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Social Enterprise and Sustainability: Key Factors that Lead to the Successful Establishment of Sustainable Development Initiatives in Ireland

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Social Enterprise and Sustainability:
Key factors that lead to the successful establishment of sustainable development initiatives in Ireland

By

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ABSTRACT

International research points to the positive impact that social enterprises with an environmental focus (also referred to as sustainable development initiatives) perform in the transition to low carbon societies. This thesis examines the capacities required for the establishment and maintenance of sustainable development initiatives in Ireland. The thesis is based on five pieces of research which are either published in international peer-reviewed publications or of a publishable standard. One of the published pieces provides an explanatory framework addressing the reasons why the social enterprise sector in Ireland is less developed than in a number of European countries, details a number of actions on how this situation can be reversed. Two of the published articles focus on renewable energy. The remaining manuscripts concentrate on topics of reuse and community gardens.

A theoretical framework is developed which outlines the capacities required for the establishment and maintenance of sustainable initiatives in Ireland. The concluding chapter outlines the key findings associated with the five pieces of research. These include: the challenges sustainable development initiatives encounter in Ireland; the motivations for establishing them; leadership; and the expertise required to establish and sustain sustainable development initiatives. The limitations associated with this research are also outlined. Finally, the thesis prioritises a number of research topics.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination of the award of PhD, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that the saved work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for postgraduate study by research of the Technological University Dublin and has not been submitted in whole or in part for another award in any other third level institution.

The work reported on in thesis conforms to the principles and requirements of Technological University Dublin's guidelines for ethics in research.

Signature _____   Date _____

      Gerard Doyle

ABBREVIATIONS LIST

Community Based Organisation (CBO)

Community Recycling Network of Ireland (CRNI)

Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)

European Union (EU)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

Sustainable Development Initiative (SDI)

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Table of Illustrations, Figures, and Tables.

1. RESEARCH CONTEXT, AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

The thesis is comprised of seven chapters. It was completed by publication and is comprised of five original pieces of research, each of which is contained in a separate chapter. Chapter 1 provides an introduction and context for the thesis. Chapters 2, 3, 4,5, 6 have all been published or are in the process of being published in international peer-reviewed publications.

Chapter 2 examines the factors that have stymied the development of social enterprise in Ireland. There then follow four case study chapters.

- Chapter 3 focuses on community gardens.

- Chapter 4 examines reuse social enterprises.

- Chapter 5 deals with community renewable energy co-operatives.

- Chapter 6 focuses on community-owned renewable energy district heating initiatives.

Chapter 7 conludes the thesis and provides an overview and critique of the results presented in Chapters 3 to 7.

This chapter (Chapter 1) is divided into eight sections. Section 1.1 outlines my rationale for selecting the particular topic for my PhD and the rationale for selecting the four pieces of research. This is followed by section 1.2, which outlines the core and subsidiary questions. Section 1.3 gives the context for the thesis. The next section, 1.4, provides an outline of sustainable development concepts and theories and their relevance for the broader social economy and social enterprises. Section 1.5 focuses on social enterprise development and presents theoretical frameworks associated with

sustainable development. Section 1.6 provides the policy context for sustainable development. The penultimate section details the methodology employed in the research. The final section, 1.8, outlines the thesis structure.

1.1. **Introduction**

Section 1 of the introductory chapter provides an overview of my rationale for selecting the particular research topic for my PhD, the rationale for selecting the four separate pieces of research, and an overview of the four pieces of research.

With over two decades of experience of social enterprise development, I decided to do a PhD on an aspect of social enterprise as I wanted to enhance my theoretical understanding thus providing credibility to my practical knowledge of this area. My experiences of working in three investor-owned businesses in the 1980s had highlighted the exploitation and alienation that the workforce in capitalist enterprises can encounter.

In addition, the three companies that I worked for manufactured either ink or paint. Environmental concerns were not a priority for the three companies. Over time, the environmental practices of two of the companies became increasingly at odds with my environmental beliefs. In 1989, I decided to stop working for an investor-owned business and instead began working, on a voluntary basis, as a full-time worker with the Dublin Simon Community. Following a year working with Dublin Simon Community, I returned to third level education to become a professional community worker. This enabled me to have the time to learn about alternative enterprise models. My MSc thesis focused on the theme of social enterprise in urban disadvantaged communities.

In the process of working in the social enterprise sector, I became aware that there was only a small number of social enterprises engaged in recycling, reuse, energy conservation and renewable energy production in Ireland compared to the number in

other European countries. This is compounded by the paucity of published research focusing on social enterprise in these sectors of the economy. This assertion is supported by research (Bull, 2015; Borzaga and Solari, 2001).

This motivated me to undertake a PhD to examine social enterprise and the transition to a 'green economy' in Ireland. I decided to do my PhD, by publication, as I already had two pieces of primary research published in peer-reviewed Irish journals and I had co-edited a book on social enterprise in Ireland entitled 'Social Enterprise in Ireland: A People's Economy?' published by Oak Tree Press and co-wrote a number of articles for TASC.

I decided to select case studies on (1) renewable energy co-operatives, (2) community-owned renewable energy district heating systems, (3) reuse social enterprises and (4) community gardens. Finally, I decided to undertake a piece of research which examined the factors which led to Ireland having a relatively undeveloped social enterprise sector compared to other European countries and Canada.

1.1.1.   Renewable energy co-operatives

I selected renewable energy co-operatives in Ireland as a case study for a number of reasons. Firstly, Huybrechts and Mertens (2014) assert renewable energy co-operatives are relevant in the transition to an economy less reliant on fossil fuels because they are democratic and their mission is concerned with making a contribution towards the realisation of a sustainable society. For instance, this characteristic leads to less resistance to accepting renewable energy technology projects which can increase the likelihood of their securing planning permission (Huybrechts and Mertens, 2014; Rakos, 2001; and Toke, 2005). Secondly, Warren and McFadyen (2010) provides evidence for community-owned renewable energy projects securing greater support for

wind turbines than investor-owned ones. The level of acceptance within communities towards renewable energy initiatives is linked to distributional justice – where the revenue and costs are distributed more fairly (Schweizer-Ries, 2008). However, if community renewable energy initiatives (which include renewable energy co-operatives) focusing on the generation of renewable energy have a narrow membership and are not accountable to the community in which they are based, or indeed if the relationship with the community is tokenistic, then this can lead to community opposition (Walker, 2008).

Walker (2007) cites several instrumental benefits of community renewable energy co-operatives including overcoming local opposition to renewable energy, particularly wind energy, and increasing the uptake in renewable energy as the benefits accrue to residents as opposed to conventional private developers who tend to live outside of the locality in which the renewable energy co-operative is located.

Hufenand and Koppenjan (2015) believe that although renewable energy co-operatives currently contribute to only a small proportion of a nation's energy requirement, they can assist in the transition to a low-carbon society by serving as exemplars for the diffusion of renewable energy. Nolden (2013) cites community renewable energy initiatives as facilitating the following: capacity building; diffusion – greater acceptance within communities of renewable energy projects; contributing to national targets in reducing carbon emissions; social cohesion; environmental factors – reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Although the literature points to renewable energy co-operatives leading to the above benefits, only five are operational on the island of Ireland. Renewable energy co-operatives were selected as a case study to examine the factors that both lead to their establishment and to them becoming sustainable. It would also aim to examine the barriers that they encounter.

1.1.2. Community-owned renewable energy district heating systems

Similar to renewable energy co-operatives in Ireland, there is a relatively small number of community-owned renewable energy district heating systems on the island of Ireland compared to a number of other European countries, however, research indicates Ireland's dependence on fossil fuels to generate heat could be significantly reduced if a higher proportion of Ireland's heat requirement was provided by district heating systems (Connolly, 2014). Moreover, Connolly and Vad Mathiesen (2014) estimates that between 30% and 40% of the total heating requirement of Ireland's buildings could be provided by district heating systems[i]. Compared to other EU countries such as Denmark, the proportion of Ireland's buildings heated by district heating systems is extremely low.

Furthermore, 39% of Ireland's total energy consumption is required to meet heat demand which is provided, in the main, by individual fossil fuel heating systems (Gartland and Bruton, 2016). Maldener *et al.* (2007) asserts that innovative district heating systems can be diffused effectively if established through community organisations. Similar to the renewable energy co-operatives case study, this case study of community-owned renewable energy district heating systems was selected to identify the factors that lead to both their establishment and to them becoming sustainable.

1.1.3. Community gardens

Community gardens was selected as a case study because they can have several social and environmental impacts such as countering social isolation, addressing food poverty, promoting cross-class and intergenerational interaction and they can contribute to the democratisation of food production (McIvaine-Newsad and Porter, 2013). Although, they have increased in number over the past decades, there are a number of policy

barriers which prevent them being replicated to a greater extent (Seyfang, 2007). Similar to the above two case studies, this case study was selected to identify the factors that lead to both their establishment and to them becoming sustainable.

1.1.4. Reuse social enterprises

Reuse social enterprises was the fourth case study selected because they provide additional value to that which investor-owned recycling companies can achieve (Davies, 2010). With regard to sustainable development in Ireland, up to 2002, policy-makers tended to focus on economic and environmental components of sustainability and did not focus on the social dimension that reuse social enterprises can realise. This is consistent with the concept of ecological modernisation (Pellow *et al.* 2000). This is a missed opportunity as international research points to social enterprises engaging with local communities and undertaking activities that promote reciprocity and civic engagement (Brass, 2006).

Pellow *et al.* (2000) notes that in some countries, the ideological dispositions of some policy-makers result in investor-owned businesses being favoured to deliver waste management contracts on behalf of the State. This results in limited opportunities for the establishment of reuse social enterprises.

In light of the recent implementation of the EU directives aimed at strengthening the circular economy, there could be opportunities for the establishment of new reuse social enterprises. Therefore, this case study examines the capacities required for reuse social enterprises to become sustainable and the barriers that they need to overcome to become sustainable.

Compared to a number of other European countries, in Ireland, social enterprises have not been embraced to the same extent by communities and civil society organisations.

The fifth piece of research outlines the economic, cultural, social and political processes which have stymied the development of a vibrant social enterprise sector in Ireland. It provides a comprehensive explanatory framework outlining why social enterprises have been underutilised by policy-makers in Ireland. It provides an analysis of the factors which led to the growth of the credit union movement in Ireland. Lessons from the development of Ireland's credit union movement could be applied to growing social enterprise in other sectors of the economy. This analysis is a critical precursor to advocating for a more benign set of policies to support the development of a vibrant social enterprise sector in Ireland.

The focus of this thesis is consumption within communities and how communities can independently develop and maintain initiatives which can increase their autonomy regarding both energy and food production and the reuse of goods and materials. The four case studies were selected because they contribute to communities and neighbourhoods becoming ecologically sustainable (Seyfang, 2007). Furthermore, electricity associated with powering households, heat and food are considered the essential items that communities consume on a daily basis (Warburton, 2016).

Reuse can enable communities to reduce the level of consumption of materials (Lovins, 2008).

I decided not to dedicate a case study to transport as it is provided by either the State or by private operators. Indeed, social enterprises only provide a residual role in delivering transport through providing accessible transport services to vulnerable groups living in rural areas (O'Shaughnessy *et al.* 2011). Also, I decided not to undertake a case study of the network of Community Based Organisations (CBO) which are contracted by SEAI to retrofit the homes of households at risk of experiencing fuel

poverty. This decision was premised on the basis that every part of the country is covered by a CBO. In essence, there is no opportunity to increase the number of CBOs in the Republic of Ireland.
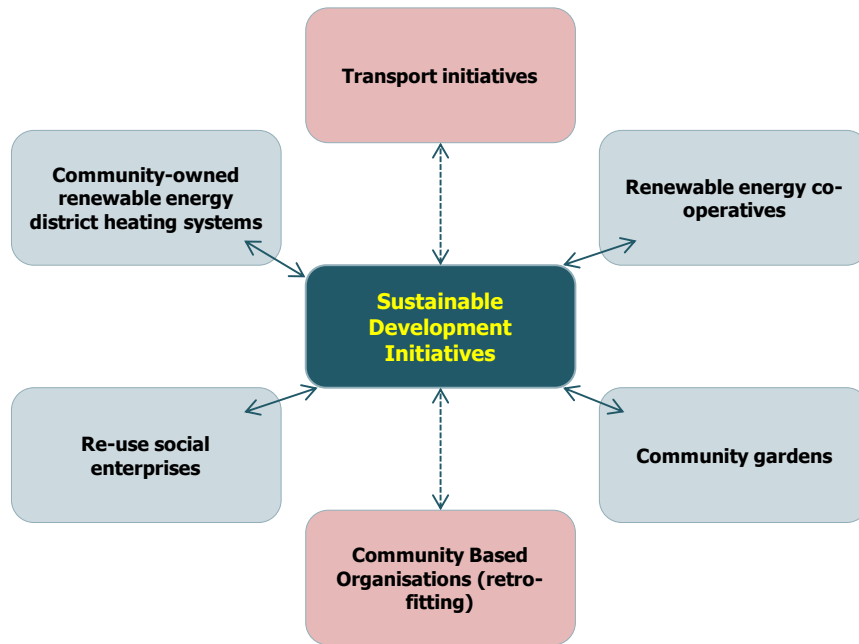
Figure 1.1 Case studies covered in thesis

1.2. **Core and subsidiary questions**

There are a number of communities in Ireland that have established social enterprises focusing on renewable energy, food generation or in the re-use of discarded materials. This dissertation aims, firstly, to examine the motivations for communities engaging in the development of social enterprises with an environmental focus. These are referred to as sustainable development initiatives in the thesis. Secondly, the thesis examines the capacities required by the promoters of these social enterprises striving to establish and maintain sustainable development initiatives. Thirdly, it examines the characteristics that distinguish successful from unsuccessful social enterprises engaged in sustainable development. As a result, learning could be used by other promoters interested in

establishing social enterprises engaged in sustainable development and for policy-makers. Therefore, it is an applied piece of research.

The core question to be examined is:

> What are the key factors that lead to the successful development of sustainable development initiatives that contribute to the transition from the current model of local development to a more socially and environmentally sustainable model in Ireland?

The subsidiary questions are:

- Why do some communities engage in sustainable development initiatives[1] and not others? (research question 1)

- What capacities are present and how do they contribute to some communities being more receptive than others to the maintenance of sustainable development initiatives in Ireland? (research question 2)

- What are the differences between the successful and unsuccessful implementation of sustainable development initiatives in Ireland? (research question 3)

- Does the rationale for communities establishing sustainable development initiatives impact on the outcomes of these initiatives? (research question 4)

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[1] Sustainable development initiatives include energy, food and up-cycling initiatives. Transport initiatives are also a component of sustainable development initiatives but are not covered in this study.

In essence, the research is aiming to address the paucity of research completed on the internal challenges experienced by social enterprises, particularly those with an environmental/ecological mission (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2016).

1.3. **Context**

Natural resources – water, energy, and fertile soil – are fundamental to our life on earth. Many environmentalists, including Jackson (2011), believe that at the heart of the environmental crisis which we are experiencing, and which is manifesting itself in so many ways, lies over-consumption of the earth's resources. In 2009, for example, it was estimated that humans were extracting and using more than 50% of natural resources than was the case 30 years previously (Jackson, 2011). Bellamy Foster (2009) states that human activity is having an increasingly adverse impact on the earth's ecosystem. He asserts that capitalism is having a devastating effect on the ecosystem. The dominant system in tackling climate change, according to Newell and Paterson (2010), refers to climate capitalism which sees no inconsistency between continual growth and a shift away from carbon-intensive industrial development. This viewpoint asserts that the market will lead the transition to reduced carbon emissions.

Dobson (1994) asserts that on a global level, but particularly in advanced capitalist countries, consumption needs to be significantly reduced, coupled with a contraction in economic growth. Jackson (2011) believes that there is an urgent need among governments to transform their economic models. One approach that could be adopted would see the transformation from the dominant model of economic growth to a steady state economy (Daly, 1996). Daly (1996) asserts that this shift to a steady state economy will be only permitted if there is a societal shift in values, which he refers to as 'moral growth'. To facilitate the move away from satisfaction achieved from

consumption, governments need to implement policies that lead to a reduction in the differentials in wealth between higher and lower socio-economic strata in society (Dobson, 1994). Jackson (2011) shares the belief in the embracing of new economic models by governments which will necessitate that the culture of consumerism be dismantled and that ecological economics are adopted. If the governments of advanced economies fail to implement policies that replace consumption and materialism by prosperity, then there will be irreversible ecological degradation (Friends of the Earth, 2011). Bellamy Foster (2009) emphasises how societies urgently need an ecological and social revolution in tandem to address the crisis the earth is encountering. The strength of this publication is that it highlights the intrinsic shortcomings and flawed analysis of solely relying on technological innovation to achieve sustainable development. This eco-social revolution is premised on a shift from capitalist enterprises and the market to 'egalitarian and collective forms of production, distribution exchange and consumption. This shatters the rationale of the dominant social order. It is premised on changing the social relations of production' (Bellamy Foster, 2009; p.13). According to Bellamy Foster (2009), the capitalist class will not cede economic and political power, instead '…it requires a civilisational shift based on revolution in economy and society.' (Bellamy Foster, 2009). This transformation will only become a reality if state institutions become democratic and corporates are replaced by democratically controlled models of production such as co-operatives. (Erdal, 2011). The high level of trust that underpins interpersonal relationships is not reflected in the market which is premised on competition (Felber, 2015). Indeed, co-operation is shown to be more efficient than competition (Birchall and Keliston, 2009; Felber 2015). However, many economists cannot countenance this situation due to their hegemonic attachment to competition and the market (Felber, 2015).

Excessive consumption emanates from three domains, namely, residents and communities, the private sector of the economy, and the public sector of the economy (Bellamy Foster *et al.* 2011). As already mentioned, the focus of this thesis is consumption within communities and how communities can independently develop and maintain initiatives which can increase their autonomy regarding both energy and food production and the reuse of goods and materials.

The past 20 years has seen a significant increase in the number of community initiatives that are engaging in renewable energy production, upcycling of discarded material and the production of food (Walker, 2007; Seyfang, 2014; and Baumans, 2013). Furthermore, there is a wealth of literature focusing on the impact that community initiatives are realising such as reducing energy consumption, augmenting community resilience and increasing awareness of environmental issues.

However, compared to the level of research completed on the impact of community initiatives, there is a dearth of research undertaken to determine the contributing factors that lead to communities engaging in both renewable energy and food production (Middlemiss and Parish, 2009). This thesis will focus on the factors that lead to communities engaging in renewable energy initiatives, local food production and upcycling of discarded materials.

1.4. Sustainable development concepts and theories

This section discusses the key concepts relating to both sustainable development concepts and theories, which include: the theoretical approaches to sustainable development; community; green economy, sustainable consumption and sustainable development initiatives; and the circular economy.

1.4.1. Theoretical approaches to sustainable development

Research has highlighted that the core objective of sustainable development initiatives is to contribute to developing a sustainable economy and society (Seyfang, 2007). Accordingly, it is critical to conceptualise this idea.

Sustainable development has become a dominant concept in political rhetoric and policy making (Connolly, 2002). Although sustainable development has become dominant, individuals from a disparate range of political standpoints adhere to it (Tovey, 2009). Therefore, they view sustainable development in different ways (Koglin, 2009).

Indeed, sustainable development is a contested term (Murphy, 2009). Policy making in the area of sustainable development is influenced by the perspective that policy-makers adhere to (Jackson, 1995). Some academics consider that Marx initially conceptualised sustainability (Tovey, 2009). However, the majority of academics subscribe to the view that sustainable development was conceptualised by the work of the Bruntland commission (Connolly, 2002).

The terms 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development' are often used interchangeably. Nonetheless, when used in an academic context, they are separated to refer to the process (sustainable development) and the outcome (sustainability). Roseland (2000, p.80) states that sustainability '…requires maintaining an adequate per

capita stock of environmental assets for use by future generations and avoiding irreversible damage to any significant asset'.

Sustainability has positive connotations and is used in a wide array of academic disciplines (Roseland, 2000). There are a number of interrelated elements to the concept (Connolly, 2002). These are:

- Environmental protection, with the objective of integration of environmental protection and economic development.

- Equity between current populations and future generations.

- Improving quality of life, acknowledging that human welfare is not exclusively strengthened by increasing household income levels.

- Participation by all social groups in society in realising sustainable development (Jacobs, 1995).

Sustainable development, irrespective of its interpretation, infers some level of change from previous development policies (Connolly, 2002). The extent of the change is premised on the ideological perspective of the policy maker (Koglin, 2009).

To summarise, the concept of sustainable development relates to a range of solutions to the issue of how to reconcile the competing goals of economic development, social justice and the protection of the environment (Koglin, 2009).

The realisation of sustainable development necessitates a transition away from unsustainable practices (Kirby and O'Mahony, 2018). Transitions are defined as 'processes of structural change in major societal subsystems' (Meadowcroft 2009, p.324). They involve a transformation in the 'dominant rules of the game' and entail a

transformation of established technologies and societal practices. They can take several generations to complete.

Hughes *et al.* (2010) emphasise the need for innovative technology to be available to communities to facilitate the transition to a low-carbon society. Seyfang *et al*. (2014) highlight that grassroots initiatives (which I refer to as sustainable development initiatives), in addition to procuring technology, benefit from participating in a niche, i.e. small networks[2], of similar initiatives. These niches enable grassroot initiatives to learn from each other (Heischer *et al*. 2011). The existence of supportive intermediary organisations, that provide a range of supports to these initiatives, is deemed critical to their successful implementation (Seyfang *et al*. 2014). Commentators note the constraints that diverse sustainable development initiatives encounter prevent them from coalescing into one niche which extends throughout a jurisdiction (Davies, 2013; Newell and Paterson, 2010).

It is in this context that national policies are critical in supporting communities to develop sustainable development initiatives that contribute to the transition to more low-carbon societies (Nolden, 2013). Kirby and O'Mahony (2018) believe that the political commitment of governments is the key ingredient in the shift from fossil fuel dependency. The dominant ideology of the ruling political party or parties sets the parameters for the transition process (WBGU, 2011). Newell and Paterson (2010) criticise the majority of western governments for adhering to a policy framework which

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[2] Niches can be defined as 'spaces which shield experimental projects with radical innovations from too harsh selection pressures fromm incumbent regimes' (Raven, 2012 p.126).

they refer to as 'Climate Capitalism'[3]. Instead, a new model of development is required that directs economic development away from fossil fuel-dependent industries and which extract unsustainable levels of the earth's resources (Mason, 2015; Newell and Paterson, 2010).

Since the thesis examines sustainable development initiatives within communities, it is necessary to outline the concept of community.

1.4.2. Community

The term community was made famous by the German sociologist, Ferdinand Tonnies, through the distinction that he made between *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society) (Powell and Geoghegan, 2004). For Tonnies, community was associated with trust which facilitated the formation of bonds between individuals. Conversely, according to Tonnies, society was hostile and heartless (Cohen, 1985).

The concept of community is another ideologically contested term (Jewkes and Murcott, 1996). Firth *et al.* (2011) state that it is difficult to define community. Indeed, Hillery (1955) identified almost 100 definitions of community and the only common feature to each was people. Cohen (1985) views communities as being both aggregational and relational with respect to the former, this refers to a group of people who have something in common that distinguishes them from others and is relational due to their difference with respect to other communities. Cohen (1985) acknowledges how their shared values bind communities together.

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[3] Advocates of 'Climate Capitalism' believe that capitalist enterprises should lead the transition to a low carbon economy as they can generate profits in doing so (Lovins and Cohen, 2011).

Dominant analyses of community tend to focus on their structure whereas, more recent research has examined and draws attention to the meaning of community (Cohen, 1985). Such research has focused on culture as a starting point in the examination of community (Gilchrist, 2009). Indeed, community is predominately a social construct and is sufficiently malleable that it can accommodate members' personal identities. The affinity with place tends to be associated with neighbourhood and this is reflected in government policy (Cattell, 2001). Not all communities are homogenous, as different cultures place greater emphasis on the importance of the function of communities (Bauman, 2001).

According to Popple (1995), the term community is often viewed in an idealised way, based on the belief that there was once a golden age of harmonious neighbourhoods where neighbours worked together and supported each other. Popple (1995) delineates two types of communities: one is based on communal links associated with people sharing the same geographical area and the other type is where a group of people share the same interest. In relation to geographical communities, people's social networks extend beyond place and are actively constructed by individuals (Cattell, 2001). The strength of social networks is influenced by class and ethnicity (Sivandan, 1990; Sen, 2006). People living in marginalised communities tend to have weaker and less developed social networks (Hall, 2000).

Similarly, Putnam (2000) considers community to be in decline in liberal economies, most notably the United States. He argues that a range of societal factors are weakening communities, leading to reduced levels of participation in community organisations (Putnam, 2000). Bauman asserts that the process of societal fragmentation is leading to isolated and alienated individuals living within their localities (Bauman, 2001).

Sen (2006) acknowledges the temporal nature of community. Individuals can belong to several communities simultaneously, and the strength and affinity associated with a community can subside over time. According to many commentators, neo-liberal policy-makers are usurping the concept of community to further their own political agenda, which primarily entails minimising the role of the State (Bollier, 2014). According to this analysis, the community and voluntary sector is not facilitated to perform functions formerly provided by the State (Powell and Geoghegan, 2004). An alternative ideological stance is that communities can also be places where people can collectively engage in alternatives to the dominant capitalist system of production, predicated on co-operation and reciprocity (Gibson-Graham, 2013). Therefore, communities can be framed by both progressive and reactionary movements (Powell and Geoghegan, 2004).

When applied to the installation of renewable energy initiatives, the term community can be contentious (Walker and Devine-Wright, 2008) and can mean different things to different people. This lack of clarity on the meaning of the term can generate tensions if 'community' has a narrow focus and the benefits accrue to only a few households in a particular area (Walker *et al.* 2010). Indeed, with regard to sustainable development initiatives focusing on generating renewable energy, one should not view 'community' with rose-tinted glasses as being all things wonderful (Walker *et al.* 2010). In particular, the association of the term 'community' with a renewable energy project does not guarantee success, because some communities can be exclusionary and fractious, and the boundaries of community may be imposed. Communities that are inclusive and cohesive, with strong relationships between residents underpinned by co-operation, are more receptive to engaging in sustainable development initiatives (Walker *et al.* 2010).

1.4.3. The green economy, sustainable consumption and sustainable development initiatives

A number of concepts underpin the recent discussion about sustainable development initiatives: these include the green economy and sustainable consumption.

In relation to the green economy, it is widely acknowledged that the Global North is consuming the earth's resources at an unsustainable rate (Gibson-Graham, 2013). To address this situation, the EU Commission through the *European Green Deal* is publicly committed to transitioning to a sustainable economy (EU, 2019). However, Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) draw particular attention to the relationship between social inequality and consumerism. They argue that this inequality will need to be addressed within societies to achieve sustainable levels of consumption (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009).

Getting clarity on the meaning of the green economy is difficult, as it is an ideological concept (Doyle, 2012). For proponents of a free-market economy, it can constitute a wide array of goods and services including renewable energy and waste management that – if developed – could lead to economic renewal of the Irish economy (Doyle, 2012). Proponents of this model of the green economy are concerned with the range of environmentally orientated goods and services that can be provided (OECD, 2011).

For others, the green economy can be defined as a sustainable economy where all energy is derived from renewable resources, which are naturally replenished (Cambridge Institute for Sustainable Leadership, 2018). Proponents of this model of the green economy are concerned with how economic activity is conducted (Doyle, 2012).

Lander (2011) asserts that the concept of the green economy as defined by the United Nations Environment Programme, i.e., that an inclusive economy is one that improves

human well-being and builds social equity while reducing environmental risks and scarcities[4], is ultimately flawed because environmental sustainability cannot be achieved while pursuing economic growth. There are structural impediments to the transition to a green economy as defined by Lander. These are primarily linked to the priorities of the majority of governments which aim to maximise economic growth (Brand, 2012). A number of commentators have accepted elements of this critique (Rifkin, 2019; Pettifor, 2019). They assert that a Green New Deal is imperative to achieve a more sustainable society (Pettifor, 2019; Rifkin, 2019).

As set out by the UN, one of the roles of the green economy is to strengthen the ability to improve production processes and consumption practices to reduce resource consumption, waste generation and emissions across the full life cycle, and this will lead to sustainable consumption (UN, 2018). Davies, *et al*. (2014, p.1) consider that:

> 'Sustainable consumption is generally conceived as the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimising the use of natural resources, toxic materials, and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations'.

From the mid-1990s to 2008, the period referred to as the Celtic Tiger, consumption in Ireland increased. Current government policies, Davies (2013) asserted, have resulted in small reductions on household consumption. The OECD criticised Ireland for pursuing a top-down approach to policy intervention (OECD/EU, 2017). It criticised

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[4] https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/green-economy/about-green-economy

Irish policy-makers for limiting the role of civil society organisations in shaping policy on consumption, while at the same time there has been a withdrawal of the State in addressing over-consumption, and weakened regulation in monitoring business behaviour (Davies *et al.* 2014).

Davies *et al*. (2014) identified several challenges facing the State in affording sustainable consumption a higher policy priority:

- A disjointed and piecemeal set of policies aimed at addressing elements of consumption.

- An absence of an over-arching government department responsible for reversing excessive consumption

- A weak set of policies to protect the interests of consumers.

Davies fails to include the lack of involvement of citizen and non-governmental organisations in the design of policy to address excessive consumption. The Irish State has failed to establish effective mechanisms to facilitate community participation (Ó Broin, 2014).

1.4.4.   The circular economy

The primary focus of the 'circular economy' is to protect the environment (Stratan, 2017). The Ellen McArthur Foundation provided the first definition of the term, as 'an industrial system that is restorative or regenerative by intention and design'(Ellen McArthur Foundation, 2011). A broader definition views the circular economy as an 'economic model based inter alia on sharing, leasing, reuse, repair, refurbishment and recycling, in a closed loop, which aims to retain the highest utility and value of products, components and materials at all times'(European Parliamentary Research Services (EPRS), 2016, p.2). According to the EPRS, one of the goals of the circular

economy is to reduce waste to the minimum level of the products' life cycles and their materials must be kept and reused, creating further value.

Another perspective sees the role of the circular economy as 'decoupling value creation from waste generation and resource use by radically transforming production and consumption systems (Camacho-Otero *et al.*, 2018, p.1). Many commentators view the circular economy as performing a key role in the transition to sustainable societies (Kircherr *et al.* 2017). Indeed, social enterprises have led the shift from linear to circular economic development (Stratan, 2017).Global extraction of resources has been rapidly increasing since the 1990s (Friends of the Earth, 2009). For example, SERI/WU Global Material Flows Database estimates that global extraction has increased by 118% over the past 31 years.[5] Within the European Union (EU), each person consumes, on average,13 3 tonnes(t) of materials annually (EC, 2015a). Much of this is discarded, with an average waste production rate of 5t of total waste per person annually (EC, 2015a).

The European Union is a net importer of natural resources to produce every product that EU citizens consume (EU, 2012). Furthermore, the member states of the EU are encountering a crisis in terms of resource availability, use and disposal of products (Miller, 2014; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2011). Within the EU, material recycling and waste-based energy recovery secures approximately 5 per cent of the original raw material value (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2015). Arising from current high levels of personal consumption and disposal, resources in Ireland are being depleted at an

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[5] http://www.materialflows.net/trends/analyses-1980-2011/global-resource-extraction-by-materialcategory-1980-2011/

unsustainable rate (Doyle and Davies, 2013). At the same time, the linear economic model results in 50% of Europe's municipal waste being landfilled or incinerated, generating considerable carbon emissions[6].

The conventional linear relationship between production and consumption is no longer sustainable (Moreau *et al*. 2017). For the switch from a linear to a more sustainable use of goods and products to be realised, citizens must alter their consumption patterns to consume within sustainable limits for the benefit of the environment and to ensure an acceptable standard of living for future generations (Jackson, 2011).

The roots of the circular economy emanate from different academic disciplines which contributes to it being a contested concept (Korhohen *et al*. 2018). An examination of the historical roots of the circular economy is required to fully understand its contested nature (Moreau *et al*. 2017).

Georgescu-Roegen (1988) made an important contribution to the development of the concept of the circular economy by differentiating between renewable and non-renewable resources. Stahel introduced the term functional economy in 1986. Functional economy is concerned with the performance of goods and services as opposed to solely their efficiency (Stahel, 2013). Indeed, Stahel (2015) asserts that there needs to be a reconciliation between product efficiency and effectiveness. A looped economy is a central feature of the functional economy (Stahel, 2015). Waste prevention and the reconditioning of goods which enable them to be reused are core components of a looped economy (Stahel, 2016). Governments must, according to

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[6] Advocates of 'Climate Capitalism' believe that capitalist enterprises should lead the transition to a low carbon economy, as they can generate profits in doing so (Lovins and Cohen, 2011).

Stahel (2010), design fiscal policy to encourage the reconditioning of goods by taxing non-renewable resources as opposed to taxing labour. These are important policies, as a key component of the transition towards a more sustainable society is the preservation of products in use for longer and the development of a repair and reuse culture (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2015).

Stahel (2010) also asserts the importance of incentivising companies to innovate the design of products with longer life-cycles. He also favoured the adoption of a different set of metrics for measuring a company's profitability (Stahel, 2010).

Industrial ecology is considered another one of the main sources of research on the circular economy (Ring, 1997). According to proponents of industrial ecology, industry can be viewed as an ecosystem made by humans that operates in a similar way to natural ecosystems. The exception being that the waste generated from the manufacture of one good is utilised in producing another good (GDRC, 2015).

Moreau *et al. (*2017) emphasises the relevance of incorporating institutional economics into the conceptualisation of the circular economy. Sahaklan (2016) asserts that the dominant model of the circular economy needs to be predicated on solidarity and the principle of equity in the allocation of resources. Furthermore, Moreau *et al.* (2017) asserts that if equity is a central component of the circular economy, then it reduces the likelihood of cost shifting between places and removes the pursuance of the profit motive. However, Suskind and Ali (2014) cites the fundamental shortcomings of market-based circular economy frameworks in not promoting human development. To address these shortcomings, commentators assert that a social and solidarity economy is a more effective model for the attainment of an equitable model of a circular economy than can be achieved by a market economy (Ali, 2009).

Bockhim (1995) acknowledges the role that community organisations, with an environmental focus, contribute to the transition to a circular economy. However, many social ecologists, including Bockhim, fail to afford sufficient weight to processes associated with globalisation (Suskind and Ali, 2014). Indeed, chapter 3 entitled 'A New Era for Reuse Social Enterprises in Ireland? The Capacities Required for Achieving Sustainability' examines the capacities for required for sustaining reuse social enterprises in Ireland.

1.5. Social enterprise

1.5.1.   Overview of social enterprise

Social enterprise has been defined in many different ways. The number of definitions of what constitutes a social enterprise reflects the diverse understanding of what a social enterprise actually is or can be (GHK, 2006).

The EU definition is widely used:

> A social enterprise is an operator in the social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion and uses its profits primarily to achieve social objectives. It is managed in an open and responsible manner and, in particular, involves employees, consumers, and stakeholders affected by its commercial activities[7].

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[7] https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy/enterprises_nl

The strength of the EU definition is that it states that social enterprises have social and economic objectives[8]. The principle of community or mutual ownership is alluded to but does not place significant weight on the fact that social enterprises are democratically governed by a group of people on behalf of a community or their members, rather than shareholders seeking to maximise the return on their investment.

The weakness of the ownership in the EU definition is partially addressed by the European research network, EMES. Its definition is based on four economic and five social criteria (Nyssens, 2006). The economic criteria are:

- Continuous activity in the form of production and/or sale of goods and services. Unlike traditional not-for-profit organisations, social enterprises do not normally undertake advocacy work; instead, they produce goods and services.

- A high level of autonomy: social enterprises are created voluntarily by groups of citizens and are governed by them. Public authorities or private companies have no direct or indirect control over them, even though grant funding may be provided by these organisations.

- A significant economic risk: the financial viability of social enterprises depends on the efforts of their members, who have the responsibility of ensuring financial resources are either secured or generated from trading activity, unlike the majority of public institutions.

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[8] The Irish definition, detailed in the *National Social Enterprise Strategy for Ireland 2019-2022*, is largely consistent with that of the EU.

- A minimum number of paid workers are required, although, like traditional non-profit organisations, social enterprises may combine financial and non-financial resources, voluntary and paid work.

The social criteria are:

- An explicit aim of community benefit: one of the principal aims of social enterprises is to serve the community or a specific group of people.

- Citizen initiative: social enterprises are the result of collective interaction involving people belonging to a community or to a group that shares a certain need or aim.

- Decision-making not based on capital ownership: this generally means the principle of 'one member, one vote', or at least a voting share not based on capital shares. Although capital owners in social enterprises can play an important role, there are other stakeholders that influence decision-making.

- Participatory character, involving those affected by the activity: the users of social enterprises' services are represented and participate in their structures. In many cases, one of the objectives is to strengthen democracy at local level through economic activity.

- Limited distribution of profit: social enterprises include organisations that totally prohibit profit distribution as well as organisations such as co-operatives, which may distribute only to a limited degree, thus avoiding profit maximising behaviour.

Thus, the EMES framework outlines the essential characteristics of social enterprises. Firstly, it highlights that social enterprise is concerned primarily with the provision of products and services for sale and differs from traditional non-governmental

organisations who are either engaged in advocacy or charity. Secondly, social enterprises are started as a group of individuals belonging to a community sharing the same space or with a shared identity including ethnic minority groups or marginalised groups, for instance, people with disabilities. They are independent of the State and are governed by a group of individuals associated with a community and often on behalf of their community. However, their governance structures may include external expertise involving the State or the private sector but their motivation for being involved should be the development of a social enterprise. Thirdly, a social enterprise differs from a private enterprise in that it is predominately a membership structure with each member being allocated one vote. This allows communities to shape the future direction of the social enterprise and in so doing, it contributes to democracy being enhanced (Doyle, 2009). Fourthly, unlike charities, which is based on a donor-recipient relationship, social enterprises should endeavour to promote the involvement of the users of the social enterprise on all levels of the social enterprise's decision-making. Finally, to limit behaviour which is not consistent with the mission of the social enterprise, profit maximisation is limited.

However, a widely accepted definition is that a social enterprise is an independent, autonomous organisation that engages in economic activity to realise an environmental or a social objective for its members or community in which it is located. (Doyle and Lalor 2012; Peattie and Morley 2008). A broader definition considers social enterprise to be that part of the economy that is engaged in economic activity to meet a social objective. They are democratic entities which are controlled and owned by either their members or by the communities which they serve (Amin *et al*. 2002; Doyle and Lalor 2012; and Molloy *et al*. 1999). This definition incorporates co-operatives, associations and mutuals (Doyle and Lalor, 2012; Peattie and Morley, 2008).

According to Doyle and Lalor's definition, social enterprises are democratic in that they are controlled by their members. These enterprises express their commitment to their environmental and social goals by limiting the distribution of surplus income to members, and instead, reinvesting this for future development (Doyle and Lalor, 2012; Peattie and Morley, 2008).

Pearce (2003) asserts that social enterprises are more concerned about protecting the environment than are private enterprises, since the success of social enterprises is measured in terms of their economic, environmental and social impacts as opposed to the maximisation of profit for owners, which is the fundamental objective of conventional private enterprises. The above definition can be considered a broad definition of social enterprise, whereas, the EMES definition is considered a narrower definition.

For the purpose of this thesis, sustainable development initiatives can be viewed as social enterprises with an environmental focus.

1.5.2. Capacities required for social enterprises

As this dissertation is concerned with the operation of social enterprise with a focus on sustainable development, it is important to examine the extant literature on the factors that promote and constrain their development and enable them to fulfil their social objectives while simultaneously achieving sustainability[9].

The presence of community activists who are committed to developing social enterprises is an important stimulus for social enterprise development, according to

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[9] This section draws on material from my previous work.

Cooper (2005). Amin *et al.* (2002) argues that in addition to committed community activists, successful social enterprises require leadership with a range of skills and expertise. However, Pearce (2003) argues that in addition to this, the existence of community development infrastructure is essential so that nascent social enterprises are rooted in the community. Furthermore, these community organisations must be open to pioneering social enterprise development (Twelvetrees, 1998) and be willing to take risks and not fear the possibility of failure.

Research indicates that the personal qualities of managers or leaders of social enterprises tend to differ from those of investor-owned businesses (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2016). The leadership style of the former is underpinned by values such as humility, professionalism and calmness (Collins, 2001). Indeed, leaders of social enterprises with these qualities contribute to their sustainability (Jackson *et al.* 2018). Effective managers of social enterprises require the following attributes: the ability to develop a vision for the organisation; the interest and capacity to support employees and volunteers; a commitment and ability to promote democracy within their social enterprise, and the capacity to benefit the community which the social enterprise serves (Aziz *et al.,* 2017; Van Dierendonck and Nuijten, 2011). The governance structures of social enterprises require individuals with expertise in finance and the capacity to realise the social mission (Mason and Royce, 2008).

The influence of the State is pivotal in stimulating social enterprise through the provision of a range of supports and assistance (Hines, 2005). In particular, Oakley (1999) draws attention to the central role that local authorities can play in this regard. For example, they can award contracts to social enterprises, which lead to benefits for the local authority, the social enterprise and the community concerned (Brennan and Ackers, 2004).

There are a number of external factors which can stimulate social enterprise development. In particular, the State can stimulate and assist social enterprise development in the following ways:

- Contracting social enterprises to deliver services. State agencies should support social enterprises to enhance their capacity to tender for contracts.

- Devising a policy framework which outlines the State's view on the role of social enterprises.

- Providing start-up finance for social enterprises.

- Changing its perception of the social enterprise sector from one of a relatively inexpensive, active labour market mechanism, to one of a provider of quality services and an agent for the sustainable regeneration of disadvantaged communities.

- Building alliances with key personnel within investor-owned businesses (Doyle, 2011).

Table 1.1 Factors stimulating social enterprise development	
Internal factors stimulating social enterprise development	**External factors stimulating social enterprise development**
Presence of community leaders responsible for identifying social enterprise concepts Community development organisations willing to engage in social enterprise development Existence of a community-based economic development agency	Supportive State sector State policy framework on social enterprise Expertise from the private sector

Leadbetter (1997) emphasises the central role of social entrepreneurs in the serial championing of social enterprises. Spears (2006) states that instead of the social

entreprecise, often portrayed as a 'white knight', teams of people who emanate from within and outside of a community are pivotal to leading social enterprise development, including those with an environmental focus. While acknowledging the impact of key individuals with skills which enable social enterprises' access to information and resources, Meaton and Seanor (2007) conducted research which reinforces Spear's assertion that it is teams of people who 'make things happen'. Mawson (2008) a leading social entrepreneur, acknowledges that without a vibrant organisation, the impact of the person's intervention would be diminished. In relation to the factors that constrain social enterprise development, the following points were made.

Social enterprises have to balance attaining their social mission with achieving financial sustainability (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2016). This can lead to tensions and conflicts within social enterprises (Seanor *et al*. 2013). Social enterprises require management with the requisite expertise to effectively manage the balancing act of effectively pursuing a social mission while simultaneously attaining financial sustainability. Indeed, social enterprises require managers with a more diverse set of skills than those engaged in the management of investor-owned businesses.

Similar to other European states, the current dominant economic model of development, in Ireland, is based on economic growth and employs Gross Domestic Product as a measurement of development (Kirby and Murphy, 2008). This definition is misleading and is too narrow as it does not consider the value of unpaid work, or how national income is distributed between regions and social classes. This system is based on values of individualism, income maximisation and economic growth as an end in itself (Kirby and Murphy, 2008). It does not value alternative approaches to economic development. Therefore, it could be argued that the Irish policy agenda is less receptive

to including social enterprise development as a mechanism for generating economic activity (Doyle, 2017; Doyle, 2019).

As this thesis focuses on sustainable development initiatives, it is important to examine the both the motivations and capacities of sustainable development initiatives. These are the core components associated with the research question.

1.5.3. Motivations for the establishment of sustainable development initiatives

The motivations for the establishment of sustainable development initiatives in relation to renewable energy generation via renewable energy co-operatives, community food production and reuse will be examined.

Renewable energy co-operatives

A desire for autonomy is recognised as a motivating factor in mobilising communities to develop renewable energy co-operatives, in particular, to gain greater control over their energy supply (Pringle, 2015). Walker (2008) elaborated on the concept of autonomy, to identify the following motives in establishing sustainable development initiatives focusing on renewable energy:

- Provides a source of income generation for communities and a focus for local regeneration. In so doing, it can galvanise the local economy;

- Supplies households with a cheaper supply of energy (heat and electricity) than energy corporations;

- Enables local control over the process of developing renewable energy initiatives;

- Enables community leaders to put into practice their ethical and environmental values.

In relation to economic motives, Walker's (2008) assertion regarding the supply of cheaper energy is supported by Chittum and Ostergaard (2014), who highlight how Danish district heating systems that are mutually owned by the customers can lead to lower-cost supply of heat to households. Furthermore, the members value the transparency associated with how energy costs are set.

Regarding local economic development, Leicester *et al.* (2011) identifies employment generation and the provision of necessary infrastructure for industrial development as motives for developing sustainable development initiatives including renewable energy co-operatives. Furthermore, sustainable development initiatives can serve as a mechanism for the social and economic regeneration of rural communities (Hain *et al*. 2005).

In Germany, Wuste and Schmuck (2012) assert that ecological factors are the primary reasons for communities developing community renewable energy co-operatives. A commitment to the environment is also considered by Lokhurst *et al.* (2013) as being a primary reason for establishing community energy co-operatives – a form of sustainable development initiatives. The urgent need for a transition to low-carbon energy systems is considered the primary driver for communities establishing renewable energy initiatives in the Netherlands (Hufen and Koppenjan, 2015).

Community food production

The founders of community gardens have different motivations for their establishment (Guitart *et al*. 2012). Community gardens provide a mechanism for communities to have more control of the development of the physical space associated with their

neighbourhood (Irvine, 1999). Research conducted in the USA identifies gardeners joining community gardens for social reasons, including meeting people from different ethnic backgrounds, and making new friends (Teig *et al.* 2009). Glover *et al.* (2005) cite other social objectives such as strengthening the capacity of the community to address local issues.

Nettle (2009) identifies motivations that benefit the individual, such as opportunities to engage in physical activity to improve health, and shared benefits such as fostering community engagement, growing food for distribution among members and promoting a culture of self-reliance. Research has identified that community gardens have been started to stimulate contact with nature (Stocker and Barrett, 1998), reducing the incidence of food poverty (Holland, 2004), and increasing bio-diversity (Nettle, 2009). It would seem from the above that social and educational objectives take precedence over food production. However, another perspective is that community gardens can contribute to raising awareness of food provenance, tackling passive consumption of mass-produced food and connecting citizens back to growing food (Hill, 2011). Chapter 3 examines the motivations for the establishment of community gardens in Ireland.

Reuse

In relation to reuse, the principals of reuse social enterprises have different motives for establishing them (Taylor, 2008; Lucklin and Sharp, 2005). Reuse social enterprises have a number of social objectives that tend not to be met by the State or the private sector (Lucklin and Sharp, 2003). These include the provision of employment and training (Lucklin and Sharp, 2005). They also serve as a source of goods to low-income households (Lucklin and Sharp, 2006). In addition to realising social objectives,

environmental protection and economic regeneration are motives for the formation of reuse social enterprises (Davies, 2007). With regard to employment, the jobs provided by reuse social enterprises augment the skills and confidence of individuals who were previously long-term unemployed (Brennan and Ackers, 2003). In relation to environmental motives, the desire to reduce the level of waste going to landfill is the primary motive for principals in establishing reuse social enterprises (Davies, 2007). King and Gutberlet (2013) and Gutberlet (2016) believe that reuse social enterprises, particularly in Latin America, are established to fulfil a combination of environmental, economic and social justice objectives. However, this tends not to be reflected in the priorities of policy-makers, which tend to focus on economic and environmental components of sustainability and do not focus on the social dimension of sustainability. As a consequence, policy-makers do not acknowledge the existence of reuse social enterprises and the role they could play in waste reduction (Fagan, 2002).

Regarding ideological motives, a number of theorists assert that the formation of reuse social enterprises have a tendency to compensate for the failure of the private sector to stem the increase in the generation of waste in western societies (Ahmed and Ali, 2004; Price and Joseph (2000). Reuse social enterprises have the potential to reduce resource use and waste generation (Belk, 2007). Pellow *et al.* (2000) notes that in some countries, the ideological dispositions of some policy-makers results in investor-owned businesses being favoured to deliver waste management contracts on behalf of the State. This results in limited opportunities for the establishment of reuse social enterprises. Chapter 3 examines the motivations for the establishment of reuse social enterprises in Ireland.

Summary

The literature points to the founders of renewable energy co-operatives, community gardens and reuse sustainable development initiatives as having a range of motives for establishing them. Social and economic motives seem to be more prevalent than environmental or ecological motives. Ideological motives appear to be the least common motive for their establishment. The next section outlines the the barriers to social enterprise development.

1.5.4.   Barriers to social enterprise development

Ireland has an under-developed social enterprise sector compared to other EU countries (Doyle, 2017; DCRD, 2019; and Forfás, 2013). Accordingly, it is important to examine the barriers that social enterprises encounter, so that they be addressed. Many of these barriers are interlinked (Doyle and Lalor, 2012), but they can be divided into several categories: cultural and ideological; institutional and policy-related; and practical (day to day).

Cultural and ideological barriers

Culture can be defined as the accumulated beliefs, values, customs and 'way of life' of a society or a social group (Abercrombie *et al.,* 1988).

Ideology is a 'more or less coherent set of ideas that provides the basis for political action, whether this is intended to preserve, modify or overthrow the existing system of power' (Heywood, 2003, p, 8).

Polanyi (1944) asserts that classical economists have a vision of a society which is totally disembedded[10] from the economy. Utopia would be achieved, according to classical economists, when a truly 'free market economy' is established (Polanyi, 1944). However, a free market cannot be established and maintained without the support of a state (Polanyi, 1944). The economy cannot be self-regulating as the State performs a number of interventionist roles in the economy including controlling the supply of money and of credit, protecting workers' rights and ensuring that employees are trained. According to Block (2008), there is a fundamental contradiction between classical economists' views on the relationship between the State and the market.

This utopia could not be realised (Polanyi, 1944). If it is pursued, this would lead to catastrophic consequences for society and the environment (Granovetter, 1985). Indeed, the realisation of self-regulating markets leads to societies and the environment being forced to their limits (Granovetter, 1985). Block (2008) compares the shift to a fully regulated market economy as akin to pulling an elastic band to the limits of its elasticity. There is no let-up in this process until the band snaps (Block, 2008). When the economy becomes disembedded from society, a counter-movement is automatic (Polanyi, 1994). This counter-movement resists the drive to disembedding of society from the economy. The State is forced into placing controls on the market (Polanyi, 1994).

The leaders of very few western democratic governments (most notably the UK and the USA) tend not to provide alternatives to the 'laissez-faire' economic model, due to their ideological position (Hirst, 1997). The transition to a new economic model will be only

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[10] 'Embeddedness' refers to the concept that the economy is subservient to politics (Granovetter, 1985).

sustainable if it is preceded by a cultural change away from individualism (Castells and Hlebik, 2017). Indeed, this cultural change must become institutionalised (Castells, 2017).

Institutional and policy-related barriers

In Ireland, the current dominant economic model of development is based on economic growth and employs Gross Domestic Product as a measurement of development (Kirby and Murphy, 2008). This model is misleading and too narrow as it does not consider the value of unpaid work, or how national income is distributed between regions and social classes. The approach is based on values of individualism, of income maximisation, and of economic growth as an end in itself (Kirby and Murphy, 2008). It does not value alternative approaches to economic development.

The dominance of free market economics in the economic, political and cultural spheres of Irish society results in a discourse which equates economic activity with private enterprise development (Doyle, 2009). As a result, there is limited space for expounding alternative models of economic development which propose improvements in quality of life as opposed to those solely concerned with economic growth (Doyle, 2011). This makes it more difficult to secure a place for social enterprise on the policy agenda. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that there is not sufficient importance placed on countering the dominance of free market economic ideology within the media (Doyle, 2010). This results in government and its policy-makers paying insufficient attention to the potential role of social enterprise in addressing the lack of economic activity in disadvantaged urban areas (Doyle, 2009). This lack of policy attention results in a lack of state supports for social enterprises compared to those those afforded to private enterprises (Doyle, 2010).

Practical barriers

Social enterprises in Ireland encounter a number of practical constraints which adversely affect their prevalence (Doyle, 2011). These constraints can be divided into those that emanate from within and those that are external to communities in which social enterprises are based (Doyle and Lalor, 2012).

Constraints emanating from outside of communities include:

- The lack of appropriate finance, both grant and loan, for enterprises at various stages of development.

- The lack of independent support structures to provide expertise relating to the social enterprise activity (Daly, 2012).

- The reluctance of some local authorities to allow social enterprises base their operations in their vacant buildings (Doyle and Lalor, 2012).

- The difficulties in accessing public contracts (Doyle and Lalor, 2012).

- The dearth of research on social enterprise within urban areas, which prevents evidence being gathered to buttress demands for additional resources and supports for social enterprise interventions in disadvantaged communities (Doyle, 2009).

Constraints within communities include:

- The extent and nature of poverty, which make it more difficult for social enterprises to gain skilled labour (Doyle, 2010).

- The difficulty social enterprises can encounter in securing committee members with professional and strategic expertise, particularly from within marginalised communities (Doyle and Lalor, 2012).

- A reluctance amongst many community workers to engage in social enterprise development; this can be attributed to community workers associating social enterprise with investor-led business and capitalism, which they often view negatively (Doyle, 2009).

In addition, social enterprises have to attain a balance between achieving financial sustainability and fulfilling their social objectives (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2016). This can create tensions within social enterprises and with the communities in which they are based (Doyle and Lalor, 2012).

1.5.5.   Supportive environments for social enterprise

An examination of the development trajectories of social enterprise in jurisdictons that have vibrant social enterprise sectors can indicate to Irish policy makers, community activists, trade unions leaders and staff of support agencies the actions and policies that are required to develop the social enterprise sector in Ireland.

A number of states and jurdisdictions are viewed favourably with regard to social enterprise development.

The social economy[11] in Quebec

The social economy in Quebec, and parts of Italy has become a core part of their respective political economy (Mendell, 2009). In relation to Quebec, the community sector and the trade union movement embraced the social economy to address the

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[11] The social economy can be defined as that part of the economy which is engaged in economic activity to fulfil social objectives. The social economy includes organisations such as co-operatives, associations, mutuals and foundations (Mendell 2010).

economic crisis of the 1980s (Neamtan, 2005). Two of the largest trade unions in Quebec created investment funds to provide finance with the aim of both establishing new enterprises and strengthening indigenous enterprises. One of the funds provides finance to co-operatives and enterprises with employee participation in management (Mendell, 2010). Furthermore, social economy initiatives with an environmental focus are prioritised for investment (Mendell, 2009). The trade union movement used its influence to negotiate tax measures aimed at enhancing the sustainability of indigenous businesses including social economy entities. In 2008, one of the funds, Fond de Solidardie, had assets of $73 billion and had invested $4.1 billion in the Quebec economy, creating an estimated 100,000 jobs (Mendell, 2010). A significant proportion of these jobs are in social enterprises (Mendell, 2010). A dedicated fund is actively providing finance for social enterprises.

Also, in the 1980s, the community sector became involved in economic development (Lévesque, 2013). The leadership of community organisations switched from solely engaging in campaigning to practicing social economy development. Community Economic Development Corporations have become a feature of Quebec. These entities support social economy development in their respective catchment area (Mendell, 2010).

The Quebec State government has allocated the social economy a central role in the provision of goods and services, on behalf of Quebec municipalities and other state agencies. Dialogue takes place on a formal basis between state government and networks of social enterprises, the trade union movement and the community sector which facilitates social innovation ((Lévesque, 2013). State policies can be categorised into:

- Territorial policies which provide funding to resource community development agencies to promote and support the establishment and maintenance of social economy entities in the region.

- Generic development ensures that social economic development entities have access to supports similar to those delivered to small and medium investor-owned businesses. These supports include access to skill development of management, finance and funding for research and development.

- Sectoral policies relate to policies which aim to provide specific supports associated with the establishment of social economy enterprises in various sectors of the economy.

- Policies targeting the development of social enterprises for marginalised groups.

Through extensive collaboration between a number of sectors, the social economy is an integral part of the Quebec political economy (Bouchard *et al*, 2015).

Social economy in Italy

In relation to Italy, state legislation performs a key enabling role for the growth of the co-operative sector. The Italian constitution of 1945 recognised co-operatives (Zamagni, 2010; Doyle, 2018).[12] This provided the foundation for legislation facilitating the development of co-operatives from 1946 onwards. The first law

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[12] Sections of the thesis describing the social economy, were first published in Doyle G. (2018) 'Co-operatives as social innovation-how older models of social enterprise are more relevant than ever', in Munck, R; O'Broin, D; and Corrigan, J. (Eds.) Social Innovation in Ireland: Challenges and Prospects. Dublin: Glasnevin Publishing.

introduced defined the rules for cooperatives. 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 1970s recognised members' loans as performing a pivotal role in increasing capital available to co-operatives. This assisted 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 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. Legislation in 1992 further strengthened the co-operative sector in Italy by allowing co-operatives to have members whose sole function was to provide capital (Doyle, 2017). Another critical 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 organisations, covered below, aimed at strengthening the co-operative movement through the creation of new co-operatives and the restructuring of some of the existing ones (Fici, 2010).

A criticism levelled at co-operatives is lack of scale and the capacity to generate surplus income (Restakis, 2010). A review of co-operatives in northern Italy will demonstrate that co-operatives can achieve significant scale and contribute to regional economic development.

Emilia-Romagna is a region in northern 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. 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:

> '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' (Restakis 2005, p.2).

The Emillian model

This unique relationship has led to an inculcation of co-operation and reciprocity between capitalist firms and co-operatives, often referred to as the Emillian 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 success of the Emilia-Romagna economy (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 co-operative, 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:

- Co-op 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 co-operatives 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 (www.p2pfoundation.net)

- "Social Co-operatives" 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 20th 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, and supports innovation and economic cooperation processes among cooperatives. The association is also in charge of monitoring the operation of co-operatives on behalf of the Italian Ministry of Economic Development (www.emilia-romgana.legacoop.it)

However, the political economy[13] of Emilia-Romagna and Quebec could be considered atypical of that of the majority of European countries, including Ireland. Indeed, the political economy is viewed as being unsupportive towards social enterprise in Ireland (Doyle, 2019). Consequently, it would be important to review a theoretical explanation of why the majority of states are not supportive towards social enterprise.

The above discussion hightlights how social enterprise development can take place in modern liberal democracies. Both Quebec and Emilia-Romagna show how states can provide supportive environments for social enterprises. Their example indicates that the barrriers to social enterprise development are not insurmountable. In the case of Emilia-Romagna, these obstacles have been overcome in one of Ireland's fellow EU member-states.

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[13] Political economy refers to the combined and interacting effects of economic and political structures or processes, and by extension, to the scholarly study of this domain (Alder, 2009, p.1)

1.6. **Policy contexts**

In the context of this thesis policy refers to how the formal, stated decisions of government bodies are initiated, formulated and implemented (Harvey, 2008). For the purpose of thisthesis , policy needs to be examined at several different levels: global, international, national and regional.

1.6.1. United Nations

Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, member states of the UN signed up to 17 sustainable development goals which form the basis of the agreement '*Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'* (UN, 2015). Each of the Sustainable Development goals is underpinned by environmental concerns. The goals which are directly linked to this study are:

- Goal 7 Affordable and clean energy;

- Goal 11 Sustainable cities and communities;

- Goal 12 Responsible consumption and production;

- Goal 13 Climate action.

One of the main weaknesses is that the goals are aspirational and are not binding. Furthermore, Lander (2011) asserts that the concept of a green economy (as defined by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)[14]) is ultimately flawed because

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[14] A green economy is defined as low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive. In a green economy, growth in employment and income are driven by public and private investment into such economic activities and assets that allow reduced carbon emissions and pollution, enhanced energy and

he believes that environmental sustainability cannot be achieved while pursuing economic growth' (Doyle, 2012). The UNEP perspective on the green economy underpins *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'* (UN, 2015).

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) adopted in December 2015 at the 21st of the UNFCCC (COP21), marked an historic milestone in addressing global climate action. Leaders representing 195 nations came to a consensus on an accord that commitments from all countries aimed at combating climate change and adapting to its impacts. Ths agreement has three aims.

First, it will limit global temperature rise by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In an effort to reduce the risks and impacts of climate change, the accord calls for limiting the global average temperature rise in this century to below 2 degrees Celsius, while implementing initiatives to limit the temperature rise to 1.5 degrees. It also asks countries to work to achieve a leveling-off of global greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible and to become carbon neutral no later than 2050. To achieve these objectives, 186 countries–responsible for more than 90 per cent of global emissions-submitted carbon reduction targets, known as intended intentionally determined contributions (INDCs), prior to the Paris Conference.

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resource efficiency, and the prevention of the degradation of biodiversity and ecosystem services.
https://www.unenvironment.org/regions/asia-and-pacific/regional-initiatives/supporting-resource-efficiency/green-economy

These targets outlined each country's commitments for curbing emissions to 2030. They relate to society carbon-cutting goals and apply to over 2,000 cities and companies. INDCs are transformed into—nationally determined contributions—once a country formally joins the agreement. There are no specific requirements regarding how countries should cut emissions, but there have been political expectations about the type and stringency of targets by various countries. As a result, national plans vary greatly in scope and ambition, largely reflecting each country's capabilities, its level of development, and its contribution to emissions over time (UN, 2015).

Second, it will provide a framework for transparency, accountability, and the achievement of more ambitious targets. In particular, the agreement encompasses a number of binding measures for the monitoring, verification and advancement in realising a country's emission reduction targets.

Third, it will secure support for climate change mitigation and adaptation in developing nations.

1.6.2.   EU policy

This section outlines and critiques the main policies associated with the transition from a fossil-fuel dependent region to one that is carbon-free and leads to a shift to a circular economy.

EU environment policy began in 1972 with the Paris Summit of the leaders of the then nine-member states of the EEC. Up until the 1970s, EU policy was implemented on an ad hoc and reactive basis. Some commentators argue that the process of European integration facilitated the harmonisation of environmental policy across the EU (McCormick, 2013). The EU is characterised by the absence of an organisational core

which enables a range of bodies to influence and indeed design environmental policy (Jordan 2013).

Sustainable Development – European Green Deal

The European Green Deal is an integral part of the EU Commission's strategy to implement the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals.According to the EU Commission, the European Green Deal provides a blueprint with actions to

- boost the efficient use of resources by moving to a clean, circular economy
- restore biodiversity and cut pollution.

It outlines investments needed and financing tools available, and explains how to ensure a just and inclusive transition. The EU aims to be climate neutral in 2050. To do this, the EU has proposed an European Climate Law, turning the political commitment into a legal obligation and a trigger for investment.

The EU requires actions across all sectors the EU economy, such actions to including:

- investing in environmentally-friendly technologies
- supporting industry to innovate
- implementing fossil free private and public transport
- decarbonising the energy sector
- ensuring buildings are more energy efficient
- working with international partners to improve global environmental standards.

The EU will also provide financial support and technical assistance to help businesses and regions that are most affected by the move towards the green economy. This is called the Just Transition Mechanism and will help mobilise at least €100 billion over the period 2021-2027 in the most affected regions.

Energy

In the context of the COP21 agreement, the European Union committed itself to limit greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as low as required to stay below a 2 °C rise in average global temperature (Capros *et al*. 2019). The adopted climate and energy targets include GHG emissions reductions (40% less than 1990 levels), energy efficiency (32.5% less primary and final energy consumption than projected in 2007 before the economic crisis) and renewable energy (32% less a share of gross final energy consumption) in 2030. The policy interventions comprise several sectoral EU directives, in relation to energy efficiency, renewable energy deployment and a reform of the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). Since the ratification of the Paris Climate Agreement, the EU has repeatedly articulated its commitment to reducing GHG emissions. To ensure that every effort is made to achieve only a 1.5-°C rise in temperature, the EU is committed to realising zero GHG emissions in the second half of the century, and the EU Commission has developed a long term strategy with a number of scenarios.

Circular economy

Although EU policies have reduced the rates of hazardous wastes going to landfill, there has been an uneven performance with regard to the recycling and reuse of various materials (EU, 2011). In particular, the recycling of electrical and electronic goods has been low compared to that of organic waste (EU, 2013). Furthermore, the performance

across the region is uneven, with Germany attaining recycling rates of 64% compared to the meagre rate in Romania which stands at less than 5%. Consequently, this uneven performance will make it more difficult for the EU to achieve the recycling target of 50% by 2030 (EU, 2012).

It was in the above context that the EU introduced the Action Plan for the Circular Economy in 2015. The measures include:

- Funding of over €650 million under Horizon 2020 and €5.5 billion under the structural funds.

- Actions to reduce food waste by 50% by 2020.

- Development of a quality standards system/framework for secondary raw materials, to increase operators' confidence in using such materials.

- Measures outlined in the Ecodesign working plan for 2015-2017 to promote the durability of products combined with energy efficiency.

- A revised regulation on fertilisers, to facilitate the central role whichorganic fertilisers can perform in the single market.

- A strategy on plastics in the circular economy which will reduce a number of associated environmental crises including reducing marine litter.

Food

The EU *Farm to Fork* strategy aims to reduce the environmental impact, including carbon footprint, of food systems. Central to the implementation of the strategy will be the development of an EU legal framework for a sustainable food system by the end of 2023. This will augment the key targets and initiatives proposed in the strategy by establishing common definitions and general food sustainability principles. Indeed, the

EU *Farm to Fork* strategy is a key component of the European Green Deal. The framework will envision a 'sustainable food system' to guide the direction of the policy goals, assessing their achievements and ensuring consistency across all the policy areas that influence food systems (e.g. agriculture, food chains, trade, and economic development). The strategy is also central to the EU Commission's agenda to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To summarise, it will acknowledge the negative externalities of the dominant systems of food and farming and provide potential pathways for internalising them – with a specific focus on production, in contrast to consumption (EU, 2020).

1.6.3.   Ireland

Policy in Ireland is highly centralised and predominately set at a national level (Harvey, 2008). Recent initiatives such the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and the Local Economic and Community Plan are important first steps in the shift to more decentralised policy making in Ireland.

Irish policy in relation to promoting sustainability, addressing climate change, reducing the reliance on fossil fuels and reuse of discarded materials is outlined and critiqued in this section. Irish policy-makers have implemented a number of measures, including several grant schemes targeting households and communities to increase energy efficiency and promote the installation of renewable energy systems (SEAI, 2016).

Sustainable Development Goals

In 2018, Ireland adopted its first Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) National Implementation Plan for the period 2018-2020. This plan aims to transpose the SDGs into national policy. The SDG National Implementation Plan 2018-2020 sets out Ireland's overall approach for enactment of the SDGs. Ireland's current national

Sustainable Development Strategy, *Our Sustainable Future*, is a key element of Ireland's approach for implementing the SDGs.

The SDGs have become an important tool for measuring economic, social and environmental progress. They have given national governments clear economic, social and environmental standards against which established policies should be judged and prospective policies should be measured (Murphy, 2019). The Sustainable Progress Index 2019 is the third in a series of reports that assess Ireland's performance toward achieving the SDGs compared to its peers in the European Union 15 (Clark and Kavanagh, 2019). Ireland ranks 11th out of the EU15 in the 2019 Index. Although, Ireland has performed well under a number of the SDGs, its performance in specific areas such as responsible consumption and production, affordable and clean energy, innovation, reduced inequalities and climate action results in its poor overall score.

Sustainability

Launched in 2012, *Our Sustainable Future* is the Irish Government's policy framework for sustainable development in Ireland. The report details 70 measures to be implemented across government departments. It is the responsibility of a high-level inter-departmental group to ensure that the vision set out in the policy document is implemented. The areas covered include:

- Sustainable consumption and production

- Conservation and management of natural resources

- Climate change and clean energy

- Sustainable agriculture

- Sustainable transport

- Social inclusion, sustainable communities and spatial planning

Circular Economy

Although Ireland has achieved a number of milestones in reducing waste and promoting reuse, a number of challenges remain. These include:

- The attainment of the EU targets introduced by the Circular Economy Legislation package and the Single Use Plastics Directive.

- The increase in the rate of municipal waste that can be reused.

- The ability of the State to manage waste it produces.

In 2020, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE) initiated a consultation aimed at informing a policy on the circular economy.

Energy

Ireland is committed to a substantial low-carbon transformation of its economy and energy sector, including a reduction of GHG emissions in the energy sector by 80-95% relative to the 1990 level by 2050 (DCCAE, 2015).

Ireland had the third-highest share of wind in electricity generation of all IEA member countries in 2017 (IEA, 2019). Ireland's electricity system is capable of accommodating up to 65% of instantaneous variable generation at any given time (IEA, 2019).

In the first quarter of 2020, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment undertook a consultation process with the public on the next renewable electricity support scheme - the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS). This scheme would support the generation of 3,330 GWhrs of renewable electricity for the

Irish market from a combination of onshore wind, solar, hydro, waste to energy, biomass combined heat and Power (CHP) and biogas CHP. As part of this consultation process, senior civil servants have hosted 3 workshops for the public to explain the new scheme and point out how and where people can take part in this transition to renewable energy. The key points made by the civil servants have been as follows:

- The Citizen Investment Scheme - A new Government-backed investment scheme is proposed for every 'developer-led' renewable project. All citizens will have the opportunity to invest in 5% of all projects, and will be guaranteed a return on their investment. Participation will extend to anyone who lives in the EU, although locals will always be prioritised, and there are minimum and maximum investment offers of €500 - €20,000 by any one person.

- The Community Benefit fund will be a fund collected by all 'developer-led' renewable projects, at a rate of €2/MWh. A set of guiding principles for distribution of the fund will be developed. The fund consists of direct payments to 'near neighbours' within 2km of developments (25%), and to social enerterprises and community groups working on energy efficiency and climate action (50%) and local sports clubs and activities (25%). Overall, the purpose is to ensure that those within the immediate locality of any developement will see a benefit from it.

- Under the Renewable Energy Support Scheme there will be two main auctions. While the two main auctions will support 3,300 GWhrs of Renewable Electricity onto the Irish Market, a separate category of up to 30 GWhrs is proposed for community-led projects. The latter is proposed in the recognition that groups of communities and citizens who wish to

develop their own renewable projects would likely not be able to compete against major developers with large portfolios of projects. The conditions for participating in this scheme are very specific, and allow developers to partner with communities under certain conditions (if 51% of the project is owned by the community group). A community is simply a group of members who choose to participate, and all members will likely have to demonstrate their support by investing or donating money to the project to ensure that it can raise sufficient capital to get off the ground (DCCAE, 2020).

The White Paper on energy (DCENR, 2015) commits the Irish Government to:

- Facilitating access to the national grid for designated renewable electricity projects, and developing mechanisms to allow communities receive payment for electricity.

- Exploring the scope to provide market support for micro generation.

- Providing funding and supports for community-led projects in the initial stages of development, planning and construction.

Despite the ambitious targets set out in the white paper and the progress made to date, Ireland is not on course to meet its mandatory emissions reduction and renewable energy targets for 2020. There are also questions about Ireland's ability to meet the 2030 emissions reduction targets, although the potential impact of the latest policies announced by the government is not yet reflected in the latest emissions pathway projections (IEA, 2019).

Research highlights the poor performance of Ireland in addressing climate change (Climate Change Council of Ireland 2018). Ireland ranked second worst performing

state within the EU (CAN, 2018). Indeed, instead of achieving a reduction in carbon and nitrogen emissions, Ireland's emission increased in 2017 (Climate Change Advisory Council, 2018). To counter this relatively poor performance – compared to Ireland's EU counterparts – in reducing emissions, the Irish Government needs to develop a policy pathway for implementing this transition and this must be robustly implemented. (Climate Change Advisory Group, 2018; Kirby and O'Mahony, 2018). However, a number of government policies are facilitating an increase in carbon emissions or directly increasing the level. The National Development Plan contains a number of measures which assist in the transition but there are others which increase Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions such as the investment in new roads as opposed to the allocation of a greater level of investment in public transport (National Development Plan, 2018; Climate Change Advisory Council, 2018).

Furthermore, agricultural policy is contributing to increased emissions in carbon dioxide even though agriculture only contributes 1.5% towards total GDP (EPA, 2018). Indeed, over the next decade, the national livestock herd is set to increase which will result in further rises in carbon emissions (DAFM, 2015).

To counter increases in carbon emissions, policy-makers have a number of policy tools at their disposal (Climate Change Advisory Committee, 2018). One such policy, according to commentators, is for policy-makers to increase Ireland's carbon tax. The same commentators consider this to be a more cost-effective policy as opposed to the purchase of carbon credits (Climate Change Advisory Committee, 2018). However, the concerns of powerful interest groups including large livestock farmers, will have to be tackled if Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions are to be lowered (McCabe, 2013).

Food

The Irish Government published a strategic plan for the development of the agri-food sector which paves the way for 'sustainable growth'. The strategy, referred to as *Food Wise*, has objectives for the period 2015 to 2025which include:

- An increase in the value of agri-food exports by 85% to €19 billion

- An increase in the value added in the agri-food, fisheries and wood products sector by 70% to in excess of €13 billion

- An increase in the value of primary production by 65% to €10 billion.

This could generate an additional 23,000 jobs over the life-time of the strategy, while protecting biodiversity and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Social enterprise strategy

The Irish Government has launched Ireland's first national social enterprise strategy, covering the period 2019 to 2022 (DRCD, 2019). The strategy has three policy objectives:

- Building awareness of social enterprise.

- Growing and strengthening social enterprise.

- Achieving better policy alignment.

Many of the stated policy objectives have an international origin. One of the challenges for the Government of Ireland is implementing these policies. The EU published a social enterprise policy in 2011, referred to as the Social Business Initiative. However, it took 8 years for the Government of Ireland to finalise a social enterprise policy.

If social enterprise is to perform a more central role in the transition to a sustainable society, the Government will need to modify the policy process in two ways. First, it

will need to transpose EU legislation in the areas of renewable energy and the circular economy more quickly. Secondly, as is the case in a number of EU countries, it will need to afford social enterprise more than just a residual role in achieving the targets set out in the various EU directives.

1.7. **Methodology**

This section of the report outlines the research methodology. Bryman (2004) explains the 'research methodology' as detailing the philosophical position of the researcher, theoretical considerations, the approaches, strategies and time horizons of the research, and the methods employed.

1.7.1.   Philosophical position of the researcher

Some academics assert that it is of uppermost importance in social science to acknowledge the researcher's self and the philosophical assumptions underpinning their work in both the research process and the presentation of data (Mertens, 2010). Moreover, it is widely accepted that the researcher's philosophical position influences the choice of research approach and methods employed (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

In relation to philosophical position, a researcher needs to answer three questions:

- Ontological: What is the researcher's view about the form and nature of the world?

- Epistemology: What is the researcher's view of what can be known about the world?

- Axiology: What are the values which underpin the reseacher's research?

Ontology is concerned with the researcher's belief in what constitutes social reality (Creswell, 2014). This thesis is predicated on the understanding that people have an

active role in the construction of reality. Therefore, I subscribe, as a researcher, to a constructionist perspective (Bryman, 2004).

Epistemology concentrates on the nature and forms of knowledge (Cohen, 2007). I adhere to an interpretative approach to how knowledge is generated. Specifically, I subscribe to a critical constructionist perspective. This approach proposes that knowledge of society is temporally and culturally situated, therefore knowledge and phenomena are socially constructed in a dialogue between culture and different social groups within society (Rogers, 2012; Kincheloe *et al*. 2011). This perspective acknowledges the power differentials that exist between social groups and classes within societies (Kincheloe *et al*. 2011).

In relation to axiology, I share the analysis of Bellamy Foster that the capitalist system needs to be replaced by an economic system that is not based on pillaging the earth's finite resources or the economic exploitation of the majority by the capitalist class (Bellamy Foster, 2002). Michael Albert in his seminal work, *Parecon: Life After Capitalism,* details how an alternative economic model based on co-operatives could address global poverty, workplace alienation associated with the capitalist model of enterprise, and ecological degradation (Albert, 2004).

1.7.2.   Theoretical framework

This research employs both deductive and inductive approaches. The former approach is employed in testing the extent to which the conceptual framework of Pringle (2015) explains the research findings presented in Chapters 3,4,5 and 6. The latter approach is employed in Chapter 2, which examines the reasons why social enterprise in Ireland is less developed than in other European countries.

A theoretical framework which encompasses interlinked individual, structural, cultural and infrastructural capacities, and which is informed by research conducted by Emery and Flora (2006), Porritt (2007), Seyfang *et al.* (2014), Middlemiss and Parish (2009), and Pringle (2015), is employed to explain the factors required for the establishment of sustainable development initiatives in a number of case studies.

In particular, the theoretical framework is underpinned by the Community Capitals Framework (Emery and Flora, 2006). According to this analysis community change can be understood by analysing the following types of capital that exist within a community.

- Natural capital refers to the level of natural assets associated with a particular community. These include scenery, natural amenities and the degree of geographic isolation.

- Cultural capital refers to how residents of a community comprehend society. It influences which people are listened to within a community.

- Human capital is associated with the level of skills and expertise that residents possess. These can be harnessed to bring about change.

- Social capital reflects the connections with residents and organisations in area.

- Political capital refers to the level of power and connections to resources and organisations. It also refers to the ability of people to articulate their perspective.

- Financial capital is associated with the level of financial resources which can be invested in a range of activities associated with community endeavour.

- Built capital refers to the infrastructure which is necessary to enable communities to organise and implement its plans.

Pringle (2015) cites four categories of capacity which constitute the theoretical framework. The first is individual capacity. Pringle (2015) defines individual capacity as the level of skills, values and finance that individuals within a community possess which can assist in the formation of sustainable development initiatives – focusing on renewable energy. Middlemiss and Parrish (2009) assert that an individual's social context shapes their capacity to initiate sustainable development initiatives. The presence of leaders within communities, who have a clear vision for the development of reuse social enterprises, is critical to their successful establishment (Brook Lyndhurst 2006). Successful reuse social enterprises tend to be characterised by possessing effective leaders who have the capacity to secure resources (Brook Lyndhurst 2006; Connett and Sheehan 2001). Brook Lyndhurst (2006) identifies sustainable reuse social enterprises as possessing effective managers, management structures and processes.

The second is the structural capacity of a community. This focuses on the culture and values pertaining to organisations within a community that have an influence over communities' efforts to implement sustainable development initiatives (Middlemiss and Parish, 2009; Pringle, 2015). Local development agencies, politicians and state agencies are included in this category. The presence of community organisations and supportive state and local development institutions can contribute to a range of barriers being addressed (Pringle, 2015). State agencies that are supportive towards reuse social enterprises can have a positive influence on the outcomes of sustainable development initiatives (Dedehouanou, 1998). However, to maximise the supportive role they can perform requires greater integration between various departments of local government (Yousefpour *et al.* 2012). Even if there is greater collaboration and integration between

departments in local authorities, the framework proposed by Pringle does not acknowledge that some local authorities are more supportive towards working with SDIs (Chambers, 1987; Chambers, 1989). Moreover, Doyle and Lalor (2012) draw attention to the fact that some local authorities are not receptive towards bottom-up approaches to addressing waste via the development of reuse social enterprises.

Strong and equitable relationships between community organisations and state agencies are fundamental to enabling the latter to effectively perform the role of animator of sustainable development initiatives (Conor and Sheehan, 2001). In addition, such relationships facilitate communities securing the necessary expertise (Connett and Sheehan, 2001).

The third is infrastructural capacity. This refers to the stock of infrastructure that is present in communities which are conducive to the drive to promote sustainability (Pringle, 2015). Finally, cultural capacity refers to the level of commitment and openness to sustainability that exists within a community (Pringle, 2015). Cultural capacity is influenced by the historical context towards sustainability. The four sets of capacity are interlinked (Pringle, 2015).
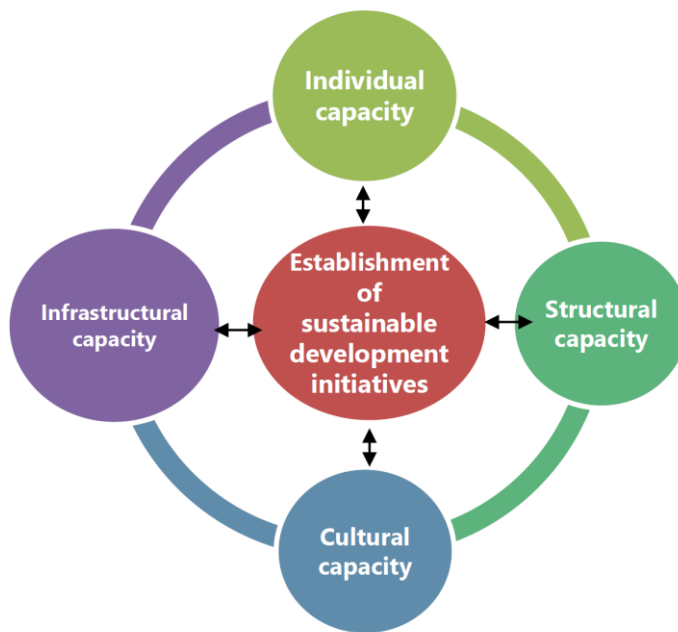
Figure 1.2 Theoretical Framework (adapted from Pringle, 2015)

Both the Community Capital Framework (Emery and Flora, 2006) and Pringle's (2015) theoretical framework focus on the capacities required for the successful implementation of community initiatives. Although both are robust frameworks, when applied to Irish communities they may require some modification to detail the capacities required to successfully implement and maintain sustainable development initiatives.

1.7.3. Case study

The research undertaken employs a case study approach. There are multiple definitions of what constitutes a case study (Zucker, 2009). Case study can be defined as the "systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest" (Bromley, p. 302). Stake (2010) identifies three categories of case study: the intrinsic, the instrumental and the collective. This research entails the use of the collective type. This involves the collection of data from several

different organisations. Case study is an effective tool when asking 'how', and 'what' questions (Yin, 2013).

There are a number of common misunderstandings relating to case study research (Flyvberg, 2006). One of these is that a case study approach to research is less robust than employing large samples. Flyvberg (2006) asserts that each research approach has their place and that different approaches can be complementary.

The case study design should possess five components (Tellis, 1997). The components are: the research question(s), its propositions, its unit(s) of analysis, a determination of how the data is linked to the propositions and criteria to interpret the findings. Yin (2013) concludes that operationally defining the unit of analysis assists with replication and efforts at case comparison.

The generalisability of case studies can be augmented by the careful selection of cases (Flyvberg, 2006). With regard to this research, time was allocated in designing a case selection protocol prior to commencing the field work for the four pieces of primary research. Factors such as geographical location and jurisdiction influenced case selection in the research.

I deliberately employed a range of different case sampling processes in undertaking the four case studies. Regarding the community-owned renewable energy district heating system case study, I opted for a maximum variation case approach (Flyvberg, 2006). Due to there being less than ten operational renewable energy district heating systems in Ireland, I selected cases from Austria where there are over 2,000 of them. The cases from Austria, I believed, would provide information on the effective policies required for their establishment which could be implemented in Ireland. The renewable energy district heating systems in Austria, similar to Ireland, are based in rural areas. In

addition, cases were selected from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as there are a similar number of community-owned renewable energy district heating systems to Ireland. I believed that these cases would provide information on the barriers that community-owned district heating systems encounter. The cases from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland could lead to the identification of policies which support the development of additional community-owned renewable energy district systems in their respective countries. I believed that best practice could be learned from these countries which could be then implemented in Ireland.

In relation to the renewable energy co-operatives case study, I decided to select all of the cases from the island of Ireland. I decided not to select cases from mainland Europe, because electricity grids and markets tend to operate differently in other EU states compared to Ireland.

With regard to reuse social enterprises, I employed a stratified case sampling approach (Flyvberg, 2006). I selected cases that were initiated by different types of organisations such as community organisations, local development companies and one social enterprise which was established by a local authority. I wanted to explore if the initiation of reuse social enterprises by different types of organisation led to different outcomes being realised. In addition, the social enterprises were selected because of their varying perceived reasons for establishment, varying models of operation and their differing core organisational objectives. Furthermore, they were selected because of their similar size. For example, none of them employ more than fifteen staff.

Community gardens were the subject of the final case study. Four community gardens were selected in the Dublin city area for this case study. The cases were located in areas that had different socio- economic profiles. Given the profound impact of

economic and social class in Ireland (see *Breen et al.* 1990), my intention was to compare if and how the various initiatives differed with the social class of the communities responsible for them. Hence, I believed there was no need to select cases from outside of the capital. A stratified case selection process was employed to select the cases.

To summarise, different case selection strategies were employed for each of the four papers:

- In relation to the case study on community gardens, the cases were selected on the basis of geographic location and the demographic profile of the area in which each community garden is located. I wanted to test whether being based in the suburbs or the inner city had any effect on the nature of the community garden and how it was established. With regard to demographic profile, two cases were selected because they were based in disadvantaged Electoral Divisions and two which were based in Electoral Divisions which were not disadvantaged.

- In relation to the reuse social enterprises, the cases were selected to secure a range of entities that were initiated by different organisations with perceived different motives for their establishment. In addition, the cases were selected because they were engaged in the reuse of different materials.

- In relation to the piece of research on renewable energy co-operatives, all of the cases engaged in the production of renewable energy were selected.

- With regard to the community-owned renewable energy district heating case study, cases were selected from Austria, Northern Ireland, the Ireland, Wales and Scotland. The rationale for selecting the above countries is that

cases were predominately located in rural areas. I decided not to include

cases from Denmark, Finland, and Sweden because the community-owned

renewable energy district heating systems are of a larger scale than their

counterparts in Ireland and tend to be located in urban areas. Furthermore,

Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales are characterised by having a similar

small number as the Ireland of community owned renewable energy district

heating systems. Austria is selected as it is internationally recognised as

being one of the leading jurisdictions for supporting the development of

community-owned renewable energy district heating systems globally.

1.7.4. Research methods

The data emanates from a range of sources including documents, archival records,

direct observation and interviews (Yin, 2013). According to Creswell (2014), research

methods are techniques employed to gather and analyse data related to a particular

research question or a hypothesis. As outlined in the previous section, the research

design of this thesis employs qualitative methods. Bryman (2004) emphasises that

qualitative research is suited to gathering data associated with events occurring over

time and the interplay between actions of participants. Therefore, qualitative research is

suited to understanding the motivations for establishing sustainable development

initiatives and the factors that lead to their establishment.

A semi-structured interview is informed by a set of standard questions relating to the

research topic with additional customised questions to clarify certain aspects or probe

the interviewee's reasoning (Leedy and Ormrod, 2015). Although the semi-structured

interview follows an interview schedule, the interviewee has a high degree of flexibility

in the dialogue (Bryman, 2004). Face-to-face interviews are considered advantageous,

since they facilitate the interviewer in establishing a relationship with the interviewee (Leedy and Ormrod, 2015). However, when the interviewees reside in different countries, telephone or virtual interviews present a practical alternative (Hine, 2012). Both approaches were employed in this research. Face-to face interviews were regarded as the favoured method, but due to time constraints, virtual interviews were employed where the interviewees lived in a different jurisdiction.

The questions were shown to my supervisor in advance of the commencement of the fieldwork. The questions were altered if required. Regarding the five pieces of research completed, the set of questions was used to guide the interviews, and some additional questions were posed, depending on each interviewee's responses. The trigger questions emanated from the author's core question associated with his doctoral thesis:

> What are the key factors that lead to the successful development of social enterprises (including co-operatives) that contribute to the transition from the current model of local development to a more socially and environmentally sustainable model in Ireland?

The questions posed varied according to category of interviewee. In relation to the volunteers and staff of sustainable development initiatives, the questions focused on the motiviations for establishing them and the factors required for the establishment and maintenance. The questions posed to the civil servants, local development and state agency officials focused on proposed policies that could facilitate communities to establish sustainable development initiatives. The interview schedule for each of the case studies can be found in the appendices.

A total of 67 semi-structured interviews and seven focus groups were undertaken as part of the case studies. Those who participated were board members (15), volunteers (including founding members) (6) and staff of the enterprises/initiatives (21), as well as policy-makers (8) and local development (9), state agency officials (7) and an academic (1). I endeavoured to hold additional semi-structured interviews and focus groups with board members, but I was informed that they did not have the time to participate in the research.

A number of individuals who participated in the research observed that they are being asked to participate in research on an on-going basis.

Interviews typically took between 45 minutes and one hour. All interviews were recorded and notes were taken.

Table 1.2 Piece of research	
Socialising Economic Development in Ireland: Social Enterprise an Untapped Resource	Six semi-structured interviews
In the Garden: Capacities that contribute to communities establishing community gardens	17 semi-structured interviews and three focus groups
A new era for reuse social enterprises in Ireland? The capacities required for achieving sustainability	12 semi-structured interviews
A new epoch for community renewable energy co-operatives in Ireland? Factors required for their implementation	14 semi-structured interviews and four focus groups
The heat is on: The capacities required for the establishment of community owned renewable energy district heating systems in Ireland	18 semi-structured interviews
Total number of semi-structured interviews and focus groups	67 semi-structured interviews and seven focus groups

1.7.5. Qualitative data analysis

In relation to the data analysis, qualitative thematic analysis was employed to formulate themes from the transcripts (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The process entailed reading each of the transcripts a number of times in order to become familiar with the data. The text of each of the transcripts was then coded. A number of themes and sub-themes were identified.

I am cognisant of the strengths and limitations of employing case study. Yin (2013) mentions sloppy data analysis as one of the weaknesses levelled at case study research. Yin (2013) emphasises that researchers should provide evidence that the analysis was predicated on all of the relevant evidence. In addition, he recommended that researchers utilise all of the prevalent opposing perspectives in the analysis. These recommended courses of action were adhered to by me when analysing the data associated with the completed research. Another criticism of case studies is their supposed weakness in generalising to the population as a whole. The overall populations for the renewable energy, the reuse and the community gardens are small. For example, every operational renewable energy co-operative in Ireland is part of the research. Therefore notwithstanding the above limitations, a robust research methodology was devised and employed.

1.8. Structure of thesis

As already mentioned, the thesis comprises five separate pieces of research. The focus of each piece of research is outlined below. Each separate piece of research is allocated a separate chapter.

Table 1.3 Structure of thesis	
Chapter 2 Socialising Economic Development in Ireland: Social Enterprise an Untapped Resource	The chapter provides a comprehensive explanatory framework outlining why social enterprises have been underutilised by policy-makers in Ireland. It provides an analysis of the factors which led to the growth of the credit union movement in Ireland. Lessons from the development of Ireland's credit union movement could be applied to growing social enterprise in other sectors of the economy
Chapter 3 In the Garden: Capacities that contribute to communities establishing community gardens	Based on case studies in Dublin, the paper examines the motives for individuals to establish community gardens therein. The paper also outlines the capacities required for community groups to successfully establish and maintain community gardens in Ireland
Chapter 4 A new era for reuse social enterprises in Ireland? The capacities required for achieving sustainability	This paper is concerned with, firstly, the motivations for citizens to establish reuse social enterprises in Ireland. Secondly, the paper examines the factors that contribute to reuse social enterprises in Ireland becoming sustainable.
Chapter 5 A new epoch for community renewable energy co-operatives in Ireland? Factors required for their implementation	The paper outlines the capacities required for community groups to successfully establish renewable energy co-operatives in Ireland. The research finds that community groups that successfully establish renewable energy co-operatives must possess high levels of resilience, have access to technical expertise and have appropriate finance.
Chapter 6 The heat is on: The capacities required for the establishment of community owned renewable energy district heating systems in Ireland	International reviews of countries' progress at tackling climate change show that Ireland is making small levels of progress on tackling issues associated with climate change. This paper will examine a theoretical framework, referred to as capacity analysis, to explain the capacities that need to be in place for the successful implementation of community-owned renewable energy district heating initiatives.

Each chapter, which details a separate piece of research, contains a literature review and accompanying reference section. In addition, the Reference section outlined at the end of the thesis pertains to the literature review in chapter one and the references in chapter seven.

2. SOCIALISING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN IRELAND: SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AN UNTAPPED RESOURCE

Initially, the research, which formed the basis of this manuscript, was presented as a conference paper at the International Co-operative Alliance Global Research Conference, 20-23 June 2017, University of Stirling. I was allocated a place to present this paper at the Conference, after the abstract was peer reviewed. The feedback received from attendees at my presentation, was subsequently incorporated into a second draft. This version was then developed into a draft book chapter for an international peer reviewed publication edited by Dr. Chi Maher, St. Mary's University, London. Initially, Dr. Maher reviewed a 1,200 word proposal on my book chapter. Dr. Maher invited me to proceed to submit a chapter. The manuscript was peer reviewed by two reviewers. Once the required revisions from both the reviewers and the editor were incorporated, the book chapter was accepted for inclusion in her publication in August 2018. It was published in April 2019. The reference for the book chapter is:

Doyle, G. (2019) 'Socialising economic development in Ireland: Social enterprise an untapped resource' in Maher, C. (ed.) *Value Creation for Small and Micro Social Enterprises*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

REFLECTION

Ireland has an under-developed social enterprise sector compared to a number of EU countries (Doyle and Lalor, 2012). From undertaking research in the area of social enterprise, I noticed that there was a paucity of research relating to social enterprise in Ireland compared to other European countries. In particular, there was no research focusing on the factors that have stymied social enterprise in Ireland. This is a significant gap in research, because identifying these factors is a precursor to designing effective policies and interventions to strengthen social enterprise in Ireland. While undertaking the literature review associated with this piece of research, I became aware that a combination of historical processes and events hindered Ireland's economic development. I had to become more disciplined in adhering to relevant historical literature. This was challenging as I am very interested in Irish history.

By interviewing a number of individuals with extensive expertise of social enterprise development, I gained a wealth of data relating to this research topic. I realised the importance of gaining insights from individuals associated with: framing policy relating to social enterprise development; academics whose research focused on the trajectory of social enterprise development, and experienced practitioners who managed large scale social enterprises.

The paper that I presented at the International Co-operative Alliance conference generated considerable debate between people who had different perspectives on the impact of colonialisation on the development of social enterprise in Ireland. The changes were incorporated into the first draft of the book chapter.

I learned that a higher standard is required for publication in an edited volume than presenting a paper at a conference. In addition to feedback from the peer reviewers, I was required to submit four drafts before the editor agreed to it being published.

I learned that all of the research data contained in a conference paper tends not to be used in a published manuscript. The feedback highlighted the importance of using contemporary references. In addition I needed to bear in mind, to a greater extent, the audience of the publication. Consequently, I removed material which non-Irish readers might not be familiar with.

This piece of research demonstrates the need for a concerted collaboration between community organisations, social enterprises and trade unions to put forward a different value system, one premised on collectivism and co-operation as opposed to individualism and competition. In doing so, the State will be challenged to develop policies which are more supportive towards social enterprises. The research highlighted the ideological disposition of policy-makers towards the private sector. Community organisations, social enterprises and trade unions will need to counter this policy disposition. Failure to address the above barriers will prevent social enterprises contributing to the transition to a more sustainable economy and society.

SOCIALISING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN IRELAND: SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AN UNTAPPED RESOURCE

2.1. Introduction

Since the 1970s, Ireland has experienced many crises including mass unemployment, emigration and housing shortages (Kirby, 2010). It was also affected by fuel rationing, emanating from our over-reliance on imported fossil fuels combined with the oil crisis of 1973 and of 1977. However, compared to a number of other European countries, in Ireland, social enterprises have not been embraced to the same extent by communities and civil society organisations. This chapter outlines the economic, cultural, social and political processes which have stymied the development of a vibrant social enterprise sector in Ireland. The chapter asserts that to fully understand how social enterprise is not as developed here as in other European countries, an analysis of the social and economic development of Ireland is critical. Furthermore, historical events and processes from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries have an indirect bearing on the status of social enterprise in Ireland in the 21st century. The development of credit unions (a form of social enterprise) in Ireland is outlined, in the appendices, to show how a series of barriers were addressed so that the credit unions were in a position to offer households, living in every neighbourhood in Ireland, access to affordable credit. In the appendices, a number of case studies document how social enterprise can address the economic under-development of rural villages and urban marginalised communities. Finally, the worker co-operative case studies outline how this form of social enterprise can both provide an alternative to the dominant capitalist model of enterprise and contribute to strengthening the level of equality within societies.

Social enterprise is a contentious concept and consequently a plethora of definitions are cited. The number of definitions of what constitutes a social enterprise reflects the diverse understanding of what is a social enterprise. Here, a broad definition of what constitutes a social enterprise will be employed, encompassing 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 people, the environment and the local economy (Pearce, 1993). Pearce (2003) cited 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 the members control the governance and operation of the social enterprise; and generating traded income from the sale of products/services. To summarise, social enterprises are businesses which are democratically owned and controlled by their members (Doyle and Lalor, 2010). Co-operatives, a form of social enterprise are 'self-help businesses owned and democratically controlled by the people who use its services' (Briscoe and Ward, 2000). The International Co-operative Alliance definition is more specific, in that it states that co-operatives are comprised of 'autonomous groups of individuals established on a voluntary basis to meet their members' needs which can be economic, social or cultural (ICA, 2018).

The chapter has a number of elements. The literature review is outlined in section two. The methodology is the third section. The findings section documents the reasons for the under-utilisation of social enterprise in Ireland. A number of theoretical perspectives are employed to explain why the State and civil society do not embrace to the same extent as other EU countries, social enterprise to address the many issues which Ireland has encountered since the 1970s. Indeed, the chapter provides a

comprehensive explanatory framework outlining why social enterprises have been underutilised by policy-makers and have not been embraced by civil society. Appendix 2 provides an analysis of the factors which led to the growth of the credit union movement in Ireland. The country has the third highest penetration per capita of a financial co-operative in the world. Lessons from the development of Ireland's credit union movement could be applied to growing social enterprise in other sectors of the economy.

In addition, appendix 2 comprises a number of case studies which document how social enterprise can act as a mechanism for both rural and urban regeneration.

It also outlines the potential role of co-operatives as an important mechanism for achieving a more egalitarian society in Ireland (Ranis, 2016).

Finally, the author believes that globally there needs to be a replacement of neo-liberal capitalism with an economic system that is based on a commonwealth of co-operatives which aims to switch from a linear to a circular economy and where the market is closely regulated by public bodies (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy, 2013).

2.2.**Literature Review**

The section focuses on the review of the literature pertaining to Ireland's economic development, political development, social and cultural processes and support for social enterprises. These four dimensions are deeply interwoven.

2.2.1. Ireland's economic development

Higher levels of co-operative and wider social enterprise activity tend to be more associated with industrialised societies (particularly consumer and worker co-operatives) than with more agriculturally based economies (Restakis, 2010; Ranis, 2016). Outside of the north-east, Ireland had a low level of industrialisation compared to other European countries (Munck, 1993).

British colonisation stunted Ireland's industrial and maritime development as far back as the introduction of the Navigation Acts of 1679 (Jacobsen, 1994). Ireland's role of servicing the British economy through the provision of food, mainly livestock, was compounded following the passing of the Act of Union 1801 (McCabe, 2013). Westminster legislation prohibited Irish businesses from directly trading with other British colonies (Jacobsen, 1994). This resulted in Ireland (with the exception of the north-east) being industrially undeveloped and having a small working class (Silverman, 2001). In essence, Ireland was a dependent economy providing food for the British economy (O'Hearn, 2001; Munck, 1993).

With the formation of the Free State, the Irish Government adhered to liberal economic policies (Jacobsen, 1994). Irish economic policy was predicated on the agricultural export of cattle, with the large grazier farmers exerting significant influence over agricultural policy (McCabe, 2013). The first government believed that if cattle farmers were generating sufficient wealth, then this would benefit the rest of society through their spending (Munck, 1993). Any alternative economic policies would have been difficult to implement as the British government created a civil service which was

supportive of its imperial interests (Regan, 1999). According to Kennedy (1989), Ireland was the same country, as before independence, with a different State.

Regarding Ireland's economic development, semi-state owned commercial entities outperformed indigenous private industry (Ferriter, 2004). Indeed, successive Irish governments were frustrated with the entrepreneurial performance of the Irish capitalist class (Lee, 1999). In the 1950s, the Fianna Fáil administration concluded that the goal of autarky had failed, and replaced it with the State performing the role of facilitator of capital accumulation (McCabe, 2013). A comprador class emerged to assist foreign direct investment in establishing operations in Ireland (Eipper, 1986; Jacobsen, 1994). Symbiotic relationships were forged between business leaders, public sector officials, and elected representatives in order to maintain the economic model (Eipper, 1986). The Irish working class was too small and weak to demand an alternative model of economic development (O'Connor, 1992).

From the late 1950s, the State's model of achieving industrialisation was premised on attracting foreign direct investment rather than on building a state-sponsored model of industrial enterprise (Jacobsen, 1994). This curtailed Ireland's autonomy in setting its own industrial policy (*Breen et al.* 1990). Fink (2007) viewed Ireland's economic model of initially relying on import substitution and then on enticing foreign direct investment as failing to integrate indigenous business with transnational companies. Ireland became dependent on American foreign direct investment to a greater extent from the 1970s (O'Hearn, 2001).

The agricultural co-operative movement emerged under of the leadership of Horace Plunkett and R.A. Anderson in the late 19th century (King, 1991). Both were motivated to form agricultural co-operatives to address the high levels of rural poverty (Kennedy,

1978). Due to his unionist and landlord background, Plunkett found it difficult to gain the trust of farmers (Bolger, 1977). Traders combined with the Catholic Church in order to curtail the diffusion of agricultural retail societies outside of the south-east of the country (Kennedy, 1978). Although the Catholic clergy, perhaps the most influential element in rural Ireland, were actively involved in co-operative creameries, they tended not to be supportive towards the establishment of agricultural retail co-operatives, for fear of upsetting rural traders who were significant financial contributors to parish coffers (Kennedy, 1978). The Department of Agriculture was also hostile towards the rural co-operative movement and demanded that the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS), the representative body for rural co-operatives), restrict its activities to agricultural producer co-operatives (Tucker, 1993). Although there was opposition within the IAOS leadership, Horace Plunkett acquiesced to this demand, and with it, the opportunity to develop co-operatives for more marginalised sectors of Irish society was lost (Tucker, 1993).

In addition, George Russell's vision of a rural commonwealth of co-operatives, where co-operatives would be at the heart of every rural community, never materialised (King, 1991).

2.2.2. Politics

The leadership of the first Free State Government was deeply conservative, and it was suspicious of any challenge to the existing class system (Ferriter, 2015). Throughout the 1920s, a counter revolution was initiated as a bulwark against perceived threats towards state institutions (Regan, 1999). There were minimal differences between the main political parties which mediated class differences, and aimed to satisfy the widest proportion of the electorate rather than endeavouring to mitigate class inequalities

(Breen *et al*. 1990). Unlike other European countries, where there were strong social democratic political parties, the Irish Labour Party was weak (Puirseil, 2007). It made a number of strategic blunders such as not addressing partition in the 1920s (Puirseil, 2007). This contributed to Fianna Fáil gaining the support of large swathes of Ireland's working class (Walsh, 1986). Therefore, Ireland did not have a robust left-wing party committed to pursuing alternative models of economic development.

The welfare state fails to address inequalities through targeting social expenditure at the most marginalised (Kirby, 2010). Successive Irish governments' failure to challenge the conservative policies of Irish banks stunted industrial development (McCabe, 2013). Along with the banking sector, large farmers, those responsible for servicing foreign direct investment and the construction industry had an unhealthy level of influence over successive Irish governments' economic policies (Munck, 1993). Indeed, O'Hearn (2001) considers Ireland to be a competitive state whose aim is to create the most benign environment for the private sector. According to (Allen, 2007), the State has prioritised the corporate sector as the primary driver of economic development in Ireland. Furthermore, the State has been reluctant to pursue other models of economic development (Munck, 1993).

2.2.3. Social and cultural processes

Since the foundation of the State, the Catholic Church has had a pervasive influence in every sphere of Irish life (Ferriter, 2004). The primary and secondary education system, and the social services, were, in the main, controlled by the Catholic Church (Lee, 1999). Moran (2010) asserts that the relationship with the Catholic Church legitimised the State. The Catholic Church fostered a 'red scare' which made the environment

difficult for urban communities attempting to develop co-operatives and social enterprises (McGuinness, 1999).

2.2.4. Support for social enterprises

Ireland is characterised by combining features of a liberal market economy, also referred to as a 'competitive State', and some components associated with a 'co-ordinated market economy' (Hall and Soskice 2001, pp. 17-23). However, the State has prioritised implementing policies which meet the needs of the market (O'Hearn, 2001). The Irish State's current model of economic development is predicated on values of individualism, income maximisation and a belief in economic growth as an end in itself rather than prioritising social development (Kirby and Murphy, 2008). Regarding social development, although Ireland has made progress at reducing consistent poverty and long-term unemployment, inequalities have not been addressed (Smith, 2005).

The above model has led to the State allocating limited financial support to social enterprises (Doyle and Lalor, 2012). Indeed, with low amounts of state supports, many social enterprises engaged in a range of activities are successfully trading (Daly, Doyle and Lalor, 2012; Doyle and Lalor, 2012). This contrasts with mainstream enterprise – the State allocated a budget, in 2017, of over €1.1bn for private sector enterprise (Reidy 2017). This amount excludes tax expenditure such as research and development credits.

Doyle and Lalor (2012) assert that social enterprise is not fully understood or valued as a contributor to economic development amongst policy-makers. Where it has been comprehended by policy-makers, it has been designated a minimal role of providing employment and training opportunities for individuals who either cannot secure jobs or who require support to gain employment in the private sector.

Unlike Scotland and the Canadian provinces, the Irish State, as yet, has not developed a strategy to guide the development of social enterprises in Ireland. Similarly, Ireland has, to date, not enacted any legislation to facilitate social enterprises in securing government contracts (Lalor, 2015).

> 'In the United Kingdom, the Social Values Act 2012 requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. Before they start the procurement process, commissioners should think (Cabinet Office, 2015)'

In Italy, state legislation has contributed to the growth of the co-operative sector (Restakis, 2010). The Italian constitution of 1945 recognised co-operatives (Zamagni, 2010). This provided the foundation for legislation to be enacted which assisted with the development of co-operatives from 1946 onwards. One piece of legislation introduced in 1977 permits 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 (Doyle, 2017).

Daly *et al.* (2012) details a number of supports that social enterprises require to become financially sustainable:

- Provision of intensive supports to community organisations and groups committed to the establishment of social enterprises;
- Access to technical and professional expertise;
- Access to appropriate types of finance such as start-up and long-term finance.

Appendix two has examples of case study organisations that have developed due to the social, economic circumstances in Ireland.

2.3. **Methodology**

The methodology employs primary and documentary research such as annual reports and policy submissions of organisations covered in the case studies. The review of these documents provided information on the challenges the organisations encountered. With regard to the primary research, semi-structured interviews were held with six individuals with expertise in co-operatives in Ireland. One is a former academic who specialises in the history of co-operatives in Ireland. Three are staff of co-operatives who are either responsible for managing or supporting the development of co-operatives in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Finally, two are individuals with experience of policy-making regarding co-operative development. The purpose of these interviews was to gain the interviewees' insight into the factors which have stymied the development of co-operatives in Ireland. The research question is:

What are the factors that contributed to co-operatives being underutilised in Ireland?

Appendix 1 contains the questions which guide the semi-structured interviews.

2.4. **Findings**

2.4.1. Ireland's economic development

As mentioned in the section above on Ireland's economic development, a number of the staff of co-operatives and one of the policy-makers state that colonisation particularly from the 1800's onwards, restricted the growth of Irish industry:

> 'If you look at what happened after the Act of Union, the Irish industrial sector declined from 1801 onwards. It was only with independence and with a forced kind of protectionist growth policy that Irish business in many traditional sectors started to expand'. (Interviewee: 5)

Therefore, with a small industrial base, the point is made that this limits the number of opportunities for co-operatives and social enterprises to be formed.

A number of the staff of co-operatives endorse the point made in section above that the Irish State pursues a facile form of economic development which serves the interests of the comprador class and of foreign direct investment. The former is a cohort of builders and professional groups, including solicitors. According to a number of staff of co-operatives, the main political parties in Ireland have close ties with the comprador class. They assert that the current economic model is so pervasive within the political establishment that no other alternative models are considered.

> 'The job is always just to suit capital, suit that class of people, that's the purpose of this state. It has no other purpose really, regardless of the consequences to the Irish people … I think history proves that to be the case, so that's the group-think, they all think that's how the economy should be run, then there are absolutely no alternatives.' (Interviewee:1)

Interviewees mention the absence of a solidarity economy in Ireland. According to a number of staff of co-operatives and a policy-maker, the credit union movement does not provide much support for the establishment of co-operatives.

In relation to agricultural co-operatives, three interviewees acknowledge that members of the landowning class in the 1880s, most notably Horace Plunkett, were instrumental in introducing agricultural co-operatives to rural Ireland. According to the academic interviewee, the Nationalist Party, leaders of the Land League, and sections of the Catholic clergy were hostile to the landowning class's attempts to establish co-operatives, because of their allegiance to preserving the union and their class position. Although Plunkett and his associates were successful in establishing agricultural co-operatives, their attempts to establish rural consumer co-operatives were not, due to a combination of the following factors:

- Traders had a hold over tenant farmers as they provided credit which enabled farm families to purchase goods prior to selling produce;

- The Catholic clergy were predominately drawn from the middle class, a high proportion of which were traders, so their sympathies tended to lie with protecting the interests of shopkeepers;

- A dependency culture to outside experts prevailed in parts of rural Ireland where there were high levels of poverty.

2.4.2. Politics

Two staff members of co-operatives endorse the point made in the above section on politics, in the literature review, that the absence of a vibrant, progressive social movement in Ireland was a primary reason for there being a weak co-operative movement in Ireland.

> 'It was very unlike the co-operative movements that emerged in Spain and Italy which were always Marxist or left wing or socialist, it never came from that tradition which I think was one of its weaknesses. Then again, you could argue that was the same for the Irish labour movement, and the Irish left broadly, as it had a very tiny Marxist edge to it, and broadly speaking, it was quite socially conservative and economically conservative in that way as well. So I think the emergence of co-ops or the lack of emergence of a broad co-operative movement here has the same routes as the lack of an emergence of a progressive left in Ireland as well.' (Interviewee: 2)

The staff members of co-operatives and the academic refer to the absence of socialist leadership following the executions of James Connolly and Liam Mellows as creating a void in the socialist leadership. The point is made that the absence of a credible leadership is a fundamental weakness in the Irish left's attempts to progress a social revolution and to stem the counter-revolution which was initiated in the 1920s by the Cumann na nGaedheal government.

The staff of co-operatives and the policy-makers are consistent with the relevant points in the section on politics that the State as not being supportive towards the development of co-operatives and social enterprises. It is mentioned that this manifested in the closure of the worker co-operative unit (located in FÁS) and the limited attention

policy-makers have afforded to updating Industrial and Provident Society legislation. Indeed, a view is articulated that the co-operative unit was not of significant strategic importance to FÁS.

> 'and so when the Fianna Fáil government closed down the Co-operative Development Unit in 2002, that's just an extension of that kind of attitude. What do you need co-ops for? sure look at the place, it's booming, Celtic Tiger, everything is great, close that nonsense down, who needs solidarity, social bonds and sustainability.' (Interviewee:2)

With regard to credit unions, two staff of co-operatives and one policy-maker perceive the Central Bank as having prevented them from diversifying into new products during the economic crisis. The view is expressed that this decision by the Central Bank was made because the credit union sector is perceived as undermining the dominant position of the retail banking sector. It is stated that the credit union movement should be providing a full suite of financial services to its members.

The staff of co-operatives and the policy-makers speak about senior civil servants not being supportive towards co-operatives and social enterprises. The policy-makers mention that this could be addressed through providing civil servants with information on the benefits of co-operatives to society, particularly in relation to their economic performance. The point is made that policy-makers are most receptive to learning from UK policy and best practice. The point is articulated that civil servants perceive co-operatives as being less stable entities than capitalist enterprises. This arises from co-operatives being democratic entities which civil servants believe can undermine their governance.

'I think there still is a concern about the general fragility of co-operatives. They're not seen as being so stable or secure because of people all having an equal voice and that means potential for disagreement is higher and I suspect that that worry about co-operatives pervades policy through the decades.' (Interviewee:4)

The staff of co-operatives and a policy-maker comment on the need for political parties to make policy demands on the State to be more supportive towards co-operatives and social enterprises. One policy-maker outlines how state procurement policies could strengthen the co-operative sector and social enterprise sector, as is the case in other European countries.

'Co-operatives and social enterprises can generate additional benefits to communities than private enterprises. The government should facilitate co-operatives to be in a stronger position to win public contracts.' (Interviewee:3)

2.4.3. Social and cultural processes

The staff of co-operatives and a policy-maker observe that Irish society does not have a value system that prioritises equality, or social solidarity. Instead, charitable interventions are the favoured approach. These interviewees attribute these values to Ireland's attachment to land and private property.

'Going back to the land war and the commitment, the attachment to private property is very strong and there's less, less attention paid to the commons. I think when you see a vacant space in Ireland, you assume it is owned by some developer, who is sitting on it to make a profit.' (Interviewee:4)

The staff of co-operatives assert that the working class struggle for a socialist state was undermined by the desire to achieve a united Ireland as well as by the influence of the Catholic hierarchy. This is consistent with section 2.2.3.. This undermined the capacity of the Irish working class to address class issues. The staff of co-operatives refer to the Catholic Church's social teaching which exerted a strong influence over the majority of the population in the South. They added that this made it a difficult environment to establish co-operatives in urban areas.

The staff of co-operatives and the academic emphasise how colonisation has contributed to the creation of a dependent, passive culture. Catholicism also copper-fastened this tendency to be passive. The academic states that in the past, communities tended to wait for the imprimatur of the local Catholic clergy before responding to issues.

The staff of co-operatives, the academic and one of the policy makers refer to there being no tradition of co-operatives in Ireland, particularly in urban areas. Indeed, the staff of co-operatives and one of the policy-makers acknowledge the lack of awareness among the population of credit unions being co-operatives. As a result, the staff of co-operative speak about co-operatives not being considered as an option for a proportion of the workforce to gain a livelihood.

> '... the lack of tradition…it's hard to point to a good example of one in
> Ireland.' (Interviewee:6)

To address this, the point is made that co-operative bodies need to allocate resources to increasing awareness of co-operatives. For instance, co-operatives should be on the syllabus of different courses in secondary school.

2.4.4. Support for social enterprises

The staff of co-operatives have spoken of state agencies, for a variety of reasons, as being ill-equipped to provide supports to social enterprises:

- There is insufficient expertise within state agencies to meet the developmental needs of social enterprises;

- There is limited understanding of the rationale for establishing social enterprises and the different ideological motivations for establishing social enterprises;

- The initiators of social enterprises are often community development workers who demand to perform a central role in the developmental process;

- A support agency may be required to advocate on behalf of social enterprises and state agency officials would often not have the autonomy to effectively perform this role;

- A support agency should be engaged in identifying opportunities to develop social enterprises and not simply reacting to requests for assistance (Daly *et al.* 2012).

It is for the above reasons that a number of interviewees assert that the location of support structures is not best placed within the state sector. To date, there is no local and national support structures dedicated to developing nascent social enterprises. Many innovative attempts were made but these did not fulfil their strategies due to not securing an independent source of funding.

Community organisations and groups of individuals encounter a range of challenges, as outlined above, in developing social enterprises to address a range of issues facing Irish society.

2.5. **Conclusion**

This section of the chapter highlights the factors that contribute to the lack of development of co-operatives and social enterprises in urban and rural settings. These economic, political and cultural factors are interwoven. They have not created a benign environment for the development of co-operatives in Ireland, particularly in an urban context.

Appendix 2 shows both the efforts which communities are making in establishing social enterprises and the benefits of social enterprise in addressing the many issues in Irish society. Social enterprises are encountering a range of constraints as section two outlines. The research findings point to a number of economic, political and socio-cultural processes that have stymied social enterprise development in Ireland since the 1800s. One of these constraints has been the ideological disposition, since the foundation of the State, of successive Irish Governments towards the private sector. Ó Broin (2017, p.46) asserts that 'Irish public policy retains a very strong and distinct pro-private enterprise bias. Furthermore, the research findings point to social enterprises in Ireland being undervalued by the majority of state agencies, policy-makers and political parties. Policy-makers tend to afford them a residual role in providing services to marginalised communities and providing employment to those most distant from the labour market (Doyle, 2017).

This has resulted in the social economy being underdeveloped in Ireland compared to other EU member States (Ó Broin, 2017). Felber (2015) attributes this situation persisting due to the ideological disposition of politicians and policy-makers.

To counter this ideological disposition, many commentators assert that citizens, civil society organisations and progressive political parties need to coalesce in order to mount a concerted struggle for a 'process of social transformation and the democratisation of all spheres of life' (Munck 2017, p.18). This process of struggle is essential if social enterprise is to play a fundamental role in Ireland's economic development. A key element of this struggle is to continually highlight that co-operation and co-operatives are shown to be more efficient than both competition and investor-owned businesses (Felber, 2015; Birchall, 2010). Allied to this point is the need to challenge the dominance of neo-liberalism by undertaking and promoting research which shows the many benefits of an alternative model, based on co-operation (Klein 2014).

Ó Broin (2017) draws on the theoretical perspective of Wright that the development of increasing numbers of social enterprises can provide an ideological function in 'showing alternative ways of living and working are possible' (p.47) and in reducing constraints on the conditions for developing social enterprises in Ireland.

The process which led to the development of the credit union movement in Ireland, outlined in the appendices, demonstrates what a small cadre of committed, resilient and knowledgeable community leaders can achieve. There is no reason why their achievement, in enabling hundreds of thousands of Irish families to have access to affordable credit, cannot be replicated in other social enterprise sectors.

2.6. Future Research

The research findings outline the lack of supports for social enterprises in Ireland. Therefore, social enterprise leaders need to, firstly, campaign for a more benign set of state policies towards social enterprise. Secondly, they need to collaborate with the credit union movement, other co-operatives and the trade union movement for additional resources and supports to strengthen the various sectors of social enterprise activity in Ireland.

With regard to addressing the poor working conditions and sense of economic powerlessness that increasing numbers of workers in Ireland are experiencing, worker co-operatives could facilitate a proportion of the workforce to have a greater sense of control over their work environments. For this to become a reality requires that the Irish Government introduces a set of policies which would place Ireland in line with other EU countries. Gavan and Quinlivan (2017) recommend that the following policies be introduced.

- Recognise worker co-operatives as a distinct legal entity.

- Amend legislation to allow for worker co-operatives to be created by a minimum of three members, rather than the existing requirement of seven.

- Introduce legislation which gives workers the statutory right to request employee ownership during business succession.

- Create a statutory framework to enable the transformation of investor-owned businesses into worker co-operatives.

Perhaps the greatest challenge in the development of social enterprises in Ireland is to address the pervasive culture of individualism and consumerism which has taken root in Irish society (Kirby 2010). This cultural change will require a number of interventions,

over a lengthy period of time, by community organisations, trade unions and progressive political parties to demonstrate that another Ireland is possible where the benefits of the economy are not unequally apportioned on the basis of class. One potentially effective measure would be to deliver an awareness campaign in schools, youth organisations, community organisations and third level institutions on the potency of social enterprise in addressing the many socio-economic issues Ireland is encountering.

Research needs to be undertaken aimed at changing policy and supporting practice. Regarding the former, research should focus on the social and economic benefits of social enterprises in addressing issues facing Irish society, and on the constraints in developing social enterprises in Ireland. With respect to the latter, research could look at the factors that lead to their successful implementation.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

The questions which guided the semi-structured interviews are outlined below:

- What do you consider were the factors that led to the emergence of co-operatives (e.g. credit unions, producer co-operatives) in Ireland?

- What were the challenges in establishing co-operatives in Ireland? How were they surmounted?

- What were the reasons for state and civil society organisations not embracing co-operatives to address socio-economic issues in Ireland?

- Given your experience of co-operative development, what do you think needs to be done to encourage the establishment of more co-operatives in other sectors of the economy aside from credit unions and agricultural co-ops?

Appendix 2

This section outlines a number of social enterprise case studies in Ireland.

Development of Ireland's credit union movement

Ireland in the 1950s was marked by many commentators as a decade of unemployment, poverty and high levels of emigration (Lee, 1989). There were many citizens who were motivated to initiate responses to address these issues (O'Connor, 2011). Prior to the establishment of Ireland's first credit union, a number of co-operatives were in existence. These co-operatives, most notably the Dublin Central Co-operative Society (DCCS), served as a forum for discussions to take place on devising responses to economic issues. DCCS members considered the development of self-help responses to

the difficulties which large sections of the Irish population encountered in accessing affordable credit. This led to thousands of families having to rely on unscrupulous moneylenders who charged extortionate interest rates (Culloty, 1990). Through attending DCCS meetings, Nora Herlihy, Sean Forde and Séamus MacEoin became acquainted.

In 1954, the National Co-operative Council, with the aim of promoting co-operatives, was established. Two of the principals, one of whom was Nora Herlihy, ingeniously used the letters page of a national newspaper to promote the concept of credit unions in Ireland (O'Connor, 2011). Although awareness of credit unions was increased, there was little appetite among the DCCS membership in exploring the potential of co-operatives in Ireland (O'Connor, 2011). So it was left to Herlihy to continue researching credit unions. She studied how credit unions operated in Canada and the USA and contact was made with leaders in the credit union movement in both countries (Culloty,1990). The breakthrough came in 1957, when Muintir na Tíre collaborated with DCCS in hosting a summer school. Two papers were presented on credit unions, including one by Nora Herlihy. This led to a number of groups forming to explore the establishment of credit unions in their localities (ILCU, 2010). Herlihy realised decisive action was required to ensure that local groups with limited knowledge did not undermine the potential of establishing a national credit union movement. The NCC agreed to her request to the formation of a sub-committee to examine adapting international credit union models to Ireland. Along with Forde and MacEoin, the sub-committee was named the Credit Union Extension Service. As a result of informing the media, CUES started to receive invitations from community groups interested in establishing local credit unions (Culloty, 1990). Forde, Herlihy and MacEoin, from their own personal finances, met community groups throughout the country, advising

them on the practicalities of establishing a credit union. Support from the State was not forthcoming.

In 1958, the Department of Finance rejected a request for support from CUES. In his response to the request, T.K. Whittaker cited in his paper, *Economic Development* (which was the basis for the First Programme for Economic Expansion), claiming that, "history affords no support for the belief that co-operative credit societies can be successfully established (Whittaker 1958, p. 107)".

Undeterred, members of CUES maintained their commitment to meeting community groups throughout the country (Culloty, 1990).

Herlihy displayed considerable skill in managing different community groups' plans regarding the development of credit unions which could have undermined the establishment of a unified movement (O'Connor, 2011).

An American credit union member visiting Ireland suggested the formation of an umbrella organisation for credit unions. The advice was acted upon with the formation of the Credit Union League of Ireland.

Both credit unions and the Credit Union League of Ireland acknowledged the relevance of specific legislation for credit unions. The Credit Union League of Ireland campaigned for legislation for credit unions. In 1958, the Irish Government established the Committee on Co-Operative Societies, to report on alterations which should be made in the law in order to promote co-operative effort. The Irish Countrywomen's Association ensured that Nora Herlihy was appointed to this committee as its nominated representative (Culloty, 1990).

This ultimately led to the establishment of the Credit Union Act, 1966. The signing into law of the Act led to an increased interest in credit unions throughout the country in the late 1960s (Quinn, 1999).

- The history of the growth of the Irish credit union movement provides important lessons for the development of social enterprise in various sectors of the economy. This particularly applies to areas of the economy where there is a limited number of social enterprises.

- The importance of there being resilient cadres of pioneers who are committed to promoting social enterprise, including co-operatives, in the particular sector of the economy;

- That these pioneers become knowledgeable of factors associated with the formation of social enterprise in a particular sector of the economy;

- The pioneers build alliances with other non-governmental organisations that can provide supports and participate in campaigns for changes in government policies;

- The pioneers aim to assist in the formation of social enterprises throughout the country;

- The State cannot be relied upon to provide resources to assist in the development of a movement such as that of the credit union.

Social enterprise and area-based regeneration

Social enterprise activity contributes to area regeneration of urban areas through: creating jobs, strengthening skills and employability; and building diversified local economies (Vickers, Westall, Spear, Brennan, and Syrett, 2017). In an Irish context,

social enterprise can engage in the following activities which can contribute to the economic, social and environmental regeneration of neighbourhoods (Doyle, 2010; Doyle, 2011).

Table 2.1 Social enterprise by aim and activity		
Category of social enterprise	**Aim of activity**	**Examples of social enterprise activity**
Service provision	Improve the quality of life within disadvantaged communities	Childcare provision, combating fuel poverty, community education, home help service/elder care, estate maintenance and housing management
Environment for enterprise	Provide the infrastructure and environment for private and social enterprise	Managed work space, social finance provision
Generating wealth for community benefit	Establish community enterprises to generate income in order to subsidise or stimulate other social enterprises	Community property including: retail units, social housing, housing for students, car parks leisure facilities
Providing services for the State	Replace services that would once have been delivered by the public sector	Maintaining green spaces, managing housing stock, waste management

Social enterprises can achieve the following social, economic and ideological objectives:

- Increase the skill levels of employees;

- Strengthen local community leadership and these acquired skills can be invaluable in allowing social issues to be more effectively addressed;

- Serve as a mechanism for communities to have greater control over how their environment and services are planned and delivered, thus building innovative forms of local democracy;

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- Raise residents' expectations of what they as individuals can achieve for themselves and their families;

- Generate employment in disadvantaged communities, often targeting the long-term unemployed and individuals who are distant from the labour market;

- Develop an environment that attracts private investment into a disadvantaged community, most notably, through the provision of infrastructure including managed workspace;

- Demonstrate alternative ways of conducting economic activity to market-led systems (Doyle, 2011).

The following case studies demonstrate how social enterprises are contributing to the area regeneration of both rural villages and urban areas in Ireland.

Dunhill is a rural community located in County Waterford. The communities of Dunhill, Fenor, Boatstrand and Annestown came together to form DFBA community enterprises. DFBA is a self-financing company limited by guarantee with charitable status. Its aim is to 'develop the community socially, economically, and culturally using the resources available'. In 1999, it formed a subsidiary company to economically regenerate the catchment area. It raised €100,000 from local residents which enabled it to be used as matching funding to secure State funding to build an enterprise centre. This facility has ensured that a number of local businesses did not migrate into Waterford City. DFBA has, in collaboration with a number of other organisations, secured funding to establish tourist initiatives which have provided additional employment (Cooke and Kavanagh, 2012).

Located in Wexford town, Innovation Wexford was established in 1986 to combat high local levels of unemployment and to create an environment in County Wexford that supports job creation. Innovation Wexford is the registered trade name of Wexford Community Development Association, a community-based social enterprise organisation governed by a voluntary board of management. Innovation Wexford Initiatives include the following social enterprises: Wexford Enterprise Centre, Recycling 2000, and Datagroup.

Each of the initiatives developed must lead to generation of employment, produce a surplus (profit) and result in positive social or environmental impact.

The mission statement is to support the creation of sustainable employment through the encouragement and stimulation of private and co-operative enterprise in County Wexford.

The enterprise centre is a 45,000 square feet modern facility which comprises 50 offices, industrial and manufacturing units and accommodates approximately 30 companies, employing over 100 staff between them.

The CEO and his team provide business support to enterprises located in the centre. The centre plans to increase the capacity to 70,000 sq. ft.

The critical success factors include:

- The majority of the board have business expertise;

- None of the directors is accountable to any organisation;

- There are a number of divisions to Innovation Wexford which support one another financially (Cooke, 2018).

Datagroup offers a range of professional, cost-effective and secure document management services to businesses within the commercial and industrial sectors. This social enterprise aims to provide clients with a 'one-stop-shop' data management solution to fit their specific needs under Innovation Wexford's quality management systems.

Although pursuing social enterprise-led regeneration may be challenging to state agencies, it can lead to far more sustainable outcomes for the State. This is because of the plethora of social and economic benefits that will accrue from the interventions of social enterprises. A key feature of many social enterprise led- regeneration initiatives in Ireland is securing seed capital from within the community or from non-statutory sources (Doyle, 2011). This funding enables social enterprises to lever in additional funding to acquire assets such as enterprise centres which can generate surplus income. This surplus income can be used to resource community initiatives or to establish new social enterprises (Pearce, 2003).

Worker co-operatives

There are only 19 worker co-operatives in Ireland (Gavin, 2012) which is a significant reduction in number from 1998, when there were 82 worker co-operatives. Gavin (2012) estimates that in 2012, there were a total of 135 individuals employed in worker co-operatives in Ireland. A number of reasons have been proposed for the small number of worker cooperatives. These include lack of awareness of worker co-operatives, the difficulty which prospective members encounter in accessing capital to form and grow a worker co-operative and the belief among state agencies and policy-makers that investor-owned businesses are more profitable (Carroll, McCarthy, and O'Shaughnessy, 2012).

Erdal (2011) discredits the myths prevalent among many 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-operatives are as productive as capitalist firms. Co-operatives are key instruments in the transition to more egalitarian societies (Ranis, 2016). Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) assert that, in the transition to more equal societies, a co-operative brings a number of socio-economic advantages when compared to a capitalist enterprise, including: increased worker empowerment; worker control over deciding key decisions such as pay scales; a redistribution of wealth from shareholders to workers; and increases in productivity compared to investor-owned businesses.

Established in 1982, The Quay Co-op is a worker co-operative based in Cork city centre. With a workforce of 65 individuals, it comprises a vegetarian restaurant, in-house bakery and three wholefood shops located in Cork city and county. The Quay Co-op bakes its own breads and cakes. It was formed as a radical community project operated by a collective effort of feminist, lesbian, gay, environmental and other alternative groups and individuals (Gavin, 2012).

Established in 2012, the Belfast Cleaning Society is a worker co-operative. It was established as a result of work with two women's groups in West Belfast. There are seven part-time staff who are members and up to 75 casual staff. The members are committed to growing the business so that it can offer more casual workers membership status of the co-operative. The founder members have a wealth of cleaning experience in domestic and industrial settings. All of the members are paid the living wage. The society has secured a number of high-status contracts, such as the Tennents Vital

festival and MTV concerts. It has won contracts for a number of offices (Belfast Cleaning Society, 2018).

Key terms

Cultural and ideological constraints; social enterprise's residual role; individualism; alliances and strengthen solidarity economy.

3. IN THE GARDEN: CAPACITIES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITIES ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY GARDENS.

Initially, the research, which formed the basis of this manuscript, was presented as a conference paper at the EMES Social Enterprise Conference, June 2017, Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium. I was allocated a place to present this paper at the conference after an abstract was peer reviewed. The feedback received from attendees at my presentation was subsequently incorporated into a second draft which was then submitted for publication to the editor of the journal, *Local Environment.* Unfortunately, the journal editor rejected the paper on the basis of the feedback received from two reviewers.

The paper, once amended, was submitted to the International Journal for Urban Sustainable Development. The paper is currently under review. The title of the paper is In the Garden: Capacities that contribute to communities establishing community gardens.

REFLECTION

I received positive feedback from those who attended the presentation of my paper at the EMES Social Enterprise Conference. This reinforced my belief that the research design was robust. As with the experience described in Chapter 2, I learned that the necessary quality to get a paper published in a peer-reviewed publication is of a higher standard than for a paper to be accepted at a conference. I learned that one can experience setbacks when one submits a paper for publication, as my paper was rejected. This requires students undertaking their PhD by publication to be more resilient than I expected.

To strengthen the generalisabitity of this piece of research, I employed the Pobal HP Deprivation Index 2016 to assess the level of disadvantage/affluence when selecting the cases. I selected cases in areas where I had worked, and where I had developed working relationships with the staff of community organisations, local development companies and local authorities. Consequently, the staff of the above organisations agreed to participate in the research, even though a number of them said that they were inundated with requests to take part in research.

I developed a one-page document of frequently asked questions and accompanying answers to explain my research to prospective interviewees. I received positive feedback regarding it and the staff of the local organisations said that it gave them an overview of what my research was about without having to read a document. I used this approach in introducing my other pieces of research to prospective interviewees.

The reviewers of my paper highlighted that utilising a theoretical framework which has not been published weakens the robustness of the research design. Consequently, I augmented Pringle's framework with other peer-reviewed theoretical frameworks.

One important research finding is that lateral decision-making structures are critical to the effective operation of community gardens that are exclusively reliant on volunteer input. Furthermore, the provision of opportunities for social interaction among gardeners is critical to their operation. I found it surprising that community gardens make a minimal contribution to the economic sustainability of a locality. Specifically, unlike community gardens in some other jurisdictions, their mission does not seem to prioritise contributing to the production of sustainable food or addressing food poverty. I came to the belief that, if community agriculture is to flourish in Ireland, then it will require a different leadership which has a different set of priorities to the leadership of community gardens. In particular, the leadership of community agriculture initiatives will require financial management and marketing expertise. However, the research points to community gardens having a significant impact at strengthening the social sustainability of the locality in which they are based. This manifests in community gardens addressing isolation among residents, providing marginalisd groups with an opportunity to gain new skills and qualification,s and providing people from different ethnic backgrounds with the chance to interact. Access to land to base a community garden in was a barrier that many communities, particularly those in the city centre, experienced.

As the paper was being written, a number of community gardens were forced to vacate their areas because they were required for residentital development. This highlights the conflicting demands for space in urban areas. Policy makers will need to be innovative in providing space for community gardens. One solution could be the allocation of the rooftops of public buildings for community gardens and community agriculture initiatives.

IN THE GARDEN: CAPACITIES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITIES ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY GARDENS

Abstract

Based on case studies in Dublin, Ireland, the paper examines the motives for individuals to establish community gardens therein. The paper also outlines the capacities required for community groups to successfully establish and sustain community gardens in Ireland. These capacities include the involvement of individuals with a range of expertise, the presence of supportive community and state agencies, and access to resources, including land. Although the selected explanatory framework provides a solid basis for elucidating the factors required for the successful implementation of community gardens, it does not take account of the research findings. Indeed, the research findings indicate that community gardens in urban settings encounter a number of challenges, including the absence of a mechanism for community groups to access land. The article provides a framework for communities and community organisations to develop community gardens.

Key words: capacity, collaboration, community gardens, sustainability, tenure.

3.1. **Introduction**

Community gardens contribute to addressing a range of environmental, economic and social issues facing urban communities across the globe (Keeney, 2000; Calvin 2011; McIvaine-Newsad and Porter, 2013). In response to the benefits that they generate, there has been a significant increase in community gardens internationally over the last 30 years (Firth *et al*. 2011). This paper is concerned with, firstly, the motivations for citizens establishing community gardens. Secondly, the paper examines the capacities required for the establishment and the sustainability of community gardens in Ireland by focusing on community gardens in Dublin City. The core question being addressed is:

What capacities are present in communities and how do they contribute to some communities being more receptive than others to community gardens in Ireland?

A subsidiary question is:

What motivates citizens to establish community gardens?

Section two is the literature review. Section three details the methodology . The penultimate section details the research findings, while the final section of the paper contains the discussion and conclusion.

3.2. **Literature review**

3.2.1.   Concepts

Social enterprise

Social enterprise has been defined in many different ways. Indeed, at European level, there is no universally accepted definition of a social enterprise (GHK, 2006). However, the number of definitions of what constitutes a social enterprise reflects the diverse understanding of what a social enterprise actually is. The EU definition is widely used.

'A social enterprise is an operator in the social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion and uses its profits primarily to achieve social objectives. It is managed in an open and responsible manner and, in particular, involves employees, consumers and stakeholders affected by its commercial activities[15]'.

Community gardens

There are a number of descriptions of what constitutes a community garden (Guitart *et al.* 2012). The American Community Gardening Association (ACGA) considers a community garden to be a tract of land cultivated by a group of people (Teig *et al.* 2009). The shortcoming of this definition is that it does not specify characteristics relating to governance, control, or access. Unlike the ACGA definition, Ferris et al.

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[15] https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy/enterprises_nl

(2001) define community gardens in terms of their collective ownership, control, and access (Ferris *et al.* 2001). This approach has the advantage of distinguishing community gardens from private gardens (Ferris *et al.* 2001).

Eizenberg (2012) proposes an alternative perspective which views community gardens as the manifestation of the commons in an urban setting. Some academics and community garden activists view community gardens as a means to contest private ownership of land, develop alternative forms of land ownership, and to challenge the dominant neo-liberal model of urban development (Levkoe, 2011; Traveline and Humold, 2010). This perspective fails to take into account the diverse motivations for establishing community gardens and the peripheral role that they can play in challenging the dominant model of urban development.

Stocker and Barrnett (1998) devised a typology which divides community gardens into three categories. The first category is a group of individual plots often referred to as allotments. The second is gardens which are governed by institutions that use gardening as a means of realising their objectives. The third category is collectively organised gardens that are accessible to and benefit the public. This framework is useful in contextualising the wide array of community gardens in Ireland.

Finally, Ferris *et al*. (2001) named eight different types of community gardens: leisure gardens; early education and school gardens; gardens targeting marginalised groups; therapy gardens; neighbourhood spaces; gardens promoting bio-diversity; commercial-orientated gardens; and demonstration gardens.

Capacity

The concept of capacity refers to the ability of members of a community or indeed the community itself to make changes by harnessing the resources at their disposal either individually and collectively (Middlemiss and Parrish, 2009)

Sustainability

According to Nyssens (2006), the corporate sector's discourse on sustainability – which is measured in terms of profit maximisation, productivity and competitiveness – has a significant influence on how the sustainability of social enterprises is framed. This discourse on sustainability does not fit well with the diversity of social enterprises in Ireland, many of which could never attain financial sustainability (Crossan and Van Til, 2008). Indeed, it is the view of Chan *et al.* (2017) that the majority of social enterprises will never attain financial sustainability due to their combination of activities and because of their location in disadvantaged communities. The concept of sustainability needs to be broadened to account for social, environmental and economic goals (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2016).

Moreover, social enterprises' sustainability should not be defined and measured solely in financial terms. Instead, it should be defined in terms of the extent to which a social enterprise achieves a combination of social, financial and environmental sustainability. These different forms of sustainability may be defined as follows: social sustainability is the extent to which a social enterprise realises its social mission; financial sustainability is the extent to which a social enterprise can meet its operational costs from a combination of grant and traded income, and input from volunteers; and environmental sustainability is the extent to which the social enterprises activities can continue without having a negative impact on the physical environment (Doyle, 2019).

There are a range of motivations for establishing community gardens which are outlined in the next section.

3.2.2. Motivations for establishing community gardens

The founders of community gardens have different motivations for establishing them (Guitart *et al.* 2012). Community gardens provide a mechanism for communities to have more control of the development of the physical space associated with their neighbourhood (Irvine, 1999). Research conducted in the USA identifies gardeners joining community gardens for social reasons, including meeting people from different ethnic backgrounds, and making new friends (Teig *et al.* 2009). Glover *et al.* (2005) cite other social objectives such as strengthening the capacity of the community to address local issues.

Nettle (2009) identifies motivations that benefit the individual, such as opportunities to engage in physical activity to improve health, and shared benefits such as fostering community engagement, growing food for distribution among members and promoting a culture of self-reliance. Research identifies that community gardens can be started to stimulate contact with nature (Stocker and Barrett, 1998), reducing the incidence of food poverty (Holland, 2004), and increasing bio-diversity (Nettle, 2009). It would seem from the above that social and educational objectives take precedence over food production. However, another perspective is that community gardens can contribute to raising awareness of food provenance, tackling passive consumption of mass-produced food and connecting citizens back to growing food (Hill, 2011).

3.2.3.   Theoretical framework

Community gardens tend to be driven by a small cadre of volunteers who generally give a lot of their time to the development of such initiatives (Seyfang, 2007). However, their enthusiasm can often lead to them becoming 'burnt out', and isolated from other residents in the community who do not share their passion for community gardens (Middlemiss and Parish, 2009). Therefore, an examination of the capacities critical to the implementation of successful community gardens could assist communities and policy-makers alike.

A theoretical framework is employed which encompasses individual, structural, cultural and infrastructural capacities that are interlinked. This theoretical framework is informed by research conducted by Emery and Flora (2006), Middlemiss and Parish (2009), and Pringle (2015).

In particular, the theoretical framework is underpinned by the Community Capitals Framework (Emery and Flora, 2006). According to this framework, community change can be understood through analysing the following types of capital that exist within a community:

- Natural capital refers to the level of assets associated with a particular area. These include amenities, scenery, natural amenities and geographic isolation.

- Cultural capital refers to the how residents of a community comprehend society. It influences how and whether people are listened to within a community.

- Human capital is associated with the level of skills and expertise that residents possess. This is required to bring about change.

- Social capital refers to the degree of inter-connectedness between residents and organisations in an area.

- Political capital refers to the level of power, and connections to resources and organisations. It also refers to the ability of people to articulate their perspectives.

- Financial capital is associated with the level of financial resources which can be invested in a range of activities associated with community endeavour.

- Built capital refers to the infrastructure which is necessary for a community to organise and implement its plans.

The Community Capital Framework informs Pringle's theoretical framework. Pringle (2015) cites four categories of capacity which constitute the theoretical framework.

Pringle (2015) cites four categories of capacity which constitute the theoretical framework. The first is individual capacity. Pringle (2015) defines individual capacity as the level of skills, values, and finance that individuals within a community possess which can assist in the formation of social enterprise – focusing on renewable energy. Middlemiss and Parrish (2009) assert that an individual's social context shapes their capacity to initiate social enterprises. Indeed, Robbins and Rowe (2002) hold that the capacity for individuals to act is linked to the resource availability within a community. Developing a successful social enterprise is predicated on recruiting community members and maintaining their participation. It is important to recruit individuals beyond the initial core enthusiasts. Personalised recruitment processes and personal appeals can be effective at recruitment. The recruitment strategy and maintenance in participation is brought about by an association and appreciation of a place – whether

this is an affinity to a neighbourhood or attachment to a specific attribute in a place (Hoffman *et al.* 2010).

The second is the structural capacity of a community. This focuses on the culture and values pertaining to organisations within a community that have an influence over communities' efforts to implement social enterprises with an environmental focus (Middlemiss and Parish, 2009). Politicians are included in this category. The presence of community organisations and supportive state and local development institutions can contribute to a range of barriers being overcome (Pringle, 2015). Strong relationships with community organisations and state agencies can lead to them either directly performing the role of animator of social enterprise with an environmental focus or providing funding for communities to secure the necessary expertise (Walker *et al.* 2008). The third is infrastructural capacity. This refers to the stock of infrastructure that is present in communities which is conducive to the drive to promote sustainability (Middlemiss and Parrish 2009). Horst *et al.* (2017) consider that the lack of permanent land tenure is a barrier to communities establishing community gardens. Horst *et al.* (2017) identifies land which is allocated to community gardens is often deemed a temporary use of land which is a better use than the land being left vacant. However, community gardens based on vacant sites have little security from replacement by other uses (Horst *et al.* 2017). With regard to securing land and start-up capital, local authorities perform a critical role in the establishment of urban community gardens (Holland, 2004). Some communities are not in a position to access land necessary to initiate and successfully establish community gardens due a deficit in expertise (Hope and Alexander, 2008). To address this deficit, particularly in less affluent areas, the assistance of local authorities is necessary (Holland, 2004). However, the compartmentalisation of local authorities can make it difficult for community groups,

particularly those without the relevant expertise, to access effective supports from local authorities or municipalities (Hope and Alexander, 2008). With the retrenchment of the State, there is less funding for local authorities to resource communities to establish community gardens (Jereme and Wakefield, 2013).

Finally, cultural capacity refers to the level of commitment and openness to sustainability that exists within a community. Cultural capacity is influenced by the historical context towards sustainability. A high level of trust of community projects and state institutions within communities contributes to communities becoming more receptive to the development of social enterprises with an environmental focus (Walker *et al.* 2010). According to Okvat and Zautra (2011), accessing suitable land, acquiring sufficient volunteers and sourcing leadership are the key challenges encountered by urban communities striving to establish community gardens. To conclude, the research will examine the extent to which individual, structural, cultural capacities and infrastructural capacities explain the research findings detailed in section 3.
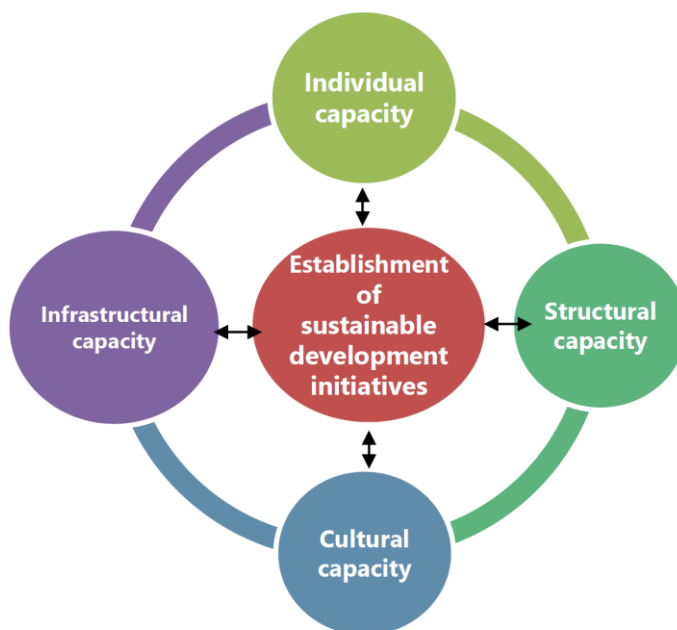
Figure 3.1 Theoretical Framework, adapted from Pringle (2015)

3.2.4. Methodology

Case selection

Four community gardens were selected in the Dublin city area for this article. Social class in Ireland has a profound impact on people's economic and social well-being (Breen *et al.*1990). Hence, they were selected on the basis of their socio-economic profile.The four community gardens selected are:

- Santry Community Garden located in a municipal park on Dublin's northside;

- Sitric Community Garden, which is a small community garden located in Dublin's north inner city;

- Ballymun Muck and Magic community garden located in Ballymun on Dublin's northside;

- Cherry Orchard Community Garden, based in Cherry Orchard, which is located in the south west of the city.

The *Pobal* HP deprivation[16] index deems electoral divisions (EDs)[17] that score between: -20 and -30 as being very disadvantaged; -10 and -20 as being disadvantaged and 0 and -10 as being marginally disadvantaged (marginally below average).

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[16] The index provides a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area using data compiled from various censuses. A score is given to the area based on a national average of zero and ranging from approximately -40 (being the most disadvantaged) to +40 (being the most affluent

Santry community garden and Sitric Community garden are located in EDs which are affluent or marginally above average. Ballymun Muck and Magic and Cherry Orchard Community gardens are located in community gardens which are disadvantaged.

Table 3.1 Level of deprivation/affluence of Electoral Division in which community garden based		
Community garden	**Electoral Division**	**Deprivation**
Santry Community Garden	Airport	Affluent (13.09)
Sitric Community Garden	Arran Quay	6.79
Ballymun Muck and Magic	Ballymun C	Disadvantaged (-11.38)
Cherry Orchard Community Garden	Cherry Orchard C	Disadvantaged (-10.68)

Methods

Semi-structured interviews were held with nine key individuals who were gardeners associated with the four community gardens, and with eight individuals working for either civil society organisations or local authorities that provided supports and resources to the four community gardens. Focus groups were held with three of the committees responsible for the governance of their respective community garden. The interviews were held either in person or over the phone and they lasted between 40 minutes and one hour. The focus groups were held in a variety of locations and they lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.

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[17] Electoral Divisions (EDs) are the smallest legally defined administrative areas in the State for which Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) are published from the Census.
http://census.cso.ie/censusasp/saps/boundaries/eds_bound.htm

Data collection and coding

A list of trigger questions was used to guide the interviews, and some additional questions were posed, depending on each interviewee's responses. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Analysis

Qualitative thematic analysis was employed to formulate themes from the transcripts (Braun and Clarke 2006). The process entailed reading each of the transcriptions a number of times to become familiar with the data. The text of each of the transcriptions was then coded.

3.3. Results

The research findings pertain to interviews and focus groups with individuals associated with community gardens, representatives of civil society organisations and local authorities who provide support to community gardens. The four capacities which constitute Pringle's framework are four of the themes employed to categorise the research findings. In addition, sustainability is also a theme that is utilised.

3.3.1. Individual

Expertise

The groups that are formed to establish community gardens possess a range of skills. One gardener refers to there being two distinct sets of expertise. One is associated with undertaking administrative tasks such as possessing the capacity to complete funding applications to a high standard, planning activities and preparing accounts.

The other type of expertise relates to gardening skills and knowledge. Gardeners speak of how possessing expertise in gardening can facilitate the development of their garden. Furthermore, members with gardening expertise can prevent errors in cultivation which can result in poor vegetable yields. Gardeners mention that crop failures can undermine members' enthusiasm and even contribute to inexperienced gardeners giving up.

A small number of gardeners express the view that experts can be disempowering in the development of a community gardening group. They are of the view that a group could source the essential information from websites and this can galvanise the group through learning together, rather than relying on experts which may disempower the community gardeners.

Gardeners associated with one garden speak about different types of expertise being sourced from professional workers employed by a local development organisation. An employee of a community support organisation comments on how Dublin Community Growers serves as a forum for the exchange of information between gardeners involved in community gardens across Dublin.

Leadership

Interviewees frequently emphasise how leadership provides continuity to the community gardens' operations. A number of interviewees are of the opinion that leadership is collective in nature as different individuals take on different leadership roles. An alternative model of leadership is mentioned which takes the form of a lone facilitator. This arises from a reluctance of members to take on leadership roles.

> '..trying to get somebody else you, everybody would tell you how valuable
>
> this thing is but, …getting somebody to take over actually has been
>
> impossible.'

Key functions of a community garden leader are: member engagement; the delegation of tasks and responsibility; and resolving conflict.

Skills

Several community gardeners and local development agency staff speak about successful community gardens having members with a range of different skills. They rate practical experience and expertise in growing plants as the most critical factors to the development of a successful community garden. Community gardeners mention that experienced gardeners are given the responsibility of devising a physical plan and design for the garden. The more experienced gardeners tend to value spending time with new members with the aim of passing on their knowledge of growing plants.

> 'So we give them an idea that's how a corn grows or that's where a turnip comes from.'

Members with promotional and media skills are deemed important for publicising what the garden has to offer the community.

Representatives of civil society support organisations and state agencies mention how important it is that the process of assisting community gardeners to gain a range of skills associated with operating a community garden should not be rushed.

> 'It wasn't just something that you were presented with on day one, it was something that was gradual and we built up their skills, confidence around managing the community garden.'

Civil society support organisation staff and one local authority official speak of the critical role that is performed by a senior state agency official who is committed to the development of community gardens.

> 'You always need that advocate in-house, say whether it's in X or Y, someone who's already bought into that vision and is willing to support that group of individuals.'

The same local authority official mentions that a request from a senior local authority official affords it more credibility than if it emanates from a group unknown to senior management in the local authority. A number of community gardeners and support organisation staff speak of how certain local authority staff access resources and funding for the community garden groups. One local authority official explains how this can work in practical terms.

> '…got everything all lined up, we got permissions, I think it was coming into June and we were kind of running out of planting time rapidly so I got,1200 plants and we got them all delivered and we had a big planting day.'

3.3.2.   Structural

Organisational maintenance

The interviewees mention the importance of having a core group of active gardeners comprising a minimum of four members. Gardeners speak about the core group performing a variety of functions. These include opening the garden, devising work plans, countering setbacks, dealing with conflict, ensuring members are included in

activities and setting an example of undertaking physical work associated with gardening.

> 'A group of people were willing to be committed, you know, and to be in it for the long haul through the rough as well as the smooth patches.'

Community solidarity

Several community gardeners speak of their commitment to facilitating different social groups to gain access to their community garden. A number of community gardeners emphasise their commitment to providing schoolchildren with the opportunity to learn how to grow plants and to gain an appreciation of nature. One of the community gardens provides local young people with the opportunity to gain practical horticultural experience which is a prerequisite to gaining a national qualification in horticulture. Two gardens provide adults with intellectual disabilities and their carers the opportunity to grow vegetables.

Community links

The governance structures of the community gardens prioritise awareness-raising and promotion of their community gardens. These activities have the twin aims of recruiting new members and gaining allies to assist in preventing vandalism. With regard to building awareness in their respective communities, promotional drives are initiated on a regular basis via the local media, social media, and through targeting community organisations such as active retirement groups. A number of gardeners mention the importance of fostering good relationships with residents living beside the community garden. These residents tend to inform garden leaders of any suspicious activities that may be taking place in the area.

'To have good relations with your immediate neighbours and like, we know some people who live quite close and they do keep an eye out for the garden and do have my number and X's number if they notice something suspicious and that is such an important asset to have really, you know.'

A former regeneration worker comments on how the demise of regeneration programmes can adversely affect resident participation in community gardens.

'All the residents' groups that were active in 2009 and 10, have nearly all fallen away based to some extent on the fact that you know, there's a promise of a regeneration in this area, which did not materialise and there was a sense of apathy towards the latter part of my time involved in the community garden.'

Local authority

Several community gardeners note the pivotal role that local authorities can perform in the establishment of community gardens. Furthermore, community gardeners overwhelmingly speak about the relationship with their local authority as being critical to community gardens remaining open. They emphasise the importance of adhering to the conditions set out in the licence agreement with their local authority. There seems to be a variation in the duration of the licence agreements with some groups being given a one-year licence while others are afforded longer-term occupancy. One community gardener suggests that local authorities should adopt international best practice of resourcing workers to support communities endeavouring to establish community gardens.

An elected member of a local authority refers to the importance of the leadership of community gardens understanding how the local government system operates. He

speaks of the disadvantage that some groups encounter, if they are not aware of how the local government system operates.

> 'None of the three groups were successful but I suspect none of them had the understanding of the political system or the influence to make their proposal come to fruition.'

The same interviewee notes how a more politically astute leadership of a community garden had the knowledge to circumvent the difficulty they were having with one official in securing a tract of land. A local authority official comments on how local authorities tend not to initiate community gardens in communities because they may be perceived by community leaders as having ulterior agendas. Hence, they prefer to wait for community groups to come to them with proposals.

> 'It's really much better if a local community group actually suggests it because it's their idea and there won't be any hidden agendas there, people suspect sometimes a local authority has a hidden agenda.'

3.3.3. Culture

Collaborative culture

Gardeners attribute the success of their community garden to members working and interacting collaboratively.

> 'And indeed, all the members must be able to work and associate with others collaboratively and make decisions regarding the future of garden in a collaborative manner.'

According to a number of gardeners, collaborative culture is underpinned by a combination of consensual decision-making and lateral organisational structures.

Indeed, some gardeners comment on how a collaborative style of working would be undermined if community gardens establish a hierarchical structure.

> 'The challenge is to maintain [that] the organisation operates as a committee and makes decisions by a consensus.'

At the outset, a number of interviewees refer to the difficulties in working and interacting collaboratively when strong personalities are involved. However, the time spent in getting to know each other's perspective and mediating differences is vital to developing a collaborative approach to working.

A number of interviewees speak of the importance of collaboration extending to all aspects of interaction, such as undertaking gardening activities. Experienced gardeners sharing their knowledge with novice gardeners is deemed an important element of collaboration.

Collaboration can be a challenge for some individuals who are used to tending to their own private garden which does not require them to consult and work as part of a team. The overwhelming majority of members adapt to working and interacting in a collaborative manner. According to a number of interviewees, a very small cohort of gardeners find it impossible to adapt to volunteering in such an environment as they may lack the necessary social skills. The leaders in two community gardens challenge any individuals who correct other gardeners in a disparaging manner for gardening errors as these confrontations can upset those who are corrected. Gardeners frequently speak about those involved in community gardens valuing every individual's contribution, and that other gardeners are encouraged to work at their own pace. Linked to this, members are encouraged to undertake work that they enjoy and that they have the capacity to undertake.

Social interaction

Community gardens promote social interaction between members through structuring specific times for members to interact with each other. The tea break is deemed the most common way for members to interact.

> 'I've always said, the most important piece of equipment is the kettle.'

Community gardeners mention the importance of having a facility to enable people to have a cup of tea. The tea break is regarded as playing an important role in fostering a sense of community among members. It enables new members to become more at ease with working in the community garden.

> 'I think the social dimension and the cultivation of a sense of community within the community is primarily important.'

The social dimension facilitates members to build trusting relationships with each other, which in turn contributes to members working more effectively together.

Norms

With regard to values, a number of interviewees are emphatic that discriminatory opinions concerning different social groups would not be tolerated. Gardeners emphasise the need for members to comply to a set of rules. The most common rule cited is the prohibition on members helping themselves to vegetables and fruit from the garden.

> '… some rules have to be, we make sure, people can't just go and help themselves to vegetables because occasionally we've had people taking the piss, so we have little rules like that…'

In one of the gardens, the members unanimously agree to observe a code of behaviour. In addition to the prohibition on taking garden produce, other components of the code of practice are that:

- Gardeners are encouraged to share their knowledge with other members;

- Gardeners are encouraged to welcome new members and ensure that they do not feel isolated; and

- Gardeners are expected to interact with all members.

Inclusion

According to a number of community gardeners and state agency officials, community gardens are designed to enable people with disabilities to work in the garden. This requires community gardens to allocate funding to amend their design (to ensure accessibility), and to facilitate people with disabilities being in a position to work in their respective community garden.

'Built raised beds for people with disabilities who were wheelchair users.'

A representative of one state-funded organisation speaks of inviting groups working with the most marginalised social groups, including drug users in recovery, to have access to the community garden.

'We would open up the garden to, say, the local addiction services as a way of helping rehabilitation.'

He comments on how a minority of gardeners do not welcome this approach. Different social groups, including individuals experiencing mental health issues, are welcomed as members of community gardens. Interviewees are mindful of including and supporting members who are experiencing personal issues in a discreet manner.

Members of community gardens welcome groups of adults with intellectual disabilities and autistic children. The members speak of their community gardens being a forum for fostering inter-culturalism. A number of community gardeners believe that their community gardens assist residents from different cultures in making new friends in their neighbourhood.

3.3.4. Infrastructure

Securing land

Gardeners mention how crucial it is to secure land. They pursue two approaches in their efforts to secure a suitable tract of land. One approach entails engaging with their respective local authority. Some community gardeners are familiar with whom to contact in their local authority, either through working in a professional capacity or volunteering activities:

> 'X made contact with Dublin City Council and Y and made arrangements
> that we could use the site to set up a community garden.'

The second approach involved two individuals endeavouring to identify the ownership of a nearby vacant plot of land. When the ownership could not be ascertained, the individuals commenced preparing the plot for a community garden.

One local authority official speaks of his colleagues being more inclined to support committed, hard-working, and proactive community groups than those who are less hard-working and who considered it to be the local authority's role to prepare the land for a community garden.

Communities can spend a number of years endeavouring to secure land for a community garden. One community gardener asserts that there needs to be a

mechanism in place within each local authority for allocating land to community groups. If this is in place, communities could secure land more quickly. One employee of a civil society support organisation asserts that there is a need for local authorities to compile a database of vacant land that could be used for community gardens and, in turn, would be accessible to the public.

Tenure

A large number of community gardeners and civil society support organisation staff emphasise that short-term leases create insecurity in the minds of the leadership of community gardens. The point is made that it compromises the capacity to engage in long-term planning. To address this, one local development agency employee suggests that local authorities should grant community organisations longer term licences with annual reviews built into the agreement. An individual who supports the establishment of community gardens suggests that community groups' ownership claims on public land would be obviated if they vacate the community garden for a period of time annually.

Several community gardeners and support organisation staff comment on the challenge that this would present to the community garden leaders to start again, if they are forced to give up the land. Although several interviewees acknowledge the potential conflicting demands placed on publicly owned land which is being used for community gardens, the point is made by community gardeners and the staff of support organisations that land should be reserved for community gardens.

To address the conflicting demands placed on the use of public land, a staff member of a local development agency suggests that an area of public parks be dedicated to community gardens. A local authority official said the allocation of land for community

gardens would set a precedent for sporting organisations to demand space in parks to be dedicated for sports.

> 'Public parks really are public parks, they have a special mission and really [are] sacrosanct… they should be there for the public use, they shouldn't be, in my view, railed off. You'll find yourself as I say, giving this piece and that piece and finding the reason for that, you'll end up with little or no park.'

3.3.5. Sustainability

The following sections detail the factors which contribute to a community gardens sustainability.

Member input

According to a number of gardeners and staff of local development agencies, the amount of time invested by members in the community gardens determines what can be achieved. Interviewees speak about the presence of a core group who are prepared to work in the garden on a weekly basis as being a critical factor in the garden's success. The core group provide continuity and leadership, and serve as role models to other members.

> 'It was important to have a number of members who were prepared to commit amount of time per week in the garden.'

The point is made that the formation of temporary groups can attract individuals who are not willing to commit long-term to the community garden, but who are nonetheless prepared to assist in the organisation of one-off events. Interviewees are conscious of members leaving after a period of time for a variety of reasons, and consequently the

core members allocate time to recruiting new members. A number of interviewees express a concern that membership will decline as the economy improves, due to members having additional income to pursue other activities.

Multiple motives

Gardeners' wide range of motivations can be categorised into two categories, those that lead to personal fulfilment, and ideological and societal motives. Regarding the former category, community gardeners cite individuals who become involved in order to: learn how to grow vegetables; realise their passion for gardening; grow organic food; and to widen their social network.

Regarding the latter category, gardeners speak about becoming involved in community gardens to promote environmental sustainability or to promote urban composting.

> 'That by composting, we could produce a lot of very valuable products in a very small space.'

The leadership associated with the community gardens ensure members' motives are accommodated.

The motives of one local authority official for allocating public land for a community garden is that there would be an opportunity for residents in the locality, which is dominated by apartment blocks, to meet their neighbours and to participate in gardening.

> "It gives people an opportunity who live in an apartment without a garden to grow vegetables and to meet their neighbours. A lot of people have moved into the area and they could be experiencing isolation."

Another senior local authority official mentions that environmental and social factors informs his decision to allocate land for a community garden.

> 'And I couldn't see for the life of me why anyone would object to the initiative in terms of the environmental improvements, the visual improvements and the possibility of people getting training and the possibility of going on for, maybe learning a skill or being able to set up a business, I can only see benefits out of it, to be perfectly honest, I couldn't see any negatives out of it at all.'

An elected member of a local authority comments that local authorities value community gardens as a mechanism for residents to interact with each other.

Voluntary input

Gardeners value the time members spend working in the garden as the most critical resource to attaining sustainability.

> 'The key resource is the time individuals are prepared to work in the community garden on a voluntary basis.'

In one community, a group of local men who had worked in the construction sector completed extensive preparatory work on an obsolete site, transforming it into space which could serve as a community garden.

Grant funding and membership fees

Community gardens secure grant funding from private, philanthropic, and state sources. The funding is mainly used to purchase equipment, upgrade aspects of the gardens' infrastructure, and either construct or purchase facilities. Interviewees are mindful that funding places constraints on its uses. One interviewee speaks about making a

persuasive pitch when seeking funding from the private sector. He opines that high-quality videos demonstrating the community garden's impact are an important tool in this regard.

While noting the benefits of state funding, a small number of community gardeners mention that receiving some forms of state support poses a challenge to the community garden's autonomy and to maintaining its values.

> 'Three years ago, we had the option of securing CE programme[18] and co-ordinator to maintain the garden. The option was put to our members but they said that this was our community and we do not want it run by taxpayers' money. They articulated a belief that would have lost their sense of community and control over the garden. The members would become visitors of the centre as opposed to running the garden. This was very encouraging.'

Traded income

Some community gardens generate income from the sale of harvested produce from their gardens. Traded income generates varying proportions of community gardens' total income required to cover operational costs.

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[18] Community Employment is an employment programme which helps long-term unemployed people to re-enter the active workforce by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return-to-work routine. The programme assists them to enhance and develop both their technical and personal skills which can then be used in the workplace.

Staff of civil society support organisations comment on the potential of selling the produce from community gardens to local residents. These interviewees emphasise that this would give residents access to locally grown organic vegetables.

> 'There's a market for it, there's a lot of people who live in Dublin that would like to eat organic vegetables and fruit that are grown locally in Dublin but that market is not being serviced.'

A local authority official speaks of the potential adverse effect on greengrocers from community gardens selling their produce on a large scale.

Succession

Community gardeners repeatedly speak of the challenges garden leaders encounter in developing a succession plan to ensure that a new leadership takes over the management of community gardens in the decades to come. Individualism in Irish society is one challenge. A concern is expressed that as the economy improves, members will have less time to spend in undertaking tasks associated with managing a community garden.

> 'It is critical to have a succession so that it does not finish up relying on two or three people.'

Another societal challenge noted is that Irish adults are increasingly leading passive lifestyles. One community gardener refers to the difficulty in getting one person to take over managing the community garden.

> 'It's been really difficult to get somebody to take that over.'

According to a number of community gardeners, the challenge of leadership succession will be mitigated if community gardens became more appealing to young people. The

community gardeners also speak about the challenge of retaining current levels of membership as the economy improves.

3.4. Discussion and conclusions

The research findings point to learning how to garden and increased social interaction as being the primary motives for becoming involved in community gardens. Ideological motives for becoming involved are mentioned, and they tend to be environmental or ecological in nature. No interviewees mention confronting neo-liberalism as being the primary motive for becoming involved in their community garden, unlike the findings of research completed in the USA (Eizenberg, 2011; Levkoe, 2011).

The research indicates that the establishment of community gardens is predicated on a cadre of committed leaders possessing a range of skills and expertise leading the process. Regarding expertise, two types are identified, one entails community gardens possessing knowledge of gardening, while the other relates to the leadership possessing the knowledge of how to effectively navigate the local government system to secure resources, most notably land. In relation to leadership, the research indicates collective leadership is more dominant in community gardens than a sole leader. However, the findings point to this shared leadership giving rise to tensions manifesting between leaders, particularly at the early stages of a community garden's development. The following are additional factors which lead to the establishment and sustainability of community gardens:

- The existence of a core group of community gardeners who are prepared to work in the community garden on an on-going basis.

- A collaborative culture which is underpinned by a commitment to consensual decision-making

- The presence of a local authority champion who facilitates the acquisition of resources including land, on behalf of the principals of community gardens.

- The creation of strong links with the surrounding community where the community garden is based.

- The acquisition of a suitable tract of land to base the community garden.

However, community gardens encounter a number of challenges:

- The challenge of balancing the pursuit of different members' motives

- Securing land with adequate security of tenure.

- Securing the involvement of young people in the management of community gardens. If this is not addressed this could lead to succession issues with the leadership of community gardens.

- The increasing passive and individualistic lifestyles pursued by Irish citizens.

- Both the Community Capital Framework (Emery and Cora 2006) and Pringle's (2015) theoretical framework focus on the capacities required for the successful implementation of community initiatives. Although both are robust frameworks, when applied to Irish communities, they may require some modification to detail the capacities required to establish and maintain community gardens.

Regarding leadership, Pringle's theoretical framework does not sufficiently outline the range of skills required for effective leadership (Pringle, 2015). Community garden leaders, according to the research, require a range of skills and expertise: effective

communication; horticulture; financial management; mediation skills; negotiation; planning; and knowledge of how to influence local government structures.

With regard to structural capacity, the research endorses the relevance of structural capacity – another component of Pringle's theoretical framework in that local authorities – and local development companies perform a vital role in allocating land and other resources to community gardens. The research findings highlight the role of a state agency champion who promotes the interests of community gardens within their respective local authority or regeneration company. This person performs a pivotal role in securing land, resources and funding essential for the establishment and development of a sustainable community garden. The research findings highlight that the state agency champions are characterised by being decision-makers or having the ability to persuade their line managers to allocate land for community gardens. Furthermore, two community gardens receive assistance from either a civil society organisation or a local development agency.

In relation to cultural capacity, many urban communities would not have a history of developing community initiatives with an environmental focus, and therefore values associated should be broadened to include those that focus on community solidarity, as these values arise in urban community gardens and are important in their development.

Regarding infrastructural capacities, the research points to land tenure being a cause of concern for the principals of a number of the community gardens. Indeed, community gardens located on vacant sites have little security from replacement by other uses. Local authorities offer limited protection to the land being used for community gardens while affording the organisations responsible for maintaining the community gardens an

annual licence. The research points to this being an ongoing concern for the principals of community gardens.

Although, Pringle's (2015) theoretical framework focuses on the capacities required for the successful implementation of community energy projects in rural settings, it does not acknowledge that the start-up phase is a challenging period for community initiatives. In particular, they encounter difficulties in securing the resources, including voluntary input, necessary to become operational. Urban communities striving to develop community gardens, particularly those in socio-economically marginalised communities, encounter a greater number of complex issues than rural communities which make it more difficult to establish them in urban settings (Powell and Geoghegan, 2004).

Shah (1996) points to 'preparatory work' as being a vital phase in a community organisation's achieving its goals. The research points to the necessity of securing sufficient volunteers who are prepared to commit sufficient time to administrative duties and to preparing the land for planting.

Moreover, although Pringle's explanatory framework provides a solid basis for explaining the factors required for the successful implementation of community gardens, it does not take account of the research findings regarding the importance of organisational ethos which underpins the particular style of interaction. Pringle's theoretical framework also fails to explain the relevance of organisational maintenance and the operational components essential to the establishment and maintenance of a successful community garden. In particular, it does not consider the relevance of inclusivity of interaction and the role that leadership performs in the realisation of it. Shah (1996) points to the following:

- Successful community organisations, including co-operatives, are concerned with ensuring inclusivity of interaction which contributes to members' allegiance to their respective organisation.

- The importance of nurturing relationships between the leadership and the membership as this reinforces the effectiveness of the community organisation.

- Leadership is seeking to generate additional benefits for the membership.

In addition, Pringle's (2015) framework does not acknowledge the challenges faced by community gardeners in establishing and sustaining community gardens. Therefore, the framework should be broadened to include sustainability. The dimensions of sustainability should include: gaining commitment from members to work in the community garden; the ability to accommodate members' motives for being involved in community gardens; the ability to secure sufficient resources; and leadership succession.

The research findings indicate that community gardens in urban settings encounter a number of challenges, including the absence of a mechanism for community groups to access land. To facilitate community groups accessing land, each local authority could consider undertaking the following actions:

- An audit of sites that could be used for community gardens that are not earmarked for other uses.

- The allocation of a portion area of a number of parks for use as community gardens.

- Designate a number of their staff with responsibility for liaising with communities that are interested in developing community gardens.

An independent support structure could assist urban communities to develop community gardens– an Taisce could be resourced to perform this role.

Environmental, health and social motives for forming a community garden are articulated. However, food poverty is only mentioned by one interviewee as a motive for becoming involved in the establishment of a community garden. In an epoch where there are number of food bank initiatives in Dublin established to address food poverty, it may be timely to undertake research into the potential of community urban agriculture to address food poverty in particular areas. However, food produced from community gardens is not a panacea to addressing food poverty (Pudup, 2008). Instead, community gardens should be viewed as one measure in array of interventions to address food poverty (Donald, 2008).

Another area of research would be to examine the extent to which community gardens are grass roots initiatives.

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Appendices

Core questions used in interviews

- How did the concept of a community garden in your locality come about?

- What were the motivating factors for individuals to develop a community garden?

- What is the primary focus of the community garden? (Social, economic, education regarding environment)

- What were the essential skills/expertise required to transform the community garden from a concept to growing food?

- What were the resources required to establish the community garden?

- Did you require resources and supports from outside your community?

- What were the challenges encountered in establishing the community garden? How were these overcome?

- Has the community developed a formal organisational structure? What are the criteria for membership?

Conflict of interest: sample disclosure statements

In accordance with Taylor & Francis policy and my ethical obligation as a researcher, I am reporting that I have no conflict of interests.

4. A NEW ERA FOR REUSE SOCIAL ENTERPRISES IN IRELAND? THE CAPACITIES REQUIRED FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABILITY

Initially, the research, which formed the basis of this manuscript, was presented as a conference paper at the International Co-operative Alliance European Conference, July 2018, University of Waneningen, the Netherlands. I was allocated a place to present this paper at the conference after my submitted abstract was peer reviewed. The feedback received from attendees at my presentation was subsequently incorporated into a second draft. The manuscript was then submitted for publication to the editor of the *Journal of Resources, Conservation and Recycling.* The journal has an impact factor of 7.0444[19]. The manuscript was peer reviewed by two reviewers. Once the revisions were incorporated, the manuscript was published in July 2019.

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[19] https://www.journals.elsevier.com/resources-conservation-and-recycling

REFLECTION

As with the research on community gardens , I carefully selected the cases for study. I decided to compile a list of nine social enterprises as a contingency in the event of any of those that were contacted not agreeing to participate in my research. This was useful, because the representatives of two social enterprises selected did not return my emails and phone calls. I continued the approach employed withthe first two research topics, by selecting reuse social enterprises that I had either worked with or undertaken research with in the past. I felt this was important as a number of interviewees commented that they were consistently receiving requests to participate in research and that they did not have time to say yes to all of them. It continued to be a successful approach as all of the representatives of the reuse social enterprises that I had a connection with agreed to participate in my research.

Carefully selection of the cases strengthened the generalisability of the findings.

I was disappointed that directors from the boards of several selected organisations declined to be interviewed, since I felt that I would have got an additional perspective from their interviews. However, I acknowledge that these directors have busy lives, with other commitments which prevent them from participating in research. Their unavailability made me more aware that people who are investing their time as board membersof reuse social enterprise do not always prioritise participating in research.

The feedback received from those who attended my presentation at the International Co-operative Alliance European Conference was incorporated into the draft.

I had strengthened the theoretical framework so I was pleased to discover that the reviewers were not critical of it.

I learned to invest time into scanning relevant journals to check if there were any special issues relating to my research topics. This process resulted in me discovering that the *Journal of Resources, Conservation and Recycling* was seeking papers on the topic of community reuse initiatives. Following submission of a paper for publication to the above journal, I was required to make what I considered to be significant changes to the draft submitted.

My supervisor and myself had a discussion in which he informed me that the changes required were not substantial. This meeting was very helpful in making me realise that I had already got my work published in peer-reviewed publications and the changes required were feasible. Following the meeting with my supervisor, I became more optimistic about being able to successfully incorporate the required changes so that the second draft would be accepted for publication.

Indeed, the second draft was accepted by the publishers. The reviewers emphasised the importance of providing more information on each of the cases, including with regard to their reuse activity. In addition, I was instructed to broaden and strengthen the discussion and conclusion sections. Although this exercise proved challenging, the news that the paper had been accepted was a significant fillip to my belief that I would complete the thesis.

Prior to commencing the field work, I was surprised to learn the high number of reuse social enterprises that were formed by local development companies. Interviewees pointed to the beneficial effect that parent organiations can have on the development of reuse social enterprises. It is my experience that local development companies that establish social enterprises tend to prioritise the creation of employment for

marginalised social groups. Consequently, the opportunities to contribute to social and solidarity objectives could be curtailed (Ranis, 2016).

My experience as a community development worker and social enterprise consultant has made me aware of the striking disparity in commitment among the management of local development companies to prioritise the formation of reuse social enterprises, and indeed social enterprises in general. Despite many years experience in the sector, I was surprised when this research indicated how great an extent a lack commitment and interest by local development companies can hinder the development of reuse social enterprises in their catchment areas. Accordingly, with the reliance on local development companies to form reuse social enterprises being augmented since the Community Development Programme has been subsumed into the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, the interest and commitment of management will increasingly determine if reuse social enterprises are formed.

To ensure that communities have the opportunity to establish reuse social enterprises, I strongly believe that the relevant government department should dedicate resources for the establishment of initiatives focusing on this social enterprise activity, possibly by channeling funds through the existing Community Services Programme.

A NEW ERA FOR REUSE SOCIAL ENTERPRISES IN IRELAND? THE CAPACITIES REQUIRED FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABILITY

ABSTRACT

The conventional linear relationship between production and consumption is no longer sustainable. A key component of the transition towards a more sustainable society is the continuation in use of products for longer and the development of a repair and reuse culture. Reuse social enterprises contribute to addressing a range of environmental, economic and social issues facing urban areas. This paper is concerned with, firstly, the motivations for citizens to establish reuse social enterprises in Ireland. Secondly, the paper examines the factors that contribute to reuse social enterprises in Ireland becoming sustainable.

The research points to the necessity of reuse social enterprises possessing: individuals with both strategic and operational expertise, appropriate facilities and adequate funding to commence operations. The research highlights the crucial role that the manager of the enterprise performs in engaging with state agencies, the community and other stakeholders. The theoretical framework detailed in the paper needs to take into account the challenges associated with being located in urban areas which reuse social enterprises encounter.

It is incumbent upon the Irish State to develop policies to assist individuals who are interested in establishing reuse social enterprises. These policy areas include procurement, the introduction of additional producer responsibility initiatives and the amendment of the tax system to encourage reuse.

Key words: capacity, community, reuse, social enterprise, sustainability

4.1. Introduction

The member states of the European Union (EU) are encountering a crisis in terms of resource availability, use and disposal of products (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2011). Within the EU, material recycling and waste-based energy recovery secures approximately 5 per cent of the original raw material value (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2015). Arising from current high levels of personal consumption and disposal, resources in Ireland are being depleted at an unsustainable rate (Doyle and Davies, 2013). Within the EU, each person consumes, on average, 13·3 tonnes (t) of materials annually (EC, 2011). Much of this is being discarded, with an average waste production rate of 5t of total waste per person annually (EC, 2011).

The conventional linear relationship between production and consumption is no longer sustainable (Moreau *et al.* 2017). For the switch from a linear to a more sustainable use of goods and products to be realised, citizens must alter their consumption patterns to consume within sustainable limits for the benefit of the environment and to ensure an acceptable standard of living for future generations (Jackson, 2011). A key component of the transition towards a more sustainable society is the preservation of products in use for longer and the development of a repair and reuse culture (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2015).

Reuse social enterprises contribute to addressing a range of environmental, economic and social issues facing urban areas and regions (Aiken and Slater 2007; Bichard, 2006, and Vickers, 2010).

This paper is concerned with, firstly, the motivations for citizens establishing reuse social enterprises. Secondly, the paper examines the factors that contribute to reuse social enterprises becoming sustainable. The core question being addressed is:

> What capacities enable reuse social enterprises in Ireland to become sustainable?

A subsidiary question is:

> What motivates citizens to establish reuse social enterprises?

Section two of this paper examines the key concepts underpinning the research. The third section focuses on the motivations for communities and groups of individuals to establish reuse social enterprises, followed by the theoretical framework for reuse social enterprises in section four. The methodology for the research undertaken will then be outlined in section five. The penultimate section details the research findings. The final sections of the paper contains the discussion and conclusion.

4.2. Concepts

4.2.1. Social enterprise

Social enterprise has been defined in many different ways. Indeed, at European level, there is no universally accepted definition of a social enterprise (GHK, 2006; Nicholls and Teasdale, 2017). However, the number of definitions of what constitutes a social enterprise reflects the diverse understanding of what a social enterprise actually is.

The Forfás (2013) definition is widely used:

> An enterprise that trades for a social/societal purpose, where at least part of its income is earned from its trading activity, is separate from government, and where the surplus is primarily reinvested in the social objective.

The strength of the Forfás definition is that it states that social enterprises have social and economic objectives. The principle of community ownership is alluded to but it does not place significant weight on the fact that social enterprises are managed differently to private enterprises in that they are democratically governed by a group of people on behalf of a community, rather than by shareholders seeking a return on their investment.

To address the above shortcoming in the Forfás definition, Molloy *et al*. (1999) proposes a definition which emphasises that social enterprises are democratic entities which are controlled and owned by either their members or by the communities which they serve (Amin *et al*. 2002). This definition incorporates co-operatives, associations and mutuals.

4.2.2. Waste, reuse and the circular economy

Gutberlet (2008) draws attention to the subjectivity of waste. However, some definitions are more dominant than others (Gutberlet, 2016). The dominant definition of waste views it as something that is not wanted and which the owner intends discarding (Pongracz and Pohjola, 2004). This perspective sees waste as a nuisance (Pongracz and Pohjola, 2004; Davies, 2002). The current situation needs to be transformed from viewing waste as a liability to viewing it as a resource (Ackerman and Mirza, 2001).

According to Miller *et al.* (2017: p.2), 'reuse occurs when an owner continues to use a material for the same or an alternative use, or when the item is transferred to someone else for continued use. In both cases, the item is still a resource and is not considered waste. At some point, everyone has things that are no longer useful to them, but these items, which still have value, may be useful to others and can therefore be reused'. Similar to the concepts of waste and reuse, the circular economy is a contested term (Bocken *et al*. 2017).

4.2.3.   Capacity

The concept of capacity refers to the ability of members of a community or indeed the community itself to make changes by harnessing the resources at their disposal either individually and collectively (Middlemiss and Parrish, 2009).

There are a range of motivations for establishing reuse social enterprises which are outlined in the next section.

4.2.4.   Sustainabilty

According to Nyssens (2006b), the corporate sector's discourse on sustainability – which is measured in terms of profit maximisation, productivity and competitiveness – has a significant influence on how the sustainability of social enterprises is framed. This discourse on sustainability does not fit well with the diversity of social enterprises in the Ireland, many of which could never attain financial sustainability (Crossan and Van Til, 2008). Indeed, it is the view of Chan *et al.* (2017) that the majority of social enterprises will never attain financial sustainability due to their combination of activities and because of their location in disadvantaged communities. The concept of

sustainability needs to be broadened to account for social, environmental and economic goals (Boschee and McClurg, 2003; Ridley- Duff and Bull, 2016).

Moreover, social enterprises' sustainability should not be defined and measured solely in financial terms. Instead, it should be defined in terms of the extent to which a social enterprise achieves a combination of social, financial and environmental sustainability. These different forms of sustainability may be defined as follows: social sustainability is the extent to which a social enterprise realises its social mission; financial sustainability is the extent to which a social enterprise can meet its operational costs from a combination of grant and traded income, and input from volunteers; and environmental sustainability is the extent to which the social enterprises activities can continue without having a negative impact on the physical environment (Doyle, 2019).

4.3. **Motivations for establishing re-use social enterprises**

The principals of reuse social enterprises have different motives for establishing them (Taylor, 2008; and Seanor *et al*. (2013)). Reuse social enterprises have a number of social objectives that tend not to be met by the State or the private sector (Lucklin and Sharp, 2003). These include the provision of employment and training (Lucklin and Sharp, 2005). They also serve as a source of goods to low income households (Lucklin and Sharp, 2005). In addition to realising social objectives, environmental protection and economic regeneration are motives for the formation of reuse social enterprises (Davies, 2007). With regard to employment, the jobs provided by reuse social enterprises augment the skills and confidence of individuals who were previously long-term unemployed (Brennan and Ackers, 2004). In relation to environmental motives, the desire to reduce the level of waste going to land fill is the primary motive for principals in establishing reuse social enterprises (Davies, 2007). Reuse social

enterprises are established to fulfil a combination of environmental, economic and social justice objective (King and Gutberlet, 2013)

Regarding ideological motives, a number of commentators allude to the formation of reuse social enterprises to compensate for the failure of the private sector to stem the increase in the generation of waste in Western societies (Ahmed and Ali, 2004; Price and Joseph, 2000). Reuse social enterprises have the potential to reduce resource use and waste generation (Belk, 2007).

4.4. **Theoretical framework**

This section of the paper firstly examines the challenges that reuse social enterprises face. It then proceeds to outline the capacities required for their successful implementation.

The leadership of reuse social enterprises have a tendency not to pay sufficient attention to the external environment or to strategic development (Brook Lyndhurst, 2007). This can be further compounded by a tendency of the leadership of social enterprises to not have business acumen. According to Brook Lyndhurst (2007) another challenge reuse social enterprise can encounter is not affording sufficient attention to developing management processes. This can lead to a lack of consistency in the quality of products (Brook Lyndhurst, 2007).

The above can stymie the capacity of reuse social enterprises to achieve financial sustainability (Brook Lyndhurst, 2007). Rather than solely concentrating on the capacity of reuse social enterprises, Amin *et al. (*2002) assert that the demographic profile of communities in which social enterprises are located has a significant impact on their capacity to become financially sustainable. Indeed, communities which would benefit most from the presence of reuse social enterprises tend to provide less of a

conducive environment for social enterprises to successfully operate than more affluent ones (Amin, 2009).

Furthermore, Hines *et al.* (2008) assert that the major challenges which reuse social enterprises encounter emanate from the environment in which they operate. These challenges include demands placed on them by the regulatory environment, having to operate in a competitive environment against investor-owned businesses. This can be further compounded by social enterprises having insufficient resources to employ a management team to increase the size of the business.

Access to appropriate facilities of sufficient size and appropriate location can present a challenge to the financial sustainability of reuse social enterprises (Brook Lyndhurst, 2009). Accessing appropriate sources of finance is deemed a significant barrier to reuse social enterprises achieving financial sustainability. Brook Lyndhurst (2006) believe the tendency of reuse social enterprise to rely on grant finance prevents them from innovating and increasing scale. An alternative perspective on grant finance is put forward by Doyle (2009). He asserts that reuse social enterprises can fulfil the objectives of a number of state agencies and consequently should be awarded state funding.

Therefore, an examination of the capacities critical for reuse social enterprises to become sustainable could assist communities and policy-makers alike in the establishment of reuse social enterprises.

A theoretical framework is employed which encompasses individual, structural, cultural and infrastructural capacities that are interlinked. This theoretical framework informed by research conducted by Emery and Flora (2006), Porritt (2007), Seyfang (2014), Middlemiss and Parish (2009), and Pringle (2015).

In particular, the theoretical framework is underpinned by the Community Capitals Framework (Emery and Flora, 2006). According to this framework, community change can be understood through analysing the following types of capital that exist within a community:

- Natural capital refers to the level of assets associated with a particular area. These include amenities, scenery, natural amenities and geographic isolation.

- Cultural capital refers to the how residents of a community comprehend society. It influences how and whether people are listened to within a community.

- Human capital is associated with the level of skills and expertise that residents possess. This is required to bring about change.

- Social capital refers to the degree of inter-connectedness between residents and organisations in an area.

- Political capital refers to the level of power, and connections to resources and organisations. It also refers to the ability of people to articulate their perspectives.

- Financial capital is associated with the level of financial resources which can be invested in a range of activities associated with community endeavour.

- Built capital refers to the infrastructure which is necessary for a community to organise and implement its plans.

The Community Capital Framework informs Pringle's theoretical framework. Pringle (2015) cites four categories of capacity which constitute the theoretical framework. The

first is individual capacity. Pringle (2015) defines individual capacity as the level of skills, values and finance that individuals within a community possess which can assist in the formation of sustainable development initiatives – focusing on renewable energy. Middlemiss and Parrish (2009) assert that an individual's social context shapes their capacity to initiate sustainable development initiatives. The presence of leaders within communities, who have a clear vision for the development of reuse social enterprises, is critical to their successful establishment (Brook Lyndhurst, 2007). Successful reuse social enterprises tend to be characterised by possessing effective leaders who have the capacity to secure resources (Connett and Sheehan, 2001). Brook Lyndhurst (2006) identify sustainable reuse social enterprises as possessing effective managers, management structures and processes.

The second is the structural capacity of a community. This focuses on the culture and values pertaining to organisations within a community that have an influence over communities' efforts to implement sustainable development initiatives (Middlemiss and Parish, 2009). Local development agencies, politicians and state agencies are included in this category (Pringle, 2015). The presence of community organisations and supportive state and local development institutions can contribute to a range of barriers being addressed (Pringle, 2015). State agencies that are supportive towards reuse social enterprises can have a positive influence on the outcomes of reuse sustainable development initiatives (Dedehouanou, 1998). However, to maximise the supportive role they can perform requires greater integration between various departments of local government (Yousefpour *et al.* 2012). Even if there is greater collaboration and integration between departments in local authorities, the framework proposed by Pringle does not acknowledge that some local authorities are more supportive towards working with reuse social enterprises (Resource Futures, 2009). Moreover, some local

authorities are not receptive towards bottom-up approaches to addressing waste via the development of reuse social enterprises (Resource Futures, 2009).

The third is Infrastructural capacity. This refers to the stock of infrastructure that is present in communities which are conducive to the drive to promote sustainability (Pringle, 2015). Adequate space enables reuse entities to store discarded material and products which, over time, could generate income (CWIN, 2016). This study emphasises the importance of the establishment of retail units to sell reuse products to the public (CWIN, 2016). The proximity of reuse facilities, including retail units, to residential areas, contributes to the donation and purchase of reuse products (Steel, 1996).
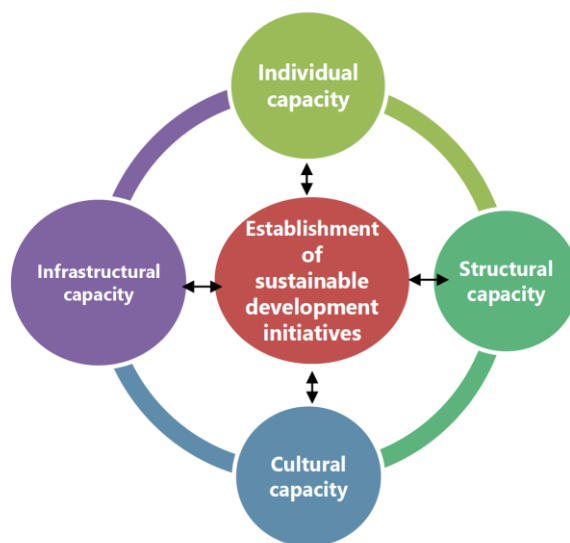
Figure 4.1 Theoretical Framework, adapted from Pringle (2015)

Finally, cultural capacity refers to the level of commitment and openness to sustainability that exists within a community (Pringle, 2015). Cultural capacity is influenced by the historical context towards sustainability (Pringle, 2015).

Research indicates that the personal qualities of managers or leaders of social enterprises tend to differ from those of investor-owned businesses (Ridley-Duff and

Bull, 2016). The former style of leadership is underpinned by values such as humility, professionalism and calmness (Collins, 2006). Indeed, leaders of social enterprises with these qualities contribute to their sustainability (Jackson *et al.* 2018). Effective managers of social enterprises require the following attributes: the ability to develop a vision for the organisation; the interest and capacity to develop employees and volunteers; a commitment and ability to promote democracy within their social enterprise, and the capacity to benefit the community which the social enterprise serves (Aziz *et al.* (2017); Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011)). The governance structures of social enterprises require individuals with expertise in finance and the capacity to realise the social mission (Mason and Royce, 2008).

4.5. **Methodology**

4.5.1.   Case selection

Seven cases were selected in Ireland for this piece of research. The social enterprises were selected because of their varying perceived reasons for establishment, varying models of operation and their core organisational objectives. Regarding different models of operation, the majority receive state funding from national programmes to employ staff, while a minority are dependent on securing contracts from local authorities and state agencies to deliver services.

The seven social enterprises are:

- Boomerang recycling located in the northside of Cork city

- Kingdom Revamp based in Castleisland, County Kerry

- Recycle IT located in Clondalkin, Dublin

- ReCreate based in Ballymount, Dublin

- Rediscovery Centre, situated in Ballymun, Dublin

- WeShare whose principals live in Dublin

- 4Rs is based in Derry city

They were selected because of their similar size. For example, none of them employ more than fifteen staff. In addition, each of them focuses on a relatively small urban area compared to their counterparts in other European countries. Indeed, none of them operate on a regional basis.

The table below (Table 4.1) details the items and materials that are reused by the social enterprises.

Table 4.1 Material/items reused	
Reuse social enterprise	**Item/material**
Boomerang recycling	Mattresses
Kingdom Revamp	Furniture
Recycle IT	Waste electronic and electrical equipment
ReCreate	Paper, cardboard and fabrics
Rediscovery centre	Bicycles, clothes, furniture and paint
WeShare	Household and personal items
4Rs	Furniture and electrical goods

4.5.2.   Methods

Twelve semi-structured interviews were held with key individuals who are either managers, voluntary directors or volunteer leaders associated with the above seven reuse social enterprises. A few managers of reuse social enterprises said that their respective management committees would not have time to participate in a focus group. The interviews were held either in person or over the phone.

4.5.3. Data collection and coding

A list of trigger questions was used to guide the interviews, and some additional questions were posed, depending on each interviewee's responses. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

4.5.4. Analysis

Qualitative thematic analysis was employed to formulate themes from the transcripts (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The process entailed reading each of the transcripts a number of times in order to become familiar with the data. The text of each of the transcripts was then coded.

4.6. Findings

The research findings pertain to interviews and focus groups with individuals associated with reuse social enterprises and policy makers. A number of themes are employed to categorise the research findings. The themes are: getting started; organisational development; management; resources; sustainability; relationships; values and policy. The research findings also identify the importance of planning to the establishment of a sustainable reuse social enterprises. The research findings associated with the planning phase is not covered in this paper as it is covered extensively in the literature. The research findings also point to how a culture of consumerism as well as current state policy both serve as a barrier to reuse social enterprises becoming sustainable.

In turn, each of the themes includes a number of sub-themes.

4.6.1. Getting started

Motives

Interviewees speak of there being multiple motives for establishing reuse social enterprises. The achievement of social objectives are the most commonly cited motives for the establishment of reuse social enterprises. These social objectives are in the main concerned with both employment creation and strengthening the skills of unemployed individuals with a view to securing employment. Furthermore, a number of the social enterprises target their recruitment at marginalised social groups and disadvantaged communities.

> 'The northside of X being very high in youth unemployment.
>
> It's somewhere to go when they come out of prison.'

Other social objectives interviewees cite include: the supply of low-cost furniture to families experiencing poverty; addressing inter-generational unemployment and reducing criminal recidivism and anti-social behaviour.

An environmental motive is considered the primary reason for the establishment of two reuse social enterprises. This motive encapsulates varying ideological perspectives from reducing the incidence of illegal dumping of harmful waste to treating waste as a resource.

> 'It was before there was any legislation involved in dealing with the waste
> that we deal with here and around the same time, there had been huge issues
> with illegal dumping of fridges particularly.'

Although, the overwhelming majority of social enterprises cited one primary objective, they each had subsidiary objectives.

'It was a dual motive and it would be environmental and social.'

The table below (Table 4.2) provides an overview of the incidence of each of the primary motives for establishing reuse social enterprises.

Table 4.2 Primary motive establishment reuse social enterprise	
Primary motive	**Number of social enterprises**
Fulfilling social or economic objective	4
Safeguarding the environment	2
Promoting an alternative economic system	1

Pre-development

Half of the interviewees acknowledge the importance of undertaking a feasibility study and business plan prior to the commencement of operations.

'We were so glad that we did a business plan and we learned a lot from a social enterprise in the UK. We believe that this prevented us from making a load of mistakes.'

Indeed, one interviewee refers to the time and resources invested in doing a business plan as reducing the risk of the social enterprise failing.

'I have seen social enterprises get into all sorts of problems from not taking the time to do a plan.'

4.6.2. Organisational development

Strategic expertise

According to a small number of interviewees, directors who have the requisite knowledge and expertise are required to ensure the organisation fulfils its mission. The same cohort of interviewees refer to the board of a social enterprise having directors with the following expertise: business expertise; knowledge of employment law; social enterprise expertise; knowledge of governance and expertise in the relevant social enterprise activity.

Regarding the level of expertise required by community representatives serving as directors, interviewees express two contrasting points of view. One perspective speaks of these directors having the requisite expertise prior to participating on a board. The other perspective considers that the role of the social enterprise is to provide community representatives with the necessary skills and expertise to effectively participate on a board. By undertaking the latter course of action, this can contribute to boards of social enterprises achieving balanced representation.

Operational expertise

According to the overwhelming majority of interviewees, staff with expertise and skills relating to their respective social enterprise activity perform a central role in the social enterprise fulfilling its mission.

> 'I've been in the recycling industry for a number of years. I've been to a number of countries and it was all within the waste recycling sector. The knowledge acquired certainly is having a positive impact on the social enterprise.'

Interviewees detail a number of benefits from employing staff with expertise relating to the social enterprise activity.

- The opportunity to train formerly unemployed staff a range of skills on site.

- The capacity to diversify into producing new products which can strengthen its financial sustainability.

- Knowledge of environmental regulation reduces the reliance on external consultants.

- Knowledge of the markets enables social enterprises to secure the best prices for recycled material.

A number of interviewees cite other types of expertise as being key to maintaining a sustainable social enterprise. These include: financial management; marketing; and the capacity to measure impact; generic business expertise and logistics.

> 'You would also need somebody that would have a good business acumen…'

> 'The key skills in getting the social enterprise up was financial management, business and knowledge of the industry. They are key skills in keeping the social enterprise successful.'

Four interviewees are of the opinion that reuse social enterprises encounter a greater number of challenges than investor-owned businesses. These include: being restricted to employing lower skilled staff; barriers to staff acquiring new skills; the challenging behaviour of a proportion of staff that were formerly unemployed; the reluctance of a proportion of staff to address their literacy issues, and the requirements of funders. Consequently, two interviewees speak of the importance of social enterprises employing

key staff who have experience of supervising staff that were formerly long-term unemployed.

Equilibrium

Several interviewees acknowledge how social enterprise, in aiming to realise a social objective while simultaneously achieving financial sustainability, can encounter a number of organisational challenges. According to two interviewees, reuse social enterprises can encounter staff productivity issues when they either diversify into new market niches or increase the level of activity. The same interviewees acknowledge that a balance needs to be achieved in acknowledging the issues certain staff may experience, while at the same time expecting staff to become more productive after receiving supports.

> 'We had quite a low burden of financial administration because we have a couple of big customers. We've gone from that model into servicing and charging householders. This has placed more demands on our staff.'

Three interviewees refer to the challenge social enterprises encounter in realising their environmental objectives when their main funder demands more of a focus on generating income.

> 'It's maybe moving into what you would call a normal business, objectives of driving the sales side and they're not able to focus at all or use the environmental message to explain what they do.'

4.6.3.   Management

The theme of management is covered under the five sub-themes below.

Committed

Persistence and tenacity are key attributes of managers, according to four interviewees. One of them considers managers who are passionate about improving the lives of marginalised groups as being another important attribute.

> 'Constant dripping water on a stone. It will wear the stone eventually, if you keep at it, your message will get across.'

They acknowledge how these attributes are pivotal to achieving the objectives of reuse social enterprises. In particular, persistence and tenacity are considered necessary attributes to secure resources, including facilities.

Inclusive

According to two interviewees, managers who create an inclusive work environment tend to gain the co-operation of staff. One interviewee emphasises the priority that he placed on creating a team. This entails informing all of the staff and participants of the sales targets. They are informed of how attaining the targets ensures that the social enterprise is financially sustainable for another year.

> 'I've actually got buy-in from all the individuals and I tell them what we are trying to do, I tell them why I'm trying to do it. I tell them the numbers that we have to achieve, the reasons why we have to achieve it, and they feel a part of the project.'

One interviewee mentions that the manager can communicate to create an inclusive work environment. Two interviewees acknowledge how holding formal

communication is not as effective an approach as holding informal meetings with many of the staff of reuse social enterprises.

The point is made that many of the staff are encountering a range of challenges to work either part or full-time. Two managers comment on how managers need to be mindful of the background of some of the staff.

> 'The key thing to addressing these challenges is good common-sense management.'

According to two interviewees, a successful manager of a reuse social enterprise needs to have good inter-personnel skills. One interviewee makes the point that management styles practiced in the private sector tend not to be suited to reuse social enterprises.

Proactive

Two interviewees acknowledge the role managers play in seeking resources for reuse social enterprises. They both mention that some reuse managers proactively seek resources from a number of funding bodies. Interviewees comment on managers requiring the capacity to seek resources from different funding bodies. This can often require the message being altered to suit the funder.

Influential

Three interviewees emphasise the importance of managers being able to influence different stakeholders to assist in developing the reuse social enterprise. With regard to staff, managers aim to motivate workers who can sometimes exhibit challenging behaviour.

> 'I suppose a key role is to motivate staff. They are the frontline and the people who are selling the concept to the public which is very critical.'

The same interviewees refer to managers having the ability to influence potential benefactors, including local authorities, to provide support. In particular, the manager needs to convince senior local authority officials that the reuse social enterprise is viable and attains the objective it sets.

> 'Convincing local authority that this was something that was viable and that could be supported.'

Empathic

Two interviewees emphasise how their having experienced discrimination allows them to be more effective managers. They spoke of this having an influence over how the social enterprise operates.

4.6.4. Resources

Facility

Five interviewees acknowledge how a facility can either enable the social enterprise to attain its objectives or can stymie it. Two interviewees comment on how acquiring a facility, at a reasonable rent, can strengthen the financial sustainability of the reuse social enterprise. In relation to design, if the facility has scope for either the building of an extension or inserting a mezzanine floor, this can enable the social enterprise to diversify its operations and handle a greater volume of material.

'We're recently putting in another floor on it in order to increase the floor space in there to do a bit more of in-house, if you'd like to call it scavenging, or you know extracting components and so on, so we're gearing up better for that as well.'

For two social enterprises, the lack of space in its facility results in having to turn down the offer of valuable discarded goods.

'There are times there where we've had to just pass material on because we had no storage capacity and we would have made more money out of it if we had been able to do a better space.'

This is adversely impacting on the financial sustainability of both social enterprises.

In addition to ample space, three interviewees comment on how the location of a facility has a bearing on a social enterprise attaining its objectives. One interviewee refers to the inability of securing a facility in its targeted marginalised area. The same person comments how this made it more difficult to promote recycling in its targeted marginalised area.

'Ideally, we would have wanted a premises within the Rapid Area that we were set up to serve but there was nothing available, there was no premises whatsoever up there..'

Three interviewees comment on how the location of a facility has a bearing on the financial sustainability of the social enterprise.

'We were struggling last year while we were up in the industrial unit, we're now on the street and we're hitting our targets in terms of money.'

One interviewee acknowledges how the design of a facility can impact on staff morale.

'The environment wasn't great above either because we were in an industrial unit, there was no windows, there was no heating, you know this type of thing.'

The establishment of reuse facility beside civic amenity centres would increase reuse rates in Ireland, according to one interviewee.

> 'It's providing covered space, it's making it a priority in civic amenity sites. This entails properly protecting equipment and goods that go into civic amenities so they can be reused.'

Credibility

Two interviewees speak of how they believe some senior local authority officials are sceptical of the capacity of reuse social enterprises to provide an efficient service on behalf of local authorities. One interviewee refers to how securing national funding enhanced the reputation of the social enterprise among senior local authority personnel. According to two interviewees, a social enterprise has to gain credibility.

> 'Now we have established a good track record, which is good but had to be earned, and so that adds to your credit when seeking to expand.'

4.6.5. Sustainability

Cost base

According to a number of interviewees, managers of reuse social enterprises are noting a significant increase in operational costs.

Labour subsidy

Five interviewees acknowledge how funding from the Pobal Community Services Programme (CSP)[20] is critical to the financial sustainability of social enterprises. (Pobal allocates funding on behalf of the Government and the EU to community companies and co-operatives to support social inclusion and local development.) The same interviewees emphasise the negative impact on the financial sustainability of social enterprises of the Pobal CSP wage grant not being pegged to increases in the national minimum wage.

> 'You see, the minimum wage when we started was €8.65 and now it's €9.55, the government don't pay the difference.'

The same interviewees assert that the Pobal CSP wage grant needs to be increased to keep pace with the minimum wage. Furthermore, three interviewees believe that Pobal needs to reinstate the material grant.

Labour market

Five interviewees acknowledge that with a significant reduction in unemployment levels, social enterprises are not able to provide the wage levels being offered by investor-owned companies. Consequently, reuse social enterprises are less likely to attract skilled staff in times of economic prosperity than during the period of the economic downturn when unemployment was far higher.

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[20] The Community Services Programme (CSP) supports community companies and co-operatives to deliver local social, economic and environmental services that tackle disadvantage. It provides funding as a contribution towards the cost of employing a manager and full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. https://www.pobal.ie/programmes/community-services-programme-csp/

A proportion of social enterprises utilise employment activation programmes to provide the necessary labour. A number of interviewees comment that this cohort can experience a range of personal issues which can affect their ability to be productive.

> 'So the people who are being taken onto the Tús programme would have significantly more issues than we would have seen two or three years ago.'

4.6.6. Relationships

Community

Four interviewees comment on the pragmatic reasons reuse social enterprises engage with their respective communities. Prior to a reuse social enterprise commencing operation, community engagement facilitates addressing mis-information pertaining to a new operation.

> 'We had open days, we used the council website, showing people what we done, we done small focus group to get the message across, we've been to all of the community groups and we invited all the councils here to let them see what we were doing.'

Parent structure

A number of reuse social enterprises are controlled by a parent organisation, according to several interviewees. These can be local development companies or community organisations. Two interviewees mention how parent structures initiate the process of establishing a reuse social enterprise. One interviewee emphasises that without a parent structure, the reuse social enterprise would not be formed. The parent structure provides a range of expertise and finance which allows the reuse social enterprise to be formed, a facility to be leased and a manager to be hired before state funding is drawn

down. For one interviewee, the reputation of the parent structure with a number of local authorities proves critical to the reuse social enterprise securing public contracts.

> 'They had the reputation which we would not have had and that was a big thing at the start.'

One interviewee acknowledges how a parent structure can cushion cuts in the state funding allocated to a reuse social enterprise.

In the table below (Table 4.3) the reuse social enterprises are categorised according to the type of organisation responsible for their establishment.

Table 4.3 Origins of social enterprise	
Category organisation that established social enterprise	Number of social enterprises
Community and voluntary organisations	3
Local development companies (LDCs)[21]	3
Local authorities	1

Network

Two interviewees acknowledge the wide network of business relationships with individuals that they have cultivated from working in the waste industry.

> 'I know a lot of people in waste industry who I can get advice from on a range of matters, including where to get the best price for recycled material.'

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[21] These are multi-sectoral partnerships that deliver social inclusion initiatives, community and rural development programmes, labour market activation and social enterprise services. LDCs support more than 15,000 community groups and 173,000 individuals annually through €330 million of state-funded programmes. www.ildn.ie

Two interviewees note that a number of reuse social enterprises are networking in a number of ways. Firstly, more experienced managers of reuse social enterprises provide advice, informally, to less established reuse social enterprises dealing with the same discarded goods. Secondly, reuse social enterprises can transfer discarded goods to other reuse social enterprises, if the former is operating at full capacity. This ensures that reuse social enterprises do not have to refuse discarded goods.

State involvement

The State interacts with reuse social enterprises in several different ways, according to five interviewees. Local authority officials serve on the management committee of a number of reuse social enterprise. Three interviewees emphasise how having them on their management committee enables a range of supports and resources to be acquired from local authorities. One interviewee mentions how local authority staff on the management committees act as a conduit to the local authority. Indeed, two interviewees comment that the assistance they receive from the local authority is a prerequisite for the formation of their reuse social enterprise.

> 'Without the support from the local authority, the project would not have happened.'

4.6.7.   Values

Solidarity

Solidarity exists within and between reuse social enterprises. Regarding the former, interviewees note how many staff are motivated to contribute to creating a more ecologically sustainable society by working in reuse social enterprises. Consequently, they are prepared to work for less remuneration than they could gain in the private

sector. One interviewee refers to how workers are ideologically motivated to work in reuse social enterprises. However, two interviewees acknowledge that it can be difficult to recruit people with a commitment to addressing economic marginalisation.

Regarding the latter dimension of solidarity, five interviewees refer to the solidarity that exists between reuse social enterprises. Three interviewees note how the level of solidarity is strongest between reuse social enterprises dealing with the same type of discarded goods. One interviewee comments on how the level of collaboration is aided by the large size of the market. He believes that if the supply of discarded goods is lower, then this could lead to a lower level of solidarity. Two interviewees emphasise how solidarity between reuse social enterprises is driven by financial motives

4.7. **Discussion**

The principals of reuse social enterprises establish them primarily to achieve both social and environmental outcomes (Taylor, 2008). The research findings regarding motives for establishing reuse social enterprises are consistent with the literature. Some reuse social enterprises are initiated to meet a combination of environmental, economic and social justice objectives.

It is interesting to note the diversity of categories of organisations responsible for promoting reuse social enterprises. A high proportion of the cases were formed by local development companies. Indeed, this could be attributed to local development companies having adequate resources to establish reuse social enterprises compared to community development organisations which have experienced significant cuts in funding (Forde *et al*. 2015) In addition, due to Government policy, a number of community development organisations have become subsumed into local development companies (Harvey, 2012). Consequently, there is less likelihood of reuse social

enterprises being formed by entities other than local development companies, other than those formed prior to the subsuming of community development organisations into local development companies. Therefore, if a local development company is not committed to establishing a reuse social enterprise, then there is less likelihood of a reuse social enterprise being formed in their catchment areas. To address this situation, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment should oblige LDCs to establish reuse social enterprises.

The research identifies several obstacles and challenges encountered when developing reuse social enterprises. The table below (Table 4.4) details the internal and the external factors which constrain the development of reuse social enterprises (Medina Munroe and Belanger, 2017).

Table 4.4 Factors constraining reuse social enterprises becoming sustainable	
Internal factors constraining reuse social enterprise development	**External factors constraining social enterprise development**
Challenging behaviour of some staff that were formerly unemployed Personal issues of some staff adversely affect productivity Inadequate size of reuse facilities Location of facility can be remote and inhibits footfall	Restricted to employing lower skilled staff State funding, particularly labour subsidy, is insufficient. Insufficient social enterprise supports Inadequate state policy framework (reuse / social enterprise) Dominance of values associated with consumption and consumerism

Furthermore, reuse social enterprises have to maintain an equilibrium between achieving their social mission and attaining financial sustainability (Mazzej, 2017). The research findings points to this requirement placing extra demands on both their governance structures and their management.

The research points to the necessity of reuse social enterprises accessing individuals with operational expertise. One of the key findings is that reuse social enterprises

employ staff with expertise and skills relevant to their social enterprise activity. They perform a central role in the social enterprise both fulfilling its mission and achieving financial sustainability.

The research findings indicate that managers of reuse social enterprises require particular expertise and attributes to manage these businesses successfully. The capacity to forge relationships with a range of stakeholders is deemed critical to the social enterprise becoming sustainable. The findings point to the managers being committed individuals who exhibit tenacity and persistence in ensuring that their social enterprises realise their mission. Furthermore, for pragmatic and ethical reasons, the managers adhere to an inclusive style of leadership. The managers of social enterprises adhere to a different theory of leadership than investor owned-businesses (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2016). Indeed, the research findings point to the inadequacy of mainstream theories of management in explaining the attributes and skills required by effective managers of reuse social enterprises (Murtagh, 2019). The implications for policy-makers is that leadership and management training for managers of investor-owned businesses is not sufficiently comprehensive to meet the range of skills and expertise required by managers of social enterprises. This would indicate the relevance of a new set of training programmes for managers of social enterprises. These training programmes would need to focus on the different styles of leadership practiced by managers of social enterprises, the range of issues they can encounter on a daily basis, and the skills required to forge relationships with a range of stakeholders.

With the exception of the support provided by some local development companies, there is a lack of support structures available to prospective promoters of reuse social enterprises. The new waste legislation from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment – which will transpose EU Waste Directive into Irish

law – should contain actions to support the development of reuse social enterprises. The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment should allocate additional funding to local development companies that demonstrate a commitment and capacity to support the development of reuse social enterprises. Indeed, local development companies that show a commitment to supporting the development of social enterprises should be awarded additional funding for this purpose. In addition, state funding should be allocated to community organisations committed to developing reuse social enterprises, particularly in areas where local development companies have not engaged in supporting social enterprise activity.

Both the Community Capital Framework (Emery, 2006) and Pringle's (2015) theoretical framework focus on the capacities required for the successful implementation of community initiatives. Although both are robust frameworks, when applied to Irish communities, they may require some modification to detail the capacities required to successfully implement reuse social enterprises. With regard to individual capacity, marginalised urban communities, tend to have a smaller cohort of individuals with the skills, knowledge and values to initiate reuse social enterprises. In relation to social capital, some communities, particularly socio-economically marginalised neighbourhoods, may not have the knowledge about how to engage with the local government system in order to secure both land and other resources to establish reuse social enterprises.

Both frameworks do not take account of the finding that the leadership and managers of reuse social enterprises need to have the capacity to forge relationships with local authorities, businesses and funding bodies, or that the reuse social enterprises also need to have access to individuals who possess key skills and expertise associated with the reuse of products.

With regard to infrastructural capacities, given that the demand for land is higher in urban than in rural settings, the framework needs to take account of the challenges in securing land and property in which to base reuse facilities. In relation to cultural capacity, the majority of communities would not have a history of developing reuse social enterprises. The values underpinning them include self-sufficiency, environmental and ecological sustainability. However, these values tend not to be prevalent in Irish communities. Indeed, the framework also does not place much emphasis on the values that exist among residents living in the catchment areas of the reuse social enterprises, as opposed to those that pertain to individuals active among reuse social enterprises. This is an important factor when one considers the dominance of consumerism in Irish society.

The theoretical framework could be broadened to acknowledge the critical importance of management style. In addition, it does not place much weight on the importance of community engagement. Innovation within the reuse social enterprise is viewed as being important to address the barriers encountered. Therefore, innovation should be also included in the framework.

4.8. Conclusion

There is a wealth of research which outlines the societal benefits of reuse social enterprises (Brennan and Ackers, 2003; Brook Lyndhurst, 2009. and Gutberlet, 2016). Therefore, it is incumbent on the Irish State to develop policies that assist communities to establish reuse social enterprises. These policy areas include procurement, the introduction of additional producer responsibility initiatives and altering the tax system to encourage reuse. In addition, a proportion of the Community Services Programme budget could be reserved for the establishment of reuse social enterprises.

Finally, research needs to be undertaken into policy needs to be changed and supporting practice. Regarding the former, research should focus on the social and economic benefits of reuse social enterprises to the State and to communities, and on the policy constraints in developing reuse social enterprises in Ireland. With respect to the latter, research could look at international best practice regarding policies for supporting the successful implementation of reuse social enterprises.

Perhaps the greatest challenge in the development of reuse social enterprises in Ireland (as well as social enterprises in general), is to address the pervasive culture of individualism and consumerism which has taken root in Irish society (Kirby, 2010). This cultural change will require a number of interventions over a lengthy period of time, by community organisations, trade unions and progressive political parties to demonstrate that an alternative Irish society is possible - where the benefits of the economy are not unequally distributed on the basis of class. One potentially effective measure would be to deliver an awareness campaign in schools, youth organisations, community organisations and third level institutions on the potency of social enterprise in addressing the many socio-economic issues that Ireland is encountering (Doyle, 2019).

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5. NEW EPOCH FOR COMMUNITY RENEWABLE ENERGY CO-OPERATIVES IN IRELAND? FACTORS REQUIRED FOR THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

Initially, the research, which formed the basis of this manuscript, was presented as a conference paper at the International Co-operative Alliance Global Research Conference, 20-23 June 2017, University of Stirling. I was allocated a place to present this paper at the conference after an abstract was peer reviewed. The feedback received from attendees at my presentation was subsequently incorporated into a second draft which was then submitted to the *Journal of Co-operative Studies.* I selected this journal because it is read by co-operators in Ireland and the UK. In addition, the next issue will focus on research on co-operatives in Ireland. The manuscript has been peer reviewed by two peer reviewers. Following incorporation of the required revisions, I was notified that the manuscript has been accepted for publication. The editors informed me that the manuscript will be published in the first quarter of 2020, at the latest.

REFLECTION

This was perhaps the most challenging case study to get published, because the journal's/book's word count limit was seven thousand words, including references. To ensure that this limit was not exceeded, the methodology and tfindings sections had to be curtailed.

At the time of undertaking this case study, only five renewable energy co-operatives were operating on the island of Ireland. I had only engaged, either through work or research, with two of them. I decided to ask two contacts of mine, acquired through voluntary work, to introduce me to the principals of the three other renewable energy co-operatives. This approach proved successful, as all of the principals who were approached agreed to participate in the research. To me, this highlighted the importance of either knowing the potential interviewees or being introduced to them by a person who could vouch for me.

As I did not know a number of the principals, I decided to conduct both the interviews and the focus groups face to face. I believed that this would allow me to develop a rapport with interviewees to a greater extent than if I had conducted the interviews via Skype or by phone, a view supported by Bryman (2004) and Creswell (2014). Consequently, I travelled to the Aran Islands, Belfast, Galway and Tipperary to hold the relevant semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Unfortunately, two of the principals were not able to attend the pre-arranged meetings. Therefore, I conducted these interviews via Skype. My experience as a community development worker and undertaking consultancy work taught me that a researcher needed to bear in mind the work and other commitments of interviewees.

I had be patient in arranging the dates with the principals of two of the renewable energy co-operatives, as they have particularly busy work schedules. However, this was stressful, becauseI needed to have the field work completed in ample time to draft a paper to present at the International Co-operative Alliance Global Research Conference, scheduled for June 2017. From this experience, I learned how crucial it was not to procrastinate in conducting the field work.

Two of the committees responsible for governing renewable energy co-operatives were not in a position to participate in a focus group and I instead completed semi-structured interviews with a number of the committee members. In addition, it was recommended by a number of interviewees that I should interview Ms. Arlene Foster, First Minister of Northern Ireland, as she had been very supportive of efforts to establish a community renewable energy district heating system. Unfortunately, despite a number of approaches she was unavailable. Interviewees were drawn from the five renewable energy cooperatives, relevant policy-makers, support agencies and local authorities. This enabled the data to be corroborated.

A NEW EPOCH FOR COMMUNITY RENEWABLE ENERGY CO-OPERATIVES IN IRELAND? AN EXPLORATION OF THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THEIR DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The paper outlines the capacities required for community groups to successfully establish and maintain renewable energy co-operatives in Ireland. The paper finds that community groups that successfully establish renewable energy co-operatives must possess high levels of resilience, have access to technical expertise and have appropriate finance. It also highlights how it is crucial that at least one member of each renewable energy co-operative engages with state agencies and the community. Pringle's (2015) theoretical framework applied in this paper focuses on the capacities required for the successful implementation of community renewable energy projects (which includes renewable energy co-operatives) in rural settings. Although this is a robust framework, when applied to Irish communities it may require some modification to detail the capacities required to successfully implement renewable energy co-operatives. Urban communities, particularly marginalised communities, may not possess the same level of expertise as rural communities. In relation to infrastructural capacities, the framework needs to take account of the challenges associated with securing suitable site and community support for the installation of renewable energy technologies. The theoretical framework could be broadened to acknowledge the critical importance of the amount of volunteer time that is required to ensure that a renewable energy co-operative becomes operational.

Key words: capacity, co-operatives, community, and renewable energy,

5.1. Introduction

Ireland is failing to meet its climate change obligations agreed with the EU (CAN 2018). Research highlights the poor performance of Ireland in addressing climate change (Climate Change Advisory Council, 2018). Ireland ranked second worst performing state within the EU (CAN, 2018). Indeed, instead of achieving a reduction in carbon and nitrogen emissions, Ireland's emission increased in 2017 (Climate Change Advisory Council, 2018). To counter this relatively poor performance – compared to Ireland's EU counterparts – in reducing emissions, the Irish Government needs to develop a policy pathway for implementing this transition and this must be robustly implemented (Climate Change Advisory Group, 2018; Kirby and O'Mahony, 2018). To counter increases in carbon emissions, policy-makers have a number of policy tools at their disposal (Climate Change Advisory Council, 2018).

International research indicates the positive impact that community-owned energy initiatives (including renewable energy co-operatives) can perform in the transition to low-carbon societies (Nolden, 2013). State planning and investment is pivotal to the development of a vibrant community-owned renewable energy sector (including renewable energy co-operatives) (Lalor, 2012; McMurtry, 2018). Compared to a number of other countries, the Irish State has not assisted the development of a community-owned renewable energy sector (Lalor, 2014). However, this may be about to change, with the Department of Communications, Climate Change and Environment in the process of introducing measures to support communities to be in a position to own renewable energy initiatives (Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, 2017). In other EU countries, the funding of third sector support agencies, the allocation of grant funding for feasibility studies, and financial packages

to generate renewable power and heat has proven effective in facilitating the growth of community renewable energy sectors (Rescoop, 2018).

Huybrechts and Mertens (2014) assert renewable energy co-operatives are relevant in the transition to an economy less reliant on fossil fuels because they are democratic and their mission is concerned with making a contribution towards the realisation of a sustainable society. For instance, this characteristic leads to less resistance to accepting renewable energy technology projects which can increase the likelihood of their securing planning permission (Huybrechts and Mertens, 2014; Rakos, 2001; Toke, 2005). Secondly, Warren and McFadyen (2010) provides evidence for community-owned renewable energy projects securing greater support for wind turbines than investor-owned ones. The level of acceptance within communities towards renewable energy initiatives is linked to distributional justice – where the revenue and costs are distributed more fairly (Schweizer-Ries, 2008).

A number of EU countries have witnessed a very significant increase in co-operatives generating renewable energy (Tarhan, 2015). However, on the island of Ireland, only five renewable energy co-operatives generate renewable energy (Doyle, 2012). With Ireland struggling to reach its binding EU carbon emission targets, renewable energy co-operatives could make a greater contribution to Ireland meeting these obligations (Bauwens, 2013., Connolly and Vad Mathiesen, 2014).

This paper will examine the components needed for the successful implementation of and maintenance of renewable energy co-operatives in Ireland. The core question being addressed is:

> What capacities contribute to the successful implementation and
> maintenance of renewable energy co-operatives in Ireland?

A review of relevant literature provides an overview of the theoretical framework and examines the literature associated with the above core question. The methodology employed to gather the primary data for this research paper is then outlined.

5.2. Capacity in renewable energy co-operatives

The concept of capacity refers to the ability of members of a community or indeed the community itself to make changes by harnessing the resources at their disposal either individually and collectively (Middlemiss and Parrish, 2010). Although there is a burgeoning amount of literature focusing on a range of topics associated with renewable energy co-operatives and community energy, this paper concentrates on the capacity of renewable energy co-operatives. Communities that are inclusive and cohesive, with strong relationships between residents underpinned by co-operation, are more receptive to engaging in community energy, including renewable energy projects (Walker *et al.* 2010). Community initiatives that focus on generating renewable energy should not be viewed as ideal (Walker *et al.* 2010). In particular, the association of the term 'community' with a renewable energy project does not guarantee success because some communities can be exclusionary and fractious, and boundaries of a community may be imposed.

A theoretical framework is employed which encompasses individual, structural, cultural and infrastructural capacities that are interlinked. This theoretical framework informed by research conducted by Emery and Flora (2006), Porritt (2007), Seyfang (2014), Middlemiss and Parish (2009), and Pringle (2015). In particular, the theoretical framework is underpinned by the Community Capitals Framework (Emery and Flora 2006). According to this framework, community change can be understood through analysing the following types of capital that exist within a community:

- Natural capital refers to the level of assets associated with a particular area. These include amenities, scenery, natural amenities and geographic isolation.

- Cultural capital refers to the how residents of a community comprehend society. It influences how and whether people are listened to within a community.

- Human capital is associated with the level of skills and expertise that residents possess. This is required to bring about change.

- Social capital refers to the degree of inter-connectedness between residents and organisations in an area.

- Political capital refers to the level of power, and connections to resources and organisations. It also refers to the ability of people to articulate their perspectives.

- Financial capital is associated with the level of financial resources which can be invested in a range of activities associated with community endeavour.

- Built capital refers to the infrastructure which is necessary for a community to organise and implement its plans.

There are four categories of capacity which constitute the theoretical framework in this paper, drawing on Pringle (2015). Individual capacity is defined as the level of skills, values, and finance that individuals within a community possess which can assist in the formation of community energy initiatives (including renewable energy co-operatives). Middlemiss and Parrish (2010) assert that an individual's social context shapes their capacity to establish community energy initiatives.

The structural capacity of a community is concerned with the culture and values pertaining to organisations within a community that have an influence over communities' efforts to implement community energy initiatives (Middlemiss and Parrish, 2010). Infrastructural capacities refer to the stock of infrastructure that is present in communities which is conducive to the drive to promote sustainability (Middlemiss and Parrish, 2010). Finally, cultural capacity refers to the level of commitment and openness to sustainability that exists within a community (Pringle, 2015). The cultural capacity is influenced by the historical context and commitment within a community towards sustainability (Toke *et al.* 2008). The above four capacities are interlinked and each can have an impact on another (Middlemiss and Parrish, 2010).
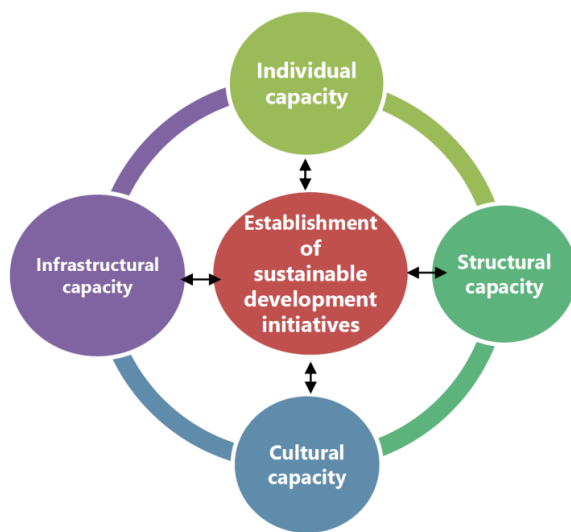
Figure 5.1 Theoretical Framework, adapted from Pringle (2015)

5.3. **Key capacities establishment renewable energy co-operatives**

This section of the literature review outlines the essential capacities required for the establishment of renewable energy co-operatives. The level of community involvement, resources, expertise and structural capacities are determining factors for the establishment of renewable energy co-operatives. Developing a successful community energy project is predicated on recruiting community members and maintaining their participation. It is important to recruit individuals beyond the initial core enthusiasts. However, the norm seems to be that a cadre of community activists develop community energy projects while utilising a hierarchical structure (Seyfang, 2007).

Rogers *et al.* (2008) observe that the majority of members of community energy initiatives prefer to have minimal involvement in operational and strategic dimensions of the project, but wish to be kept informed of developments. Therefore, practices that promote this level of involvement are critical. If the leadership in renewable energy co-operatives value the importance of community participation, then it is more likely that communities become more receptive to community energy including renewable energy co-operatives (Rogers *et al.* 2008). Structural and symbolic resources are the two sets of factors that contribute to the mobilisation of communities engaging in community energy initiatives (Bomberg and McEwen, 2012). 'Structural resources' refers to the existence of community leaders who can navigate the political structures and the policy process to gain essential resources to establish community energy initiatives (Hufen and Koppenjan, 2011). Pringle (2015) asserts the importance of the political context including: local, regional and national policy; funding; and access to in-kind support based on access to networks. 'Symbolic resources' are non-material resources such as the level of community identity which can be described as 'distinguishing

characteristics through which individuals identify themselves with others (Bomberg and McEwen, 2012). This mutual identity, argue Bomberg and McEwen (2012), contributes to feelings of solidarity which can lead to realisation of shared norms and reciprocity.

The role of 'citizen pioneers' is pivotal in the mobilising of communities to engage in renewable energy co-operatives (Toke *et al.* 2008). While acknowledging the impact of individuals with expertise, Seanor and Meaton (2007) highlight that it is 'teams of people' which make things happen. Doyle (2009) acknowledges that, although an individual with a combination of credibility and expertise can identify a sustainable development concept, this is not sufficient: the central involvement of a group of community leaders or a community development organisation is essential if the initiative is to flourish. Assuming that community renewable energy co-operatives recruit residents, there are a number of key skills that individuals need during the planning, mobilisation and developmental phases (Seyfang *et al.* 2014). These can be categorised into interpersonal, technical and organisational skills. Interpersonal skills such as confidence, emotional stamina, and communication, are deemed crucial to the development of community energy initiatives including renewable energy co-operatives (Seyfang *et al*. 2014). Technical skills include the capacity to design and interpret financial management reports, knowledge of renewable energy technology, and management expertise (Leicester, 2008). The organisational skills that key individuals require include the capacity to undertake meaningful consultations and to make effective decisions (Barry and Chapman, 2009). The vision and styles of leadership of key members are considered as being critical to the success of community energy initiatives including renewable energy co-operatives (Van der Horst, 2008).

With regard to structural capacities, the presence of community organisations and supportive state and local development institutions can contribute to overcoming a

range of barriers (Mulugetta *et al.* 2010). Strong relationships with community organisations and state agencies can lead to them either directly performing the role of animator of community energy initiatives (including renewable energy co-operatives) or providing funding for communities to secure the necessary expertise (Hain *et al.* 2005). Infrastructural capacities refer to the stock of infrastructure that is present in communities which are conducive to the drive to promote sustainability (Pringle, 2015).

Finally, cultural capacity refers to the level of commitment and openness to sustainability that exists within a community. The cultural capacity is influenced by the level of commitment to the values associated within the community, and the historical attitude, towards sustainability. A high level of trust of community projects and state institutions within communities contributes to them becoming more receptive to the development of community renewable energy initiatives (Walker *et al.* 2010). Middlemiss and Parrish (2010) assert that the above four capacities are interlinked and have an impact on one another.

5.4. **Methodology**

To identify the capacities required for the implementation and maintenance of renewable energy co-operatives in Ireland, a combination of semi-structured interviews, focus groups and documentary research were employed. The five renewable energy co-operatives are located in Ireland. They were selected because they were the only five renewable energy co-operatives operational at the time that the research was being undertaken.

The five renewable energy co-operatives are:

- Aran Islands Renewable Energy

- Claremorris and Western District Energy Co-op

- Drumlin Wind Energy Co-op

- Northern Ireland Community Energy Co-op

- Templederry Community Wind Farm.

Four of the initiatives are structured as Industrial Provident Societies[22] while Templederry is incorporated as a company limited by guarantee but adheres to the International Co-operative Alliance's co-operative principles. Templederry Community Wind Farm is a subsidiary of a community co-operative. Residents in the village and areas surrounding Templederry were invited to become a member of the co-operative. Each member initially invested €1000. There are over thirty shareholders in the co-operative. A representative of Templederry Wind Energy stated it was structured as a community limited by guarantee (GLG) as there was a perception that commercial banks were more familiar in lending to Companies Limited by Guarantee than to an Industrial Provident Society. For the purpose of this paper, Templederry Community Wind Farm is referred to as a co-operative.

Three of the renewable energy co-operatives are located in rural areas, while two are based in urban areas. Drumlin Wind Energy Co-operative and Templederry

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[22] An industrial and provident society (IPS) was a legal entity for a trading business or voluntary organisation in Great Britain. The name is still used in: Ireland, Northern Ireland and in New Zealand. Recent legal developments in Great Britain has renamed these societies as co-operative or community benefit societies.

Community Wind Energy both generate power via wind turbines and sell their electricity into the national grid. Northern Ireland Community Energy produces solar energy. Aran Islands Renewable Energy has increased the energy efficiency of community buildings and homes on the Aran Islands. It plans to erect a wind turbine. Finally, Claremorris and Western District Energy Co-op has completed measures to increase awareness of the role which communities can play in generating renewable energy. It plans to develop a renewable energy district heating system that will generate heat for a number of public buildings in Claremorris.

Table 5.1 Overview of renewable energy co-operatives		
Renewable energy co-operative	**Location**	**Renewable energy technology employed**
Aran Islands Renewable Energy	Rural, West Coast of Ireland	Energy efficiency installations and wind turbine
Claremorris and Western District Energy Co-op	Urban, County Mayo	Renewable heat via district heating system
Drumlin Wind Energy Co-op	Rural, Northern Ireland	Renewable electricity from wind turbines
Northern Ireland Community Energy Co-op	Urban, Northern Ireland	Solar energy
Templederry Community Wind Farm	Rural, County Tipperary	Renewable electricity from wind turbines

Sixteen semi-structured interviews were held with key individuals who are associated with the five renewable energy co-operatives, individuals who worked with support agencies and a policy maker. The interviews were held, in the main, at the interviewees' respective places of work or close to where they lived, and they lasted between 40 minutes and one hour. The background and expertise of each of the interviewees is detailed in the table below.

Table 5.2 Background and expertise of interviewees

Background of interviewee	Position
Aran Islands Renewable Energy	Committee member who was a founding member of the co-operative. The individual lives on Aran Mor.
Claremorris and Western District Energy Co-op	Committee member who was a founding member of the co-operative. The individual has experience of establishing and managing businesses.
Drumlin Wind Energy Co-op	Committee member who was a founding member of the co-operative. He has technical expertise in the installation of renewable energy technology. A second committee member who has professional experience at establishing renewable energy co-operatives in Great Britain.
Northern Ireland Community Energy Co-op	Committee member who was founding member of the co-operative.
Templederry Community Wind Farm	Committee member who was a founding member of the co-operative. He lives in the Templederry area. An employee of another subsidiary of the co-operative was interviewed.
Northern Ireland Community Energy Co-op	A committee member of the co-operative. The person has extensive experience of supporting the development of co-operatives in Northern Ireland. The person also has been influencing policy in relation to co-operatives.
Energy agency	The CEO of an energy agency who provided supports to the three of the above communities in establishing and sustaining renewable energy co-operatives.
Co-operative specialising in the provision of support to community energy co-operatives	A member of this co-operative who provided supports to two of the above communities in establishing renewable energy co-operatives.
Regional development agency	Two interviews were held with staff of a regional development agency. One of the employees interviewed is a senior policy analyst with expertise in local economic development. The other staff member has expertise in assisting communities in establishing community renewable energy co-operatives. This person is currently managing an EU renewable energy programme.
Local authority staff	Two interviews were held with senior staff of of two local authorities. One of the officials worked in the planning department of a local authority who provided planning permission to the renewable energy co-operative to install wind turbines.
Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment	An interview was held with a senior civil servant who was involved in designing policy to support the transition to become less reliant on renewable electricity generated from fossil fuel
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)	A senior manager of SEAI who has responsibility for developing and managing programmes to support communities to embrace develop community renewable energy initiatives.

Focus groups were held with the management committee of Aran Islands Renewable energy, Templederry Community Wind Farm, and Claremorris and Western District Energy Co-op.

A list of trigger questions was used to guide the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The questions employed were 'how' and 'why' questions. These are appropriate categories of questions for undertaking a case study (Yin, 2013). The trigger questions were piloted with two individuals with expertise in the field. Qualitative thematic analysis was employed to formulate themes from the transcripts (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The process entailed reading each of the transcripts a number of times in order to become familiar with the data. The text of each of the transcripts was then coded. A number of themes were identified which were placed under the four capacities. In addition to the interviews and focus groups, the data emanates from other sources including documents and direct observation (Yin, 2013)

5.4.1. Limitations of research

The interviews with the committee members of renewable energy co-operatives were held over a three month period from February to May 2017. The interviews with the policy maker and representatives of support agencies were held towards the end of 2017. Sixteen semi-structured interviews were held. Accordingly, the research design could be criticised for having a small number of semi-structured interviews. However, this criticism can be countered by acknowledging that it is both a qualitative and exploratory piece of research. Furthermore, the data from the semi-structured interviews is buttressed by the data secured from the three focus groups. A total of 14 people participated in the three focus groups. Furthermore, as already mentioned, there were only five renewable energy co-operatives in operation when the research was being completed.

A number of members of the respective management committees declined to be interviewed due to not having the time to participate in the research. They stated that they already allocate a considerable amount of time governing their respective renewable energy co-operative. In addition, two committee members of renewable energy co-operatives stated that they were not prepared to participate in the research due to already participating in a number of pieces of research. Another limitation is that the research does not measure the capacity of the renewable energy co-operatives.

5.5. **Findings**

The research findings pertain to interviews and focus groups with individuals associated with renewable energy co-operatives, support agencies and policy makers. The four capacities which constitute Pringle's framework are the themes employed to categorise the research findings.

5.5.1. Individual capacity

The findings indicate a number of dimensions to individual capacity.

Internal expertise

Regarding internal expertise, leaders of renewable energy co-operatives and staff of support agencies both acknowledged the importance of committee members possessing a wide range of expertise which enables the realisation of their co-operative's objectives.

These included:

- Engineering expertise – one of the co-operative members is an engineer who has expertise in developing wind turbines;

- Technical expertise – two co-operatives have committee members who were tradesmen;

- Financial expertise – a number of the co-operatives have committee members who have business knowledge and financial management expertise.

Support agency staff identified the lack of technical expertise as presenting a significant barrier to communities aiming to establish renewable energy co-operatives.

'Some communities are very lucky that they have a retired engineer that has loads of time and loads of expertise on their hands and they become a very key part of the community but not all communities are lucky in that way, you're generally dealing with community members and wouldn't have an idea how to apply for planning permission, how to, what's involved in setting up a community turbine, the access to the grid, the grid restrictions you know, you're not allowed sell electricity to your neighbours.' (Employee of support agency)

Leadership

One employee of a support agency emphasised the importance of the leadership of renewable energy co-operatives being able to discern what renewable energy technologies are suitable in Ireland so that they can achieve a high level of energy production.

Several support agency staff acknowledged the difficulty committee members of renewable energy co-operatives can encounter in securing sufficient finance from a number of sources.

> 'When you're going to get loan finance and equity finance, like it's very difficult unless you have a financial expert within your community group which not every community group has.' (Employee of support agency)

Support agency staff spoke of the importance of leaders of renewable energy co-operatives having credibility from the perspective of the financial institution.

In summary, two support agency staff referred to the leadership of renewable energy co-operatives requiring the following skills: technical knowledge of renewable energy technology and procedures to gain access to the national grid; how to effectively communicate and gain the trust of with the community; the capacity to secure finance from a range of sources to cover the capital costs associated with establishing a renewable energy project and to ensure renewable energy projects are in line with local, regional and national planning policy.

Champion

A large number of renewable energy co-operative members and support agency staff emphasised the importance of renewable energy co-operatives having an individual who is willing and has the time to commit to performing a number of crucial roles. One interviewee referred to this person as being a champion.

> 'I would say you need one person who is prepared to take it...and do whatever it takes. I would say a champion is essential.' (Committee member of renewable energy co-operative)

Two interviewees spoke of the champion identifying the idea for developing a renewable energy co-operative and persuading a number of individuals to form a co-operative. Members of renewable energy co-operatives and support agency staff acknowledged champions as building relationships with key individuals in state agencies, third level institutions, and with private businesses. Two members of renewable energy co-operatives identified that champions play a pivotal role in negotiations associated with securing finance. According to representatives of renewable energy co-operatives and support agency staff, individuals who were champions play a crucial role in ensuring that residents were consulted and an opportunity was provided for communities to influence the establishment of renewable energy co-operatives.

> 'They make sure the community is kept informed, and that the views of the community regarding the establishment of renewable energy initiatives are as far as possible taken on board. They make sure that steps are taken in to promote community buy-in.' (committee member of renewable energy co-operative)

Interviewees pointed out that champions must be accountable to the renewable energy co-operative governance structure.

Developer-led

One member of a renewable energy co-operative used the term 'developer-led' to describe the role he performed prior to the formation of the co-operative. During the developer-led phase, this individual bore the risks associated with any setbacks associated with the erection of a wind turbine and the costs incurred.

'Yeah, so I guess you know I put in my time and cash you know because there was expenditure required in the planning permission, putting up wind speed masts and you know all of those, I bore those costs initially and any failures that were along the way, not every site that I approached turned out that it was suitable or I could get planning permission for so I bore those costs.'(Committee member of renewable energy co-operative)

Agreed vision

Renewable energy co-operatives and support agencies mentioned the relevance of the governance structure associated with a co-operative, according to five members of co-operatives and support agencies. The interviewees emphasised the importance of deciding upon a vision, aims and objectives in a collective manner as opposed to one person framing them.

'We spent a lot of time agreeing our vision and objectives as a committee. We regularly review the progress that we are making in achieving our objective.' (Committee member of renewable energy co-operative)

The point was made that this collective approach provided the committee with direction and aids cohesion: '*having a vision and mission keeps us going in the right direction.*'

Task orientated leadership

Several members of renewable energy co-operatives emphasised that having individuals with the relevant expertise is essential, but equally as important is that committee members undertook agreed tasks between meetings.

> 'Once a month is not going to achieve anything, you know all of the stuff that gets done in between meetings, you know that people are willing and able and have the time and the energy to spend on it.' (Committee member of renewable energy co-operative)

The same group of members of renewable energy co-operatives asserted that when committee members spend time undertaking tasks, this then strengthened their commitment and fortifies their sense of ownership of the co-operative. Members of renewable energy co-operatives and staff of support agencies were of the opinion that setbacks can be encountered which required resilience on the part of members of the co-operative governance structure. Interviewees recounted setbacks, emanating from within the community, such as proposed plans being rejected at community meetings.

Members of renewable energy co-operatives and support agency staff identified gaining planning permission, the process of securing a power-purchase agreement and obtaining finance from commercial banks as being significant barriers facing communities in establishing renewable energy projects.

> '....And there is a whole pile of regulations, challenges and regulations and lack of accountability in all that sort of stuff that makes renewable energy development very challenging for everyone.' (Committee member of renewable energy co-operative)

Resilient leadership

Support agency staff spoke of the involvement of a large number of state authorities coupled with the challenge in securing finance as contributing to the only most resilient community leaders persisting in establishing renewable energy projects.

> 'There's not many community groups that are going to stay together and stay motivated and stay financially feasible for 12 years when they can't get access to the grid.' (employee of support agency)

> 'I think it's sheer persistence that has resulted in some renewable energy co-operatives producing power and selling it into the grid.' (employee of support agency)

A number of support agency staff compared the regulatory environment in Denmark and Germany as being more conducive to the establishment of renewable energy projects.

> 'In Germany, the policy-makers have forced the distribution operators and the planning authorities to do their job efficiently and effectively. The aim is to make it easy to develop renewable energy projects.' (Employee of support agency)

One support agency staff member said that making the regulatory environment more accessible to renewable energy projects was more important than providing animation supports to communities.

A number of renewable energy co-operative members emphasised how easy it was for a co-operative to lose credibility within its community. To ensure this did not occur, interviewees referred to the importance of the leadership having no conflicts of interest.

Members of renewable energy co-operatives and staff of support agencies referred to co-operative committee members who were trusted by the community as mitigating community resistance to the establishment of renewable energy projects.

According to a four members of renewable energy co-operatives, a key characteristic of some renewable energy co-operative committee members was being able to build effective relationships with officials in state agencies and having good relationships with other community leaders.

Social processes

Social processes were deemed another factor in the establishment of renewable energy co-operatives. A number of renewable energy co-operative members spoke about their committees making decisions through consensus. Several individuals mentioned that their committees regularly dedicated some committee meetings to planning and reviewing performance. They attributed this practice as being a key factor in their respective co-operatives attaining their goals and promptly addressing issues in the community.

> 'Yeah, how to give and take, how to listen to each other, and how to form a consensus yeah, to talk through it and talk through a situation, we're good at that here.' (committee member of renewable energy co-operative).

According to a number of members of renewable energy co-operatives, their committee members invested time in engaging with residents with a view to inviting them to become members of their respective co-operatives. One interviewee referred to how community participation increased when residents saw the benefits of community energy ownership.

5.5.2. Structural capacity

The findings point to a number of dimensions to structural capacity.

Relationship building

The capacity of renewable energy co-operatives to develop and sustain effective partnership was valued by those interviewed. Renewable energy co-operative members highlighted the amount of time required to cultivate relationships with key individuals associated with external organisations.

> 'Cultivating relationships...you have to go to meetings, you have to have time to go to meetings, and then you have to explore with them what we could do together.' (Committee member of renewable energy co-operative)

One interviewee referred to the importance of engendering enthusiasm towards the co-operative amongst representatives of organisations. This required renewable energy co-operative members to tell a compelling story of the work being undertaken.

Several interviewees mentioned the importance of identifying what the prospective partner could gain from forming a partnership with a renewable energy co-operative. Several renewable energy co-operative members identified that beneficial relationships were formed with third level institutions, private sector companies, and other co-operatives.

A number of interviewees mentioned the partnership between their co-operatives and with Templederry CRES[23] as overcoming a number of obstacles which renewable energy co-operatives currently encounter.

> 'CRES is trying to follow that model, you know where that if there are surpluses coming into CRES, that that surplus can be used to guide and to help other communities around Ireland develop their own community energy solution locally.' (employee of support agency)

A number of renewable energy co-operative members stated that forging relationships with privately-owned energy businesses can mitigate the challenge of securing the necessary funding.

External expertise

One renewable energy co-operative member and a number of support agency staff noted that there is a tendency for renewable energy co-operative governance structures not to possess individuals with all of the necessary expertise to successfully establish a financially sustainable renewable energy project. Therefore, they asserted that committees must identify gaps in their expertise. To compensate for this lack of expertise, several interviewees spoke of securing external expertise from organisations with whom they work well. One interviewee stated that gaining expertise from another co-operative was a positive experience, as it was committed to increasing the number of renewable energy co-operatives in the country. However, with only a handful of

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[23] CRES is Ireland's first fully community owned electricity supply company. It is a sister company to Templederry Community Wind Farm in County Tipperary, Ireland's only operational community-owned wind farm.

renewable energy co-operatives, a number of support agency staff and policy-makers identified the need for intermediary organisations that have the expertise to provide technical assistance to renewable energy co-operatives at various stages of development.

Support agency staff, renewable energy co-operative members and a policy-maker identified a dearth of independent technical assistance available to renewable energy co-operatives throughout the country. Interviewees pointed to there being only three energy agencies that were proactively providing support to renewable energy co-operatives and community energy initiatives.

The point was made that there needs to be an energy agency covering every part of the country.

> 'It is not fair that if your community is not located in the South East or Dublin then it is more difficult to access technical assistance from energy agencies.'(committee member of renewable energy co-operative)

> 'A network of proper energy agencies is vital.' (employee of support agency)

Support agency personnel attributed the success of the three energy agencies to a combination of pursuing a social enterprise approach, the structure of the entity and the calibre of the managers hired by the three of them.

A number of renewable energy co-operative members acknowledged the key role that SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities was performing in assisting communities to set-up renewable energy initiatives.

Some support agency personnel advocated that intermediary organisations have a regional focus while others asserted that they should have a county focus. All agreed that any intermediary organisations should have a clear remit, a strategic plan and are reviewed on an annual basis.

Community engagement

A small number of members of renewable energy co-operatives spoke of their committees prioritising consultation with their communities. Methods of consultation included community meetings and individual discussions with residents.

Members of renewable energy co-operatives spoke of implementing protocols to ensure committee members were accountable for their actions.

> 'There has to be procedures put in place that make us accountable and, like, keep an eye on every aspect of ... the activity of the committee, you know, not just the money, the money is obvious, but all the other aspects as well. So, for example, I've initiated that whenever I write an email in relation to the co-operative, there's two people on the committee that I send a copy to so there's no private email for me to send … it's a committee, it's a committee email, I write it but two other people on the committee get to read it.' (committee member of renewable energy co-operative)

A number of renewable energy co-operative members noted that their committees were devising a code of governance. According to the members of one committee, they compiled a set of criteria which would determine the location of the site for their wind turbine.

The same cohort of interviewees believed that committing to these criteria is strengthening the level of trust between the committee and the community.

> 'Once people saw that we were going to commit to those four criteria and then we came up with a site that fulfilled those four criteria, people were happy, that's why we got a unanimous 'yes'.' (committee member of renewable energy co-operative)

Several members of renewable energy co-operatives emphasised the importance of holding awareness-raising events about plans for the establishment of renewable energy installations. A number of members of renewable energy co-operatives referred to such events as reducing local opposition to the establishment of renewable energy projects.

> 'You deal with nimbyism straight on, right in its face, you deal with it, you educate, demonstrate, you don't give up you know, you empower.' (committee member of renewable energy co-operative)

According to one interviewee, renewable energy co-operatives needed to establish the reasons why people were opposing the installation of renewable energy technology in their communities, and the committees strove to address the reasons underpinning the resistance. However, the same interviewee spoke of a small minority who may not be convinced and that this cohort should not be afforded the right to block progress.

Among a minority of interviewees, co-operative renewable energy governance structures used different criteria to decide whether or not to erect or install renewable energy technology.

A number of renewable energy co-operative members spoke about seeking planning permission to erect a wind turbine only if there was unanimous community support for the location of the development.

> 'In this community and in such a small place, I don't think you could do anything, it would be impossible to do anything without backing from the community. If the majority of the community were against us, it just would be a no-go and it would be a waste of time to try and cut it, it just wouldn't happen.' (committee member of renewable energy co-operative)

Four interviewees acknowledged the damage to friendships and relationships between neighbours if the community's view was not respected with regard to the location of wind turbines. Another interviewee held a different perspective, stating that there can be a small minority of individuals who will consistently oppose the co-operative's plans and this cohort should not be afforded the right to stall the co-operative's work.

Regional focus

One renewable energy co-operative member suggested that communities should adopt a regional perspective to identifying sites to erect wind turbines. The same interviewee mentioned that a renewable energy co-operative could be formed involving a number of communities. This would facilitate the selection of the best sites for wind energy.

State supports

Six interviewees spoke about the importance of establishing an incentive scheme targeting small-scale energy generators. This would facilitate communities to establish renewable energy co-operatives.

> 'Then whenever the government incentivised smaller operations up to 250kw well then that was like, ok, well that sets a whole new different set of constraints, and opened up a whole lot of other opportunities, so if the subsidising of smaller sectors enables smaller players to enter the market because the big companies are only interested in the big fish, they're not interested in the little half million turbine because it's not big, they can't pay the wages to do that, so by artificially capping you know the project size as they did in Northern Ireland to about half a million pounds, that created an opportunity that smaller players could operate in.' (committee member of renewable energy co-operative)

A support agency employee believed that the deployment of renewable energy needed to take place on a county-by-county basis, with a number of criteria being employed to determine the number of megawatts of electricity that would be deployed in each county.

'X county needs to have, because it's a big, rural county that's depopulated, you know that isn't very populated, we can accept up to 900 megawatts in x, once over that, the CRU isn't allowed accept any further applications, the grid connection isn't allowed accept any applications and the planning authorities aren't allowed accept any applications. If you did that you'd just say, right there's the end of it, it's done, once you get to that it goes offshore or it goes into solar.' (employee of support agency)

Two support staff employees advocated that the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment should reserve a number of megawatts of power to be delivered by community owned renewable energy projects.

'They need to be given a … mandate and a … to deliver a certain number of megawatts of community owned renewable energy projects by a certain time.' (employee of support agency)

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment should be held accountable to attaining this target.

According to a policy official, a government strategy to support renewable energy referred to as the Renewable Energy Support was being finalised. The recommendations contained in the independent report commissioned by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment include:

- Preferential treatment should be afforded to community projects in relation to the connection process to the grid.

- Financial support should be provided at pre-start up stage, including the provision of grant funding to undertake a feasibility study.

- Grant funding should be provided during the development phase.

- The creation of a number of 'trusted intermediaries' and 'trusted advisers'.

The trusted advisor role will be created primarily to signpost communities to where they can source the expertise to overcome the barriers encountered such as grid access.

The Department is considering ring-fencing an amount of power under each REFIT auction which would be delivered by community energy projects.

5.5.3. Infrastructural capacity

The findings indicate a number of dimensions to infrastructural capacity.

Access to suitable sites

Committee members of two renewable energy co-operatives stated that it was imperative to secure suitable sites to install renewable energy technology, particularly wind turbines. One of the interviewees spoke of how communities had to compete against investor-owned businesses to acquire suitable sites. This required communities to have access to expertise to identify the most suitable sites.

Community support

Among the committee members of renewable energy co-operatives interviewed a range of different views were expressed on the level of community support required to proceed with the erection or installation of renewable energy technology. Representatives of two renewable energy co-operative governance structures used different criteria to decide whether or not to erect or install renewable energy technology. A number of interviewees spoke about proceeding to seek planning

permission to erect a wind turbine only if there was unanimous community support for the location of the development.

A number of interviewees spoke about the damage to friendships and relationships between neighbours if the community's view was not respected with regard to the location of wind turbines. Another interviewee held a different perspective, stating that there can be a small minority of individuals who will consistently oppose the co-operative's plans and this cohort should not be afforded the right to stall the co-operative's work.

Resilience

Two committee members of renewable energy co-operatives commented on how their respective committees were required to be resilient when there were objections (either during consultation phase or planning objections).

5.5.4. Cultural capacity

Trust was identified as another important factor in the establishment of community renewable energy co-operatives. According to a number of renewable energy co-operative members and support agency staff, co-operatives were positively viewed in light of the economic benefits that agricultural producer co-operatives have generated for farmers. This association benefited renewable energy co-operatives, according to the same cohort of interviewees. Renewable energy co-operative members also acknowledged the importance of investing time in raising awareness of community renewable energy co-operatives through holding information meetings, and consulting the community on key developments.

Both renewable energy co-operative members and support agency staff attributed renewable energy co-operatives gaining credibility through administering a state-funded residential retro-fitting programme. This initiative reduced the risk of households experiencing fuel poverty. According to renewable energy co-operative members, this displayed to the community that the co-operative intended to undertake activities which improved residents' quality of life. The point was made that the term co-operative was easy to understand compared to a company limited by guarantee, as it was associated with being democratic.

5.6. Discussion and conclusions

The research points to renewable energy co-operatives that successfully establish renewable initiatives possessing high levels of resilience, and having access to technical expertise and appropriate finance. The research highlights how it is crucial that at least one member of each renewable energy co-operatives engages with state agencies and the community.

Pringle's (2015) theoretical framework focuses on the capacities required for the successful implementation of community renewable energy projects (which includes renewable energy co-operatives) in rural settings. Although this is a robust framework, when applied to Irish communities it may require some modification to detail the capacities required to successfully implement renewable energy co-operatives. With regard to individual capacity, urban communities, particularly marginalised communities, tend to have a smaller cohort of individuals with the skills, knowledge and values to initiate community renewable energy co-operatives. This could have repercussions for the amount of time these individuals need to invest to ensure that the co-operatives become operational. Community leaders could become over-committed

which could lead to personal repercussions, due to their enthusiasm (Seyfang, 2007). Therefore the framework could be adjusted to specify the importance of empowering novice members. With regard to social capital, some communities, particularly socio-economically marginalised neighbourhoods, may not have the knowledge about how to engage with the local government system, in order to secure both land and other resources to establish a renewable energy co-operative.

With regard to infrastructural capacities, it was surprising that securing suitable sites was not considered a challenge by more of the cases. However, committee members from three of the renewable energy co-operatives cited the challenges encountered in gaining unanimous community support for the installation of wind turbines. Accordingly, the framework needs to take account of this challenge.

In relation to cultural capacity, the majority of communities would not have a history of developing renewable energy co-operatives, and therefore values associated with their establishment should be broadened. These values could include those that focus on self-sufficiency and collective economic development, as these values are identified as the key motives for the establishment of the majority of the renewable energy co-operatives in Ireland.

The research findings allude to renewable energy co-operatives encountering a number of challenges. Therefore, resilience within the governance structure of renewable energy co-operatives could be included as a component of the theoretical framework. An independent support structure could assist communities to develop renewable energy co-operatives.

The theoretical framework could be broadened to acknowledge the critical importance of the amount of volunteer time that is required to ensure that a renewable energy co-

operative becomes operational. Furthermore, the style of collaboration between committee members contributes to the success of renewable energy co-operatives. In particular, a consensus approach to decision-making is considered as an important factor in the successful establishment of renewable energy co-operatives. The theoretical framework does not place much weight on the importance of community engagement.

The framework also does not place much emphasis on the values that exist among residents, as opposed to those that pertain to individuals active among community organisations. This is an important factor when one considers the level of resident resistance in Ireland to the installation of renewable energy technology.

There is a wealth of research which outlines the societal benefits of renewable energy co-operatives (Tarhan, 2015). Therefore, it is incumbent on the Irish State to develop policies in assisting communities to establish community renewable energy co-operatives. These policy areas include procurement, legislative reform, finance and access to the national grid.

Finally, the EU's directive on smart grids presents opportunities for renewable energy co-operatives. Therefore, research is required to identify the supports for renewable energy co-operatives to contribute to the operation of smart grids. Another piece of research could focus on whether the category of ownership- investor versus co-ownership -of the renewable energy initiatives has a bearing on how receptive communities are to their installation.

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6. THE HEAT IS ON: THE CAPACITIES REQUIRED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF COMMUNITY-OWNED RENEWABLE ENERGY DISTRICT HEATING SYSTEMS IN IRELAND.

I submitted an abstract to the call for papers on *Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: What Role for Social and Solidarity Economy?* In December 2019. This call for papers was organised by the Social and Solidarity Team of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. My abstract was one of 180 selected from a total of 320 received. I then submitted a manuscript in January 2019. The manuscript was peer reviewed. Following the reviewers' required revisions being incorporated, the manuscript was published, in July 2019, on the UN Social and Solidarity Knowledge Hub for the Sustainable Development Goals.

REFLECTION

This was the final case study undertaken. I employed a maximum variation case selection strategy for this case study. The selection of Wales and Scotland (countries with similarly low numbers of community renewable energy district heating systems to Ireland) enabled me to corroborate the challenges that communities in Ireland encountered. It would have been easier to select cases from Denmark as I had collaborated with the principals of several Danish renewable energy co-operatives while hosting a seminar on renewable energy co-operatives in 2014. However, renewable energy district heating systems in Denmark tend to be large-scale and based in urban areas. From undertaking a literature review on community renewable energy district heating systems, I learned that Austria would be a better fit to Ireland, because renewable energy district heating systems in both countries are predominately based in rural areas. Consequently, I opted to select cases from Austria over Denmark. This selection provided me with the potential to glean information on how challenges to establishing and maintaining these initiatives can be resolved. Unfortunately, I do not speak German, and this was a barrier to me identifying and making contact with appropriate cases. Fortunately, a friend of mine, originally from Germany, was able to assist me by translating the text contained in several community renewable energy district heating systems' websites. This allowed my friend to make contact with several organisations. He was able to find out which of the principals were able to speak English. Based on his feedback, I selected one case from Austria. I also made contact with one of the leading academic researchers on district heating systems in Austria who agreed to participate in this piece of research. It was fortunate that this person had an affinity to Ireland having worked here for several years. Heendorsed the findings of my literature review that Austria has developed an effective intermediary support system.

This researcher emphasised the crucial role that the network of support agencies perform in ensuring that the district heating systems are designed and constructed to a high standard. He also made an introduction, on my behalf, to two support agencies. This was a critical intervention as I was not having any success in making contact directly with such organisations. His help demonstrated to me again how significant it is for a reputable figure to provide an introduction when a researcher does not know key individuals whom he or she would benefit greatly from interviewing.

I also learned how beneficial it was to be on the mailing list of global organisations. In this instance, the International Co-operative Alliance research centre emailed me a notification of a call for papers from the Social and Solidarity Economy Task Force of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. I submitted an abstract in response to the call for papers on *Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: What Role for Social and Solidarity Economy?* in December 2019. The word count for this paper forced me to exclude a number of themes from the original draft.

The reviewers required the least number of alterations of the five manuscripts submitted for publication. This could be attributed to taking on board the cumulative feedback from the reviewers of the other papers.

Although my paper was published on the UN Social and Solidarity Knowledge Hub for the Sustainable Development Goals, it was not one of the 40 papers selected for a United Nations Conference on Social and Solidarity Economy and the Sustainable Development Goals. A high proportion of the 40 papers focused on issues associated with the global south.

THE HEAT IS ON: THE CAPACITIES REQUIRED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF COMMUNITY-OWNED RENEWABLE ENERGY DISTRICT HEATING SYSTEMS IN IRELAND.

ABSTRACT

International reviews of countries' progress at tackling climate change show that Ireland is making small levels of progress on tackling issues associated with climate change. This paper will examine a theoretical framework, referred to as capacity analysis, to explain the capacities that need to be in place for the successful implementation of community-owned renewable energy district heating initiatives. The theoretical framework employed here is based on the 'conceptual framework' developed by Pringle which consists of four categories of capacity. The research methodology involves a case study with cases from Austria, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Wales and Scotland. The research indicates that the State needs to provide a range of supports for communities to establish community-owned renewable energy district heating initiatives. In addition, the State needs to implement a range of policies including the introduction of a carbon tax for the diffusion of these initiatives. The promoters of these initiatives need to be trusted within their respective communities. The research also points to the importance of engaging with a number of stakeholders. Dialogue with the residents living in the communities, where the community-owned renewable energy district heating initiatives are located, is also deemed a key factor for the establishment and maintenance of these initiatives.

Key words: biomass, communities, district heating, and renewable energy

6.1. **Introduction**

International reviews of the progress of different countries in tackling climate change show that Ireland is making small levels of progress on addressing issues associated with climate change (Kirby and O'Mahony, 2018). The 2018 Climate Change Performance Index puts Ireland in 49th place out of 56 countries identified in the study (Burck, Marten, Bals, and Höhne, 2017). The report has highlighted Ireland as being the worst performing country in Europe for taking action to tackle climate change. The report forecasts that Ireland has little probability of attaining its 2020 emission targets – this will result in Ireland being compelled to pay penalties to the EU for failure to meet the targets

Regarding energy security, Ireland had an import dependency of 85% in 2014, estimated to cost €5.7bn. In 2014, 97% of imports were fossil fuels (SEAI, 2017). Although Ireland has made modest progress in meeting its EU renewable electricity target, it has failed to increase the proportion of the heat energy from renewable sources. However, with the proper supports, communities have ample opportunities to generate heat from renewable energy resources in the form of biomass, geothermal and solar (Connolly *et al.* 2014). In doing so, it will contribute to the realisation of goal seven of the UN Sustainable Development Goals to ensure access to affordable, reliable and sustainable modern energy for all.

Unlike Ireland, in several European countries there has been a significant increase in the number of community initiatives that are engaging in renewable energy production (Walker, 2008; Bauwens, 2013). There is a wealth of literature focusing on the impact that these community initiatives are having, for example, in reducing energy consumption, augmenting community resilience and increasing awareness of environmental issues. However, compared to the level of research completed on the

impact of community initiatives, there has been a dearth of research undertaken to determine the contributing factors that lead to communities successfully implementing community renewable energy initiatives (Middlemiss and Parrish, 2009).

This paper will examine a theoretical framework, referred to as capacity analysis, to explain the capacities that need to be in place for the successful implementation of community renewable energy district heating initiatives. The first hypothesis being proposed is that communities require a range of capacities to be in place to establish community-owned renewable energy district heating systems. A second hypothesis is that the theoretical framework proposed by Pringle (2015) does not adequately explain the capacities required to establish community-owned renewable energy district heating systems.

District heating entails transferring thermal energy from a centralised source by a pipeline system to its end users (Gartland and Bruton, 2016). The heat used is metered at each building. District heating systems can come in different sizes.

- Communal heating systems heat single buildings with multiple users.
- Localised heating systems entail heating multiple buildings which are heated by a centralised heating system in a confined area or a campus.
- District heating systems provide heat to a neighbourhood or town.

The cases selected in this study are localised heating systems[24].

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[24] The term district heating systems tends to be the term used. Hence, in order to avoid confusion, district heating system will be used throughout this paper.

6.2. Literature review

The theoretical framework employed is based on the 'conceptual framework' developed by Pringle (2015), which consists of four categories of capacity.

Individual capacity is defined as the level of skills, values and finance that individuals within a community possess which can assist in the formation of community-owned renewable energy initiatives. Middlemiss and Parrish (2009) assert that the social context of an individual shapes their capacity to initiate community renewable energy schemes. Indeed, Robbins and Rowe (2002) hold that the capacity for individuals to act is linked to the resource availability within a community.

The structural capacity of a community is concerned with the culture and values pertaining to organisations both within and outside a community which have an influence on, or could be influenced by, other organisations within the community. Pringle (2015) includes politicians in this category. The presence of community organisations and supportive state and local development institutions can contribute to a range of barriers being overcome (Pringle, 2015).

Infrastructural capacities refer to the stock of infrastructure that is present in communities which are conducive to the drive to promote sustainability.

Finally, cultural capacity refers to the level of commitment and openness to sustainability that exists within a community. The cultural capacity is influenced by the level of commitment to the values associated within the community, and the historical attitude, towards sustainability. A high level of trust of community projects and state institutions within communities contributes to them becoming more receptive to the development of community renewable energy initiatives (Walker *et al*. 2010).

Middlemiss and Parrish (2009) assert that the above four capacities are interlinked and have an impact on one another.

In relation to the successful deployment of renewable energy heating systems, the State performs a central role through legislation and funding to facilitate the transition from heat generated by fossil fuels (Parajuli, 2012). Research from Denmark demonstrates the interdependence of the national and local governments in the transformation to renewable energy district heating systems (Sperling, Hveplund, and Vaad Mathiesen, 2011). Central government passed legislation requiring municipalities to develop heat plans which require them to shift to the production of heat from renewable heat via a range of technologies including district heating systems (Mathiesen *et al.* 2011). The establishment of support bodies at national and regional levels contribute to promoters having access to the technical expertise and capacity to effectively engage with a range of stakeholders (Rakos, 2001). The provision of a range of financial supports is also deemed critical to the establishment and diffusion of community district heating systems (Maldener, 2007).

District heating systems minimise the risk of households experiencing breakdown in the heating system producing their heat (Chittum and Ostergaard, 2014). The risk of households linked to a district heating system being charged excessive prices for their heat is minimised when the customers are empowered to form a consumer co-operative (Chittum and Ostergaard 2014). A willingness to participate in co-operatives is underpinned by a belief in co-operation and mutuality (Chittum and Ostergaard, 2014). However, in Ireland a culture of individualism prevails which presents a barrier to participation in these initiatives (Doyle, 2019).

The engagement of Energy Service Companies can minimise financial risk to the consumers of these initiatives (Chittum and Ostergaard, 2014).

In relation to the development of district heating systems in the United States of America, the presence of 'champions' is identified as being key to their implementation. However, organisations are required to initiate and develop them (Burch, 2010). In Austria, well respected residents of villages and the presence of accessible support agencies are important actors in the diffusion of district heating systems (Maldener, 2007). Two additional sets of actors are – regional politicians for defending grant funding for district heating systems and scientists in promoting state-of-the-art technology. The grants on offer to farmers to produce biomass fostered new forms of cooperation between farmers and residents of villages to develop district heating initiatives (Rakos, 2001).

In Denmark, resources are allocated to the assessment of costs of district heating systems at national and local levels for different stakeholders. The findings of these assessments give confidence to district heating initiatives (Chittum and Ostergaard, 2014).

6.3. **Methodology**

Cases were selected from several juridictions. The rationale for selecting Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales is that, similar to Ireland, there are only a small number of community -owned renewable energy district heating systems in each country. Unlike the Nordic countries, where they tend to be located in urban settings, the majority are located in rural communities. Austria was selected due to it having over 2,000 community-owned renewable energy district heating systems, of varying sizes, located in rural villages and towns. Therefore, as a result of selecting Austria, information

could be gleaned on effective policies and supports for the development and diffusion of community-owned renewable energy district heating initiatives in Ireland.

The cases selected from each country are detailed below

- Three Camphill Communities based in counties Kilkenny and Tipperary
- The Cloughjordan Ecovillage located in Tipperary
- Two Camphill communities located in counties Down and Tyrone
- A housing association in based in Argyll, Scotland
- The National Trust in Wales.
- An Austrian renewable energy co-operative.

Eighteen semi-structured interviews were held with:

- Key individuals who are associated with the above community-owned renewable energy district heating systems,
- Individuals who worked with support agencies from each of the selected countries, and
- Policy makers from all of the countries with the exception of Austria.

A list of trigger questions was used to guide the interviews, and some additional questions were posed, depending on each interviewee's responses. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Qualitative thematic analysis was employed to formulate themes from the transcripts (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The process entailed reading each of the transcriptions a number of times in order to become familiar with the data. The text of each of the transcriptions was then coded. The codes and associated data are categorised under the relevant themes.

6.4. **Findings**

The research findings pertain to interviews with individuals associated with community-owned renewable energy district heating initiatives (referred to as initiatives), support agencies and policy makers. A number of themes are employed to categorise the research findings. The themes are: credibility and trust; dialogue; collaboration; supports; expertise; sustainability; stakeholder engagement; policy and regulations; and benefits.

In addition to the above themes, interviewees cite a range of motives for the establishment of these initiatives. Environmental reasons are the most common motive among interviewees for their establishments.

> 'you know, we are interested in the environment, we want to do the right
>
> thing, that's always been part of our agenda in our communities.'

Other motives interviewees cite are: providing an income for local farmers; generating employment and strengthening fuel security.

The interviewees in each of the countries acknowledge various supports are required to establish and maintain these initiatives. The Austrian interviewees speak of how the capital that can be acquired from statutory grants facilitates the establishment of the initiatives. Initially, the State provided grants of 50% of the capital costs of the initiatives. This percentage was reduced to 30% as the number of initiatives established increased. The Irish interviewees, on both sides of the Border, mention how grant funding can be secured from the Leader programme and European programmes. In Scotland and Wales, a number of the interviewees are employed by a housing association and a national voluntary organisation. With the regard to the former, the interviewee states how housing associations can include the capital costs associated

with these initiatives in the overall funding required to construct social housing schemes. With regard to the latter, the interviewee from Wales states that the capital costs can be covered from the organisation's reserves. A number of the Irish interviewees emphasise how important it is to gain funding to complete a feasibility study. In Ireland, according to four interviewees, the lack of a state grant system compels community organisations to spend time sourcing funding from several sources. Consequently, the interviewees acknowledge that this is a barrier to establishing these initiatives.

The findings indicate that there are different types of supports in place in the various jurisdictions. In Austria, all of the interviewees emphasise the pivotal role that support agencies play in the successful establishment of these initiatives. The interviewees distinguish between the technical support provided by one set of support agencies.

> 'Now in Austria we have about 25 certified quality managers that are participating in the system. Normally they are technical experts, they are engineers and they supervise the design and operation process of the plants'.

> 'They kind of lead the promoters through the project by giving them advice on what steps to take and how to apply for the subsidies. They help them in setting up an economic analysis of the project and stuff like that.'

Another type of support agency provides stakeholder engagement expertise to enable community organisations to both navigate the State apparatus and engage with residents.

> 'keeping the project out of the sphere of politics is also an important support.'

In Ireland, according to three interviewees, there is a paucity of support available to community organisations committed to establishing renewable energy district heating systems. The same interviewees mention how there are only two dedicated support agencies providing support to communities interested in establishing these initiatives. A number of Irish interviewees comment how the insufficient number of support agencies in Ireland presents a barrier to the establishment of these initiatives.

> 'I was, ok I'm a practical person I can fix a tractor, there is no engineer from Austria on site and there was no support infrastructure, there was no dealership, there was nothing.'

According to interviewees in Ireland, Northern Ireland and Austria, the promoters of these initiatives need to have credibility and be trusted among residents in their respective communities. Several Austrian and Irish interviewees comment on how allocating time and resources to increasing awareness of the initiatives can contribute to strengthening trust towards the founders' efforts.

> 'We gained the residents' trust by having lots and lots of conversations and meetings and giving them the facts, and at the end of the day it does help if you have a very sound economic argument.'

The research indicates that expertise is derived from either within the organisation establishing the initiative or from external agencies. With exception of the majority of initiatives in Ireland and Wales, the interviewees mention how the expertise tends to be sourced from a range of support agencies. In Ireland, some of the founders state how they possess technical knowledge of how district heating systems operate from having either a mechanical or engineering professional background. Interviewees articulate how they augment their knowledge through operating these systems.

'I basically ended up doing it myself. You learned, you installed the whole project and managed the whole process. I engaged a welder to weld pipes properly and everything else we did ourselves bar the insulation of the pipes.'

With the exception of one initiative, individuals originally from Austria and Germany performed a pivotal role in sourcing information and in some instances, in providing leadership to the establishment of initiatives. Furthermore, interviewees point to how having these individuals allows information to be more easily obtained than if it is individuals without a fluency in German who are endeavouring to obtain the information.

The overwhelming majority of interviewees comment on how the lack of expertise required to establish these initiatives can result in a range of technical difficulties being encountered. Some of these difficulties may ultimately require the boiler and the network of pipes having to be replaced.

'One mistake we made was not to treat the water and so it was eaten partly by limescale.'

Three Austrian interviewees emphasise how the engineers employed in the support agencies ensure that there are no fundamental technical flaws in the design of the initiatives.

Interviewees indicate the importance of community organisations (that intend to establish these initiatives) either possessing or having access to expertise in: drafting grant applications; securing finance from a range of sources; financial management; community engagement; conflict resolution and understanding the planning process

Effective dialogue with a range of stakeholders is rated as being a key factor in the establishment and maintenance of these initiatives. Several Irish interviewees note the relevance of dialogue to address residents' fears and dissension against the establishment of the initiatives. Two interviewees point to dialogue with residents being effective when it focuses on the economic benefits associated with the systems over conventional fossil-fuelled heating systems.

'I think what made it happen in most cases was the economic argument.'

How dialogue with residents is conducted can have an impact on the outcomes. One interviewee points to the effectiveness of addressing issues by discussing residents' concerns in small groups prior to convening public community meetings.

'If you were in a one-to-one, like if I could have met these dissenting voice people on a one-to-one, I don't think I would have a big problem to convince them that the project was actually quite good. If I was to do it again I would have approached it on a smaller scale first and gradually build it up to the public meeting event then, you know, the public meeting is more about endorsing what has already been felt in the village.'

Three Irish interviewees are of the opinion that the willingness of households to engage in these initiatives is influenced by cultural factors. Two interviewees observe that Irish society does not have a value system that prioritises equality, or social solidarity.

They assert that this contributes to Irish communities being less receptive to the formation of these initiatives.

> 'It seems to be in the Irish psyche about, "I'll mind mine and you mind yours and I don't know about sharing it because it could get stolen on me or could, the whole thing could just go belly-up and I'll lose it all". It is a deep-rooted consequence of English oppression.'

Several interviewees from Ireland emphasise the need for managers of these initiatives to have the capacity to effectively manage stakeholder relationships.

Interviewees detail two approaches to initiatives attaining sustainability. One approach entails the promoters of the initiatives recruiting volunteers with the necessary commitment to the development of renewable energy and varying levels of knowledge of biomass heating systems. According to interviewees, the vast majority of the volunteers are originally from either Austria or Germany. Their ability to speak German and to read German literature pertaining to biomass district heating technology enables communication and negotiations to take place regarding the purchase of the boiler and the installation of the system.

> 'I did grow up in Germany so I knew I had a slight advantage in the terms that I could speak the lingo, read the literature and I knew a lot of technology.'

Furthermore, the same interviewees comment on how the installation of the biomass heating system is less expensive if undertaken by engaging local labour rather than via a specialist energy company. The other approach which is pursued in Austria, Scotland and Wales entails engaging a specialist installation company. The interviewees outline a number of risks associated with this approach. Firstly, the smaller-sized initiatives

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can attract installation companies that do not have the same level of expertise as larger companies. Secondly, a number of the smaller-sized installation companies can be more at risk of going into liquidation.[25]

'The company went bust hence we never got the solar farm aspect running; they left us with a half-installed system. We had to basically do a lot of retrofitting of the boiler house, the wiring was done very badly because it wasn't completed and then as the solar panels never worked and we had no comeback because the company just went out of business.'

One organisation in Wales has sufficient reserves to enable it to hire a team of specialists, including engineers, to develop their own initiatives. Indeed, it can cover the costs of the debt repayment from the renewable heat incentive payments.

In relation to the operational phase, a number of Irish and Welsh interviewees comment on how the financial sustainability of the initiative can be enhanced through the:

- Generation of electricity which can be sold to their customers or members.

- Sale of surplus electricity to the national grid.

- Sale of surplus gas to the national gas grid.

- Acquisition of income from taking food waste from restaurants and agri-food companies.

A number of the Irish, Scottish and Welsh interviewees comment on how risk can be minimised by outsourcing the operation of the initiative to a third party, referred to as

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[25] Three of the installation companies engaged went into liquidation. Two of these were engaged by Irish community organisations and the other by a Scottish housing association.

an energy service company (ESCO). A Scottish interviewee mentions how entering into an ESCO arrangement allows its organisation to focus on fulfilling its core mission.

> 'We don't have the headache because we're not an energy supplier. Although we have gained a lot of knowledge in biomass, it is not our bread and butter.'

Interviewees from Austria, Wales and Scotland acknowledge that it is not sufficient to cover operational costs. Instead, they note a sufficient return on investment needs to be generated to allow sufficient levels of reserves to be amassed for contingencies and to replace the boiler or anaerobic digestor when its lifespan has been completed.

> 'We need at least a 7% return on it but I think we're now down to 4% return on projects so they can't be net drains on the charity, they have to make money.'

A number of the Irish interviewees criticised aspects of the regulatory environment and policies which impact on the initiatives.

- The difficulty in getting connected to the electricity grid in Ireland.
- Unlike utility companies, the installers of district heating systems do not have leave way status.
- Building regulations emphasise the installation of renewable energy as opposed to zero carbon measures.
- Local authorities are not obliged to undertake heat plans.
- The lack of a support system across the country to provide community organisations with the requisite expertise.

- The absence of a national capital investment programme to contribute to the costs of purchasing the infrastructure and to cover the installation costs.

The majority of interviewees are of the opinion that providing grants towards the capital costs associated with these initiatives is a more effective and sustainable approach to assist community organisations to embrace renewable energy district heating systems. In particular, a leading Austrian expert and pioneer in district heating states that heat incentives lead some projects being initiated for dubious motives.

> '...Because it was managed in a way that was creating perverse incentives. The plants were then constructed in a way to maximise the subsidies without any regard to what the actual outcome was and as if it was just to heat air.'

'It makes a lot of sense to keep subsidies out of generation, I think that the UK system is the most ridiculous system I've ever seen in supporting renewable heat'.

The same interviewee draws attention to the experience in Austria where in the first decade of installing district heating systems, significant difficulties were encountered with the quality of the installations. The introduction of management systems as part of the requirement for community organisations receiving funding addressed this difficulty.

'I did my PhD on the topic of community district heating about twenty years

ago and at that time about 150 projects had been established. I did a

technical appraisal of them and I found that they were expensive to install

and inefficient to operate. After the appraisal, a quality management system

was introduced which basically consists of a quality manager who is

working side by side with the planner of project who is doing the technical

planning.'

Although the motives for the promoters of these initiatives are varied, a large number of

interviewees are of the opinion that residents will only embrace heat supplied by these

initiatives if it does not require them to spend more money than heating their homes via

fossil fuels.

Hence the introduction of a carbon tax, at the required level, which makes biomass

heating systems more affordable than obtaining heat from fossil fuels is deemed as the

most important policy.

'There has to be a commitment to kind of steer the development away from

natural gas towards local bio-energy use. The introduction of a high carbon

tax is fundamental to make natural gas more expensive to use.'

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment[26], according to two policy makers, are in the process of implementing a range of policies in relation to the diffusion of these initiatives.

- The Energy White Paper commits to developing a policy framework to encourage the development of district heating in Ireland. An inter-Departmental and inter-agency Working Group, chaired by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, has been established to develop this framework.

- The policy measures designed to support improved energy sustainability in the heat sector were discussed. These include the energy efficiency grants for homes which are operated by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). The grants promote a "fabric first" approach which encourages householders to first reduce heat losses, making it easier and cheaper to heat a home.

- Supports for the non-domestic sector include the Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH). The scheme is designed to financially support the adoption of renewable heating systems by commercial, industrial, agricultural, district heating and other non-domestic heat users at sites not covered by the EU Emissions Trading System. The first phase of the SSRH, an installation grant for heat pumps, opened for applications on 12 September 2018. This phase of the scheme will support ground, air and

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[26] The Irish Government's department which has responsibility for formulating energy policy and addressing climate change

water source electric heat pump installations providing grant-aid of up to 30% of the installation cost. The first phase of the scheme was implemented under the state aid General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) and did not require prior approval from the European Commission.

- The second phase of the scheme, an operational support for biomass boilers and anaerobic digestion heating systems, cannot be accommodated within the provisions of the GBER and, therefore, must follow the full state aid notification process. It is intended to open the second phase of the SSRH for applications early in 2019, subject to the State aid process. The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment is engaging with the European Commission in order to obtain this approval.

- Part L of the Building Regulations, which come within the remit of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, sets out the renewable energy requirements for new and refurbished buildings.

- The Climate Action Fund is one of the four funds established under the National Development Plan 2018-2027 as part of Project Ireland 2040.

6.5. Discussion and conclusion

As Austria has over 2,000 community-owned renewable energy district heating systems, and other countries have fewer than 20 each, these countries can learn lessons from how Austria supports communities to establish and maintain these initiatives. In relation to the role of the State, grants towards the costs of the purchase of the boiler and installation of the pipe network is pivotal to community organisations being in a position to finance the construction of these initiatives. Austrian interviewees are of the opinion that heat subsidies are not sustainable. The State should also provide feasibility

study-funding to the promoters of these initiatives to provide evidence of the cost savings associated with these heating systems. The findings could be used to convince residents of the benefits of supporting such initiatives.

The findings indicate that organisations developing these initiatives should secure the necessary expertise in three ways. The majority of Irish initiatives acquired their expertise from developing the systems. Indeed, the promoters of the Irish initiatives are motivated to creating sustainable communities. Therefore, the Irish cases are probably not typical of Irish communities in general as they do not possess residents who would have that level of motivation. The Welsh case, a national voluntary organisation, is characterised by having a subsidiary company to provide the necessary expertise. The third approach, as pertains to Austria, entails the State resourcing a network of regional support agencies charged with supporting community organisations to develop these initiatives. Similar to Austria, the other countries should develop support agencies, on a regional basis, to provide communities with the relevant expertise to be in a position to establish and maintain these initiatives. Indeed, the Austrian practice of not releasing grant funding to cover the capital costs associated with these initiatives unless a community organisation engages the designated technical support agency should be state policy in Ireland.

Pringle's (2015) theoretical framework focuses on the capacities required for the successful implementation of community renewable energy projects (which includes renewable energy co-operatives) in rural settings. Although this is a robust framework, when applied to Irish communities it may require some modification to detail the capacities required to successfully implement these initiatives. With regard to individual capacity, urban communities, particularly marginalised communities, tend to have a smaller cohort of individuals with the skills, knowledge and values to initiate

community renewable energy co-operatives. This could have repercussions for the amount of time these individuals need to invest for the initiative to become operational. Community leaders could become over-committed which could lead to personal repercussions, due to their enthusiasm (Seyfang, 2007). Therefore, the framework could be adjusted to specify the importance of empowering novice members. With regard to social capital, some communities, particularly socio-economically marginalised neighbourhoods, may not have the knowledge about how to engage with the local government system and local development organisations, in order to secure grant funding.

In relation to cultural capacity, the majority of communities would not have a history of developing these initiatives, and therefore values associated with their establishment should be broadened. Perhaps the greatest challenge in the development of these initiatives in Ireland is to address the pervasive culture of individualism and consumerism which has taken root in Irish society (Kirby, 2010). This cultural change will require a number of interventions, over a lengthy period of time, by community organisations, trade unions and progressive political parties to demonstrate that another Ireland is possible where the benefits of the economy are not unequally apportioned on the basis of class. One potentially effective measure would be to deliver an awareness campaign in schools, youth organisations, community organisations and third level institutions on the potency of social enterprise in addressing the many socio-economic issues Ireland is encountering.

The research findings allude to these initiatives encountering a number of challenges. Therefore, resilience within the governance structure of these initiatives could be included as a component of the theoretical framework.

The theoretical framework does not place much weight on the importance of community engagement.

In addition, the framework also does not place much emphasis on the values that exist among residents as opposed to those that pertain to individuals active among community organisations. This is an important factor when one considers the level of residents' resistance in Ireland to the installation of renewable energy technology.

There is a wealth of research which outlines the societal benefits of renewable energy initiatives (Tahram 2015). Therefore, it is incumbent on the Irish State to develop policies in assisting communities to establish these initiatives. These policy areas include procurement, legislative reform including residential planning regulations, finance and access to the national grid.

The economic motive is deemed an important driver of residents embracing these initiatives. The introduction of a carbon tax at a level which would make heat from biomass-fuelled initiatives comparable in price to heat derived from fossil fuels would be a significant step forward.

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7. CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the research presented above is considered under a number of headings: summary of the findings, the contribution to knowledge (including the development of a conceptual framework) and contribution to practice. The penultimate section outlines the limitations of the research and areas of potential future research. The chapter concludes by highlighting that the research aim and questions have been answered in chapters 2 to 6.

7.1. Summary of findings

Sustainable development initiatives are social enterprises with an environmental focus. The development of a vibrant social enterprise sector in Ireland has been stymied because of interwoven economic, political and cultural factors. These factors have been particularly acute in the urban context. The successful development of sustainable development initiatives is predicated on a combination of factors. These include:

- The presence of leaders with a range of interpersonal and technical expertise

- The capacity and willingness of these leaders to engage with their communities

- The support of state agencies

- The presence of state agency champions who are committed to securing support for sustainable development initiatives from their respective agencies

- Access to land and appropriate facilities

- The existence of a benign policy framework.

7.2. Contribution to knowledge

7.2.1.   Development of a conceptual framework

The Community Capital Framework developed by Emery and Flora (2006) strongly informs Pringle's theoretical framework (2015). Pringles's framework focuses on the individual, structural, cultural and infrastructural capacities required for the successful implementation of community renewable energy projects (which includes renewable energy co-operatives) in rural settings. Although this is a robust framework, when applied to Irish communities it requires some modification to detail the capacities required to successfully implement sustainable development initiatives. The shortcomings can be common to the four types of sustainable development initiatives or specific to one particular category.

With regard to individual capacity, the conceptual framework does not sufficiently outline the range of skills required for effective leadership. Urban communities, particularly marginalised communities, tend to have a smaller cohort of individuals with the skills, knowledge and values to initiate community renewable energy projects. This could have repercussions for the amount of time these individuals need to invest to ensure that the co-operative become operational. Community leaders could become over-committed which could lead to personal repercussions, due to their enthusiasm (Seyfang, 2007). Some communities, particularly socio-economically marginalised ones, may not have leaders with the knowledge of how to engage with the local government system in order to secure both land and other resources critical to the establishment of reuse social enterprises. Pringle's category of individual capacity needs to be broadened to include leadership, which must have both the ability and willingness to engage with the community (in which the sustainable development initiative is located), to attract new members, and to possess governance expertise.

With regard to structural capacity, the research endorses the relevance of structural capacity insofar as local authorities and local development companies perform a vital role in allocating land and other resources to community gardens. Based on the research findings, the framework needs to acknowledge the role of a state agency champion who promotes the interests of sustainable development initiatives among state agencies (EPA, 2020). In addition, the framework fails to take into account the varying levels of commitment from local authorities to sustainable development initiatives.

In relation to infrastructural capacity, given that the demand for land is higher in urban than in rural settings, the framework needs to take account of the challenges in securing land and facilities to locate the operations of sustainable development initiatives.

With regard to cultural capacity, the majority of communities would not have experience and track record of developing sustainable development initiatives. The values underpinning these initiatives tend to include self-sufficiency, environmental sustainability and ecological sustainability. However, these values tend not to be prevalent in many Irish communities. Therefore the values associated with the establishment of sustainable development initiatives need to be broadened to include those that focus on community solidarity, as these values arise in urban community gardens and are important in their development.

Neither Emery and Flora's nor Pringle's frameworks take account of a number of additional capacities that are required, including management, innovation, and capacities that change over time.

With regard to management capacity, as detailed in the literature review, managers in sustainable development initiatives need to possess a wider range of attributes than their

counterparts in investor-owned companies to be effective (Ridley-Duff, 2016; Bull, 2015; Nicholls, 2006).

The research finds that innovation within sustainable development initiatives is important in order to address the barriers encountered. For example, reuse social enterprises need to be innovative in order to develop new markets for their 'products' in order to achieve financial sustainability. In this context, innovation needs to be incorporated into an understanding of such initiatives. Sustainable development initiatives encounter a number of challenges, for example, with regard to accessing appropriate facilities to locate their operations, gaining access to the electricity grid, and adhering to regulatory frameworks. Therefore, resilience within the governance structure of sustainable development initiatives, particularly, renewable energy co-operatives, should be incorporated as a component of a theoretical framework.

Pringle's framework takes account of the status of capacities at one moment in time. However, the research detailed above, particulary the cases of community gardens and renewable energy, indicates that capacities augment over time. Accordingly, sustainable development initiatives often require a range of external supports at the start-up phase when they tend not to have amassed the experience and expertise to successfully govern and operate them. The case studies show how support agencies and intermediaries can perform a pivotal role in augmenting the expertise of the leadership of sustainable development initiatives.

As outlined above, while Emery and Flora's and Pringle's frameworks provide useful starting points, the research found signicant gaps in their applicability. These include the capacity and willingness of the leadership to engage with their communities,

management capacity, access to land and facilities, and the importance of state agency champions. In addition, Pringle's framework does not take into account temporality.

As a result, Pringle's framework, while useful, is not sufficient to provide a detailed explanation of the factors which contribute to the success of sutainable development initiatives. Therefore it is necessary to devise a more robust conceptual framework. The findings of the papers support the conceptual framework outlined below. Indeed, it is a robust conceptual framework which could be employed in further research[27].


Figure 7.1 New Theoretical Framework, Author (2019)

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[27] The components in yellow represent my additions to the conceptual framework

7.2.2.　　　Contribution to practice

The key findings are categorised under a number of themes.

Historical context

In the chapter, *Socialising Economic Development in Ireland: Social Enterprise an Untapped Resource*, the research findings arising from a review of the literature and from interviews with academics, staff of co-operatives and policy-makers point to a number of economic, political and socio-cultural processes that have stymied social enterprise development in Ireland since the 1800s. One of these constraints has been the ideological disposition, since the foundation of the State, of successive Irish governments towards the private sector. Ó Broin (2017, p.46) asserts that 'Irish public policy retains a very strong and distinct pro-private enterprise bias'. Furthermore, the research findings point to social enterprises in Ireland being undervalued by the majority of state agencies, policy-makers and political parties. Policy-makers tend to afford them a residual role in providing services to marginalised communities and providing employment to those most distant from the labour market (Doyle, 2017). Perhaps one of the issues of most concern is the belief among some senior civil servants that co-operatives are less stable entities than investor-owned enterprises. This belief arises from co-operatives being democratic entities which civil servants consider can undermine their governance.

This under-valuing of social enterprises has resulted in the social economy being underdeveloped in Ireland compared to other EU member states (Ó Broin, 2017). Felber (2015) attributes this situation persisting due to the ideological disposition of politicians and policy-makers. The staff of co-operatives and a policy-maker observe that Irish society does not have a value system that prioritises equality or social

solidarity. Instead, charitable interventions are the favoured approach. The above issues will need to be addressed if social enterprises are to play a more central role in addressing the many issues that Irish society is encountering such as the dependence on fossil fuels.

Furthermore, the ability to implement policies is constrained by institutional frameworks (Crouch, 2005). The Irish State has prioritised meeting market needs over addressing inequality (Smith, 2005). A number of other European countries with different models of capitalism, such as Germany and Italy, have prioritised supporting their respective social enterprise sectors (Restakis, 2005). Compared to a number of European states, the Irish State has neglected supporting the development of the social economy in Ireland (Doyle, 2019). However, section 1.5.5 highlights that social enterprise development can be vibrant in modern liberal democracies.

Motivation

At the outset in undertaking the research, the researcher framed a hypothesis which stated that the background of the promoters of sustainable development initiatives is relevant in that there is a perception that a high proportion have environmental motives in establishing sustainable development intiatives. However, the research finds that motives of promoters are irrelevant in that there are a range of motives in establishing SDIs. Indeed, the dominant motive is the fulfilment of social objectives including job creation and training.

The research points to community gardens making a minimal contribution to the economic sustainability of a locality. Specifically, unlike community gardens in some other jurisdictions, their mission does not seem to prioritise contributing to the production of sustainable food or addressing food poverty. Indeed, if community

initiatives whose primary focus is to produce food (referred to as community agriculture) flourish in Ireland, then it will require a leadership which has a different set of priorities to the existing leadership of community gardens. In particular, the leadership of community agriculture initiatives will require financial management and marketing expertise.

Leadership

The four pieces of research on sustainable development initiatives point to different leadership contexts. Within the sustainable development initiatives, individuals (predominately board directors) who can maintain the strategic direction of the organisation are deemed to be critical to the organisation achieving its objectives. The research points to there being two contrasting points of view on the recruitment of directors. One perspective speaks of these directors having the requisite expertise prior to participating on a board. The other perspective considers that the role of the social enterprise is to provide community representatives with the necessary skills and expertise to effectively participate on a board. By undertaking the latter course of action, this can contribute to boards of social enterprises achieving balanced representation. This approach could be supported by resourcing community development organisations, which are independent of the State, to undertake capacity building with residents to ensure that they have the expertise, skills and values to become effective directors of sustainable development initiatives. The State should resource this function. The community development organisations would need to secure individuals with financial and marketing expertise to deliver training in these areas – this expertise could be sourced from the co-operative movement or the social housing sector in Ireland.

Management

The research highlights the crucial role that the manager performs in engaging with state agencies, the community and other stakeholders. Effective managers are committed, empathic, inclusive, influential and proactive. This is consistent with the literature which highlights that the managers of social enterprises require a wider and more diverse array of skills to deal with the more varied challenges that social enterprises encounter (Moreau and Mertens, 2013) compared with their counterparts in investor-owned enterprises. This has implications for policy makers on several fronts. Firstly, training and educational programmes designed for managers employed in investor-owned companies are not suited to meeting the training and educational needs of managers employed in sustainable development intiatitives. Instead, specifically designed programmes need to acknowledge the required attributes of managers of sustainable development initiatives and equip them with the skills and expertise to effectively manage these initiatives. Secondly, a number of interviewees commented on the remuneration packages that managers and staff of sustainable development initiatives are gaining is far lower than their counterparts in investor-owned companies.[28] If sustainable development initiatives are to play a central role in the transition to a more sustainable society, then the issue of pay differentials in Ireland will require further research.

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[28] This was a research finding in two of the case studies but the peer reviewers recommended that it be omitted.

Support

There is a lack of support structures available to communities who wish to establish sustainable development initiatives. Indeed, a network of support agencies, similar to Austria, Denmark and Gerrmany, should be afforded the role of supporting sustainable development initiatives, particularly in the areas of renewable energy.These should have a regional mandate, and should be responsible for providing a range of relevant technical and non-technical supports to sustainable development initiatives. In addition, sustainable development iniatiatives should not receive state grant funding unless they sign a contract to receive support from state appointed organisations to develop their sustainable development initiatives. This would minimise the likelihood of them encountering technical issues and would ensure that the State gains value for money.

Land use

To address the difficulties that sustainable development initiatives encounter in accessing land and buildings, the Department Housing, Planning and Local Government should mandate local authorities to allocate land for sustainable development initiatives. Local authorities should be instructed to allocate vacant buildings, particularly in rural areas, to accommodate sustainable development initiatives' operations. In urban areas, where public space is a premium, local authorities should be required to allocate tracts of land for sustainable development initiatives. To facilitate this process, local authorities should be obliged to undertake an audit of vacant space in their catchment area. This information should be made available.

The roof tops of public buildings and local authority flat complexes in inner city areas, could be one option to accommodate the land needs of sustainable development initiatives.

Broadening support for sustainable development initiatives

Quebec and Emiliana Romagna demonstrate that the trade union movement and the community sector can perform a pivotal role in the development of a vibrant social enterprise sector. Accordingly, they should be approached to actively support and protect the growth of social enterprise sector in Ireland, including sustainable development initiatives.

The State could reverse its policy decision of withdrawing funding from community development projects. One of the criteria of receiving funding could be to assist communities to form sustainable development initiatives. In so doing, communities with limited individual capacity could be empowered to establish their own sustainable development initiatives. This would also lead to communities have greater ownership of the process (Powell and Geoghegan, 2004), thereby reducing resistance to the deployment of renewable energy installations (Walker and McFadyen, 2010).

Research fatigue

An important research finding for all of the pieces of research, particularly for the renewable energy case study, is that committee members state that they are inundated with requests to participate in research. In addition, some interviewees comment on the relevance of research, particularly at undergraduate level. This was a contributing factor in the researcher not being granted access to the boards of some sustainable development initiatives, and in a number of directors declining to be interviewed.

Innovative policies

In relation to the reuse case study, the Irish State should implement policies that assist communities to establish reuse social enterprises. These include the area of social

procurement and policies that adjust the tax system to encourage reuse. In addition, a proportion of the Community Services Programme budget could be reserved for the establishment of reuse social enterprises.

The renewable energy co-operatives case study recommends that the Irish State develop policies in assisting communities to establish community renewable energy co-operatives. These policy areas include social procurement, legislative reform, finance and access to the national grid.

With regard to the district heating case study, the introduction of a carbon tax at a level which would make heat from biomass-fuelled initiatives comparable in price to heat derived from fossil fuels should be prioritised over implementing heat incentives. The introduction of a carbon tax should be coupled with grant funding to community co-operatives, as a contribution towards the costs of purchasing the plant associated with a district heating system.

Lateral decision-making structures

Lateral decision-making structures are critical to the effective operation of sustainable development initiatives that are exclusively reliant on volunteer input, most notably community gardens. Accordingly, organsiations that provide support to these entities should be cognisant of this, and provide experiential training to them so that they have the capacity to be governed by employing lateral decision-making structures.

7.3. **Limitations of research**

The limitations of the research are categorised according to broader limitations and specific limitations.

7.3.1. Broader Limitations

Firstly, due to the word count associated with all of the publications, I was forced to delete some of the findings from chapter 2 and each of the case studies. This situation was further compounded by the peer reviewers suggesting that a number of themes and associated findings be removed. I believe that there was some findings and insights that were not included. For instance, the lack of state support is a barrier to diffusion of community-owned district heating in a number jurisdictions. However, municipal authorities in Austria have played a pivotal role in increasing awareness of community-owned district initiatives among rural communities. This was achieved through developing relationhips with trusted and credible residents. Another finding was that community support for community-owned renewable energy installations could be achieved through showing households the cost savings that could be secured from deriving their heat and power from renewable sources. Networks of community-owned renewable energy initiatives have proven effective in sharing best practice and influencing relevant state policy.

Secondly, a number of the committee members and directors [29] of sustainable development initiatives declined to be interviewed largely due to the time they devote to undertaking tasks associated with being a committee or board member.

Thirdly, due to time constraints of doing a PhD on a part-time basis, I was restricted in who I could interview for the case studies. Consequently, I decided to focus on interviewing the principals of sustainable development initiatives, representatives of support agencies, relevant local authority officials, senior policy makers and staff of support agencies. I was not in a position to interview the wider membership of sustainable development initiatives or their non-management staff.

Finally, the journals had different instructions for whether nor not the questions employed in the interviews and focus groups were included at the end of the journal article. To address this inconsistency, the set of questions are included in the appendices.

7.3.2.   Specific limitations

In relation to chapter 4, the boards of directors and committees of the cases selected declined to participate in focus groups. This was disappointing as I believe that I would have got an additional perspective from these focus groups.

Regarding chapter 6, I was not able to conduct the interviews with representatives of international cases in person, due to time constraints. This could have affected the richness of the data that was collected. In addition, I do not speak German which was a

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[29]Menbers of the boards of directors of companies limited by guarantee are referred to as directors. The members of the committees of Industrial Provident Societies are referred to as committee members.

barrier to me identifying and making contact with appropriate cases. I was also restricted to interviewing individuals who could speak English.

7.4. Future research

The research findings indicate that the case studies constitute significant areas of activity that we know very little about. In addition, the recent devised European Green Deal (2019) and the Programe for Government (2020) detail significant investment in these areas. Accordingly, I believe that the topics below should form the basis of future research.

- Undertake a study which measures the impact of sustainable development initiatives. This would provide advocacy organisations with the evidence to advocate for policies and supports to assist communities to establish sustainable development initiatives. The Department of Rural and Community Development is supportive of such a recommendation.

- Undertake a piece of research which examines policy support frameworks across several EU states.

- Complete research to identify the factors that would encourage residents to engage in sustainable development initiatives.

- Undertake research to trial funding models from other EU countries that would enable sustainable development initiatives to raise equity capital without having to have recourse to debt finance (e.g. community share schemes).

- There is very little action research carried out in the area of sustainable development initiatives. To address this, action research could be undertaken in this area. One topic could be to document the process

involved in establishing renewable energy projects, particularly in urban centres, including anaerobic digestors. This would provide community organisations and policy-makers with a template for countering local resistance to the development of these initiatives.

- Examine pay differentials between the staff of sustainable development initiatives and investor-owned companies.

If completed, the above research would both strengthen practitioners' understanding of how to develop sustainable development initiatives and would also inform policy makers' understanding of what constitutes effective policies to support the development of sustainable development initiatives in Ireland.

7.5. Research aim

The table below indicates what research questions are answered by each of the chapters (excluding chapters 1 and 7).

Table 7.1 Papers address research questions		
Chapter (paper)	**Research question**	**Chapter number**
In the Garden: Capacities that contribute to communities establishing community gardens	Why do some communities engage in sustainable development initiatives[30] and not others? (research question 1) What capacities are present and how do they contribute to some communities being more receptive than others to the maintenance of sustainable development initiatives in Ireland? (research question 2) Does the rationale for communities establishing sustainable development initiatives impact on the outcomes of these initiatives? (research question 4)	Chapter 3
A new era for reuse social enterprises in Ireland? The capacities required for achieving sustainability	Why do some communities engage in sustainable development initiatives and not others? (research question 1) What capacities are present and how do they contribute to some communities being more receptive than others to the maintenance of sustainable development initiatives in Ireland? (research question 2) Does the rationale for communities establishing sustainable development initiatives impact on the outcomes of these initiatives? (research question 4)	Chapter 4
A new epoch for community renewable energy co-operatives in Ireland? Factors required for their implementation	Why do some communities engage in sustainable development initiatives and not others? (research question 1) What capacities are present and how do they contribute to some communities being more receptive than others to the maintenance of sustainable development initiatives in Ireland? (research question 2) Does the rationale for communities establishing sustainable development initiatives impact on the outcomes of these initiatives? (research question 4)	Chapter 5
The heat is on: The capacities required for the establishment of community-owned renewable energy district heating systems in Ireland	Why do some communities engage in sustainable development initiatives and not others? (research question 1) What capacities are present and how do they contribute to some communities being more receptive than others to the maintenance of sustainable development initiatives in Ireland? (research question 2) What are the differences between the successful and unsuccessful implementation of sustainable development initiatives in Ireland? (research question 3) Does the rationale for communities establishing sustainable development initiatives impact on the outcomes of these initiatives? (research question 4)	Chapter 6

[30] Sustainable development initiatives include energy, food and up-cycling initiatives. Transport initiatives are also a component of sustainable development initiatives but are not covered in this study.

The thesis answers the research questions above. In addition, it addresses the research aim detailed in section 1.2, as outlined in the core question below:

> What are the key factors that lead to the successful development of sustainable development initiatives that contribute to the transition for the current model of local development to a more socially and environmentally model in Ireland?

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APPENDICES

The sets of trigger questions employed in each of the case studies are outlined below.

The questions used in chapter 2 are included as an appendix within chapter 2.

Chapter 3- In the garden: capacities that contribute to communtities establishing community gardens

The core questions posed to the principals of community gardens, both in semi-structured interviews and focus groups, were as follows.

- How did the concept of a community garden in your locality come about?

- What were the motivating factors for individuals to develop a community garden?

- What is the primary focus of the community garden? (social, economic, education regarding environment)

- What were the essential skills/expertise required to transform the community garden from a concept to growing food?

- What were the resources required to establish the community garden?

- Did you require resources and supports from outside your community?

- What were the challenges encountered in establishing the community garden? How were these overcome?

- Has the community developed a formal organisational structure? What is the criteria for membership?

The questions below formed the basis of the semi-structured interviews with representatives of both state agencies and support bodies.

- How did you become aware of the community garden promoters were seeing resources to develop a community garden?

- What supports or resources did your organisation provide to community gardens?

- What were the reasons for your organisation providing support and resources to the promoters of community gardens?

- Did your provision of resources for the concept of a community garden gain wider support from other organisations? If not, how were the challenges surmounted?

- Does your organisation have a transparent system for the promotion and allocation of resources for community groups interested in establishing community gardens?

- What changes, if any, within how your organisation allocates resources could facilitate the establishment of community garden in other urban areas?

Chapter 4 – A new era for reuse social enterprises in Ireland? The capacities required for achieving sustainability

The core questions posed to the directors and managers of reuse social enterprises, both in semi-structured interviews and focus groups, were as follows.

- How did the concept of your reuse social enterprise come about?

- What were the motivating factors for individuals to develop this social enterprise? Was there divergence in motivations? If so, how was this addressed?

- What is the primary focus of the reuse social enterprise? (social, economic, education regarding environment)

- What were the essential skills/expertise required to transform the concept to re-recycling and or re-using discarded items?

  What were the resources required to establish the social enterprise? Did you require resources and supports from outside your community?

- What were the challenges encountered in establishing the social enterprise? How were these overcome?

- What are the challenges in ensuring your social enterprise fulfils its objectives?

- Could you outline your organisational structure? What do you consider its strengths and limitations?

- Do you believe that re-use social enterprises can make a contribution to the establishment of the circular economy in Ireland? If so, what policies/changes need to be implemented for this to happen?

Chapter 5 – New epoch for community renewable energy co-operatives in Ireland? Factors required for their implementation

The core questions posed to the committee members of renewable energy co-operatives, both in semi-structured interviews and focus groups, were as follows.

- How did the idea for a renewable energy co-operative emerge?

- What were the motivating factors for individuals to develop a renewable energy co-operative in your locality?

- What was the reasons for embracing a co-operative structure as opposed to a different organisational structure?

- What is the primary focus of the renewable energy co-operative (economic, education regarding environment, ecological)? What were the essential skills/expertise required to transform the idea for a renewable energy co-operative from a concept to generating energy?

- What were the resources required to establish the renewable energy co-operative?

- Did you require resources and supports from outside your community? If so, what were they? Where did you source them? How did you source them?

- What were the challenges encountered in establishing the co-operative? How were these overcome?

- Has the community developed a formal organisational structure? What is the criteria for membership?

The questions below were used solely for planning officials in a local authority.

- How did you become aware that the renewable energy co-operative was seeking planning permission or supports? (will vary question depending on who is being interviewed i.e. planning permission for planning officials)

- From your experience, what are the main difficulties or barriers, if any, that renewable energy co-operatives encounter in securing planning permission?

- How can these difficulties or challenges or barriers be surmounted?

- Do local authorities have any role in addressing these difficulties or challenges? If so, could you specify what they are?

- What advice, if any, would you give to renewable energy co-operatives in seeking planning permission?

- What policy/policies or aspect of the regulatory framework do you believe, if introduced, would augment the capacity of communities to develop successful renewable energy co-operatives?

The questions used solely for support agency personnel were as follows.

- What areas of expertise did you consider the main proponents of the renewable energy co-operative possessed to enable it to be in a position to generate renewable energy? What, if any, did you consider to be the shortcomings in expertise and capacity amongst the proponents?

- What resources or supports did your agency provide to the renewable energy co-operative/promoters of the renewable energy co-operative (if the co-operative was not incorporated)?

- What were the reasons for your agency providing support to the renewable energy co-operative/promoters of the renewable energy co-operative?

- What are the gaps in supports and resources, if any, that currently exist for renewable energy co-operatives to be in a position to become sustainable?

- What organisation is best placed to address these gaps in supports and provide these resources?

- What policy/policies or aspect of the regulatory framework do you believe, if introduced, would augment the capacity of communities to develop successful renewable energy co-operatives?

Chapter 6 - The heat is on: The capacities required for the establishment and sustainability of community-owned renewable energy district heating systems in Ireland

The core questions posed to the principals of community renewable energy district heating initiatives, both in semi-structured interviews and focus groups, were as follows.

- How did the idea for a renewable energy district heating system come about?

- What were the motivating factors for individuals to develop a renewable energy district heating system in your locality?

- What is the primary focus of the renewable energy district heating system? (economic, education regarding environment, ecological)

- What were the essential skills/expertise required to transform the idea for a renewable energy district heating system from a concept to generating energy?

- What were the resources required to establish the renewable energy district heating system?

- Did you require resources and supports from outside your community? If so, what were they? Where did you source them? How did you source them?

- What were the challenges encountered in establishing the renewable energy district heating system? How were these overcome?

- Has a formal organisational structure been developed? Could you outline the structure? What were the reasons for opting for this structure?

The core questions posed to staff of support agencies were as follows.

- What areas of expertise do you consider the founders of community-owned renewable energy district heating system, in Ireland, require to establish their district heating systems? What, if any, do you consider to be the shortcomings in expertise and capacity amongst the founding members of community-owned district heating systems both in your catchment area and nationally?

- Does your energy agency provide supports to community-owned renewable energy district heating initiatives? If so, what resources or supports does it provide to community-owned renewable energy district heating systems?

- What are the reasons for your agency providing support to the principals of community-owned renewable energy district heating systems?

- What are the gaps in supports and resources, if any, for community-based renewable energy district heating systems, both in your catchment area and nationally, to be in a position to become sustainable?

- What organisation(s) is best placed to address these gaps in supports and provide these resources?

- What is/are the key policy/policies that currently support the establishment of community-based district heating systems in Ireland?

- What additional policy/policies or aspect of the regulatory framework do you believe, if introduced, would augment the capacity of communities to develop successful renewable energy district heating systems in Ireland?

- What are the supports that need to be introduced to assist communities to establish community-owned renewable energy district heating systems in Ireland?

The following were the core questions posed to senior policy makers.

- What areas of expertise do you consider the founders of community-owned renewable energy district heating system, in Ireland, require to establish their district heating systems? What, if any, do you consider to be the shortcomings in expertise and capacity amongst the founding members of community-owned district heating systems in Ireland?

- Does the Irish Government resource the provision of supports to community-owned renewable energy district heating initiatives? If so, what resources or support are provided to community-owned renewable energy district heating systems?

- What are the reasons for the Irish Government allocating resources for the provision of support to the principals of community-owned renewable energy district heating systems?

- What are the gaps in supports and resources, if any, for community-based renewable energy district heating systems, in Ireland, to be in a position to become sustainable?

- What organisation(s) is best placed to address these gaps in supports and provide these resources?

- What is/are the key policy/policies that currently support the establishment of community-based district heating systems in Ireland?

- What additional policy/policies or aspect of the regulatory framework do you believe, if introduced, would augment the capacity of communities to develop successful renewable energy district heating systems in Ireland?

- Are there any additional supports that need to be introduced to assist communities to establish community-owned renewable energy district heating systems in Ireland?