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A new era for reuse social enterprises in Ireland? The capacities required for achieving sustainability

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4 **ABSTRACT**

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

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

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

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

25 **1. INTRODUCTION**

26 The member states of the European Union (EU) are encountering a crisis in terms of
27 resource availability, use and disposal of products (Ellen MacArthur Foundation,
28 2011). Within the EU, material recycling and waste-based energy recovery secures
29 approximately 5 per cent of the original raw material value (Ellen MacArthur
30 Foundation, 2015). Arising from current high levels of personal consumption and
31 disposal, resources in Ireland are being depleted at an unsustainable rate (Doyle and
32 Davies, 2013). Within the EU, each person consumes, on average, 13.3 tonnes (t) of
33 materials annually (EC, 2011). Much of this is being discarded, with an average
34 waste production rate of 5t of total waste per person annually (EC, 2011).

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

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

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

49 *What capacities enable reuse social enterprises in Ireland to*
50 *become sustainable?*

51 A subsidiary question is:

52 *What motivates citizens to establish reuse social enterprises?*
53

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

60 **2. CONCEPTS**

61 **2.1. Social enterprise**

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

67 The Forfás (2013) definition is widely used:

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

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

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

83 **2.2. Waste, reuse and the circular economy**

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

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

98 **2.3. Capacity**

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

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

104 **2.4. Sustainability**

105 According to Nyssens (2006b), the corporate sector’s discourse on sustainability –
106 which is measured in terms of profit maximisation, productivity and

107 competitiveness – has a significant influence on how the sustainability of social
108 enterprises is framed. This discourse on sustainability does not fit well with the
109 diversity of social enterprises in the Ireland, many of which could never attain
110 financial sustainability (Crossan and Van Til, 2008). Indeed, it is the view of Chan
111 et al. (2017) that the majority of social enterprises will never attain financial
112 sustainability due to their combination of activities and because of their location in
113 disadvantaged communities. The concept of sustainability needs to be broadened to
114 account for social, environmental and economic goals (Boschee and McClurg,
115 2003; and Ridley- Duff and Bull, 2016).

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

126

127 **3. MOTIVATIONS FOR ESTABLISHING RE-USE SOCIAL**
128 **ENTERPRISES**

129 The principals of reuse social enterprises have different motives for establishing
130 them (Taylor, 2008., Nicholls, 2006; and Seanor et al. (2013)). Reuse social
131 enterprises have a number of social objectives that tend not to be met by the state or
132 the private sector (Lucklin and Sharp, 2003). These include the provision of
133 employment and training (Lucklin and Sharp, 2005). They also serve as a source of
134 goods to low income households (Lucklin and Sharp, 2005). In addition to realising
135 social objectives, environmental protection and economic regeneration are motives
136 for the formation of reuse social enterprises (Davies, 2007). With regard to
137 employment, the jobs provided by reuse social enterprises augment the skills and
138 confidence of individuals who were previously long-term unemployed (Brennan
139 and Ackers, 2004). In relation to environmental motives, the desire to reduce the
140 level of waste going to land fill is the primary motive for principals in establishing
141 reuse social enterprises (Davies, 2007). Reuse social enterprises are established to
142 fulfil a combination of environmental, economic and social justice objective (King
143 and Gutberlet, 2013)

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

149 **4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

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

153 The leadership of reuse social enterprises have a tendency not to pay sufficient
154 attention to the external environment or to strategic development (Brook Lyndhurst,
155 2007). This can be further compounded by a tendency of the leadership of social
156 enterprises to not have business acumen. According to Brook Lyndhurst (2007)
157 another challenge reuse social enterprise can encounter is not affording sufficient
158 attention to developing management processes. This can lead to a lack of
159 consistency in the quality of products (Brook Lyndhurst, 2007).

160 The above can stymie the capacity of reuse social enterprises to achieve financial
161 sustainability (Brook Lyndhurst, 2007). Rather than solely concentrating on the
162 capacity of reuse social enterprises, Amin et al. (2002) assert that the demographic
163 profile of communities in which social enterprises are located has a significant
164 impact on their capacity to become financially sustainable. Indeed, communities
165 which would benefit most from the presence of reuse social enterprises tend to
166 provide less of a conducive environment for social enterprises to successfully
167 operate than more affluent ones (Amin, 2009).

168 Furthermore, Hines et al. (2008) assert that the major challenges which reuse social
169 enterprises encounter emanate from the environment in which they operate. These
170 challenges include demands placed on them by the regulatory environment, having
171 to operate in a competitive environment against investor-owned businesses. This

172 can be further compounded by social enterprises having insufficient resources to
173 employ a management team to increase the size of the business.

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

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

186 A theoretical framework is employed which encompasses individual, structural,
187 cultural and infrastructural capacities that are interlinked. This theoretical
188 framework informed by research conducted by Emery and Flora (2006), Porritt
189 (2007), Seyfang (2014), Middlemiss and Parish (2009), and Pringle (2015).

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

- 194 • Natural capital refers to the level of assets associated with a particular
195 area. These include amenities, scenery, natural amenities and
196 geographic isolation.
- 197 • Cultural capital refers to the how residents of a community comprehend
198 society. It influences how and whether people are listened to within a
199 community.
- 200 • Human capital is associated with the level of skills and expertise that
201 residents possess. This is required to bring about change.
- 202 • Social capital refers to the degree of inter-connectedness between
203 residents and organisations in an area.
- 204 • Political capital refers to the level of power, and connections to
205 resources and organisations. It also refers to the ability of people to
206 articulate their perspectives.
- 207 • Financial capital is associated with the level of financial resources
208 which can be invested in a range of activities associated with
209 community endeavour.
- 210 • Built capital refers to the infrastructure which is necessary for a
211 community to organise and implement its plans.

212 The Community Capital Framework informs Pringle’s theoretical framework.
213 Pringle (2015) cites four categories of capacity which constitute the theoretical
214 framework. The first is individual capacity. Pringle (2015) defines individual
215 capacity as the level of skills, values and finance that individuals within a
216 community possess which can assist in the formation of sustainable development
217 initiatives – focusing on renewable energy. Middlemiss and Parrish (2009) assert
218 that an individual’s social context shapes their capacity to initiate sustainable
219 development initiatives. The presence of leaders within communities, who have a
220 clear vision for the development of reuse social enterprises, is critical to their
221 successful establishment (Brook Lyndhurst, 2007). Successful reuse social

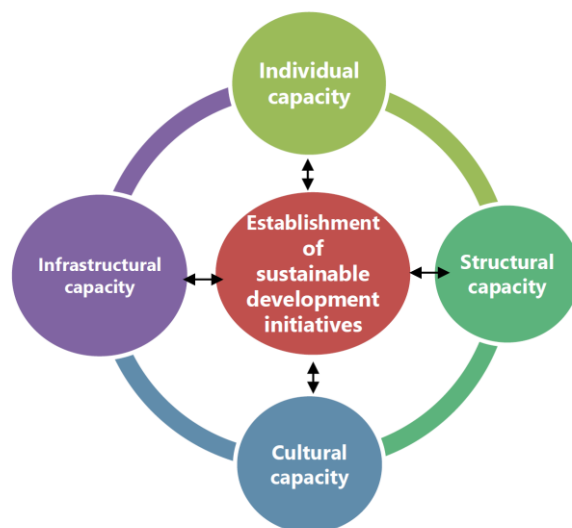
222 enterprises tend to be characterised by possessing effective leaders who have the
223 capacity to secure resources (Connett & Sheehan, 2001). Brook Lyndhurst (2006)
224 identify sustainable reuse social enterprises as possessing effective managers,
225 management structures and processes.

226 The second is the structural capacity of a community. This focuses on the culture
227 and values pertaining to organisations within a community that have an influence
228 over communities' efforts to implement sustainable development initiatives
229 (Middlemiss & Parish, 2009). Local development agencies, politicians and state
230 agencies are included in this category (Pringle, 2015). The presence of community
231 organisations and supportive state and local development institutions can contribute
232 to a range of barriers being addressed (Pringle, 2015). State agencies that are
233 supportive towards reuse social enterprises can have a positive influence on the
234 outcomes of reuse sustainable development initiatives (Dedehouanou,1998).
235 However, to maximise the supportive role they can perform requires greater
236 integration between various departments of local government (Yousefpour et al.
237 2012). Even if there is greater collaboration and integration between departments in
238 local authorities, the framework proposed by Pringle does not acknowledge that
239 some local authorities are more supportive towards working with reuse social
240 enterprises (Resource Futures, 2009). Moreover, some local authorities are not
241 receptive towards bottom-up approaches to addressing waste via the development of
242 reuse social enterprises (Resource Futures, 2009).

243 The third is Infrastructural capacity. This refers to the stock of infrastructure that is
244 present in communities which are conducive to the drive to promote sustainability
245 (Pringle, 2015). Adequate space enables reuse entities to store discarded material

246 and products which, over time, could generate income (CWIN, 2016). This study
247 emphasises the importance of the establishment of retail units to sell reuse products
248 to the public (CWIN, 2016). The proximity of reuse facilities, including retail units,
249 to residential areas, contributes to the donation and purchase of reuse products
250 (Steel, 1996).

251 Finally, cultural capacity refers to the level of commitment and openness to
252 sustainability that exists within a community (Pringle, 2015). Cultural capacity is



253 influenced by the historical context towards sustainability (Pringle, 2015).

254 **Figure 1: Theoretical Framework, adapted from Pringle (2015)**

255 Research indicates that the personal qualities of managers or leaders of social
256 enterprises tend to differ from those of investor-owned businesses (Ridley-Duff and
257 Bull, 2016). The former style of leadership is underpinned by values such as
258 humility, professionalism and calmness (Collins, 2001). Indeed, leaders of social
259 enterprises with these qualities contribute to their sustainability (Jackson et al.
260 2018). Effective managers of social enterprises require the following attributes: the
261 ability to develop a vision for the organisation; the interest and capacity to develop

262 employees and volunteers; a commitment and ability to promote democracy within
263 their social enterprise, and the capacity to benefit the community which the social
264 enterprise serves (Aziz et al. (2017); and Van Dierendonck, D., and Nuijten I.,
265 (2011)). The governance structures of social enterprises require individuals with
266 expertise in finance and the capacity to realise the social mission (Mason and
267 Royce, 2008).

268 **5. METHODOLOGY**

269 **5.1. Case selection**

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

276 The seven social enterprises are:

- 277 • Boomerang recycling located in the northside of Cork city;
- 278 • Kingdom Revamp based in Castleisland, County Kerry;
- 279 • Recycle IT located in Clondalkin, Dublin;
- 280 • Recreate based in Ballymount, Dublin
- 281 • Rediscovery Centre, situated in Ballymun, Dublin;
- 282 • WeShare whose principals live in Dublin;
- 283 • 4Rs is based in Derry city;

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

288 The table below (Table 1) details the items and materials that are reused by the
289 social enterprises.

290 **Table 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

291 **5.2. Methods**

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

297 **5.3. Data collection and coding**

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

301 **5.4. Analysis**

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

306 **6. FINDINGS**

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

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

318 **6.1. Getting started**

319 6.1.1. Motives

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

327 *“The northside of X being very high in youth unemployment.*
328 *It’s somewhere to go when they come out of prison.”*

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

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

336 *“It was before there was any legislation involved in dealing with*
337 *the waste that we deal with here and around the same time, there*
338 *had been huge issues with illegal dumping of fridges*
339 *particularly.”*

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

342 *“It was a dual motive and it would be environmental and social.”*

343 The table below (Table 2) provides an overview of the incidence of each of the
344 primary motives for establishing reuse social enterprises.

345 **Table 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

346 6.1.2. Pre-development

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

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

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

354 *“I have seen social enterprises get into all sorts of problems from*
355 *not taking the time to do a plan.”*

356 **6.2. Organisational development**

357 6.2.1. Strategic expertise

358 According to a small number of interviewees, directors who have the requisite
359 knowledge and expertise are required to ensure the organisation fulfils its mission.

360 The same cohort of interviewees refer to the board of a social enterprise having
361 directors with the following expertise: business expertise; knowledge of
362 employment law; social enterprise expertise; knowledge of governance and
363 expertise in the relevant social enterprise activity.

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

371 6.2.2. Operational expertise

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

375 *“I’ve been in the recycling industry for a number of years. I’ve*
376 *been to a number of countries and it was all within the waste*
377 *recycling sector. The knowledge acquired certainly is having a*
378 *positive impact on the social enterprise.”*

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

- 381 • The opportunity to train formerly unemployed staff a range of skills on
382 site.
- 383 • The capacity to diversify into producing new products which can
384 strengthen its financial sustainability.
- 385 • Knowledge of environmental regulation reduces the reliance on external
386 consultants.
- 387 • Knowledge of the markets enables social enterprises to secure the best
388 prices for recycled material.

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

392 *“You would also need somebody that would have a good business*
393 *acumen...”*

394 *“The key skills in getting the social enterprise up was financial*
395 *management, business and knowledge of the industry. They are*
396 *key skills in keeping the social enterprise successful.”*

397 Four interviewees are of the opinion that reuse social enterprises encounter a greater
398 number of challenges than investor-owned businesses. These include: being

399 restricted to employing lower skilled staff; barriers to staff acquiring new skills; the
400 challenging behaviour of a proportion of staff that were formerly unemployed; the
401 reluctance of a proportion of staff to address their literacy issues, and the
402 requirements of funders. Consequently, two interviewees speak of the importance of
403 social enterprises employing key staff who have experience of supervising staff that
404 were formerly long-term unemployed.

405 6.2.3. Equilibrium

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

414 *“We had quite a low burden of financial administration because*
415 *we have a couple of big customers. We’ve gone from that model*
416 *into servicing and charging householders. This has placed more*
417 *demands on our staff.”*

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

421 *“It’s maybe moving into what you would call a normal business,*
422 *objectives of driving the sales side and they’re not able to focus at*
423 *all or use the environmental message to explain what they do.”*

424 6.3. Management

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

426 6.3.1. Committed

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

430 *“Constant dripping water on a stone. It will wear the stone*
431 *eventually, if you keep at it, your message will get across.”*

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

435 6.3.2. Inclusive

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

441 *“I’ve actually got buy-in from all the individuals and I tell them*
442 *what we are trying to do, I tell them why I’m trying to do it. I tell*
443 *them the numbers that we have to achieve, the reasons why we*
444 *have to achieve it, and they feel a part of the project.”*

445 One interviewee mentions that the manager can communicate to create an inclusive
446 work environment. Two interviewees acknowledge how holding formal
447 communication is not as effective an approach as holding informal meetings with
448 many of the staff of reuse social enterprises.

449 The point is made that many of the staff are encountering a range of challenges to
450 work either part or full-time. Two managers comment on how managers need to be
451 mindful of the background of some of the staff.

452 *“The key thing to addressing these challenges is good common-*
453 *sense management.”*

454 According to two interviewees, a successful manager of a reuse social enterprise
455 needs to have good inter-personnel skills. One interviewee makes the point that
456 management styles practiced in the private sector tend not to be suited to reuse
457 social enterprises.

458 6.3.3. Proactive

459 Two interviewees acknowledge the role managers play in seeking resources for
460 reuse social enterprises. They both mention that some reuse managers proactively
461 seek resources from a number of funding bodies. Interviewees comment on
462 managers requiring the capacity to seek resources from different funding bodies.
463 This can often require the message being altered to suit the funder.

464 6.3.4. Influential

465 Three interviewees emphasise the importance of managers being able to influence
466 different stakeholders to assist in developing the reuse social enterprise. With regard
467 to staff, managers aim to motivate workers who can sometimes exhibit challenging
468 behaviour.

469 *“I suppose a key role is to motivate staff. They are the frontline*
470 *and the people who are selling the concept to the public which is*
471 *very critical.”*

472 The same interviewees refer to managers having the ability to influence potential
473 benefactors, including local authorities, to provide support. In particular, the
474 manager needs to convince senior local authority officials that the reuse social
475 enterprise is viable and attains the objective it sets.

476 *“Convincing local authority that this was something that was*
477 *viable and that could be supported.”*

478 6.3.5. Empathic

479 Two interviewees emphasise how their having experienced discrimination allows
480 them to be more effective managers. They spoke of this having an influence over
481 how the social enterprise operates.

482 6.4. **Resources**

483 6.4.1. Facility

484 Five interviewees acknowledge how a facility can either enable the social enterprise
485 to attain its objectives or can stymie it. Two interviewees comment on how
486 acquiring a facility, at a reasonable rent, can strengthen the financial sustainability
487 of the reuse social enterprise. In relation to design, if the facility has scope for either
488 the building of an extension or inserting a mezzanine floor, this can enable the
489 social enterprise to diversify its operations and handle a greater volume of material.

490 *“We’re recently putting in another floor on it in order to increase*
491 *the floor space in there to do a bit more of in-house, if you’d like*
492 *to call it scavenging, or you know extracting components and so*
493 *on, so we’re gearing up better for that as well.”*

494 For two social enterprises, the lack of space in its facility results in having to turn
495 down the offer of valuable discarded goods.

496 *“There are times there where we’ve had to just pass material on*
497 *because we had no storage capacity and we would have made*
498 *more money out of it if we had been able to do a better space.”*

499 This is adversely impacting on the financial sustainability of both social enterprises.

500 In addition to ample space, three interviewees comment on how the location of a
501 facility has a bearing on a social enterprise attaining its objectives. One interviewee
502 refers to the inability of securing a facility in its targeted marginalised area. The
503 same person comments how this made it more difficult to promote recycling in its
504 targeted marginalised area.

505 *“Ideally, we would have wanted a premises within the Rapid Area*
506 *that we were set up to serve but there was nothing available, there*
507 *was no premises whatsoever up there...”*

508 Three interviewees comment on how the location of a facility has a bearing on the
509 financial sustainability of the social enterprise.

510 *“We were struggling last year while we were up in the industrial*
511 *unit, we’re now on the street and we’re hitting our targets in terms*
512 *of money.”*

513 One interviewee acknowledges how the design of a facility can impact on staff
514 morale.

515 *“The environment wasn’t great above either because we were in*
516 *an industrial unit, there was no windows, there was no heating,*
517 *you know this type of thing.”*

518 The establishment of reuse facility beside civic amenity centres would increase
519 reuse rates in Ireland, according to one interviewee.

520 *“It’s providing covered space, it’s making it a priority in civic*
521 *amenity sites. This entails properly protecting equipment and*
522 *goods that go into civic amenities so they can be reused.”*

523 6.4.2. Credibility

524 Two interviewees speak of how they believe some senior local authority officials
525 are sceptical of the capacity of reuse social enterprises to provide an efficient
526 service on behalf of local authorities. One interviewee refers to how securing
527 national funding enhanced the reputation of the social enterprise among senior local
528 authority personnel. According to two interviewees, a social enterprise has to gain
529 credibility.

530 *“Now we have established a good track record, which is good but*
531 *had to be earned, and so that adds to your credit when seeking to*
532 *expand.”*

533 6.5. Sustainability

534 6.5.1. Cost base

535 According to a number of interviewees, managers of reuse social enterprises are
536 noting a significant increase in operational costs.

537 6.5.2. Labour subsidy

538 Five interviewees acknowledge how funding from the Pobal Community Services
539 Programme (CSP) ¹is critical to the financial sustainability of social enterprises.
540 (Pobal allocates funding on behalf of the Government and the EU to community
541 companies and co-operatives to support social inclusion and local development.)

¹ 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/>

542 The same interviewees emphasise the negative impact on the financial sustainability
543 of social enterprises of the Pobal CSP wage grant not being pegged to increases in
544 the national minimum wage.

545 *“You see, the minimum wage when we started was €8.65 and now*
546 *it’s €9.55, the government don’t pay the difference.”*

547 The same interviewees assert that the Pobal CSP wage grant needs to be increased
548 to keep pace with the minimum wage. Furthermore, three interviewees believe that
549 Pobal needs to reinstate the material grant.

550 6.5.3. Labour market

551 Five interviewees acknowledge that with a significant reduction in unemployment
552 levels, social enterprises are not able to provide the wage levels being offered by
553 investor-owned companies. Consequently, reuse social enterprises are less likely to
554 attract skilled staff in times of economic prosperity than during the period of the
555 economic downturn when unemployment was far higher.

556 A proportion of social enterprises utilise employment activation programmes to
557 provide the necessary labour. A number of interviewees comment that this cohort
558 can experience a range of personal issues which can affect their ability to be
559 productive.

560 *“So the people who are being taken onto the Tús programme*
561 *would have significantly more issues than we would have seen two*
562 *or three years ago.”*

563 6.6. Relationships

564 6.6.1. Community

565 Four interviewees comment on the pragmatic reasons reuse social enterprises
566 engage with their respective communities. Prior to a reuse social enterprise
567 commencing operation, community engagement facilitates addressing mis-
568 information pertaining to a new operation.

569 *“We had open days, we used the council website, showing people*
570 *what we done, we done small focus group to get the message*
571 *across, we’ve been to all of the community groups and we invited*
572 *all the councils here to let them see what we were doing.”*

573 6.6.2. Parent structure

574 A number of reuse social enterprises are controlled by a parent organisation,
575 according to several interviewees. These can be local development companies or
576 community organisations. Two interviewees mention how parent structures initiate
577 the process of establishing a reuse social enterprise. One interviewee emphasises
578 that without a parent structure, the reuse social enterprise would not be formed. The
579 parent structure provides a range of expertise and finance which allows the reuse
580 social enterprise to be formed, a facility to be leased and a manager to be hired
581 before state funding is drawn down. For one interviewee, the reputation of the
582 parent structure with a number of local authorities proves critical to the reuse social
583 enterprise securing public contracts.

584 *“They had the reputation which we would not have had and that*
585 *was a big thing at the start.”*

586 One interviewee acknowledges how a parent structure can cushion cuts in the state
587 funding allocated to a reuse social enterprise.

588 In the table below (Table 2) the reuse social enterprises are categorised according to
589 the type of organisation responsible for their establishment.

590 **Table 3: Origins of social enterprise**

Category organisation that established social enterprise	Number of social enterprises
Community and voluntary organisations	3
Local development companies (LDCs) ²	3
Local authorities	1

591 6.6.3. Network

592 Two interviewees acknowledge the wide network of business relationships with
 593 individuals that they have cultivated from working in the waste industry.

594 *“I know a lot of people in waste industry who I can get advice*
 595 *from on a range of matters, including where to get the best price*
 596 *for recycled material.”*

597 Two interviewees note that a number of reuse social enterprises are networking in a
 598 number of ways. Firstly, more experienced managers of reuse social enterprises
 599 provide advice, informally, to less established reuse social enterprises dealing with
 600 the same discarded goods. Secondly, reuse social enterprises can transfer discarded
 601 goods to other reuse social enterprises, if the former is operating at full capacity.
 602 This ensures that reuse social enterprises do not have to refuse discarded goods.

603 6.6.4. State involvement

604 The state interacts with reuse social enterprises in several different ways, according
 605 to five interviewees. Local authority officials serve on the management committee
 606 of a number of reuse social enterprise. Three interviewees emphasise how having
 607 them on their management committee enables a range of supports and resources to

² 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

608 be acquired from local authorities. One interviewee mentions how local authority
609 staff on the management committees act as a conduit to the local authority. Indeed,
610 two interviewees comment that the assistance they receive from the local authority
611 is a prerequisite for the formation of their reuse social enterprise.

612 *“Without the support from the local authority, the project would*
613 *not have happened.”*

614 6.7. Values

615 6.7.1. Solidarity

616 Solidarity exists within and between reuse social enterprises. Regarding the former,
617 interviewees note how many staff are motivated to contribute to creating a more
618 ecologically sustainable society by working in reuse social enterprises.

619 Consequently, they are prepared to work for less remuneration than they could gain
620 in the private sector. One interviewee refers to how workers are ideologically
621 motivated to work in reuse social enterprises. However, two interviewees
622 acknowledge that it can be difficult to recruit people with a commitment to
623 addressing economic marginalisation.

624 Regarding the latter dimension of solidarity, five interviewees refer to the solidarity
625 that exists between reuse social enterprises. Three interviewees note how the level
626 of solidarity is strongest between reuse social enterprises dealing with the same type
627 of discarded goods. One interviewee comments on how the level of collaboration is
628 aided by the large size of the market. He believes that if the supply of discarded
629 goods is lower, then this could lead to a lower level of solidarity. Two interviewees
630 emphasise how solidarity between reuse social enterprises is driven by financial
631 motives

632 **7. DISCUSSION**

633 The principals of reuse social enterprises establish them primarily to achieve both
634 social and environmental outcomes (Taylor, 2008). The research findings regarding
635 motives for establishing reuse social enterprises are consistent with the literature.
636 Some reuse social enterprises are initiated to meet a combination of environmental,
637 economic and social justice objectives.

638 It is interesting to note the diversity of categories of organisations responsible for
639 promoting reuse social enterprises. A high proportion of the cases were formed by
640 local development companies. Indeed, this could be attributed to local development
641 companies having adequate resources to establish reuse social enterprises compared
642 to community development organisations which have experienced significant cuts
643 in funding (Forde et al. 2015) In addition, due to Government policy, a number of
644 community development organisations have become subsumed into local
645 development companies (Harvey, 2012). Consequently, there is less likelihood of
646 reuse social enterprises being formed by entities other than local development
647 companies, other than those formed prior to the subsuming of community
648 development organisations into local development companies. Therefore, if a local
649 development company is not committed to establishing a reuse social enterprise,
650 then there is less likelihood of a reuse social enterprise being formed in their
651 catchment areas. To address this situation, the Department of Communications,
652 Climate Action and Environment should oblige LDCs to establish reuse social
653 enterprises.

654 The research identifies several obstacles and challenges encountered when
655 developing reuse social enterprises. The table below (Table 4) details the internal

656 and the external factors which constrain the development of reuse social enterprises
 657 (Medina Munroe and Belanger, 2017).

658 **Table 4: Factors constraining reuse social enterprises becoming sustainable**

Internal factors constraining reuse social enterprise development	External factors constraining social enterprise development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

659 Furthermore, reuse social enterprises have to maintain an equilibrium between
 660 achieving their social mission and attaining financial sustainability (Mazzej, 2017).
 661 The research findings points to this requirement placing extra demands on both their
 662 governance structures and their management.

663 The research points to the necessity of reuse social enterprises accessing individuals
 664 with operational expertise. One of the key findings is that reuse social enterprises
 665 employ staff with expertise and skills relevant to their social enterprise activity.
 666 They perform a central role in the social enterprise both fulfilling its mission and
 667 achieving financial sustainability.

668 The research findings indicate that managers of reuse social enterprises require
 669 particular expertise and attributes to manage these businesses successfully. The
 670 capacity to forge relationships with a range of stakeholders is deemed critical to the
 671 social enterprise becoming sustainable. The findings point to the managers being
 672 committed individuals who exhibit tenacity and persistence in ensuring that their

673 social enterprises realise their mission. Furthermore, for pragmatic and ethical
674 reasons, the managers adhere to an inclusive style of leadership. The managers of
675 social enterprises adhere to a different theory of leadership than investor owned-
676 businesses (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2016). Indeed, the research findings point to the
677 inadequacy of mainstream theories of management in explaining the attributes and
678 skills required by effective managers of reuse social enterprises (Murtagh, 2019).
679 The implications for policy-makers is that leadership and management training for
680 managers of investor-owned businesses is not sufficiently comprehensive to meet
681 the range of skills and expertise required by managers of social enterprises. This
682 would indicate the relevance of a new set of training programmes for managers of
683 social enterprises. These training programmes would need to focus on the different
684 styles of leadership practiced by managers of social enterprises, the range of issues
685 they can encounter on a daily basis, and the skills required to forge relationships
686 with a range of stakeholders.

687 With the exception of the support provided by some local development companies,
688 there is a lack of support structures available to prospective promoters of reuse
689 social enterprises. The new waste legislation from the Department of
690 Communications, Climate Action and Environment – which will transpose EU
691 Waste Directive into Irish law – should contain actions to support the development
692 of reuse social enterprises. The Department of Communications, Climate Action
693 and Environment should allocate additional funding to local development
694 companies that demonstrate a commitment and capacity to support the development
695 of reuse social enterprises. Indeed, local development companies that show a
696 commitment to supporting the development of social enterprises should be awarded
697 additional funding for this purpose. In addition, state funding should be allocated to

698 community organisations committed to developing reuse social enterprises,
699 particularly in areas where local development companies have not engaged in
700 supporting social enterprise activity.

701 Both the Community Capital Framework (Emery, 2006) and Pringle's (2015)
702 theoretical framework focus on the capacities required for the successful
703 implementation of community initiatives. Although both are robust frameworks,
704 when applied to Irish communities, they may require some modification to detail
705 the capacities required to successfully implement reuse social enterprises. With
706 regard to individual capacity, marginalised urban communities, tend to have a
707 smaller cohort of individuals with the skills, knowledge and values to initiate reuse
708 social enterprises. In relation to social capital, some communities, particularly
709 socio-economically marginalised neighbourhoods, may not have the knowledge
710 about how to engage with the local government system in order to secure both land
711 and other resources to establish reuse social enterprises.

712 Both frameworks do not take account of the finding that the leadership and
713 managers of reuse social enterprises need to have the capacity to forge relationships
714 with local authorities, businesses and funding bodies, or that the reuse social
715 enterprises also need to have access to individuals who possess key skills and
716 expertise associated with the reuse of products.

717 With regard to infrastructural capacities, given that the demand for land is higher in
718 urban than in rural settings, the framework needs to take account of the challenges
719 in securing land and property in which to base reuse facilities. In relation to cultural
720 capacity, the majority of communities would not have a history of developing reuse
721 social enterprises. The values underpinning them include self-sufficiency,

722 environmental and ecological sustainability. However, these values tend not to be
723 prevalent in Irish communities. Indeed, the framework also does not place much
724 emphasis on the values that exist among residents living in the catchment areas of
725 the reuse social enterprises, as opposed to those that pertain to individuals active
726 among reuse social enterprises. This is an important factor when one considers the
727 dominance of consumerism in Irish society.

728 The theoretical framework could be broadened to acknowledge the critical
729 importance of management style. In addition, it does not place much weight on the
730 importance of community engagement. Innovation within the reuse social enterprise
731 is viewed as being important to address the barriers encountered. Therefore,
732 innovation should be also included in the framework.

733 **8. CONCLUSION**

734 There is a wealth of research which outlines the societal benefits of reuse social
735 enterprises (Brennan and Ackers, 2003; Brook Lyndhurst, 2009; and Gutberlet,
736 2016). Therefore, it is incumbent on the Irish State to develop policies that assist
737 communities to establish reuse social enterprises. These policy areas include
738 procurement, the introduction of additional producer responsibility initiatives and
739 altering the tax system to encourage reuse. In addition, a proportion of the
740 Community Services Programme budget could be reserved for the establishment of
741 reuse social enterprises.

742 Finally, research needs to be undertaken into policy needs to be changed and
743 supporting practice. Regarding the former, research should focus on the social and
744 economic benefits of reuse social enterprises to the State and to communities, and
745 on the policy constraints in developing reuse social enterprises in Ireland. With
746 respect to the latter, research could look at international best practice regarding
747 policies for supporting the successful implementation of reuse social enterprises.

748 Perhaps the greatest challenge in the development of reuse social enterprises in
749 Ireland (as well as social enterprises in general), is to address the pervasive culture
750 of individualism and consumerism which has taken root in Irish society (Kirby,
751 2010). This cultural change will require a number of interventions over a lengthy
752 period of time, by community organisations, trade unions and progressive political
753 parties to demonstrate that an alternative Irish society is possible - where the
754 benefits of the economy are not unequally distributed on the basis of class. One
755 potentially effective measure would be to deliver an awareness campaign in schools,
756 youth organisations, community organisations and third level institutions on the

757 potency of social enterprise in addressing the many socio-economic issues that

758 Ireland is encountering (Doyle, 2019).

759

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