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Civil Society for Equality and Environmental Sustainability: Reimagining a Force for Change

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Niall Crowley
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Part 1. Civil Society: Concept, Challenge, and Context

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Chapter 1. Concept: Civil Society

CIVICUS, the global alliance of civil society organisations, defines civil society as "the arena, between family, government and market, where people voluntarily associate to advance common interests". Civil society encompasses formal and informal groupings which people choose to establish and engage with of their own volition. CIVICUS notes that civil society is "composed of positive and negative, peaceful and violent forces that may advance or obstruct social progress" (1).

Civil society is a broad concept, that encompasses political parties and paramilitaries, health services and education providers, housing associations and social services providers, religious organisations and professional associations, and advocacy organisations and networks. Civil society is so broad that it is often defined by what it is not. Civil society is not government nor the state. It is not commerce, the private sector, nor the market. It is that spread of organisations or groupings, formal and informal, outside of these two fields, sometimes referred to as an anonymous 'third sector'.

Nonetheless, the concept of civil society does engage people emotionally and with some emotive force, an engagement that arises from that space it occupies outside of the market and state. Civil society makes this space available for people such that they have a voice and can exercise some control, a space of some autonomy. This is particularly significant in an era of unfettered markets that seem to dictate by whim, and at a time of a bureaucratic and impenetrable state that seems unable to address people's needs. Civil society is a space that people can occupy to collectively contest these forces, and to assert themselves in the face of these forces, from whatever particular shared perspective.

Civil society includes important actors for any democratic system. It includes organisations, formal and informal: that bring forward and provide platforms for voices that would not otherwise be heard in the political system; and that champion interests that would otherwise be ignored. It includes organisations of diverse types that point to new ways forward for politics, society, its economy, and the environment, pressurising the political system, and holding it to account. These are the organisations that can be a force for transformative change for equality and environmental sustainability.

It is these organisations and this part of civil society that is the primary concern and focus for this book: civil society for equality and environmental sustainability. This involves a mix of organisations, of diverse types, spread across a wide range of the traditional sectors that are deemed to comprise civil society. These are organisations that work directly on issues of equality and environmental sustainability, as well as organisations that have an interest in such issues for being ancillary but relevant to their immediate purpose or function.

The wide range of organisations that comprise civil society is captured in the Benefacts database on the Irish non-profit sector (2). In 2021 according to the database, civil society,

not including informal groups, involved: 34,331 organisations; 164,922 employees; 93,451 directors/charity trustees; €13.9bn in turnover; and €6,2bn in state funding. This database organises the breadth of the concept of civil society by classifying it under twelve categories, with fifty-four sub-categories.

The twelve categories and fifty-four subcategories for the Benefacts Database 2021 are:

- local development, housing (6,953 organisation in 5 sub-categories: 5,764 local development; 485 job creation; 345 social housing; 289 social enterprise; and 70 sheltered housing);
- recreation, sports (5,616 organisations in 3 sub-categories: 4,380 sports organisations; 1,117 recreational clubs/societies; and 119 agricultural fairs);
- education, research (5,086 organisations in 8 sub-categories: 3,304 primary education; 790 secondary education; 393 education support; 153 adult and continuing education; 149 research; 141 pre-primary education; 71 vocational and technical education; and 67 third level education);
- religion (4,500 organisations in 3 sub-categories: 2,501 places of worship; 1,154 diocesan/parishes; and 844 religious associations);
- social services (3,462 organisations in 8 sub-categories: 676 services for older people; 634 pre-school childcare; 547 youth services; 529 family support services; 451 services for people with disabilities; 317 services for Travellers and ethnic minorities; 197 emergency relief services; and 111 homelessness services);
- arts, culture, media (1,896 organisations in 4 sub-categories: 1,129 arts; 565 heritage and visitor attractions; 120 media/film; and 82 museums/libraries);
- environment (1,661 organisations in 4 sub-categories: 782 environmental enhancement; 361 group water schemes; 288 animal welfare; and 230 environmental sustainability);
- health (1,114 organisations in 7 sub-categories: 569 health services and health promotion; 281 mental health services; 131 addiction support; 62 residential care centres; 37 hospitals; 22 hospices; and 12 residential mental health services);
- professional, vocational (1,039 organisations in 3 sub-categories: 835 professional or sector representation bodies; 112 chambers of commerce; and 93 trade unions, employer organisations);
- philanthropy, voluntarism (701 organisations in 3 sub-categories: 467 fundraising; 182 philanthropy; and 52 voluntarism);
- international (424 organisations in 2 sub-categories: 265 international development; and 159 international affiliation); and
- advocacy, law, politics (407 organisations in 4 sub-categories: 247 advocacy; 74 civil and human rights; 61 legal services; and 26 politics).

The Benefacts database seeks to resolve the complexity of civil society as a concept by breaking it down by function into discrete sectors. This approach reflects the dominant discourse of those involved in civil society, who tend to identify themselves by sector, defined by function, while making little reference to the broader concept 'civil society'.

This is evident in their identification as: the 'community and voluntary sector', with a function in addressing inequality in all its forms; the 'environmental sector', with a function in responding to environmental degradation, biodiversity destruction, and climate disruption; the 'trade union sector', with a function in addressing workplace rights and issues; the

'cultural sector', with a function in producing the arts and enabling creative expression; or the 'global development sector', with a function in providing international assistance and solidarity. This approach to categorisation leaves little space to identify and shape that part of civil society concerned to progress equality and environmental sustainability across such a range of functions.

This fragmentation of civil society into sectors, defined by function, loses sight of the shared aspirations or values that might connect diverse organisations and sectors in different and more powerful platforms of shared purpose. This fragmentation disarms the potential for a forceful civil society to progress societal change of a transformative nature. These discrete civil society sectors create their own carefully guarded silos, compete with each other for resources and public attention, and pursue their own supposedly separate agendas and interests.

In some instances, the individual sectors involved are so broadly drawn that they lack the shared interests that would underpin a sense of common identity within those sectors. The community and voluntary sector, for example, encompasses thousands of small grassroots community organisations responding to diverse local needs and aspirations in many different ways, a smaller number of large local professionalised organisations involved in delivering social services, a diversity of national networks and organisations engaged in seeking policy change, and a number of national-level large-scale providers of a spectrum of social services. The interests, perspectives, and aspirations of this breadth of organisations are too diverse to give any substantive meaning to the title of being a sector.

An all-encompassing civil society posed in terms of discrete sectors defined by function, dissipates popular engagement with the concept. The focus on function loses sight of purpose and aspiration, which give civil society its emotive content, its ability to engage people. This is the purpose of contesting state or market, and the aspiration of asserting oneself in the face of these forces.

Murphy, the Irish academic and activist, adopts a focus on purpose and aspiration in her analysis of civil society. In this, she explores "progressive civil society", defined as being inclusive of an "anti- capitalist 'movement of movements', local environmental activism, gender and sexual identity activism, local and community development, equality and anti-poverty activism, and trade union activism" (3). This "progressive" purpose and aspiration is focused on the pursuit of alternatives to the dominant status quo, in particular equality and environmental sustainability. In this, Murphy notes the "potential of progressive civil society to enable a politicised form of active citizenship" (4).

O'Connor and Ketola, academics based in Ireland and England respectively, emphasise purpose and aspiration in deeming civil society organisations to be essential for social inclusion, democratic policymaking, and the "achievement of solutions to complex social problems such as climate change, child poverty, mental ill health and obesity" (5). They too make the link with active citizenship, suggesting that "civil society organisations have a vital role in fostering active citizenship", emphasising that "civil society organisations are not just a means by which individuals are enabled to take action, but civil society organisations themselves are a legitimate expression of active citizenship" (6).

This focus on active citizenship underpins an understanding of civil society with a capacity to enable the individual to move from passive object, on which market and state impact,

to active subject in asserting some level of autonomy and seeking some level of influence on these forces. However, Murphy's emphasis on politicised active citizenship is important. Active citizenship is not only problematic for its entanglement with the exclusive terminology of 'citizen', it is also understood with varying levels of ambition. At its most powerful, active citizenship encompasses exercising rights, responsibility, and influence. At its most anodyne, it is focused on interdependence and mutual support, as set out in the 2007 report of the Government Task Force on Active Citizenship (7).

Claiming Our Future, a national networking of civil society organisations across various sectors, emphasised purpose and aspiration, as well as values, in defining itself in terms of an explicit civil society mantle. It was established, in 2010, in the throes of economic and financial crisis and claimed this mantle out of a perceived need "to bring together the different sectors of civil society and break down the silos that existed". In this, Claiming Our Future focused on purpose and aspiration, in a manner similar to Murphy, in its concern that "civil society needed to step forward as a creative force in imagining alternatives for a more equal and environmentally sustainable future" in the prevailing context of austerity at that time. It also focused on a set of agreed shared values, of equality, environmental sustainability, accountability, participation, and solidarity, as a means of defining and bringing together this part of civil society (8).

CIVICUS moves from its broad all-encompassing definition of civil society to a tighter focus on purpose and aspiration, when defining one of its goals as being to "strengthen the power of people to take collective action to realise a more just, inclusive and sustainable world" (9). The European Civic Forum, a transnational network of non-governmental organisations, likewise focuses on purpose and aspiration in identifying civil society as being vital for an open civic space and "a healthy democracy, and strong social justice" (10). The Forum defines one of its key goals as being to "reinforce citizens' engagement with their associations and movements, for an egalitarian Europe of solidarity and democracy by ensuring access for all" (11). It is of note that these various approaches to defining a particular strand of civil society by purpose and aspiration, all rest on a central concern for and focus on equality and environmental sustainability.

The Forum usefully emphasises the concept of civil society in terms of civic space, rather than a focus on active citizenship. It defines civic space as "the political, legislative, social and economic environment which enables citizens to come together, share their interests and concerns, and individually and collectively influence and shape policymaking" (12). It suggests this civic space is "central" to achieving human rights and building democracies that respond to all needs.

Defining 'civil society' in terms of purpose, aspiration, and values offers a more useful deployment of the concept, than the current understanding in terms of discrete sectors, defined by function. It avoids fragmentation, and allows a self-identification for organisations within a grouping, rather than being labelled by function within a specific sector. It is the basis for identifying and shaping a civil society for equality and environmental sustainability.

CIVICUS notes that civil society "is not a homogenous entity, but rather a complex arena where diverse values and interests interact and power struggles occur" (13). Kirby and Murphy (2011), Irish academics and activists, note this issue of heterogeneity of analyses and interests, even within civil society grouped by shared purpose, aspirations, and values, including to progress equality and environmental sustainability. They identify a useful framework to

capture, track and understand this heterogeneity in terms of ambition in the nature and level of change sought. They identify "neoliberal", "social democratic", and "ecological" strands within that part of civil society concerned with equality and environmental sustainability (14):

- The neoliberal strand of organisations, that seek societal reforms that are consistent with the dominant neoliberal model of development.
- The social democratic strand of organisations, that seek a strong role for the state, high quality publicly-owned services, equality, and a tax regime to sustain this, all at the service of a flourishing society.
- The ecological strand of organisations, that seek an environmentally sustainable society through social, economic, cultural, and environmental change and that is rooted in new ways of organising social and economic life and wellbeing at a local level.

If civil society for equality and environmental sustainability is to be an effective force for transformative change, it must build and deploy a countervailing power to contest those vested interests that protect the status quo. There is a significant imbalance of power between civil society and these vested interests, to the detriment of civil society making its contribution. Fragmentation by sector and division by ambition serve to disable civil society in this regard.

In building its countervailing power, this diversity of ambition in civil society has to be addressed, by collaboratively deliberating on and finding agreement on an agenda for change and on the manner in which such change might be sought. Internal struggles in this regard need to be of a constructive and coherent nature, building ambition and strengthening the movement in pursuit of shared purpose. Such struggles need to be engaged in with generosity and creativity if civil society for equality and environmental sustainability is to build adequate power behind an agenda for transformative change.

In deploying this countervailing power behind the demand for transformative change, civil society for equality and environmental sustainability must: motivate people to be concerned about the change required; establish organisations to engage people in seeking this change; and create collaborative platforms to pose a shared and powerful demand for the change required.

In doing so, civil society for equality and environmental sustainability draws from a wealth of strategies that form part of its traditions, across a framework of:

- non-violent public protest;
- policy negotiation;
- watchdog monitoring;
- prefiguring change; and
- activist training.

Non-violent public protest demonstrates public demand for change and disrupts the status quo. McKibben, the North American environmental activist, identifies non-violence as a strategy "that could be decisive if fully employed" in seeking a future for the planet, encompassing "acts of civil disobedience that end in jail or a beating" alongside the "full sweep of organising aimed at building mass movements whose goal is to change the zeitgeist" (15).

Negotiating change engages civil society organisations in formal and informal relationships with the state, lobbying and advocating for change. Harvey (2013), identifies that civil society organisations have "a specific role to play in government and public administration, bringing expertise, broader perspectives, democratic dialogue, buy-in, assistance with implementation, ground truth, wider perspectives and, ultimately, much improved and better considered policy and decisions" (16).

The watchdog role played by civil society organisations includes monitoring public policy and seeking accountability from government. This involves such as: engaging with the reporting systems under international instruments in relation to human rights, equality, or the environment; litigation in domestic and international courts; and engagement in public discourse and advancing a critique through the media.

A strategy of prefiguring change involves civil society organisations in imagining, testing out, and promoting new programmes, systems, or policies that enable alternative ways of organising social, economic, and political life. Kirby and Murphy point to civil society's role as "the incubator of the ideas and projects that will give shape to a new economy and society" (17).

As a training ground in activism, civil society organisations empower new champions for change. Horvat, the Croatian philosopher, notes the value in the "process of acquiring a political subjectivity through the experience of organising and protesting, of confronting the system and one's own contradictions" (18).

Chapter 2. Challenge: Transformative Change

Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability has the potential to play a significant role in the pursuit of transformative change, for which there is an imperative in today's world. In recent years, inequality has deepened, between the regions of the world and within societies, to unprecedented levels. Environmental degradation, destruction of biodiversity, and climate disruption have grown exponentially to a point where there is a clear threat to the future of the planet. These challenges to equality and environmental sustainability are linked.

The social, political, and economic system that has generated current high levels of inequality is the same system that has generated environmental crisis. Equality is not possible without environmental sustainability, given that the alternative to such sustainability is an uninhabitable planet. Environmental degradation does not impact uniformly and carries issues of climate injustice among its burdens. Similarly, environmental sustainability is not possible without a focus on equality. Equality is a requirement and foundation for: the resilience to adapt to the changes already in train from climate disruption; the bedrock of popular support for the change that the achievement of environmental sustainability requires; and, ultimately, the effective functioning of an environmentally sustainable society.

The global imperative to address this situation of inequality and environmental crisis is reflected in the adoption, in 2015, of the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. Agenda 2030 establishes environmental sustainability and equality as interlinked. It articulates a global determination to: "end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions", and "ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment"; as well as to "protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the

needs of the present and future generations" (1). The seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, comprising Agenda 2030, underpin a potential new model of social and economic development based on these goals of equality and environmental sustainability.

This ambition for an equal and environmentally sustainable society is contested, both globally and nationally. There are interests, vested in maintaining the status quo, that seek to block progress towards equality and environmental sustainability. Whatever the threats posed by inequality and environmental destruction, these vested interests are loathe to relinquish their profits, wealth, and power.

Contested ambition leads to limited or compromised ambition for equality and environmental sustainability, in particular when it comes to political initiative. Agenda 2030 itself has been critiqued for limited ambition in the targets established across the policy areas for its seventeen goals. This issue of limited ambition is exacerbated when moving from the international level to the national level, where the action for change is actually required, and remains lacking.

In a context of limited ambition, equality is reduced to a policy goal of fairness and equality of opportunity. Fairness does provide a bedrock, with its requirement for a basic minimum for all. Equality of opportunity provides a valuable standard with its requirement for non-discrimination in the competition for opportunity and advantage thereafter. However, fairness co-exists and is at ease with sustained inequality. People come to that competition for opportunity and advantage from very different starting points and with very different resources with which to engage and compete. Significant inequalities thus persist and sit comfortably with this ambition for fairness. Despite such flaws, this is the limited ambition for equality that is repeatedly articulated and pursued in political and legislative initiative at the national level.

Civil society organisations, at the more ambitious end of the spectrum, have advanced goals for equality that are concerned with achieving new outcomes for groups in society, involving a rebalancing of the relative situation of different groups in society. In this, they assert the imperative of transformative change. Equality, thus defined, requires a new distribution of:

- resources, encompassing such as: income, wealth, employment, and the public goods of accommodation, education, health, and culture;
- recognition, encompassing status and standing in society, with diversity positively recognised and adaptations made to meet specific needs that flow from how people choose to live out their identities;
- respect, encompassing access to relationships of love, care and solidarity, with an end to interactions that diminish, patronise, abuse, or exclude groups that experience inequality; and
- representation, encompassing power and influence, such that groups that experience inequality have a say in, bring their perspective to, participate in, and shape decision-making.

Civil society organisations, at that more ambitious end of the spectrum, have advanced an ambition for equality across these four domains that is comprehensive in encompassing all groups exposed to inequality, including a concern for intersectionality and diversity within these groups. Political perspective and policy initiative, on the other hand, has fragmented the goal of equality, with different government departments and separate policy strands for each of the various groups experiencing inequality.

More broadly, political perspective and policy initiative has separated identity-based inequalities from socio-economic-based inequalities. This leads to damaging societal divisions, a fragmentation in civil society for equality and environmental sustainability, and an undermining of common interests across the groups experiencing these inequalities. Fraser, the North American academic and philosopher, notes, in this regard, that "Only by joining a robustly egalitarian politics of distribution to a substantively inclusive class-sensitive politics of recognition can we build a counter hegemonic bloc capable of leading us beyond the current crisis (identified as hegemonic neoliberalism) to a better world" (2).

In a context of limited ambition, environmental sustainability is dishonestly pursued in symbolic gestures, or it is reduced to a matter of individual behaviours, or deemed to depend on futuristic technocratic breakthroughs. The focus on individual responsibility and choices is inadequate, given the scale of the challenge posed. The limited range of options actually available to individuals, and the manner in which their choices are shaped in the way society and the economy are currently organised, need to be the primary concern. The disproportionate impact of the holders of wealth on the climate and biodiversity crisis, and the nature and level of their consumption, need to be a focus. Environmental sustainability will not be achieved by putting faith in the emergence of new technology in the timescale required for planetary survival. Scientists and engineers will not resolve this challenge, while the rest of us await their inventions and carry on as normal, with climate disruption progressing unabated and unaddressed.

Civil society organisations, at the more ambitious end of the spectrum, have advanced a new model of social and economic development, in pursuing environmental sustainability goals. Here again, they assert the imperative of transformative change. This is understood as requiring such as: zero carbon and greenhouse gas emissions and an end to the fossil fuel industry; a steady-state economy; new forms and systems of energy production, distribution, and consumption; and new approaches to food production and local distribution systems.

A civil society for equality and environmental sustainability is defined by purpose and aspiration in its focus on these two interlinked challenges of our time. Such a civil society grouping is built on and from those civil society organisations currently working on these issues. A civil society for equality and environmental sustainability then offers a powerful banner around which to draw in, mobilise and empower a wider range of civil society organisations, whatever their primary roles or functions. While some foundational elements for this civil society grouping are in place, it has yet to emerge in any coherent manner as a unified collective platform for change.

A civil society for equality and environmental sustainability would encompass a diversity of organisations, along the neoliberal, social democratic, and ecological strands identified by Kirby and Murphy above (3). In forming a shared platform they would, therefore, still need to find agreement on the ambition for change for equality and environmental sustainability, and on the manner in which such change is to be sought. Such struggles would be played out in forming such a grouping, but would need to be pursued in a manner that sustains collaboration and cooperation, respecting the autonomy of the individual organisations involved.

Progress to-date on achieving any substantive ambition for equality and environmentally sustainability, in policy or legislation, has not been significant in Ireland. Politics and the

political system, if functioning properly, should be delivering on ambitious goals for equality and environmental sustainability at this stage, given the alarms sounded and the impending perils.

The capacity of our politics and political system to deliver the necessary change is in question, however, pointing to the imperative for other drivers for change to emerge and secure necessary progress. Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability is one such potential driver. However, its emergence in such a role is still awaited and will require time, effort and imagination from those organisations already working on or concerned for equality and environmental sustainability, if it is to emerge as a force to be reckoned with.

Chapter 3. Context: Low-Energy Politics

Change comes slow in Ireland, if at all. There is a political lethargy or, at best, a prolonged and meandering incrementalism, when it comes to progressing significant change with any immediacy. The positive results in recent Constitutional referenda on same sex marriage (2015) and on abortion rights (2018) are deemed to be two recent examples of such significant change. However, while these are two major issues and the referenda results did reflect significant change, these referenda were markers for a subterranean and ongoing progress that was worked at and emerged over decades. They did not evidence a political capacity to achieve transformative change in a short time frame.

The Thirty Fourth Amendment of the Constitution, to permit marriage to be contracted by two persons without distinction as to their sex, was introduced by referendum in 2015. The referendum campaign reflected positive solidarity across civil society as well as creativity in its values-led messaging. The outcome, though, was the culmination of campaigns on LGB rights that date from the 1970s, with high points in: decriminalisation of homosexuality with the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993, and introduction of civil partnership for same-sex couples with the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010.

The prohibition on abortion, introduced by referendum into the Irish Constitution in 1983, was only removed, by referendum in 2018. This was on foot of sustained, brave and innovative campaigns over that period, with the Coalition to Repeal the Eight Amendment emerging in 2013. Again, the referendum campaign reflected positive solidarity across civil society as well as creativity in values-led messaging.

The current failure to address, in any meaningful way, the major societal challenges posed by such as climate disruption, housing insecurity and homelessness, and inter-generational inequalities, more accurately reflects the actual and limited capacity of our politics to advance substantive change. Politics has traded in promises, gestures and small steps, but has not been willing or able to deliver the transformative change required to resolve fundamental issues.

In Ireland, we place little faith in our political leadership to effect change. In his analysis of the European Social Survey, 2018-19, O'Connell, the Irish academic, identifies that: over 10% of people respond that they have no trust at all in either politicians or political parties; just over one-quarter have relatively high levels of trust in politicians or political parties; and only 40% have relatively high levels of trust in the Dáil. These levels of trust were far lower than other institutions assessed such as the Garda Síochána and the legal system. Ireland was placed behind most other western European democracies on this indicator of trust in politicians (1).

"We succeed by failing" opined Fintan O'Toole, Irish journalist and author, in 2020, in a convincing diatribe on our political leadership. He pointed out that "Ireland's only really effective way of responding to climate change has been to go into recession". In a critique of how politics had failed to advance the significant change required for survival on the planet, O'Toole notes that progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions had only been significant over the period of economic and financial collapse from 2008 to 2012, and again, temporarily, in the first phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. He identified a failure in political leadership whereby "disasters have been much more effective in allowing us to meet our international obligations than any official plans" (2).

The COVID-19 context has offered a different perspective on our political leadership and its ability to advance substantive change in a short time frame, though predicated on crisis. The early responses to the pandemic reflected how such change, albeit of a temporary nature, can be brought about at speed when crisis provokes the necessary political will. A political capacity to advance significant change was revealed that was unthinkable right up to the pandemic asserting itself. Equality was a significant element in these early changes. This is far from the norm, where, at the best of times, equality has a tenuous foothold in policy-making, a foothold that has been quickly lost in previous times of economic crisis.

Over a period of days, as the pandemic and the requirements for its suppression hit, social welfare policy was upended. There was an effective admission of the inadequacy of the social welfare payment rates payable up to that point. The COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment was introduced as an accessible flat rate payment of €350 per week, for the duration of the pandemic, to those who had become unemployed as a result of the crisis. This payment also covered those who were in part-time work, working casually or on systematic short-time work.

The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) identified distributional effects of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment that were of benefit to those on lower incomes, finding that "the pandemic unemployment shock will result in higher income families seeing larger proportionate falls in their incomes than lower income families. Families in the lower two-fifths of the income distribution are, on average, insulated from income losses" (3).

The Health (Preservation and Protection and other Emergency Measures in the Public Interest) Act 2020 enabled changes in housing and homeless policy that had been suggested as unconstitutional up to that point. A temporary prohibition on evictions was introduced and a rent freeze was enacted. More broadly, the primacy of the market was challenged with prolonged economic lockdowns for sectors.

Accommodation provision for homeless people was improved, in a manner that had been suggested as impossible before this, and that effectively protected them from the enhanced risks they faced from COVID-19. Beds were sourced in empty hotels to enable on-street homeless people with underlying conditions to cocoon, and those with symptoms to self-isolate. Vacated Airbnb accommodation was secured to move families out of crowded emergency accommodation.

The two-tier healthcare system was set aside in a matter of weeks. An agreement was signed with the Private Hospitals Association (PHA) to use their facilities, during the crisis, for the treatment of both patients with COVID-19 and those with health issues other than COVID-19. In effect, private hospitals became part of the public system for that period of the pandemic. The government's Sláintecare strategy, published in 2018, includes among its aims to establish a universal single-tier health and social care system, though over a ten year period. This central tenet of the strategy was realised, if temporarily, in a matter of weeks.

Crisis, in this instance the COVID-19 pandemic, shifted the political dynamic, in an unprecedented manner, across a wide range of policy areas. Political leadership for significant change was deployed in such a context. Unger, the Brazilian philosopher and politician, however, in his analysis of political systems, critiques such a situation in emphasising the need to "weaken the dependence of change on crisis " (4).

Vindicating Unger's position, the changes introduced in the early phase of the pandemic did not survive intact even over the pandemic, let alone after it began to wane. They came under attack from economic interests, with the imperative of the market reasserted, at significant cost to public health at times. Rent and eviction freezes were terminated. The Pandemic Unemployment Benefit rate was lowered for many and then abolished. Private health services resumed at full strength. Homeless people, once again, became visible on the streets.

In an Irish context there are problems of political leadership. However, inadequate leadership is not sufficient to explain the slow pace of change. There is a need to look beyond elected representatives and the quality of political leadership, to political systems, to understand the failure of politics to deliver on equality and environmental sustainability. Unger emphasises the centrality of democratic institutions to generating alternatives and, therefore, the need for the search for transformative societal change to be accompanied by a concern for re-imagining and re-making democracy.

Unger points to the problematic dominance of a low energy democracy in most of the wealthier nations. He identifies this as a block to the changes required for social justice, equality, and environmental sustainability. Low energy democracy involves rules and arrangements that generate low levels of political mobilisation, and that slow politics down, hindering structural change by requiring political parties to negotiate proposals for change with a small set of powerful vested interests (5).

Kirby and Murphy identify that politics in Ireland is of this low-energy variety. They establish that the "State became increasingly captured by vested interests with strong veto power to stop reforms in their tracks. This leads to a frozen landscape of policy reform often characterised by paralysis and failure to respond effectively". They further note that "Ireland has a relatively large number of veto points which constrain policy (a relatively rigid constitution, coalition government, bicameralism, and Social Partnership can all be seen as veto points)" (6).

It is political systems that are at play when it comes to the slow pace of change. Within these systems, the power of vested interests, national and global, are central to any analysis of the slow pace of change in Ireland and, specifically, the lack of progress on issues of equality and environmental sustainability. The vested interests of those who hold wealth hang a leaden weight on any ambition for such change, in order to preserve their position. This does link back to issues of political leadership in that this leadership: shares interests with those who hold wealth; depends for its position in some way on those who hold this wealth; or shares the ideological norms of an all-determining market that benefit those interests.

Pizzigati, the North American labour affairs journalist and author, points up the political dominance of the interests of the wealthy in North America and suggests this is effectively shielded from public visibility: "Our pundits seldom play up this dominance. They tend instead to prattle endlessly about gridlock. But the rich never seem to have much of a problem getting our allegedly gridlocked political system to swing sprightly into action" (7).

McCabe, the Irish academic, captures this power of the interests of the wealthy, in his analysis of policy responses to the 2008 economic and financial crisis: "The decision in 2008 to give an almost blanket guarantee to six banks in Ireland – despite the severe problems that were known in relation to at least two of them, Irish Nationwide Building Society and Anglo Irish Bank – was itself a bailout of financial institutions and a cohort of their property-based clients. It was an exercise in genuine political and economic power, one that put certain vested interests over the wellbeing of the state" (8).

Unger emphasises the need for reimagining and remaking a "high energy" democracy. High energy democracy is characterised by five elements (9):

- arrangements that favour a heightened, sustained, and organised level of popular engagement in politics, weakening the influence of money;
- rapid resolution of impasses among branches of governments, breaking any deadlock through this heightened popular engagement;
- assuring a basic stake of resources available to all citizens, taking people out of entrenched disadvantage and exclusion;
- enabling opportunities for experimental deviation such that, as society goes down a certain path, it encourages the development of strong contrasts to the future it has provisionally chosen, as a means of hedging its bets; and
- combining features of both representative and direct democracy, enabling the direct engagement of local communities in the formulation and implementation of local policy outside the structure of local government by organising for popular participation in national and local decisions.

High energy democracy would provide the driving force to advance the significant change required for equality and environmental sustainability. As such, such a model of democracy needs to be a focus for civil society campaigning.

In a context of sustained low energy democracy, there is a challenge to find other drivers for change to bring forward the demand both for high energy democracy and for an effective response to the imperatives of equality and environmental sustainability. This underpins the importance of an independent and effective civil society for equality and environmental sustainability.

Chapter 4. Moment of Potential

Arundathi Roy, Indian author and activist, has identified the pandemic as a key moment of potential within which to imagine and pursue a new future. She writes "Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudices and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage to imagine another world and ready to fight for it" (1).

Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability has not emerged as a significant force for change at this key moment of potential resultant from the COVID-19 pandemic. There has been an absence of a civil society platform that operated decisively, collectively,

and in a sustained manner to define and shape the future that would emerge for Irish society from this unprecedented crisis. Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability has not yet shown signs of fulfilling its potential as a collective driver for transformative change.

Solnit, the North American writer and activist, writes that this is a time where "we may feel free to pursue change in ways that seemed impossible while the ice of the status quo was locked up. We may have a profoundly different sense of ourselves, our communities, our systems of production and our future". She notes, however, that "the outcome of disasters is not foreordained. It's a conflict, one that takes place while things that were frozen, solid, and locked up have become open and fluid – full of both the best and the worst possibilities" (2). Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability does not appear to be geared up or equipped to join that conflict with any evident strategy or force.

Civil society organisations concerned with equality did contribute to the effective management of the pandemic. Some organisations engaged with the government's 'Community Call' initiative, in taking steps to ensure everyone was looked after, with a particular focus on older people and those in isolated or disadvantaged situations. Some of these organisations, providing front-line services in fields deemed key, coordinated with the public sector in effectively re-arranging their services to ensure groups that would otherwise have been vulnerable to the worst effects of the virus, were protected. Homelessness services and housing support services were positive exemplars of such coordination and reorganisation.

Civil society organisations engaged their role as a watchdog, highlighting the particular impact of the crisis on, and the precarious situations resulting for marginalised groups. These organisations articulated demands for government to respond more adequately to: the dangers of congregated settings for groups such as asylum seekers in direct provision, older people in nursing homes, and people with disabilities in institutional care; the risks for those experiencing inadequate and overcrowded living conditions such as Travellers and Roma people; the needs of isolated older people; the rights of people with disabilities and migrant workers; and the alarming rise in domestic violence.

A small number of civil society initiatives did seek to open up a futures perspective and to bring forward an agenda to contest the nature of the society that might emerge from this crisis. However, these agendas were broadly sketched and were not a focus for significant follow-up and organising.

Community Work Ireland, the national community work network, coordinated the COVID-19 NGO Group, comprising nineteen civil society organisations. This group developed a shared policy position for an improved focus on groups at particular risk of adverse effects from the virus, due to inequality and lack of resources, both in the management of the pandemic and in a post-COVID-19 scenario. Its future scenario sought: equality and poverty proofing of all policy responses; use of the UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals as a framework for recovery; and universal public services accessible to all (3).

The Community Platform, an alliance of national networks and organisations, presented an agenda for post-crisis recovery, framed by the values of community, participation,

and decency in another such initiative. Its future scenario included seeking: support for transitions required at community level to meet the challenges of climate change, inequality, and uneven development; models for co-creation of key policies and programmes; and a strategy for economic equality (4).

This limited range of future-focused initiatives and lack of sustained endeavour in their pursuit raises questions in relation to the current situation and capacity of civil society for equality and environmental sustainability. It would be important to understand the nature and scale of the impediments faced by this part of civil society in making its needed contribution to transformative change, and to respond to these impediments, if it is to realise its potential in this regard.

Saskia Sassen, the Dutch-American sociologist, emphasises this period of crisis as a source of learning about our own endeavours. She notes that "The virus is teaching us something, enabling us to recognise our flaws, and the poverty of our endeavours. In this way it is an alert…The virus is an invitation for us to rethink things, to recognise, to hear, to listen, to pay attention, to want to discuss with others." (5). As such, this period of crisis requires reflection. It requires civil society for equality and environmental sustainability to reflect on its potential, the barriers it faces in realising this potential, and how best it might evolve and change in order to realise this potential.

Part 2: Civil Society: Fit for Purpose and Aspiration?

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Chapter 5. Externally: An Enabling Environment?

The nature and quality of the external environment for civil society for equality and environmental sustainability is the first key determinant for review in assessing its fitness for purpose and aspiration to advance transformative change. The European Civic Forum has developed a useful four strand framework within which to review this external environment for civil society, that encompasses:

1. Conducive political, cultural and socio-economic landscape.
2. A supportive legal and regulatory framework with respect for fundamental freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly.
3. A supportive framework for financial viability and sustainability.
4. Dialogue between civil society and governing bodies: meaningful engagement in public debate and policymaking (1).

Independence is the indicator deployed, within each strand of this framework, in reviewing the impact of the external environment on civil society for equality and environmental sustainability's fitness for purpose and aspiration. Independence provides the space for this part of civil society to operate and to make an impact. Where its independence is compromised, effectiveness is undermined, in terms of its capacity to imagine and advance transformative change with impact.

The Baring Foundation's independence barometer, based on three types of independence, is useful in this regard (2):

- Independence of purpose: the space for organisations to be freely established, shaped and run to meet changing needs.
- Independence of voice: the space for organisations to have the ability to protest, campaign or negotiate without fear of retribution.
- Independence of action: the space for organisations to design and deliver effective activities, to innovate and take risks.

Strand One: Political, cultural and socio-economic landscape

"Utterly irrelevant, that's how they see us, utterly irrelevant" mused a prominent civil society advocate in May 2020, discussing the evolution of national public policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, in a personal conversation. Politicians and public servants appear to have come a long way from their embrace of civil society as a Social Partner for the first time, in 1996, in the negotiations for the Partnership 2000 national agreement (3). The inclusion of civil society organisations concerned with issues of inequality in Social Partnership, with the formation of a Community and Voluntary Pillar, had been reflective of an enabling environment in offering new space for civil society to articulate and seek to progress its agenda.

The enabling environment of that time had been further underpinned, in 2001, with the publication by Government of a White Paper on the community and voluntary sector. This set out its vision for the sector and its advocacy role, noting "a need to create a more participatory democracy where active citizenship is fostered. In such a society the ability of the Community and Voluntary sector to provide channels for the active involvement and participation of citizens is fundamental" (4). This identification of the space for civil society in terms of participatory democracy reflected its independence of voice.

This was a period of apparent rude good health for the Irish economy. Rapid economic growth had allowed resources to be made available to accommodate different interests to those more powerful, without posing a threat to dominant interests or requiring any modification in the structure of society or its economy. Vested interests could safely let politics off its tight leash. Increased public spending improved the situation and experience of some groups subjected to disadvantage and exclusion. This was a moment of increased funding for, and potential influence of, civil society working on issues of inequality.

Two decades later, politicians and public servants apparently feel free to ignore civil society and its potential contribution to national policymaking in a context of a major society-wide crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic. Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability appears to have been corralled into policy insignificance over the intervening period.

A small, apparently innocuous, step is identified by Harvey as the turning point in the fortunes of civil society advocacy. He suggests that "a strategic turn" took place in 2002 when the then recently elected Fianna Fail/Progressive Democrats majority government closed the Policy Unit, an initiative of the Department of Social Welfare (5). This unit was established to enhance civil society advocacy by enabling learning from community development work to more systematically inform national policymaking. The unit was a marker of influence, enabling independence of voice for civil society organisations.

This incident coincided with and reflected a period of political shift. The so-called rainbow coalition, formed in 1994, of Fine Gael, Labour and Democratic Left, had lost power in the 1997 elections. This coalition had been largely enabling of civil society organisations. Irish politics took on a more neoliberal hue from this point, reflected in the presence and influence of the Progressive Democrats in the subsequent four governments up to 2011. This was a party that was strongly neoliberal in its orientation. It formed part of a two party coalition in 2002, which held a Dáil majority, not enjoyed by the previous coalition.

Specific and intense political hostility for civil society advocacy was evident shortly after this turning point, in relation to the Shell to Sea protest in the Erris peninsula. This protest campaign, initiated in 2005, was local in its concern for the health, safety and environmental dangers to the local community of the natural gas pipeline to be run through the area by a Shell-led consortium. The campaign was national and international in capturing: the threat posed by fossil fuel extraction to environmental sustainability; the supine nature of Irish politics in its engagement with business, in particular multi-national business; and the failures in a democracy that did not allow for the voice of the community to be heard (6).

The response to this protest campaign involved a political demonization of and, ultimately, criminalisation of dissent. The hostile policing of this protest was subject to ongoing media critique and a series of complaints. In 2014, Shell to Sea and other groups involved, called for an independent investigation into alleged incidents of violence and intimidation during the policing of this protest campaign.

A longer-term and broader dismantling of the enabling environment for civil society organisations concerned with inequality, however, evolved with the economic and financial collapse in 2008. The austerity policies pursued over the following decade provided cover for an intensified undermining of these civil society organisations, in terms of the influence allowed and of the resources made available. Independence of purpose, voice, and action was significantly diminished. At the same time, there was a societal context of public indifference to the fate of civil society, given the inevitable popular preoccupation with experiences of economic hardship.

Social Partnership, in terms of the regular national agreements, collapsed in 2009, and this reduced civil society organisations' access to and influence on government, diminishing independence of voice. Civil society organisations suffered disproportionate funding cutbacks from this point, limiting independence of action. This involved contraction of the community and voluntary sector by 35% of its funding, with a reduction of over 11,150 employees, between 2009 and 2013. The disproportionate nature of these cutbacks is evident when compared to the overall fall of 2.82% in government spending on services over this period (7).

The Advocacy Initiative rang alarm bells, in 2010, for civil society organisations, noting their widespread "concern that the environment for advocacy was becoming more challenging" (8). Hostility from the state, a challenging funding environment, diminished prospects for positive change in a context of economic recession, and increased competition between these organisations were identified as causal factors.

A mere two years later, Harvey suggested that the influence of this part of civil society "had begun to shrink to the inconsequential"(9), and Walshe et al, Irish social researchers, found that these organisations "had lost influence, credibility and power" as a result of the demise of Social Partnership and an increased economic focus for decision-making (10). That these civil society organisations were not understood, in this analysis, as having a contribution to economic decision-making is problematic given the centrality of such decision-making to issues of poverty. However, that these civil society organisations could only see this environment for their advocacy work as being "more challenging" two years previously, suggests some significant level of complacency or denial on their part.

It is notable that the external environment for civil society advocacy continued to deteriorate over a series of coalition governments, encompassing various permutations of Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, the Progressive Democrats, the Green Party and the Labour Party. This reflects a predictable ongoing hostility from those parties of the right, and a disappointing performance by those parties of the left, who might have been expected to more effectively blunt the dominance of a neoliberal agenda and to better protect civil society and its potential for advancing transformative change for equality and environmental sustainability.

The participation by the Green Party in government, in coalition with Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats, from 2007 to 2011, did not serve to defend civil society. However, their participation is of note for the close relationship between this political party and civil society organisations concerned with environmental sustainability. It was during this period, in 2009, that the environmental sector gained entry to the Social Partnership arena. The Environmental Pillar was established as an independent national Social Partner by decision of Government. This, however, coincided with the collapse of the formal negotiating elements of Social Partnership system, the key point of influence, in the face of economic crisis.

A range of initiatives by governments, of various political hues, over the two decades, compromised civil society's independence of purpose, voice and action, thus undermining its effectiveness as an actor for transformative change. This was nowhere more evident than in the field of community development, a cornerstone for civil society advocacy in relation to inequality. The key elements of these political initiatives were: funding constraints; funding cutbacks; alignment of operations; and commodification of the work being done (see box below).

Funding for community development was constrained in terms of the nature of activity that could be implemented by community development organisations, with reduced space afforded for advocacy work. Independence of action, and, in particular, voice were compromised. Advocacy for societal change, previously viewed as a democratic imperative and central to the community development function, took a back seat to a demand to provide direct services to individuals. Disproportionate cutbacks were then experienced by this specific part of civil society as part of the austerity policies being pursued by Government.

The reform of local government, in 2014, included a process to align community development with the priorities of local government, undermining independence of purpose. This process effectively gave local authorities an oversight role with some control in relation to the practice and priorities of community development organisations. The final element in this restriction of community development was the introduction of commissioning and competitive tendering for social inclusion related services. Commissioning is increasingly the norm for state-funded services provided by civil society organisations.

Murphy, Irwin and Maher, Irish academics and activists, researched the impact of this commissioning and competitive tendering, establishing its damaging impact on the quality of civil society organisations' endeavour, the space allowed for advocacy, and ultimately the independence of purpose and action of civil society organisations. They found a range of negative impacts, including:

> "in some sectors, for example Housing First, commissioning and procurement was creating a dynamic of below cost competition and was potentially damaging interagency and collaborative working. In the Public Employment Services sphere, Job Path and uncertainty about procurement have had implications for the type, volume and quality of services delivered to different service users. In community development, the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme has been narrowly focused on specified nationally-set targets, rather than meeting local needs, while advocacy and capacity to innovate have also been considerably weakened. In the domestic violence sector, different processes of commissioning are evident across regions and there is an absence of clarity about how these feed into national decision making and resource allocation." (11)

The experience of civil society organisations involved in community development over this period captures many of key elements of the damaging environment for civil society organisations, compromising their independence.

The Local Community Development Programme was established in 2010 as a new funding mechanism for community development to replace a more liberal funding regime. It explicitly constrained community development and its contribution to advocacy. Funded activities were restricted to four objectives with limits set for resources that could be used for each: education and training (40% of project funding) and assisting clients to become work-ready (40%) predominated over raising awareness (10%) and a policy role of identifying gaps in services (10%).

This situation was exacerbated with particular and disproportionate reductions in funding levels for community development after the economic and financial collapse in 2008. Harvey identified that funding for the Local Community Development Programme was cut by 35% from 2008 to 2012 (12).

A process of alignment for community development with local government was initiated in 2014. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 established Local Community Development Committees in each local authority area "for the purposes of developing, co-ordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development". Membership of these committees includes local authority members, local authority staff, public sector bodies, local community interests, and Local Development Companies.

These committees are responsible for preparing and monitoring the 'community' element in a Local Economic and Community Plan. This plan establishes a framework for economic development, local development and community development, to be pursued by all agencies and publicly funded organisations. This effectively gave local authorities an oversight role with some control in relation to the practice and priorities of community development.

The most recent element in this restriction of community development and its advocacy work involved the introduction of a commissioning and competitive tendering approach to funding social inclusion-related services. Competitive tendering was introduced for the new Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme in 2014 and repeated in 2017. This programme is a key funding source for community development.

The power and changed disposition of leadership in public administration was another problematic factor in this landscape. This leadership played a significant role in the continuing deterioration of the external environment for civil society for equality and environmental sustainability. A gradual change-over in public administration leadership, coinciding with the 2002 "turning point" for civil society advocacy, is evident. A leadership that favoured a social-democratic ethos and saw a constructive role for civil society advocacy as an integral part of democracy was ultimately replaced. The new leadership was more attuned to the neoliberal model of development of their political masters of that period, and was more hostile to what they viewed as interference from civil society organisations.

An authoritarian dimension to this public administration leadership compromised the independence of purpose and voice of civil society for equality and environmental sustainability. Kirby and Murphy point to "values of authoritarianism, conformism, and

anti-intellectualism" as predominating in the Irish political culture (13). In analysing the undermining of the Equality Authority, an independent statutory body with a mandate to implement equality legislation, Crowley (author) identified a "hierarchical and authoritarian culture" at a senior level in public administration. "The (public) sector does not welcome advocacy from its employees; preferring obedience. Nor does the notion of an independent statutory equality body sit easily with this culture" (14). The Equality Authority's budget was cut by a disproportionate 43% by its parent Department in late 2008.

The funding levels for civil society for equality and environmental sustainability recovered as the economic situation improved and returned to some level of stability. The manner in which funding fortunes are so aligned with the economic situation is instructive for how government and the public administration view civil society. It reflects how civil society organisations apparently serve as some form of reserve for the provision of key services to the public. In the good times, civil society expansion allows a cheap and flexible means of expanding public services which, in the bad times, can be cut back at speed and without cost or resistance. This reflects poorly on any commitment to independence of purpose.

By 2018, the wheel appeared to turn full circle for the community and voluntary sector. A new Government strategy on supporting the sector was published that harked back to the tone and analysis of the 2001 White Paper. The new strategy identified that community and voluntary sector organisations "contribute to social and economic cohesion and work to ensure communities, particularly the most marginalised, are included and can participate effectively in decisions affecting their future". The strategy includes an objective to "strengthen and develop participative approaches to the development of public policy and programming, underpinned by an autonomous community and voluntary infrastructure"(15).

Any hope that might be engendered by this policy development must be tempered by the fate of the 2001 White Paper and the failure to progress its implementation. The influence of civil society for equality and environmental sustainability has not recovered to anywhere close to the levels achieved prior to economic collapse and recession, in particular with the failure to re-establish the national agreements negotiated with the Social Partners. This was reflected in the lack of space to engage with key public policy decisions over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, in marked contrast to the engagement in and influence on these decisions by economic interests.

Strand Two: Legal and regulatory framework

A series of legislative developments over the past two decades have significantly increased the administrative burden on civil society organisations. This burden consumes scarce human resources, serving to stifle civil society endeavour. In some instances these legislative developments have served to constrain the activities of civil society organisations. These legislative developments are noteworthy for their failure to take account of the specific nature and role of civil society organisations concerned with equality and environmental sustainability. Legislative provisions that are directed at a wider range of fields, fail to include for approaches that would achieve the outcomes deemed necessary, while reflecting the values and resources of civil society organisations, in particular those that are advocacy-led.

Civil society organisations already faced a significant administrative burden on the basis of the legal form they take, and, in effect, must take if they are to receive sustained funding. The legal form of choice for many civil society organisations is that of company limited by guarantee. This is a legal form conceived for the profit-driven private sector. It brings civil society organisations within the ambit of companies legislation, which carries a significant administrative burden, requires specific expertise, and consumes a high level of limited human resources.

Legislative developments served to diminish civil society's independence of voice, through constraint, and independence of action, through administrative burden, over these two decades, These developments start from the Electoral (Amendment) Act 2001. This Act has a broad definition of 'political purpose' that includes bringing forward and commenting on policy proposals. As a result, it brings civil society organisations involved in advocacy work within its ambit. These organisations are thus required to register with the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO), keep a separate bank account for donations received for such work, and provide an annual certificate to SIPO that all such donations have been lodged to this account and any withdrawals from this account have been used for this political purpose.

The Broadcasting Act 2009 prohibited advertisements on radio and television that are 'directed to a political end'. The Broadcasting Authority is viewed as having taken "an expansive approach" to this prohibition, and civil society organisations have fallen foul of its reach (16). While civil society organisations rarely have the resources for such public campaigns, this legislation closes off an influential advocacy avenue of broad-based communication for societal change.

The Charities Act 2009 marked a shift away from self-regulation in the sector, a shift deemed necessary due to a small number of high profile instances of misuse of funds. It constrained civil society advocacy with a narrow definition of charitable purpose that excludes human rights, though there is now commitment to change this, and through confining registered charities from promoting a political cause unless it relates directly to their charitable purpose.

Charitable status is vital for civil society organisations' fundraising, in applying for grants and contracts, and in seeking tax exempt status from the Revenue Commissioners for funds received. Civil society organisations must demonstrate to the Charities Regulator that they are in good financial standing, that their governance arrangements are to a sufficient standard, and that they pursue a charitable purpose, if they are to be accepted onto the charities register. They must annually submit a report, accounts, and a Charities Governance Compliance Form to maintain this standing. This reflects a significant administrative burden.

The Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 established a broad definition of lobbying that encompassed civil society advocacy. Those deemed under the Act to be involved in lobbying must register with SIPO and must file a declaration with SIPO, every four months with details of all their lobbying activities. There is a need to regulate lobbying by powerful economic interests, whose lobbying has contributed to low energy politics. The potential for corruption in the lobbying conducted by vested interests, and the democratic imperative of civil society advocacy should and could, however, have been differentiated.

Strand Three: Funding regime

The significant increase in state funding to civil society organisations, over the period of economic growth leading up to the financial and economic crisis of 2008, had come at a cost for civil society independence of purpose, voice, and action. It drove civil society organisations concerned with inequality into a narrow service provision role, leaving little room for advocacy. It resulted in civil society for equality and environmental sustainability becoming increasingly dependent on statutory funding, in a context where philanthropic funding is underdeveloped, and fundraising capacity within the sector is largely limited to a small number of large service delivery organisations, given the resources required and the preference evident to donate to services rather than advocacy.

Popplewell, a UK-based researcher, identifies that civil society grew significantly in Ireland over these years of economic growth. She notes an increased promotion of a service delivery model, restricted space for advocacy, and a professionalisation of civil society as accompanying this growth (17). Harvey also identifies an emerging and dominant "services paradigm" for the sector (18).

Organisations that had been predominantly advocacy-focused became more focused on service provision. Civil society organisations had always been involved in service provision, filling gaps in public sector provision but also offering innovation in meeting needs not currently addressed and in new forms of delivery. This service provision was, however, often viewed by these organisations as subsidiary to their core advocacy purpose. New and constricting relationships with the state were, however, constructed around contracts for service provision, with organisations being subject to more intense oversight, as service providers. This limited space and resources for advocacy initiatives.

Dependence on statutory funding acted as a deterrent to any combative advocacy to advance societal change. In some instances, state funding is conditional on organisations signing Service Level Agreements that preclude advocacy work, particularly in services funded through the health sector. More generally, Harvey found that many national organisations were clear that government departments and agencies had never directly used their funding role to influence positions taken by these civil society organisations or how they might articulate such positions. However, he noted that many identified how this funding dependence had a chilling effect, influencing them to "tread a fine line" in terms of the critical voice they chose to deploy in public discourse (19).

When these supposed good times came to an abrupt end, from 2008, community and voluntary sector funding became a particular target for the champions of austerity in the public administration. Downsizing of the sector, due to disproportionate cutbacks, was a feature of the subsequent period. Many organisations in the sector, as providers of essential services to disadvantaged communities, felt bound to pursue survival as the imperative. Independence of voice was undermined in such a context, with little room for civil society to come to the fore to contest austerity policies that were generating significant hardships and inequalities for these communities.

The subsequent economic recovery enabled survival for most of these civil society organisations. However, improved funding regimes further emphasised the narrow service provision role of civil society over its potential contribution of advocacy initiatives. Dependency on statutory funding, with its attendant risks for independence, has continued to be a feature for civil society.

Philanthropic funding sources are important for their potential to enable independence for civil society advocacy. However, these sources are limited in quantity in the Irish context. The spend down and closure of Atlantic Philanthropies in Ireland in 2018, and of the One Foundation in 2013, left an estimated €50m void in the funding available from such sources. The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust's strategic decision, in 2016, to cease funding in the Republic of Ireland, further reduced such funding.

Philanthropic funding sources that followed a spend down strategy ramped up their grant giving over that period. While these grants, given their scale, had an immediate impact in the level and quality of the work supported, they damaged civil society organisations for being unsustainable over the long-term. When the funding ended, the funded organisations faced a funding cliff that saw some close, and that has left others struggling in survival mode over long periods.

Philanthropic funding has provided important support for the advocacy work of civil society organisations on a range of equality and environmental issues. It has made a central contribution to the success of some key civil society advocacy issues, including progress towards the positive outcome from the marriage equality referendum in 2015. It has enabled a creativity in developing and testing out new and innovative advocacy strategies. This latter gain is particularly attributable to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust with, for example, its long-term funding of new initiatives without any track record in place, such as Claiming Our Future and the Equality Rights Alliance.

However, many philanthropic funding sources reinforce the service provision role that has come to predominate in civil society organisations. These philanthropic funders seek solutions to issues of disadvantage by supporting an expansion and increased efficiency of social services through these civil society organisations, rather than by enabling the advocacy required for the transformation of the systems and structures that caused this disadvantage. There was an emphasis from many of these philanthropic funders on quantitative metrics and individual throughput in this service provision, that did not match the values and qualitative emphasis of many of the civil society organisations involved.

Business models and values are promoted, even imposed, by such philanthropy, including with its emphasis on social entrepreneurship. These models and values are at odds with the different realities and values of civil society organisations directed at very different ends of equality and environmental sustainability.

The preference of this philanthropy to invest in proven winners was also problematic. Risk-taking and investing in new untested initiatives was rare among these philanthropic organisations. The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust was a singular exception, with its ability to identify and engage with emerging and potentially innovative initiatives.

Philanthropy is the prerogative of the holders of wealth in society, those same economic interests that weigh so heavily on our low energy politics. It is no surprise, therefore, that an imperative to make the current system work better through such funding took precedence over interest in its transformation. Civil society's independence of purpose, voice, and action were and continue to be subjected to the limits posed by that imperative

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The environmental sector stands out for the manner in which many organisations developed funding sources that are less dependent on the state. Member subscriptions and donations

cover core costs for some of these organisations. Public funding availed of by these organisations tends, therefore, to be for specific projects rather than for core operational costs. There is a further funding arrangement of interest whereby a number of these organisations, at national level, receive a low level of core funding from the state, but at one stage removed from the state, in receiving these funds through the Irish Environmental Network.

Environmental organisations have, thus, avoided, to a greater extent, threats to independence posed by contractual relationships with the state, whereby they would become intermediaries in providing public services. While paid activism is evident and valuable across these organisations, they further gain from a tradition of unpaid volunteer activism, some even operating without paid staff. This has left them more independent of the state and its offers of funding in the good times, just as it has given them some protection from funding withdrawal in the bad times.

Strand Four: Engagement with the state

"Dozens of submissions, we've made dozens of submissions this year alone and nothing has changed". This was the rueful perspective of the coordinator of an innovative and effective local civil society network on its work on equality and environmental sustainability. It was stated to explain her refusal to countenance any reference to 'engagement with civil society' by public bodies in a policy document being worked on, without it being preceded by the word 'meaningful'.

There has been a plethora of formal engagement structures established to bring the statutory sector and the community and voluntary sector together over the past two decades at national and local levels, ranging from the National Economic and Social Forum at national level to Local Community Development Committees at local level. There has, however, been a contraction in such structures at national level over this period, including the demise of key Social Partnership structures. This is significant, given that in a centralised system, key decision-making is reserved to this national level. There has been a continued expansion and evolution of such structures at local level, arguably the level of least influence.

Engagement in these structures places significant demands on the human resources of civil society organisations at national and local level. Therefore, there are risks in such engagement, which can only be justified by real gains secured. Where engagement is not meaningful, independence of voice is diminished but also independence of action, given the investment of scarce resources involved.

In the early days of civil society involvement in Social Partnership, the Community Platform, which formed part of the Community and Voluntary Pillar, identified an impressive list of specific gains from its participation, in its decision to ratify the Partnership 2000 national agreement. However, it could still only conclude that the agreement "represented a step forward in relation to addressing social exclusion and inequality but no more than this. Many of the commitments within Partnership 2000 are vague and aspirational. However, it was felt that there was a basis which could be built on through participation in the monitoring arrangements" (20).

Larragy found limited and decreasing bargaining power available to the Community and Voluntary Pillar in Social Partnership from this early high point in 1996. He points to a form

of proxy-influence held at that early point, due to a "crisis of legitimacy among the political elite" with the community and voluntary sector being involved in Social Partnership to confer legitimacy in a context of high levels of unemployment and poverty. He notes, however, the risk of "redundancy" for these organisations: as this crisis passed their influence waned. He exemplified this by contrasting the negotiations for the Partnership 2000 agreement in 1996, with those for the Sustaining Progress agreement in 2002 (21).

In 1996, a threatened withdrawal from the negotiations, by some members of the Community and Voluntary Pillar, led to two Cabinet meetings being convened to consider the matters and a subsequent commitment to additional resources for social inclusion and equality. In 2002, the threatened rejection of the agreement, by some members of the Community and Voluntary Pillar, merely resulted in the exclusion of these organisations from the Social Partnership processes over subsequent years once they fulfilled their threat and rejected the agreement.

Civil society organisations involved in Social Partnership, in particular the Community Platform (22), rationalised their participation on the basis of an expansion of democracy to encompass both representative and participative forms of democracy. A more limited problem-solving rationale for civil society engagement in these structures was, however, increasingly articulated by the state in particular, as well as by the other Social Partners, and, ultimately, even by elements within civil society over the following years. This rationale is specifically established in the work of the National Economic and Social Council (23).

Walsh et al. identified how policymakers saw effective advocacy in terms of civil society organisations: being representative of real issues; bringing forward clear evidence-based asks and arguments; and presenting solutions based on the actual economic situation. Policymakers saw community and voluntary sector organisations as useful partners when they: were realistic; invested in building relationships; held an understanding of the policy process; and recognised that gains would be incremental (24).

A problem-solving rationale for engagement in Social Partnership limits the aspirations and expectations from this engagement, thus diminishing independence of voice of the organisations involved. Engagement is understood, in this approach, as involving civil society inputs useful to policymakers and their priorities, rather than hearing and being influenced by a voice that is charged by a specific set of interests to bring forward new priorities and to seek the policies and proposals to match these. This problem-solving rationale for the engagement of civil society for equality and environmental sustainability does not allow for meaningful engagement on issues of societal change. Incremental change, on the basis of what the power holders consider permissible or palatable, has effectively been set by the state as the limited and limiting goal for this civil society engagement in Social Partnership and in the structures for engagement directly with the state.

In conclusion, it is clear that civil society organisations have operated and continue to operate in an external environment that is, at best, not enabling, and, at worst, undermining their fitness for purpose and aspiration as a driver for transformative change. The capacity of civil society organisations to advocate for and advance an ambitious and transformative agenda for societal change has been largely constrained and corralled. Their independence of purpose, voice, and action has been diminished over the past two decades.

Political leadership has evidenced an hostility to civil society advocacy, most intensely when it takes the form of public protest. This hostility has been enabled by and progressed under

cover of the financial and economic crisis of 2008 and the imperative of economic recovery pursued on foot of this. It has been facilitated by a public administration increasingly averse to what it regards as civil society interference rather than conceiving of the advocacy role of civil society organisations as a democratic imperative. Civil society organisations concerned with equality and environmental sustainability have failed to build sufficient public support for their advocacy contribution or to build public concern at the dismantling and restricting of their advocacy potential.

Legal and regulatory provisions have contributed to civil society landscape where organisations are increasingly characterised by bureaucracy and burdened by administrative requirements. In some instances these provisions directly curtail advocacy work. In all instances, even as these provisions advance what can be important objectives, they fail to take account of and respond to the specificity of civil society organisations concerned with equality and environmental sustainability.

The funding regime has reshaped civil society organisations' priorities in terms of being primarily service providers, in place of being advocates. It has diminished the capacity of these organisations with cutbacks, and limited their critical voice, in a context of funding dependency on the state. Alternative sources of funding, including philanthropy, are inadequately developed and often deployed in a manner that hinders civil society for equality and environmental sustainability in its pursuit of transformative change agendas.

There is evidence of a diminishing influence for civil society organisations on policymaking, despite significant investment of scarce resources in this engagement. The potential in this engagement, to advance transformative agendas for equality and environmental sustainability, has been hampered in the process being defined as a form of problem-solving exercise, ultimately offering only limited incremental gains rather than the transformative change required.

Chapter 6. Internally: An Enabling Disposition?

This external environment that debilitates civil society organisations concerned with equality and environmental sustainability is interlinked with and formative of a particular internal disposition within many of these organisations. Internal disposition encompasses the ambitions set, the values prioritised, the choices made, and the confidence evident across these organisations.

This internal disposition is central to the ability or inability of these organisations to navigate this external environment and find alternate ways to bring forward and advance agendas for transformative change. While this internal disposition could be directed towards resisting this hostile external environment, it could equally serve to submit to, and thereby, reinforce it.

This internal disposition is, therefore, the second key determinant for review in assessing the fitness for purpose and aspiration of this part of civil society in driving transformative change. In this, the dominant disposition across these organisations is reviewed. Other, less dominant strands of internal disposition are explored in subsequent chapters.

There is no readymade framework for analysing the internal disposition of civil society organisations. This suggests a lack of internal reflection on this element. The only tools readily available to review internal disposition are the traditional and limited tools of organisational or programme evaluation. Such evaluations have more often tended to serve the needs of

external stakeholders, namely funders and policymakers, rather than the internal needs of the organisation in strengthening its pursuit of transformative change.

The framework that has, therefore, been developed and applied to review the internal disposition of civil society organisations involves three strands:

- Strategy: encompassing the nature of the goals being pursued; the analysis applied to understand the nature of the problem to be addressed and establish how change might be brought about; and the strands of action proposed to advance change.
- Culture: encompassing the dominant values of the organisation, evident in shaping its priorities and processes; and the confidence with which these organisations seek transformative change.
- Imagination: encompassing the creativity applied in defining a vision for society that is to be realised through the work of civil society, and the manner in which this vision for society could be progressed.

Effectiveness comes centre stage as the indicator to be deployed, under each of these strands, in reviewing the nature and implications of the internal dispositions identified. Effectiveness focuses on organisational capacity to:

- bring forward agendas for, and advance transformative change characterised by ambition;
- achieve more immediate impacts of substance that create the conditions for such transformative change; and
- disrupt the status quo, challenging and disarming vested interests and creating the conditions for immediate impacts of substance.

Strand One: Strategy

Over the past two decades of restriction, there has been a shift in the nature of the strategic goals articulated by civil society organisations concerned with equality and environmental sustainability, from a focus on large-scale transformative change to a focus on incremental change. While incremental change can serve as a means to build towards transformative change, and while the shift in goals initially might have reflected such an understanding, the toll of time and the burden of external restriction has left the pursuit of incremental change as an end in itself rather than a means towards a greater goal. The resolution of immediate problems has become the priority, thus raising issues of effectiveness in progressing transformative change.

This shift to a focus on incremental change has been influenced by the restrictions imposed on civil society. It has equally been influenced by the dominance Social Partnership was afforded in the strategic approaches of civil society organisations. The prioritisation of Social Partnership as the central means through which to advance change, increasingly limited civil society goals, based on the understanding developed of what was deemed appropriate and possible to pursue through this channel of negotiated advocacy.

Civil society campaigns, prior to the inclusion of these organisations in Social Partnership, were characterised by demands for transformative change. The Community Workers Cooperative, predecessor of Community Work Ireland, sought to ensure that policies and

plans for the investment of European Structural and Investment Funds were committed to eliminating inequalities. This ambition was stated in terms of a new model of development to be pursued in Ireland using this EU funding, a model that integrated social and economic objectives (1). The campaign work of the Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed in response to the high levels of unemployment at the time, sought: a redesigned labour market characterised by full employment; an end to long-term unemployment; adequacy of social welfare rates; and the elimination of precarious employment (2).

The move by civil society organisations into Social Partnership, with the formation of the Community and Voluntary Pillar, and the access to decision-makers that this afforded, did initially add a useful strand to civil society advocacy for transformative change. However, as problem-solving processes came to dominate within Social Partnership and other arenas of direct engagement with the state, the goals of these organisations were reframed in terms of such incremental change.

Problem-solving is an expert process, shifting civil society engagement in these structures from being a political act to being one of a technical nature. Problem- solving limits what issues it is possible to raise within such partnership arenas. Kirby and Murphy conclude that the "tightly controlled coordinative technical discourse in Social Partnership" involves a limited form of discourse that "leads to reform that is incremental rather than transformative and structural" (3).

The civil society organisations involved did not propose this problem-solving paradigm, however, they gradually adopted this understanding of their engagement with the state. In a context of increased vulnerability, these organisations made the case for their continued participation as a partner in terms of the problem-solving gains that their engagement offered the state. These gains were identified as: improving policies with information, options, and solutions brought to government; offering a long-term perspective to the policy process beyond the electoral cycle; and bringing forward the perspective of minority groups whose views might be overlooked in policymaking based (4).

Engagement in Social Partnership and in various partnership structures with the state at national and local level, became the dominant element in how many civil society organisations' chose to pursue change for equality and environmental sustainability, an almost singular element in some instances. This represented a significant shift in civil society strategy, moving away from emphasising the need for a multiplicity of elements, and a strategic mix of these elements, in their pursuit of change. Alongside negotiation, this multiplicity of elements had included elements such as protest, local organising, monitoring as watchdog, prefiguring change, and activist training. While in part reflecting limited resources as much as being a matter of choice, this change in strategy raises issues of effectiveness, in terms of achieving impact, but also in terms of disrupting the status quo.

Engagement in Social Partnership could only be effective in achieving impact if it was part of an interlinked suite of activities pursued by civil society organisations within and outside of Social Partnership. Any capacity to disrupt the status quo required such an approach. The choice of a largely singular strategy for change, through Social Partnership and the access this allowed, had not been the intention of these organisations. The Community Platform had, for example identified Social Partnership as just "one important means of achieving our goals" (5).

Crowley (author) emphasised that Social Partnership be engaged in as "one means to an end, so that resources are spread across a range of strategies to achieve ends and so that participation is organised in such a manner that a critical and angry voice can continue to be articulated by the sector" (6). This multiplicity of elements, was required if involvement in Social Partnership was to empower, rather than consume the civil society organisations engaged.

These civil society organisations could not call on the same economic power as was available to the business, farmer, and trade union interests in Social Partnership. This inequality intensified over time as civil society's strategy narrowed to this largely singular approach, with fewer linked elements of action that could mobilise a popular power behind its arguments.

The potential of and structures for this civil society engagement with the state deteriorated with the demise of the national Social Partner agreements process, in 2009, and the dissolution of the National Economic and Social Forum, in 2010. Civil society advocacy subsequently sought to regain position and reinstitute the structure for its preferred form of engagement with the state. Participation in Social Partnership became an advocacy goal in and of itself, rather than a means to progress more substantive goals, suggesting issues of effectiveness in terms of advancing transformative change.

This situation was evident in a 2020 Community and Voluntary Pillar letter to the Irish Times (7), identifying the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on disadvantaged groups. The Pillar members suggested, in conclusion, that the "need for social dialogue is more urgent than ever". Their call was for "a new structure for Social Partnership/social dialogue" that included civil society. The Pillar was unable to look beyond an approach that had been tried and found wanting, nor to raise its ambition beyond an ongoing demand to sit at the table.

Engagement with the state in a problem-solving process establishes, at best, persuasion and, at worst, a good argument, as the key tools for achieving impact. This neglects the reality that once the change sought goes beyond problem-solving to anything of a more transformative nature, it takes more than a good argument or persuasion to make progress. With persuasion and a good argument established as the key tools for advancing change, engagement with the state ultimately became a form of elite dialogue.

Some civil society organisations realised and relished an insider status on the basis of their involvement in this elite dialogue. These organisations were able to roam the corridors of power as a Social Partner, but were increasingly ineffectual. Participation in elite dialogue ultimately enmeshed civil society organisations for equality and environmental sustainability in discussion with the powerful, rather than in conversation with a wider public. They therefore lost sight of key audiences that had to be mobilised if agendas were to be progressed.

In doing so, these civil society organisations undermined their potential power base. Civil society organisations, if they are to advance transformative change and achieve more immediate impacts of substance, needs to mobilise the power of popular demand behind their positions, however the details of these demands might subsequently get negotiated on foot of that mobilisation.

Policymakers were clear about the requirements attendant on the insider status conferred on these civil society organisations. They critiqued any failure by civil society organisations to acknowledge their insider status and to understand that they were part of the system rather than a critical voice. They emphasised the need for civil society organisations to prioritise building relationships with the administration rather than engaging in public critique of government policy (8).

For insider status to be sustained, this necessitated a reshaped form of advocacy to the values and forms that were acceptable to the power holders. A preference was evident, among the organisations involved, for insider status and direct engagement with decision-makers, over the use of 'outsider' tactics such as public protest. This drove the singular strategy that emerged.

Civil society organisations did engage in campaigning work targeting a wider public over the period of restriction. However, the impact of participation in elite dialogue with a resultant emphasis on persuasion and a good argument over popular mobilisation is evident in this campaigning work. Public debate was an arena for a form of 'megaphone' elite dialogue between these organisations and the power holders.

Public awareness work on key societal issues was little more than a means of continuing the elite dialogue from outside the corridors of power. It was not about motivating, building, and engaging public demand for change and, thus, could not serve to mobilise and build popular power behind civil society demands for transformative change.

In one example, in a study on values-led communication to advance the right to housing, Crowley (author) and Mullen, an Irish social researcher and activist, examined civil society public communication in this field and found that:

> "The current role accorded (by civil society actors) to public discourse in the strategies being pursued for social change on the issue of homelessness and housing insecurity appears to be limited. The primary role, it would appear, is as a public space for contest between the advocate and the policymaker, principally in regard to the veracity of the homelessness figures, and for state actors to defend their record" (9).

The civil society priority given to elite dialogue, as the means to progress their agendas, generated an alienation between those inside and those outside the Social Partnership processes and structures. This fragmentation blocked alliances that would have been required for an effective advocacy, and further undermined the power base of civil society. Crowley (author) noted:

> "A division emerged between those organisations in Social Partnership and those outside the partnership process. Some inside Social Partnership saw those outside as irrelevant. Some outside Social Partnership saw those inside as compromised. The lobbyists were distanced from the campaigners which diminished both" (10).

Insider status and participation in elite dialogue can have detrimental effects on participants' perspectives. Harvey records how "advocacy organisations form their own elite so close to the governing class of politicians and civil servants as to eliminate any serious prospect of social change" (11). This process is not inevitable but requires active countering to ensure

it does not take hold. These divisions and this potential sense of elitism undermine the effectiveness of civil society to disrupt the status quo, achieve impact of substance or advance transformative change.

Strand Two: Culture

"We are still grieving", opined one veteran of Social Partnership operating at a local level, in a personal conversation. He was trying to explain the difficulties his civil society network was having in agreeing on a strategic plan for its future, in particular in relation to its engagement with the state. It was insightful and held a broader relevance. A form of grief does seem to have gripped civil society organisations concerned with equality and environmental sustainability as they continue to act out their role as Social Partner, an increasingly meaningless role without the full panoply of structures required for any influence, and a role in which they lacked the necessary level of power to have an effective impact.

There is the repetitive participation in policy fora, and the endless preparation of submissions and policy positions, which consume many hours, allow the power holders to legitimately claim they have consulted, yet rarely make a significant impact in policy and legislative outcomes. There is the time-consuming maintenance of the Community and Voluntary Pillar and the Environmental Pillar, despite the demise of the Social Partnership structures they were set up to service. In this regard, civil society organisations have descended into ritual endeavours over this period of restriction. Ritual is central to giving vent to grief.

Horvat points up the dangers for a civil society movement mourning in the face of multiple defeats. He draws from Traverso, the Italian historian, in suggesting that "mourning might also result in the identification with the enemy: the lost struggles are replaced by accepted capitalism" and "the refusal to believe in the possibility of an alternative inevitably results in a disenchanted acceptance of global capitalism". Traverso, he notes, recommended melancholy over mourning. Melancholy at least leads to an "obstinate refusal of any compromise with the enemy". It offers "memory and awareness of the potentialities of the past" (12).

However comforting ritual might be, it is a resource-consuming process, and can be a barrier to advancing transformative change. At some point, if unchecked, ritual forms into habit and in turn, solidifies into culture. Civil society organisations remain on what has become a policy treadmill, simply because it has become a matter of ingrained habit. The failure to see beyond ritual and break the deadening hold of habit, diminishes effectiveness in disrupting the status quo or achieving impact of substance.

"The rich don't always win. We can win, we can create a more equal society" claimed Sam Pizzigati to a visibly disbelieving Irish civil society audience badly in need of inspiration and hope. The occasion was an event organised by Claiming Our Future, in 2014. The audience comprised civil society activists who were more than a little battered by five years of economic crisis and austerity policies. Pizzigati had history on his side however, in the triumph of those experiencing disadvantage over the holders of wealth in the USA during the first half of the twentieth century (13). However, in Ireland he was addressing an audience grown accustomed to defeat and disillusioned as to any prospect of transformative change becoming possible in the near future.

'There is no alternative' is a mantra that dominated political discourse and took a popular hold during the economic crisis, from 2008. Civil society organisations concerned with equality and environmental sustainability were not immune to its stranglehold over hope and imagination. Pizzigati warns that "Plutocracies rest upon cynicism, upon a deep-rooted sense that what we do as average people doesn't matter, that the rich always get richer" (14). He emphasises the importance of new initiatives from civil society in attacking that cynicism and raising hopes that things can change, giving the example of the Occupy Wall Street movement.

Loss of confidence is interlinked with caution, and caution does not lend itself to ambition. Caution for these civil society organisations is entwined with experiences of financial vulnerability and a continuing dependence on the state for core funding. With survival as an imperative, it was not easy for these civil society organisations to rock the boat with new perspectives or initiatives.

Popplewell found that "in comparison to other European countries in similar situations such as Greece and Spain, there has been a relative absence of social movements and civic action in Ireland in response to economic collapse and austerity policies" (15). Harvey identified civil society criticism being tempered "for fear of risking reprimand and a loss of funding" (16). Such caution undermined civil society effectiveness in advancing transformative change.

Values are important to civil society organisations and, for many, their very establishment emanated from a set of particular core values. Civil society organisations take an active pride in their founding values. For some, however, there is a drift from these core values, evident in their priorities and day-to-day activities. This points to issues of effectiveness in terms of achieving impact.

Values are key motivators in any organisation. They shape what an organisation prioritises and how it goes about pursuing its priorities (17). They are embedded in and reflective of organisational culture. The engagement of values such as dignity, social justice, empowerment, community, and environmental protection, in driving and shaping the actions and work processes of civil society organisations, are central to their advancing of transformative change.

The corralling of much of the community and voluntary sector into prioritising a service provision role, came at a cost that went beyond a downgrading of its advocacy work. These civil society organisations had to emphasise proficiency in financial oversight, management, service delivery, meeting operational targets, and organisational governance in order to secure and sustain state contracts as service providers. The management of services, sometimes complex and expansive in scale, requires particular types of leadership and skillsets to meet the standards required. Some philanthropic funding sources reinforced the need for such a skillset with their imposition of private sector business models for planning and management, and their emphasis on operational efficiency and meeting quantitative service provision targets.

Organisational values shifted as a result of these requirements. Values operate akin to muscles, the more frequently specific values are engaged by organisational systems, the stronger these values are in shaping organisational culture. Founding values were still espoused, however, the dominant values driving organisational priorities and processes

changed. This growing values gap, between espoused and dominant values, tends to be an implicit rather than an explicit process.

A managerial organisational culture became evident in many civil society organisations. Values of professionalism, efficiency, excellence, and value for money, came to shape organisational strategy, process, and practice of such civil society organisations, becoming central to their organisational culture. Values motivating the pursuit of equality and environmental sustainability, lost priority for lack of the same level of constant and systemic engagement.

This is not to suggest that the values of professionalism, efficiency, excellence, and value for money are less worthy values. The problem is one of balance and prioritisation. In failing to adequately engage the core values that motivate their concern for equality and environmental sustainability, the ambition and space for an active and creative advocacy for transformative change declines. As a result, issues of effectiveness emerge in terms of advancing transformative change

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Strand Three: Imagination

Klein, the Canadian author and activist, has observed that previously "times of rupture served to unleash the 'utopian imagination' engendering a situation where people dared to dream big, out loud, in public together". She laments that "by the time the 2008 financial fiasco was unfolding, that utopian imagination had largely atrophied" and "generations who had grown up under neoliberalism's vice grip struggled to picture something other than what they had already known" (18). Civil society advocacy in Ireland was not immune from this atrophy of imagination.

Those involved in civil society organisations concerned with equality and environmental sustainability are ever more stretched and busy. In many cases this is because they are expected to do more with less resources, particularly as service providers. It is also a result of their entanglement in multiple engagements with the state, and in the various administrative reporting requirements they must comply with. This busyness leaves little room to reflect, to explore alternatives, or to pursue new ideas. There is a treadmill of activity that is demanded by funders, potential funders, regulators, policymakers, and even organisational members.

There is little space, energy, or motivation available to, or created by, these civil society organisations to imagine new advocacy agendas or new approaches to advocacy. The demands of the 'day job' have largely, though not completely, precluded such creativity and experimentation. This inevitably raises issues of effectiveness in advancing transformative change, achieving impact, and disrupting the status quo.

During the period of financial and economic crisis and the imposition of austerity policies, the survival agenda left little room for civil society organisations to advance an agenda that could take advantage of that "time of rupture" in advancing its potential to achieve transformative change. Looking beyond the survival agenda, few of these civil society organisations put forward change agendas that went beyond their specific focus and mandate.

Popplewell notes an emphasis on "defensive forms of civil society advocacy" over this period, with civil society seen as defending "services to micro-population groups" (19). There was, predominantly, a failure to seize the moment and move beyond the customary and traditional agendas, a failure to dream big and out loud.

A new future of equality and environmental sustainability, and a model of development to realise this future, remains to be adequately envisioned, and to be envisioned in a manner that would inspire and mobilise popular support. There have been some initiatives towards developing such an agenda, though incomplete and with limitations, which are described in chapter nine.

The development of this agenda demands imagination rather than repackaging past agendas, which has largely been the approach to-date. Horvat points out that the modest proposals of the past do not enable a break out into the future, and he makes a call for imagination, in suggesting that the content of such change must be drawn from the future rather than the past or the present: "In order to draw out inspiration from the future, we must escape from the blandishments of the past: we must shoot the clocks of the present in order to break out into the future" (20).

To create the conditions for a more equal and sustainable future to emerge from the current "time of rupture", due to the COVID-19 pandemic, civil society needs to convincingly envision such a future. As crisis mode recedes, the dominant pursuit of recovery, posed as a return to normality, gains increasing prominence as a societal and political goal. This is a return to the previous unequal and destructive 'normal'.

This situation demands capacities of invention from civil society organisations, to establish and communicate what a different future might look like and how it might be realised. With limited exceptions, such as the initiatives of Community Work Ireland and the Community Platform noted in chapter four, such capacities have yet to emerge with any conviction in this current moment of crisis.

There is an imperative to imagine new forms of action or strategy to achieve the change required for an alternative future for equality and environmental sustainability. Crowley (author) identifies a failure of civil society imagination to renew and recreate the manner in in which its advocacy agendas are pursued and promoted, noting that, during the period of financial and economic crisis:

> "the community sector has not seen the need for, nor imagined the content of, an agenda for its own transformation. What forms of organisation could progress social change for those experiencing inequality and poverty in this new context? What types of activity could mobilise people and advance the values-based agenda of the sector?" (21).

During that "time of rupture", as Ireland faced economic and financial collapse in 2008, civil society missed the opportunity to imagine and take on new roles and strategies in pursuit of a social, political and economic model of development to advance equality and environmental sustainability. A similar challenge is posed by the current pandemic-related crisis and an adequate response has yet to emerge, despite some initiatives noted, such as that of Community Work Ireland, described in chapter ten. This raises issues of effectiveness in advancing transformative change.

In conclusion, it is clear that many civil society organisations concerned with equality and environmental sustainability reflect an internal disposition that is undermining of their fitness for purpose and aspiration as drivers for transformative change. This is an internal disposition that has largely been shaped by a hostile external environment, which civil society organisations have not demonstrated an ability to resist, or to operate effectively within. This problematic internal disposition is evident across all three strands of the review framework applied: strategy; culture; and imagination. It results in issues of effectiveness for civil society organisations in advancing transformative change, achieving impact, and disrupting the status quo.

The goals pursued by these civil society organisations have largely been reduced to the specific and incremental steps deemed possible by low-energy politics. Change is mainly sought through persuasion and well-crafted argument rather than as a product of popular demand. Processes of elite dialogue have captured civil society organisations in a conversation with the powerful, and reduced the space for the conversation with a wider public, which is so important to mobilising and building a power base of public demand for change.

Civil society organisations have invested the bulk of their advocacy resources in a predominantly singular strategy of engagement with the state in what is essentially a problem-solving dialogue. This is at the expense of the broader mix of strategies and tactics that would offer a wider platform and a stronger power base from which to advance transformative change.

These organisations have been hampered by a growing internal disillusionment and loss of confidence that change is possible. The sector is caught in a prolonged mourning for former influence that further underpins this sense that there is no alternative. Caution has put boundaries on the strategies pursued and the demands articulated, as the need to protect position and funding often takes precedence.

For many civil society organisations, organisational values have shifted, with new service provision roles and funder requirements. Values such as professionalism, efficiency, excellence, and value for money have come to dominate, often implicitly, and to increasingly shape priorities and processes in many these organisations. Values such as social justice, inclusion, dignity, empowerment, community, and environmental protection have not been adequately defended and engaged, and have been quietly displaced as priority values within organisational culture in the process. This diminishes the nature, level and quality of the pursuit of any transformative change by these organisations.

A treadmill of busyness has left these civil society organisations with little room to imagine and create new agendas for the transformative change required. Such agendas would: take advantage of current opportunities of disruption; envision an equal and environmentally sustainable future; and inspire public demand for this.

Civil society organisations concerned with equality and environmental sustainability have yet to imagine new ways of doing their advocacy work in a more hostile external environment, and in a manner better suited to the transformative change they once sought but have perhaps lost sight of. These organisations themselves, therefore, remain in need of transformative change if they are to be fit for purpose and aspiration as drivers for equality and environmental sustainability.

Part 3: Civil Society: Innovations and Alternatives

Part 3: Civil Society: Innovations and Alternatives

Chapter 7. Traces and Legacies of Resistance: Organisation

There are civil society organisations that have, over this two-decade period of restriction and demoralisation, creatively sought to re-imagine and expand the boundaries of the structure, role, strategy, and contribution of civil society for equality and environmental sustainability. These organisations have been valuable zones of experimentation, with valuable learning for future civil society endeavour.

Horvat emphasises the importance of such learning, quoting an interview with Chomsky who identified that "if you look back in history, those movements that succeeded seem like those who have failed or didn't succeed to achieve their goals", as "they left traces and legacies that are bringing us forwards" (1). Such valuable traces and legacies are available from civil society endeavour in Ireland over the past two decades. This endeavour encompasses organisation, change agendas, collaboration, and tactical invention. Organisation is addressed in this chapter, with the remaining types of endeavour addressed in subsequent chapters.

Garza, co-founder of Black Lives Matter, identifies that "Organisations are a critical component of movements – that become the places where people can find community and learn about what's happening around them, why it's happening, who it benefits and who it harms. Organisations are the places where we learn skills to take action, to organise to change the laws and change our culture. Organisations are where we come together to determine what we can do about the problems facing our communities" (2).

Garza further emphasises that "the change we seek can only be accomplished through sustained organising"(3), and "if we want to influence the decision-maker to either reverse the decision or do something different, we have to demonstrate that this is something a lot of people care about and there will be consequences if they don't do what we need them to do" (4).

This emphasises the creation and sustaining of organisations, spaces, and platforms, by civil society for equality and environmental sustainability, as well as the organising of a wide spectrum of people in shaping the change agenda required and in demanding its implementation. This organising involves knocking on doors and bringing people together in significant numbers in the pursuit of transformative change. It requires investment of time and energy in engaging with people and drawing them together behind shared purpose.

There have been important instances of new organisations that emerged in this period of restriction for civil society in Ireland. These have involved both new forms of organisation and new ways of organising. They have all encompassed concern for equality and environmental sustainability.

Some of these new organisations have survived, while many have had to close down over time. Some have met with success in their endeavours, but most have not been able to

achieve their goals. Nonetheless, they all provide learning for the future, both generally in terms of the importance of organising independently from the state, and specifically in relation to the creativity that they brought to their means of mobilisation.

Four such organisations stand out for the learning they offer: the Right2Water movement and Right2Change which emerged from it; the Spectacle of Defiance and Hope; Claiming Our Future; and Extinction Rebellion. These initiatives gave new and real meaning to the concept of civil society for equality and environmental sustainability, and pursued new and creative approaches to organising for the achievement of transformative change.

The Right2Water movement was, by far, the most effective such mobilisation over this period in terms of organising people across the country behind a set of specific demands. This was a popular campaign against the imposition of water charges and, more broadly, the privatisation of water and sanitation services. The campaign was led by trade unions, initially Unite and Mandate, subsequently joined by the Civil and Public Services Union, the Communications Workers Union, and OPATSI (plasterers' union). It began in early 2014 as local communities began blocking the installation of water meters. Left wing politicians approached the trade unions to seek help in building a campaign to stop the imposition of water charges. The Right2Water movement was organised on the basis of three pillars: trade union, political, and community.

The Right2Water movement owes its origins to a new model of trade unionism. Ogle, one of the key trade union organisers of the movement, from the Unite trade union, notes the importance to this movement of "those within the trade union movement who not only resisted the lazy partnership consensus but who are now trying to forge a new model of community and workplace-based 'lifelong trade unionism'". He points out that "the reality is that whatever gains workers are making in the workplace, even if they are just holding back the tide or stopping the rot in some cases, the advancement of the neoliberal agenda doesn't stop at the workplace gate" (5).

Aronoff and her colleagues, journalists and academics based in USA, similarly note, in their work on a green new deal, that "unions win when they do 'whole-worker' organising – organising that sees workers as connected to broader communities and that organises those communities alongside their coalitions, bargaining for the common good" (6).

An important feature of the Right2Water campaign was the interaction between the local and the national levels. Local community level direct action to block the installation of water meters was combined with creative street protests organised at national level. There were nine large-scale national demonstrations, each with a carefully designed mix of political and community speakers, and a strong element of cultural spectacle. In November 2014, the national demonstration was localised, involving 106 simultaneous local demonstrations.

In a context of economic and financial crisis, water charges reflected a narrow agenda to emerge in such a dominant manner and to mobilise in such an effective way. It was, however, a concrete issue of significant concern to people across the country. The campaign harnessed public anger at austerity, something that was key to its effectiveness in mobilising people in such large numbers. There was a subsequent initiative, to build on this single-issue focus and the success of its mobilisation, in developing the broader Right2Change policy agenda in 2015.

The Right2Change platform moved the agenda to a focus on transformative change. While Right2Water organised around what people did not want in the present, Right2Change organised around what people did want for the future. It marked a significant evolution and expansion in focus and strategy. However, it did not enjoy the same success or popular adherence as the original campaign. It closed in 2020, noting that, though it had not fulfilled its mission, it had made a difference and left a legacy, in the form of a small Right to Change political party.

The Right2Water campaign rested in the main on the drive and direction of two key trade union officials, David Gibney of Mandate and Brendan Ogle of Unite. Ogle points to the importance of the campaign agenda being based on two key demands: the abolition of domestic water charges; and of Irish Water (the body responsible for water services), in that "many other things divided those of us that shared these two core messages, but by uniting around that simple single belief and objective we had a massive movement on our hands" (7). A focused demand enabled success, even in the face of significant opposition, where a broader transformative agenda might not, and ultimately, in the case of Right2Change, did not achieve such unity or success.

The effectiveness of the movement is evident in that water charges and any threat of privatisation were stopped in their tracks. The 2015 Biennial Delegate Conference of ICTU, despite a tense debate with evident division on the issue in the trade union movement, backed a motion to reject water charges and to seek a Constitutional referendum to prevent the privatisation of water charges. More than half of the TDs elected in the 2016 general election opposed water charges, leaving the minority Fine Gael government unable to implement them.

An independent expert commission was established to examine the future of the water charges, and their report was considered by an Oireachtas committee. In April 2017, the Dáil voted to accept its recommendations that: only people who excessively use water would be charged as opposed to all water users; an agreed refund would be made to people who had already paid water charges; and a referendum would be held on the issue of privatisation of Irish Water.

Community and voluntary sector and environmental sector organisations were notable for their absence from the Right2Water movement. The community pillar of Right2Water involved community-level activists involved in direct action to stop the installation of water meters rather than local or national community and voluntary sector organisations. Ogle states that the trade unions "invited a long list of 'civil society' organisations" to the campaign launch, "but from memory only Amnesty International attended and they never came back to us" (8). The absence of community and voluntary sector and environmental sector organisations from this campaign was a missed opportunity.

The absence of civil society organisations concerned with equality and environmental sustainability might reflect the nature of the issue at the heart of the campaign. Some of these organisations saw water charges as a valid environmental strategy in support of water conservation. This position, however, did not address the threats inherent in privatisation of water provision. Others among these organisations saw limitations in building a movement around such a narrow issue and a negative framing in terms of what people did not want, when the focus needed to be on the type of society we did want to emerge out of financial and economic crisis. The absence of these sectors of civil society might equally reflect their caution about getting involved in such a controversial campaign. Survival and retaining or regaining a position of influence were imperatives for many such organisations over this period. There were also resource barriers for organisations caught up in the demands of service provision and managing a growing administrative burden.

Ogle identified that the community pillar of the Right2Water movement was large, and "mostly non-aligned to parties or individuals, not uniform, and lacking in structure and discipline". He noted that "hierarchy and control were feared and distrusted totally by many of these new activists in the water movement". In an analysis, that also holds relevance for the community and voluntary sector, he notes that "trade unions were something they associated with the establishment, with Government, and that they had betrayed the working class" (9).

The Spectacle of Defiance and Hope was arguably the most creative mobilisation over this period. This was a community-based campaign to resist austerity policies, operating most intensively over the period 2009-2011. The campaign involved an alliance of community and youth organisations, based in working class communities and in Traveller communities. It was local in nature, being largely but not solely Dublin-based. It exemplified a significant capacity for organising and mobilising people behind high level social change goals. Its agenda emphasised equality rather than environmental sustainability. It stands out as an important source of learning for the interplay of the community sector and the cultural sector in its mobilising activities.

The Spectacle of Defiance and Hope recalled an earlier tradition from the 1980s in this alliance of community organisations and cultural organisations, in particular the Parade of Innocence. That dramatic street demonstration was organised in 1989 to celebrate the release of the Guildford Four after their wrongful imprisonment in England, and to demand the release of the Birmingham Six, similarly imprisoned.

The first major initiative for the Spectacle of Defiance and Hope was a street-based pre-budget demonstration, organised in 2010. This was based on creative representations of the injustices being experienced under the austerity policies of the time. These representations were devised and developed in workshops in the various local communities involved. Personal testimonies from community members replaced the speeches that are more traditional at such demonstrations.

The second major initiative was the Books of Grievance and Hope project. This drew from French history, the 'Cahiers de Doleances' or list of grievances requested by the king prior to the 1789 revolution. These 'Cahiers', contrary to the intentions of the king, became a subversive source of resistance to the monarchy in the build-up to revolution. The Spectacle of Defiance and Hope facilitated the communities involved to collate their grievances and hopes for change, in a record of their experiences of and responses to austerity.

These records were the focus for a second street-based pre-budget demonstration, in 2011. This involved large book-shaped props carrying these grievances and hopes. Those who created the records read excerpts at different points on the march. The books were subsequently used as a source for Songs of Grievance and Hope events, where they were given a musical form, which brought the campaign into a theatre space.

Bissett, one of the community leaders involved, identified the "general frustration at didactic, preordained, ineffective, and unimaginative forms that … mainstream protest was taking". The Spectacle of Defiance and Hope sought to "fuse the imagination of the arts with the praxis of community work". It "provided a continuous space for critical reflection on the crisis and a creative space for design of a public response". It was, he emphasised, to be "one of the spokes in the wheel of a larger movement that is gradually building against austerity" (10).

Ultimately the Spectacle of Defiance and Hope was not sustained into the longer-term. The energy and resources required were not available, momentum was lost in the face of an implacable politics of austerity, and a nation-wide presence proved unattainable. Bissett, however, notes that "if we are to make a difference in changing the status quo in Ireland and elsewhere, we will need to develop similar forms of creativity alongside a radical egalitarian politics" (11).

Claiming Our Future was, arguably, the most innovative mobilisation over this period. This emerged in 2010 as a civil society response to the economic and financial crisis. It created a cross-sectoral civil society space based on shared values, involving individuals and organisations from the community and voluntary, trade union, environmental, cultural, and global development sectors. It worked to mobilise individuals and organisations through large-scale deliberative events, the development of shared agendas, and cross-sectoral campaigns on specific issues that emerged from these. The innovation brought by Claiming Our Future rested on deliberation as the starting point for mobilisation and organising.

Deliberative events reflect the importance of dialogue and the use of public spaces as places to define and agree the better society sought. Deliberation reflected the imperative of the communicative public discourse, described by Kirby and Murphy as one "of promoting social learning leading to a change in values which can in turn support a fundamental restructuring of policy and institutions" and requiring "new spaces to promote wider imaginative discourse on alternatives" (12). They identify this communicative public discourse as key for effective policy for change.

Claiming Our Future convened nine deliberations in locations around the country between 2010 and 2016, when it closed down. The deliberations ranged in size from over 1,000 participants at the inaugural event, to an average of 300 participants at the policy-focused deliberations. The inaugural event facilitated deliberation and agreement on shared values and policy priorities for the new movement. In building the agenda for deliberation at this inaugural event, local meetings and activities were held around the country in the lead up to the national event and there was extensive use of social media.

The topics for the subsequent deliberative events, that were more theme-focused, largely drew from the priority issues agreed at this inaugural event, being:

- income equality;
- an economy for society;
- reinventing democracy;
- resilience in communities and in the local economy;
- energy production, distribution, and conservation;
- development of priorities to inform the process for what was to become the UN Sustainable Development Goals;
- a 'futures' event to explore future perspectives for civil society, including both likely futures and futures that participants would like, in order to support a shared vision for change across civil society; and
- a final 'Broken Politics' event to explore shared agenda development, strategies for change, and cooperation and connecting within civil society, in a context of disillusionment with the ability of politics to deliver change.

There were no speeches at these deliberative events. Discussion was facilitated at tables of ten participants. Deliberation was stimulated and energised by creative moments of song, poetry, dance, theatre, and relaxation. Decision-making was organised on foot of discussion at the tables and engaged all the discussion tables in a preferential voting procedure. Preference-based voting was used, rather than a majoritarian approach, to underpin inclusive and consensual decision-making. A small group of 'consensors' supervised the voting, reported back to participants, and prepared a report on the conclusions of the deliberation (13).

After its inaugural national event, Claiming Our Future prioritised a local focus, seeking to build ownership of and action on the agenda that had emerged. This was pursued through the local contacts and membership of those organisations involved nationally. While this met with some initial success, it proved impossible to sustain in a context of the dominance of the day-to-day struggles of these local organisations on the issues driven by austerity policies, and of the limited resources available to these local organisations and to the Claiming Our Future initiative.

Two of the deliberative events were hosted in partnership with local organisations. One was organised with Transition Kerry on building a resilient community and economy. The other was organised with Laois Environmental Action Forum on the production, distribution and conservation of renewal energy and the transition from fossil fuels. Nonetheless, national to local linkage remained weak.

The Advocacy Initiative, a short-term civil society project developed to reflect on and promote social justice advocacy, conducted a SWOT analysis of Claiming Our Future. This identified strengths in "new ways of advocating based on promoting values on issues, creating spaces for deliberation, advocating for public support, and tracing out the practical implications of these values". It noted innovation in taking a "future perspective" in a context where this gets "limited attention in advocacy which often has a more immediate policy/issue focus". It pointed to the value of cross-sectoral networking in that it "can draw from a broad range of thinking and experience, enable access to a broad constituency in devising and pursuing agendas, and empower the civil society voice" (14).

The Advocacy Initiative identified weaknesses in Claiming Our Future in that "civil society silos are hard to break down - civil society, under pressure, returns to these silos and focuses on the struggle to survive, and there is a lack of experience in brokering the type of relationships required". It noted barriers of "limited funding, limited investment of resources by civil society, and traditions of paid activism". It pointed to difficulties in sustaining a "futures perspective" given the "dominance of day-to-day struggles in relation to outcomes of austerity policies" (15).

The most recent mobilisation, still in its early phases, has been the emergence of Extinction Rebellion in Ireland. Extinction Rebellion was established in Britain in early 2018 and spread rapidly from there as an international movement. Since its formation in Ireland, in late 2018, local groups have been established across the country to seek action on climate change and for a just transition. To-date its actions have been characterised by public protest and creativity. It too has exemplified a capacity to organise and mobilise a wide range and significant numbers of people behind far reaching demands. It stands out for identifying non-violent civil disobedience as its means of mobilising the demand for change.

Extinction Rebellion has framed its specific demands in both environmental and equality terms, as being: tell the truth, whereby the government and the media inform the public about the climate and biodiversity emergency; act like it's an emergency, whereby the government act immediately to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2030; and ensure a just transition, whereby policy change is designed to ensure the most vulnerable are not expected to pay the most and profits are not placed before planet (16).

Extinction Rebellion is working to build a movement that is participatory, decentralised and inclusive. It has sought to build the movement around public protest, including spectacle and non-violent civil disobedience. It organises in a decentralised manner through small local affinity groups, with autonomous circles of multiple groups established at a national level. An anchor circle involves the coordinators of these circles to enable communication.

Extinction Rebellion's demand for a political declaration of a climate and biodiversity emergency was achieved in May 2019, though it acknowledges that concrete policy has failed to follow from this. In looking to the post-COVID-19 context, Extinction Rebellion has demanded that "green strings" be attached to any EU bailout funds used by government. It held a socially distanced gathering, in keeping with the times, in front of the Central Bank, to demand binding emissions reduction targets be required of any company seeking a bailout package as part of the economic recovery plan.

In conclusion, there have been positive and important exemplars of new civil society organisations emerging over this period of restriction, to give form to a civil society for equality and environmental sustainability and to demonstrate a capacity to organise and mobilise a popular demand for social change. There is a need for further action to give structure to and realise the potential in this part of civil society and the populations it can mobilise.

There remains a challenge to create and sustain sufficient spaces to provide platforms to develop and pursue transformative change agendas that are not dependent on the state and that can secure adequate resources. This requires investment of time and resources in the core tasks of organising and of enabling a wider population to engage in framing and pursuing the demand for transformative change. There have been these examples to learn from, but there has not been a critical mass of such organisation and organising, nor an adequate civil society investment in sustaining the spaces that have emerged.

It is noteworthy that purpose and aspiration, rather than specific civil society sector defined by function, characterises these new organisations. Each in their own way, broke with the current silos that have fragmented civil society in such an unhelpful manner. Their independence from the state was important for their ability to create these new and innovative civil society spaces. The focus on a new form of trade unionism, in the Right2Water movement, emphasises the importance of flexibility from the civil society organisations involved and an ability to move away from business-as-usual, if such civil society spaces are to be created.

Key learning from these new organisations lies in their contrasting and creative approaches to the organisation and mobilisation of people behind broad social change agendas. These involved:

- new forms of trade unionism, for the Right2Water movement;

- an engagement with culture and the arts, for the Spectacle of Defiance and Hope;
- deliberative models based on inclusive consensus building, for Claiming Our Future; and
- civil disobedience and protest, for Extinction Rebellion.

Each of these different approaches has evidenced a strong capacity to mobilise and organise at key moments.

Linkages between the local and national levels were a concern and a challenge for these new organisations. Interconnected local and national levels are important to effective mobilising and organisation. Different patterns of local and national linkages are evident in the exemplars:

- the Right2Water movement emerged out of local organising and action, and was developed into a national movement to good effect through the engagement of national organisations;
- the Spectacle of Defiance and Hope was locally rooted and, while emerging with a strong Dublin presence, was unable to spread beyond that, lacking national organisation;
- Claiming Our Future emerged out of national organising and a linking of national organisations, and sought, but was not successful in, building a local presence through the membership of those national organisations involved; and
- Extinction Rebellion is rooted in local affinity groups with a focus on national protest action, with time still required for the potential of its model of organisation to be evidenced.

There are challenges evident from these exemplars in relation to the agenda that is the focus for organising. Mobilising in a sustained manner behind large-scale future-focused agendas faced particular challenges. Single issue agendas, focused on issues of immediate concern evidenced stronger traction. However, taking a single issue agenda starting point and moving to a broader change agenda proved difficult for the Right2Water movement. An exclusive large-scale future-focused agenda proved difficult to sustain for Claiming Our Future. The Spectacle of Defiance and Hope offered potential in this regard but did not manage to sustain its momentum and the potential of Extinction Rebellion remains to be determined. This is a challenge that needs attention if civil society for equality and environmental sustainability is to effectively build and pursue the agendas required for transformative change.

Sustainability emerges as a challenge for such organising, in that the only exemplar still in place is the most recently formed Extinction Rebellion. However, it is possible that such civil society spaces have their own lifecycle and to extend them beyond the point where there is organisational energy to sustain them would not serve purpose and aspiration. The decision to close can be important in leaving the field open for new organisations and spaces to emerge and be active on the issues.

Chapter 8. Traces and Legacies of Resistance: Change Agendas

The effective pursuit of societal change for equality and environmental sustainability requires new ideas in the form of a vision for society: one with the capacity to contest the dominant agenda which sustains the unequal and environmentally unsustainable status quo. Silva,

an academic based in USA, emphasises "the capacity of ideas to shape policy options and principles of social organisation" (1). Mouffe, the Belgian political theorist, points to the lack of new ideas in that, "What now rules is an individualistic liberal vision that celebrates consumer society and the freedom that markets offer" (2). Aronoff and colleagues, in their work on a green new deal, graphically capture this challenge for new ideas in stating that "fighting for a new world starts with imagining it viscerally" (3).

The new ideas brought forward and the vision they form must be such that they can convince as to their feasibility, inspire hope that there is an alternative, and compel a popular adherence. Horvat emphasises that any such new vision must motivate hope. He notes that, "the present seems to be omnipresent. Yet no one seems to believe in the future anymore. Our world no longer appears connected by a shared hope of a better future; on the contrary it is hyper-connected by a prevailing feeling there is no future at all" (4).

The communication of new ideas to a broad audience, is key in mobilising the power of such ideas. Silva identifies the importance of the communicative element, emphasising the centrality of the "cognitive mechanisms" required to underpin new ideas and vision. These are mechanisms that shift perceptions about issues, resonate with a wider audience, and "transform movements and demonstrations from isolated instances of protest into growing streams of mobilisation" (5). This communicative element is, as yet, underdeveloped in the Irish context.

Mouffe emphasises that strategy needs to offer people "a vision of the future that gives them hope, instead of remaining in the register of denunciation" (6). Civil society organisations concerned with equality and environmental sustainability often tend towards a defensive mode, organising to challenge what they do not want: the register of denunciation. They can be more concerned with addressing present pressures than with pursuing new futures. Both are important, but organising in a manner that can bridge this divide, responding to immediate issues in a manner that advances new futures, is underdeveloped in the Irish context.

However, over these past two decades of restriction civil society organisations have demonstrated capacity to imagine and communicate an alternative vision for society. There are traces and legacies of value to be built on. These encompass: the building of new change agendas around alternative models of development; innovation in prefiguring these change agendas in practice; and establishing values-led frameworks for the change envisaged and its effective communication.

Moments of rupture, such as that brought about due to the COVID-19 pandemic, provide an opportunity for societal change that could advance equality and environmental sustainability. A transformative change agenda is needed to realise such opportunity, an agenda that convinces in its detail, inspires hope in its potential, compels with its promise, and demands the systemic change needed.

A liberating vision of hope was not to hand, ready to be advanced by civil society at this particular moment of crisis. Such a change agenda was required, one that went beyond a shopping list of fragmented single issue demands, and that was not a problem-solving set of steps to recover what had been lost. Such an agenda was not available, leaving civil society organisations, who were not absorbed in providing COVID-related supports and services, scrambling to seize the pandemic moment with its potential for change.

This was a repeat of the situation that had prevailed with the onset of economic and financial crisis in 2008 and, clearly, had not been rectified in the interim. Nonetheless, the fallout from the economic and financial collapse of that period did spark some creativity from civil society organisations, at that time and subsequently, in developing new agendas for societal change. These agendas took the form of broadly drawn visions for the future society sought.

It was not only civil society that lacked such an alternative model in that moment of economic and financial collapse. Lonergan, the British economist, and Blyth, the Scottish-American political scientist, note that the established elites across the globe had no such alternatives to neoliberalism available either. They describe how capitalism was reset and redesigned after the great depression of the 1920/1930s, pivoting to a Keynesian model with its emphasis on government spending on public goods, and the goal of full employment, and after the crisis of unemployment and inflation of the 1970/1980s with the pivot to the neoliberal model with its emphasis on globalisation of production, opening up of financial markets and the goal of low inflation. No such reset or redesign was achieved on foot of the 2008 crisis, with recovery relying on bailouts and austerity policies. This has, they suggest, driven an unresolved and damaging politics of anger, while at the same time opening up opportunities for a future pivot of substance (7).

Two waves of civil society initiative to develop transformative change agendas for equality and environmental sustainability can be identified. The first wave runs from 2008 to 2015, a point where some form of economic recovery had been achieved. This emphasised a social justice focus. Significant actors in this first wave were: the Community Platform, Is Féidir Linn, Claiming Our Future, and the Right2Change movement. The second wave, which is still emerging and evolving, emphasises an environmental sustainability focus. Significant actors in this second wave are Coalition 2030 and an emerging set of initiatives that revolve around Stop Climate Chaos, the One Future campaign, and Friends of the Earth.

In the first wave, the Community Platform, an alliance of civil society organisations working to address poverty, social exclusion, and inequality, published a discussion paper, 'A Better Ireland is Possible', in 2009 (8). It further evolved this work with the 2015 publication 'The Future Perspective of the Community Platform' (9). Is Féidir Linn was an informal ad-hoc grouping of individuals with a commitment to, or involvement in, community work, social inclusion, anti-poverty, human rights and equality issues. It published its 'Proposal for a Manifesto' in 2009 (10). Emanating from its inaugural event and subsequent deliberative events, Claiming Our Future published its 'Declaration for a Future Ireland' in 2016 (11). The Right2Change campaign, agreed a broad agenda for change to bring forward in the run up to the 2016 general election (12).

In the second wave, Coalition 2030, an alliance of over 60 civil society organisations, including global development organisations, trade unions, youth organisations, and environmental groups, has identified the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a transformative agenda to be pursued (13). A Green New Deal agenda with its attendant model of development has begun to emerge through the work of Friends of the Earth and in the Stop Climate Chaos network and One Future campaign.

Friends of the Earth was established in Ireland, in 2004, as part of an international network. It has built agendas that encompass addressing climate change and climate justice. Stop Climate Chaos is a coalition of over thirty international development, environmental, youth, faith-based, and community organisations promoting an agenda of a carbon-free future and

a just transition. The One Future campaign is concerned with an agenda for faster and fairer climate action. The three are interlinked, the One Future campaign is coordinated by the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition, which is based in the offices of Friends of the Earth.

These initiatives to develop change agendas, in both waves, reflected significant efforts to break out of the silos that have fragmented and disempowered civil society's work for transformative societal change. They sought to establish an agenda for societal change that would unite diverse sectors of civil society, but that would go beyond a joined up shopping list of each sector's demands. This reflects Silva's emphasis on the importance of movements developing "a cohesive comprehensive model for an alternative national project to neoliberalism" (14).

An alternative model of development, even if insufficiently delineated, was at the centre of the change agendas developed in both these waves. In this, previously siloed agendas were integrated to encompass elements of social justice; environmental sustainability; economic development; and political change. However, a cultural initiative element was missing, and the focus on economic development was limited.

The social justice element of these alternative models of development, most evident in the first wave of these new change agendas, emphasised adequate, accessible, and high quality public services. The Community Platform called for a renewal of public services and publicly funded services. Is Féidir Linn sought prioritisation for development of, and investment in high quality, efficient and effective public services underpinned by high levels of taxation and social expenditure. The urgency of addressing deficiencies in the provision of education, health, care, and housing services was emphasised.

The achievement of equality and fulfilment of human rights were established as central to this social justice element. Equality was raised across the agendas, developed in terms of: gender equality; a wider comprehensive and inclusive equality framework; and economic equality, income equality and the elimination of poverty and social exclusion. Human rights were raised in terms of addressing issues such as the direct provision system for asylum seekers and responding to domestic violence, alongside the transposition of economic and social rights into domestic legislation.

The environmental element is present in the first wave of new change agendas, but in a limited manner. Its presence marked a concern to address issues of climate change and climate justice, as well as efforts to break down the silos that divided the community and voluntary, trade union, and environmental sectors. However, this element became more central in the second wave of new change agendas.

Coalition 2030 put forward the UN Sustainable Development Goals as the frame for a new model of development. These seventeen goals address a range of themes, establishing an ambition to leave no one behind. They reflect a model of development integrating goals of: environmental sustainability; the elimination of poverty and hunger; access to health, education, and decent work; the restoration of ecosystems; and the reduction of inequality. The COVID-19 NGO Group, coordinated by Community Work Ireland, as noted in Chapter 4, also recognised the potential in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, recommending their use as the framework for the recovery after COVID-19 (15).

There is, nonetheless, concern, expressed within civil society, at the low level of ambition in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, specifically at the level at which the targets have been set. This is almost inevitable where such targets have to be universally agreed at a global level. However, the Sustainable Development Goals do hold potential as an internationally agreed framework that points to the new directions and elements required for an alternative model for development.

Stop Climate Chaos, Friends of the Earth and the One Future campaign have been moving to open up more ambitious possibilities. In a 2020 letter to the Fine Gael and Fianna Fail parties, then negotiating a programme for government, Stop Climate Chaos sought a governmental agenda based on three strands of action:

- confront the climate crisis with the same determination as efforts to tackle COVID-19;
- put people and planet at the centre of the economic recovery plan rather than a return to business-as-usual; and
- deliver fairer and faster climate action.

Their emphasis is to secure a reduction of "emissions with the scale and urgency that is necessary to limit global temperature increases in line with the Paris Agreement"; focus "public policy and public investment on laying the foundations for an economy that is more sustainable, more resilient and more equal"; secure green "capital expenditure plans"; and have investment channelled "into zero-carbon infrastructure, food security, sustainable land use and habitat restoration, clean renewable energy, public health care, the expansion of social security, and quality sustainable jobs" (16).

The One Future campaign seeks energy, transport, housing, food and economic systems that have zero climate impact. Noting that climate change and badly designed climate action exacerbate existing inequalities, it further seeks action on improved public services, greater equality, and social justice.

Friends of the Earth have identified some elements of a Green New Deal in their campaigns leading up to the 2019 elections. These include zero-carbon houses and schools; a just transition task-force with the resources and the authority to support the affected workers, and their families and communities, to plan for a sustainable future; investment in public transport, cycling and walking; five year carbon budgets; and carbon impact assessment in policy-making.

The work of Friends of the Earth, Stop Climate Chaos and the One Future campaign opens up the potential for a model of development to emerge that would be based on a Green New Deal for Ireland. The strategy for the further elaboration of this model of development will need to avoid the perils of elite dialogue across the various Social Partners and public authorities. If it is to serve as a compelling focus for mobilisation of popular demand and action for transformative change, its elaboration needs to involve participative and deliberative processes.

Ambition too will be important in the further elaboration of this new change agenda. Aronoff and colleagues identify that a radical Green New Deal "leans into the inevitable intersections of social, economic, and environmental policy, and prioritises equality", as opposed to the narrow focus on swapping clean energy for fossil fuels pursued under less ambitious models. They emphasise ambitious science-based targets in relation to climate warming, using "the power of public investment and coordination to prioritise decarbonisation at speed, scope and scale", as opposed to the tax incentives and price signals suggested in

less ambitious models. They identify that change should be advanced through building "majority support for big change and mobilise political energies to break the status quo", as opposed to working through elite consensus which is a feature of less ambitious models (17).

The economic element in the first wave of new change agendas, was limited to pragmatic labour market reforms, access to decent employment, and economic security. This element reflected a distributional focus with a concern to address low pay, establish a high pay commission, and strengthen a progressive, just and equitable tax regime. There were proposals that went beyond this important but narrow focus, such as to nationalise public resources, and to define and measure progress in a balanced way that stresses economic security and social and environmental sustainability. This economic element remains under-developed and inadequately detailed to-date, in the second wave of change agendas.

Both Right2Change, in its predecessor Right2Water phase, and Claiming Our Future, saw the need for and took action to deepen sectoral capacity on this economic element. As part of its ambition to transform what was a protest movement into a longer-term organisation for change, the Right2Water campaign organised political economy courses for local community activists. These courses had a focus on the political and economic agendas that were behind and driving water charges and water privatisation.

Claiming Our Future developed a 'Cap the Gap' training course to broaden the range of activists, from different civil society sectors, engaged in economic issues, and deepen their capacity to promote and argue core messages of economic equality in public debate. This covered themes of political economy, equality, income policy, and taxation policy (18).

Claiming Our Future engaged with TASC, the civil society independent think-tank and a member of the Claiming Our Future working group on economic equality, to build its knowledge base on economic inequality. At the instigation of Claiming Our Future, TASC developed a paper on the case for a maximum wage, to inform Claiming Our Future's work for economic equality. TASC more broadly has enabled civil society change agendas in its function of building and communicating new knowledge and thinking, through research and public outreach. Its work, in this regard, has included a valuable focus on democratic institutions and democratic accountability, economic equality, climate justice, and social inclusion.

In a context of low energy politics, political systems must be a focus for transformation within any new change agenda if there is to be any hope of securing its implementation. While less evident in the second wave to-date, this political element is particularly evident in the first wave of new change agendas, with proposals centred on reforming representative democracy to be more inclusive, and developing more participatory forms of democracy.

A mix of representative and participatory democracy was sought by the Community Platform, Is Féidir Linn, and Claiming Our Future. Is Féidir Linn highlighted an autonomous and critical civil society as central in this regard. The Community Platform promoted a focus on both economic and political democracy, in emphasising a right to participation in political and economic decision-making.

Claiming Our Future, in one of its national deliberations, focused on political reform. The consensus conclusions from these deliberations emphasised the need for devolution to local government, participatory forms of governance at local level, and recognition of the role of civil society in democracy. There was also consensus evident on the need to: reform the electoral system to deliver greater diversity of representatives; change the party whip system; and allow the Dáil to set its own agenda, with Oireachtas committees afforded greater powers (19).

The policy agenda of Right2Change emphasised reform of representative democracy through: popular initiation of constitutional referenda and parliamentary legislation; a right to recall TDs; citizen nomination of Presidential candidates; direct elections to the Seanad; overseas voting; and mandatory voting (20).

Another powerful strand of activity in relation to ideas and change agenda development, is the prefiguring of, or making new ideas real in practice through civil society initiatives. Horvat, in visiting a series of Spanish communes established since the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008, views those involved as seeking "new ways of living that defy the dictum that there is no alternative". He suggests that this prefiguring of elements of a different future, could be "the basic unit from which a more complex system can be built" (21).

Prefiguring, living out future realities in the present, not only creates foundations for the future, it builds the vision of and agenda for that future. There is some limited evidence of such prefiguring by civil society organisations concerned with environmental sustainability.

The Transition Network is a global movement of communities working to reimagine and rebuild their world in a practical manner, defining itself as an experimental learning network committed to sharing ideas and power. Its work is based on respect for resource limits and the creation of community resilience, and is concerned to promote inclusivity and social justice.

Transition Kerry is one local exemplar, addressing the challenge of "how to build resilient and sustainable communities" and committed to demonstrating how local action can make a difference. It works to the Transition and Permaculture Principles of "earth care, fair share, and people care" and seeks to inspire and mobilise people behind environmental, social, and community concerns (22). Transition Kerry's activities are broadly focused and it has made particular progress on: advancing sustainable energy production, that is locally produced and owned; promoting sustainable food production with a focus on self-reliance and transition farming; and informing and inspiring communities on transition principles.

The ecovillage established in Cloughjordan is another significant exemplar of prefiguring from the environmental sector. Founder members established a company, to be run along co-operative lines, to purchase land, secure planning permission, and provide members with fully serviced sites. All members build their own homes in line with a Master Plan and within an agreed Ecological Charter they have signed up to. The initiative dates back to 1999 with the first residents moving into the ecovillage in 2009 (23).

Values have played a role in the work of advancing and communicating these civil society change agendas for alternative models of development, providing the frame for the development of some of the change agendas set out above. Values are used, in both waves, in explicitly connecting the different elements of the comprehensive agendas required for transformative change.

Values are ideals that people deem to be important. They motivate people's actions, choices, behaviours and attitudes. As such, they have a central place in inspiring, engaging, and mobilising the broader public around new change agendas. Aronoff and colleagues emphasise that it is necessary to recognise that "people mobilise around concrete projects that appeal to their desires and values" (24).

The Community Platform, in its 2015 'Future Perspective', identified that its vision for an inclusive, sustainable, and equal Ireland, was motivated by values of: economic equality, social inclusion, social justice, dignity, participation, and sustainability (25). It applied these values to frame its change agenda.

Claiming Our Future placed significant emphasis on values. There was consensus established at its inaugural event that priority would be given to five core values in seeking to shape an alternative society and economy: equality, environmental sustainability, accountability, participation, and solidarity (26). These values shaped and informed agreement on the priority themes to be pursued for achieving this alternative society and economy.

Stop Climate Chaos identify their values as encompassing a broad spectrum of: science; human rights; public participation; social justice; equality; the natural environment; and creativity, diversity and persistence in campaigning (27). Friends of the Earth identify their values as: transparency and accountability; solidarity, participation and inclusion; nature and social ecology; people and communities; science and education; social justice and climate justice; and culture and creativity (28). These values have not yet, however, been explicitly linked to the change agendas being brought forward by these organisations.

Overall, such value sets, combined and agreed in a tight format, hold the potential to: shape the agenda for equality and environmental sustainability as an alternative model of development; and motivate a public demand for the implementation of this agenda. Such values serve as the 'cognitive mechanisms', to use Silva's terminology, to shift perceptions and resonate with a popular audience once they are creatively deployed in communicating this agenda to a wider audience. This approach, however, has yet to be pursued by civil society for equality and environmental sustainability to any significant or adequate extent.

While some change agendas have been developed in this manner, there is less of a track record in action to build support for, and mobilise support around, these change agendas. The resources available to the organisations involved in developing these agendas were too limited to promote these agendas to a wider public to any significant extent. The compelling nature that is required of such agendas to mobilise people, has not, therefore, been adequately tested in relation to the change agendas developed.

The Community Platform had and continues to have difficulty in mobilising an in-depth engagement by, and investment of time from, its constituent organisations. The Community Platform does, however, continue to promote the agenda it has developed over this period. Is Féidir Linn waned and closed, as Claiming Our Future emerged. Claiming Our Future

pursued a programme of deliberative events, over a six-year period, to further detail and promote its vision for society. Deliberation emerged as a valuable and innovative 'cognitive mechanism'.

Claiming Our Future, however, found it increasingly hard to mobilise the engagement of and investment of time and resources from the diverse civil society sectors involved. The former silos that had fragmented the sector proved resilient and, while they had weakened over the period of crisis, the walls went up again as society and the economy moved into recovery mode. Claiming Our Future recognised the impact of this loss of engagement, disbanding in 2016.

The agenda developed by Right2Change was the focus for a roadshow of meetings, in twenty locations around the country, to support discussion and mobilise support for it. This too proved to be a simple but useful 'cognitive mechanism'. Nonetheless, Right2Change disbanded in 2020.

Coalition 2030 and Stop Climate Chaos are now opening up the second wave of change agendas with their associated models of development. They are still in place, with capacity to be further developed and more effectively promoted. Their agendas are emerging and hold promise. It is not clear, however, that attention has yet been given to the most effective cognitive mechanisms that need to be deployed to shift perceptions and build popular demand behind the models of development that emerge from these initiatives.

In conclusion, civil society for equality and environmental sustainability has laid foundations for change agendas that reflect an alternative model of development. This work continues, with some promise, particularly in terms of the development of a Green New Deal for the Irish context.

The change agendas developed to-date demand more detail if they are to be effective in advancing the transformative change required. In particular, the economic development and cultural initiative dimensions to these agendas still require significant evolution. However, this challenge for a more detailed change agenda is relevant to all elements required for an alternative model of development that has a capacity to convince and inspire.

These change agendas have lacked effective communication and action to build a popular demand for their implementation. The organisations that developed these change agendas lacked resources. The energy and investment of their component elements has dissipated in many instances. Nonetheless, new platforms have emerged and are in place to continue this work of agenda development and communication, with a particular focus on environmental sustainability.

There is learning to inform the development of mechanisms adequate to shifting popular perceptions on these agendas and building demand for their implementation. Values, and the engagement of the values underpinning these change agendas, hold particular potential for an effective communication of these agendas to enable wider mobilisation behind their implementation. Deliberation and roadshows were put to use to good effect. However, the mechanisms developed still need to be applied to a greater and more sustained scale for any impact to be achieved.

Chapter 9. Trace and Legacies of Resistance: Collaboration

Collaboration and coordination, across and within the various civil society sectors, are key elements in strengthening the potential impact of civil society for equality and environmental sustainability, in its demands for transformative change. Collaboration was evident where the new organisations, described in the previous chapter, moved beyond traditional sectoral silos to collaborate around shared purpose and aspiration. However, this collaboration rarely evolved to a coordination of action and strategy in shaping the priorities and processes of the individual organisations within these sectors in their mainstream endeavours.

From the experience in Latin America, Silva identifies four brokerage mechanisms in building such collaboration and coordination, where movement leaders:

- built coalitions through summit meetings and creating organisations specifically to promote cooperation;
- facilitated contact and cooperation where they were members of dense organisational networks;
- encouraged open, general assembly-style deliberations for decision-making, where policy and plans were set consensually; and
- drew on communal forms of social organisation to mobilise people (1).

While there is evidence of some of these mechanisms being employed by the civil society organisations described in the previous chapter, brokerage of new relationships for collaboration and coordination has been and remains a significant challenge for a civil society fragmented in competing silos based on traditional sectors defined by function. The limited initiatives of a collaborative nature engaged in by civil society over past two decades of restriction do, however, evidence some invention from which there is learning to be extracted.

Four exemplars stand out in this regard: Claiming Our Future, reflected a values-led approach to collaboration and coordination; the Right2Change initiative stands out for its agenda-led approach and for its ambition of collaboration and coordination that involved political actors; and the Equality and Rights Alliance and the work of the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI), stand out for their issue-led approach to collaboration and coordination.

Claiming Our Future can be seen to have deployed two of Silva's brokerage mechanisms in its pursuit of collaboration and coordination: creating a new organisation specifically to promote cooperation; and encouraging open general assembly style deliberations.

Claiming Our Future engaged in collaboration that brought the community and voluntary, environmental, cultural, global development, and trade union sectors together. From its foundation, shared values were identified as the necessary underpinning for such collaboration. The inaugural deliberative event of Claiming Our Future discussed and agreed, through its preferential voting approach, a set of values as a basis for cross-sectoral collaboration in seeking transformative change. These values were: equality, environmental sustainability, accountability, participation and solidarity.

Claiming Our Future deployed these values as:

- a link that gave shared identity to the broad range of individuals and organisations involved in the initiative;

- a lens that underpinned its mandate and enabled it to analyse, prioritise, and shape the issues for collaboration and how they should be addressed; and
- a motivator to engage a wider audience with the vision for society it promoted and pursued (2).

Claiming Our Future had a loose and open structure, and, in such a context, the identified shared values served as a mandate for decision-making across its internal structures. Values provided the glue that kept this diverse coalition together in its ongoing endeavours, in the absence of formal structure other than a central group and a number of small working groups.

However, Claiming Our Future did not go beyond agreeing the identified value labels, to deliberate on and agree a shared understanding of these values. Such labels are open to interpretation. A deeper values-led focus through building a shared meaning for each of these values, and engaging them in a systematic manner across the traditional civil society sectors involved, might have reaped longer-term benefits in the strength of collaboration and, ultimately, in securing a wider coordination across the organisations involved. Nonetheless, the positions taken and activities developed by Claiming Our Future did offer practical expressions for these values. This was the result of a careful application of values as a lens in decision-making.

An understanding of the motivational power of values only began to take root belatedly in Claiming Our Future's work. There was a recognition of the potential in a more effective sustained communication of its values in securing popular support for its positions and in building a wider demand for transformative change. While the thinking for such an evolution was undertaken, its practical implementation was stymied by a lack of resources and ultimately time, as Claiming Our Future closed down in 2016.

Claiming Our Future pursued collaboration, based on these shared values and informed by its deliberative events, across a wide range of issues. Early online campaigns focused on defending the minimum wage, seeking gender quotas in politics, and seeking the introduction of a wealth tax. Broader campaigns followed on issues such as the introduction of a financial transactions tax, seeking the introduction of a maximum wage, and promoting a framework for an alternative national budget (3).

The Right2Change initiative can be seen to have deployed two of Silva's brokerage mechanisms in its pursuit of collaboration and coordination: building cooperation through summit meetings, and facilitating contact and cooperation between members of different networks. It did so with a very particular sector; political parties.

The relationships between political parties and civil society organisations tend to be characterised by strict separation. There are exceptions in the loose relationship between the trade union movement and the Labour Party, the Green Party and environmental organisations, and in local community organisations successfully organising to run independent candidates against the mainstream political parties. Interaction, otherwise, has been limited to lobbying of politicians and political parties, and public argumentation through the media.

Civil society organisations have always been careful not to suggest any alignment with, or indeed competition with, a political party. This could put statutory funding, on which there

is a dependence, at risk and could block access to and influence on political deliberations. Political parties, equally, have always been careful to set boundaries to ensure there is no electoral competition or threat from civil society organisations. They have tended to treat any formal engagement with civil society as a form of recruiting ground for voters and party activists.

Mouffe has emphasised the importance of an articulation between protest movements and institutional politics, noting that the loss of dynamic of movements such as Occupy is related to their refusal "to engage with the political institutions" which "limited their impact". Ultimately, she suggests that the type of outcomes sought by protest movements can only be achieved "when followed by structured political movements ready to engage with political institutions" (4).

The Right2Change initiative sought a new collaboration and coordination between political parties and popular movements. A shared agenda was identified as the necessary underpinning for such collaboration and coordination. This involved developing a shared manifesto of issues to be addressed, in the form of ten policy principles and an underpinning fiscal framework. A participative process of meetings was organised to craft the Right2Change manifesto (5). The ten policy principles were subsequently formally signed up to by some political parties and civil society organisations, with agreement on ensuring their implementation after a forthcoming election.

Gibney, from the Mandate trade union, captures the ambition behind this: "The unions want(ed) to ask political parties, community groups, and the trade union movement whether there is a possibility to build a permanent movement of the left that could build an egalitarian movement". He queried the value in having a "policy platform if a fractured and fragmented left wouldn't work together" (6).

The political parties that engaged in the Right2Change process included the Anti-Austerity Alliance (AAA), the Communist Party of Ireland, People Before Profit (PBP), Sinn Fein, the Social Democrats, the Workers Party, and Workers and Unemployed Action Group (WUAG) along with a number of independent TDs. However, only Sinn Fein, PBP, the Communist Party of Ireland, and a number of independent TDs signed up to the Right2Change policy agenda and, if successful in the election, committed to form a government on the basis of this agenda.

Thirty-six candidates who had endorsed the Right2Change agenda won seats in the 2016 general election, which was significant but well short of the scale required for government. A small Right2Change party subsequently emerged from the process. However, the Right2Change initiative closed in 2020.

Ogle documented the challenges in building collaboration and coordination with the political parties. He suggests that, for some political party members, "supporting the party objective can blind people to the need for unity that, purposely or not, damages the wider movement". Political parties need to compete and, therefore, need "points of difference, whether real or imagined". Some are opportunistic in seeing their engagement with civil society as an opportunity to "collect funds, distribute party newspapers, recruit volunteers and advance their party agenda". He concludes pessimistically, that the "existing players provide no real hope of delivering a broad progressive government based on these principles" (7). It appears that a fractured and fragmented left is not yet able to work together.

The Equality and Rights Alliance and the Migrant Rights Centre can be seen to have deployed one of Silva's brokerage mechanisms in their pursuit of collaboration and coordination: facilitating contact and cooperation between members of different networks. The Equality and Rights Alliance did so with a particular focus within the community and voluntary sector, the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland did so across civil society sectors in involving the community and voluntary sector and the trade union sector. Both initiatives were characterised by an issue-led approach.

Mouffe emphasises the "Need for a left politics to articulate the struggles about different forms of subordination without attributing any a priori centrality to any of them" (9). This remains a challenge for a community and voluntary sector that is fragmented across a range of communities and oppressions. One initiative of interest in this regard was the emergence of the Equality and Rights Alliance in 2008, bringing together individuals and organisations working on a diverse range of equality and human rights issues.

The Equality and Rights Alliance (ERA) was issue-led in being formed in reaction to the effective dismantling of the statutory equality and human rights infrastructure, when the Equality Authority, and the Irish Human Rights Commission had their budgets cut by 43% and 24% respectively, in budget 2009. The ERA moved to a broader more proactive agenda, in 2011, when its 62 member organisations, working across the spectrum of equality and human rights issues, adopted a Roadmap for rebuilding the equality and human rights infrastructure that encompassed legislation, institutions, policy instruments, and policy strategies (8).

The ERA can point to gains made from the relationships brokered and the resultant collaboration across the community and voluntary sector with: the establishment and allocation of resources to the newly merged Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, at a level akin to that which pertained prior to 2008; and the introduction of a statutory duty on all public bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality, and protect human rights in carrying out all their functions, in Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

It is of note that members' investment of time and energy in this collaboration began to falter when the ERA moved to a broader focus, shifting from a reactive to a proactive agenda, and was not engaged to the same intensity in seeking a response to the Roadmap developed. The ERA closed down in 2019 primarily due to lack of funding, but also due to the fall off in engagement by its members.

The Advocacy Initiative, in its assessment of the ERA, noted strengths in the nature of the Alliance, with organisations brought out of their silos, enabling an enhanced voice and mutual learning. It pointed positively to the move from reactive to proactive advocacy, the avoidance of a constant reactive/protest mode, and the value in the Alliance offering solutions and new thinking. However, the difficulties in maintaining a collective voice, and sustaining the active involvement of members, getting them to invest time and effort in the work of the ERA , were noted as weaknesses (10).

The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) pursued collaboration and coordination between the community and voluntary sector and the trade union sector, in a series of campaigns on migrant workers. It sought and built strong relationships with trade unions in its work on migrant rights, in particular the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and SIPTU.

This collaboration with trade unions involved an alliance that has been identified as particularly important in the pursuit of transformative change. Aronoff and colleagues

emphasise the importance of this alliance from an environmental perspective, in that the pursuit of planetary survival requires "revitalising labour militancy. Labour power has always come from its ability to bring business as usual to a halt" (11).

The brokerage of this relationship and the subsequent collaboration was enabled by the MRCI operating a new model for a community and voluntary sector organisation. This need for a new model of organisation to underpin collaboration, mirrors Ogle's description of the need for a new model of trade unionism in building the trade union, community, and political pillars of the Right2Water movement (12).

In this new model, the MRCI combines a focus on building stronger communities, better workplaces, and a fairer more open society for all, in pursuit of a transformative agenda that encompasses both community and workplace. Within this frame, it takes a community development approach, based on collective action and supporting migrant activists in building organisations, such as the Domestic Workers Action Group in 2003, and the Justice for the Undocumented group in 2010 (13).

Gains achieved from this issue-led collaboration of the MRCI and migrant worker groups with the trade unions, include: improvements for migrant women working on mushroom farms; the introduction of a bridging visa in 2009 giving undocumented people who previously held a work permit, and became undocumented for reasons beyond their control, the right to apply for a new permit; and ratification by the Irish government, in 2014, of the International Labour Organisation's Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189), adopted in 2011 to improve the working and living conditions of domestic workers.

Most recently the MRCI and migrant worker groups were involved in a coalition of trade unions, community groups, and business associations to collaborate in calling for the urgent regularisation of undocumented workers. Many of these undocumented workers were based in sectors deemed essential in managing the COVID-19 pandemic, including care of older people, healthcare, retail, cleaning, food processing, agriculture, and fisheries. This campaign met with notable success with the announcement, in 2021, of a new scheme to regularise thousands of undocumented migrants and their families living in Ireland for four years without immigration permission or three years in the case of those with children.

In conclusion, collaboration and coordination, among civil society organisations, are not readily nor easily built or sustained over time. Brokerage mechanisms are required to build the relationships necessary for such linkages. These have not been extensively deployed by civil society, particularly in going beyond collaboration to a sustained coordination of endeavour across diverse organisations. However, both collaboration and coordination are key if civil society is to secure some progress on its transformative agenda.

Individual relationships between key members of different organisations, participative meetings to develop shared agendas, the formation of new organisations, and deliberative events are all evident in the brokerage mechanisms implemented by civil society organisations, over the past two decades.

Values were innovatively deployed as: a basis for organisations to collaborate; a means of underpinning priorities and processes pursued; and a tool for building popular support for change agendas. Agenda-led approaches were inventively deployed in realising a new form of collaboration with political parties, opening up a potential new channel for civil society

influence. Issue-led approaches were effectively deployed in drawing organisations out from silos to collaborate on shared issues to good effect.

Collaboration and coordination challenges organisations not just to build new relationships, but also to rethink their own mandate and mission. It is clear from the exemplars described, that new forms of trade unionism, of community organisation, and of political parties will need to emerge for effective collaboration and coordination across civil society for equality and environmental sustainability.

To effectively brokerage relationships for collaboration and coordination, organisations are challenged to look beyond their own immediate mandate and the demands of this mandate. The imperative for political parties to secure votes, the trade union imperative to pursue the immediate interests of their members, and the pressures on community organisations to narrow their focus to the situation and experience of their particular community, have all militated against effective collaboration and coordination. Shared purpose and aspiration will have roots in these immediate mandates, but will inform an ambition that stretches well beyond the boundaries of these mandates, demanding solidarity actions as well as the identification of common ground for specific shared actions.

The four exemplars demonstrate that brokerage requires spaces for leadership across different sectors of civil society to build the relationships and trust required for collaboration and coordination. It equally requires: a shared long-term agenda and vision; common defined values that are engaged internally by the organisations involved in a sustained manner; and immediate purpose of agreed and shared relevance. These are the conditions that need further reinforcing if collaboration and coordination are to be effectively built and deployed by civil society.

Chapter 10. Traces and legacies of resistance: Tactical invention

Horvat raises the need for invention in civil society tactics, warning that "current models of resistance to global capitalism and the renewal of fascism – alter summits, public demonstrations, violent protests - are no longer enough, if they ever were". He suggests that the ability of alter summits (large scale global gatherings of progressives, such as the World Social Forum founded in 2001 to counter the World Economic Forum) to challenge the system is blocked by "the fetish of the horizontal" (no hierarchies, self-management, and the democratic participation of all), with the emphasis on debate and alliance-building over the "verticality" required for effective decision-making and organisational structure. He critiques public demonstrations, for doing little more than enact dissatisfaction with the current global system. While violent protests have revealed the brutalities of the system, he suggests "they have not proven sufficient to challenge existing power structures or to create a real counter power" (1).

There is a challenge to pursue tactical invention if civil society for equality and environmental sustainability is to progress transformative change. There has been some innovation in the tactics of civil society organisations over the previous two decades, which holds learning for what might need to be prioritised into the future.

This innovation is evident in five strands of initiative: deploying values in communication initiatives; engaging the artist in community building; pursuing litigation in confronting the power of the state and the vested interests that sustain the status quo; organising public protest with a capacity to both disrupt and mobilise; and engaging in strategic and tactical reflection. This is a repertoire that enables civil society to look beyond elite dialogue, and to disrupt, surprise, and make new gains for equality and environmental sustainability.

Deploying values in communication initiatives as an explicit civil society tactic, is a relatively recent departure with real potential and a proven track record in the referenda campaigns in relation to marriage equality and abortion rights. Significant work has been undertaken by Values Lab, a small collective established in 2015, in devising a theoretical underpinning for and promoting such tactics, but any ongoing or widespread application of this by civil society organisations has yet to emerge.

Mouffe points to the role of the emotions in progressing societal change, bemoaning how the left is "locked into a rationalist framework" and lacks understanding of and attention to the "affective dimension". She suggests that "radicalisation of democracy requires mobilising affective energy through inscription in discursive practices that beget identification with a democratic egalitarian vision". She emphasises the importance of the "production of ideas with the power to affect" and the need for strategy to "address people in a manner able to reach their affects", noting that this "has to be congruent with their values and the identities of those it seeks to interpellate and must connect with the aspects of popular experience" (2).

Values Lab opened up this emotional or affective domain for Irish civil society, with their focus on engaging values as key motivators for change, at societal and organisational levels. It promotes and supports tactics of values-led approaches to change for equality and environmental sustainability. In this it has been inspired and informed by the work of the Common Cause Foundation in Britain.

In relation to change at a societal level, Values Lab developed and now applies approaches, for organisations and networks, to implement values-led strategic communication. Values-led strategic communication involves the purposeful use of communication as a core element in an organisation's strategy for societal change. Values-led strategic communication mobilises support for change, engages a wider public in the demand for social change, and influences power holders.

Values-led strategic communication engages people at the level of their emotions, something which fact-based communication does not, despite a heavy reliance on the latter in much of the communication work of civil society advocacy. Schwartz, the Israel-based social psychologist, has shown that our core values each form the basis of a specific set of beliefs and attitudes, which in turn drive a large range of actions and behaviours: from the careers we choose and the causes we support, to how we spend our free time and the products we buy (3). There is a wide body of research subsequently undertaken, reflecting this and demonstrating that the engagement of values motivates people to care about and take action on issues.

Mullen, a co-founder of Values Lab, highlights how strategic communication should consistently and repeatedly engage those values that motivate a concern for others and for the common good "through the diversity of communications channels, tools and tactics employed. This is not about attempting to change people's values, it is about engaging and giving priority to (pro-common good) values they already hold…our values operate like muscles and just as muscles are strengthened (by repeated engagement), repeatedly engaging certain values will strengthen those values in target audiences" (4).

Where values are effectively engaged in a sustained manner through strategic communication, they influence the dominant value set within society when a critical mass

of such communication can be deployed and sustained. This is how values-led strategic communication becomes a driver for societal change at a cultural level.

Values Lab undertook research in this area for 'Home for Good', a network of organisations and individuals seeking the insertion of a right to housing into the Constitution. This involved examining the narratives and underlying values of the target audience for this campaign, with a view to shaping campaign messages advancing the right to a home. This was to enable communication that would be true to the activist narrative, while being resonant with the target audience narratives, and engaging of values that motivate a concern for the situation and experience of others (5).

In relation to change at an organisational level, Values Lab has developed and applied tools to support organisations to become values-led. The values-led organisation ensures a sustained engagement with its core values through ongoing internal dialogue about these, and through organisational systems to enable the organisation to be: explicit in collectively naming, defining and communicating the values that motivate its purpose and work; coherent in giving expression to its core values in carrying out all of its functions and bringing its values into all areas of its operations; and consistent in applying its values at all times and in all contexts.

Organisational values, where effectively engaged in this way, shape organisational priorities, procedures, and practices. This approach emphasises the importance of engaging and embedding values that motivate a concern for equality and environmental sustainability within organisations. In this way, societal change is underpinned by institutional change motivated by such values.

Values Lab has supported such institutional change, through supporting values-led approaches by public bodies to implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (6). This Duty requires public bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality, and protect human rights for staff, service-users, and policy beneficiaries, across all of their function areas.

Values of dignity, autonomy, inclusion, participation, and social justice have been identified as motivating a concern for equality and human rights (7). These are the values used by Values Lab as a framework for values-led implementation of the Duty. These values are not new to the public sector, but have suffered some de-prioritisation in public bodies over the past two decades. This was due to public sector reform that was based on private sector management models, which drove a prioritisation for values of efficiency and value-for-money, at the expense of wider common good values previously prioritised in the sector.

A values-led implementation of the Duty enables a rebalancing of values in public bodies, with a renewed engagement of equality and human rights values to shape a public body's priorities and processes. As a first step, public bodies identify and define the values that motivate their concern for equality and human rights. These are set out in an Equality and Human Rights Values Statement, a tool developed by Values Lab (8), that further concretises each of these values in: a statement of outcome that establishes the implications of the value for the change sought by the organisation; and a statement of process that establishes the implications of the value for the manner in which the organisation goes about its business.

This Equality and Human Rights Values Statement frames their implementation of the Duty, in effectively establishing their ambition for the Duty. It enables, using the statements of outcome and of process, organisations to review plans and policies at final draft stage to ensure they remain aligned with their values. It forms part of internal communications of

the organisation, to ensure an ongoing engagement of these values such that they secure some priority within their organisational culture. This approach drives an institutional change which could ultimately contribute to societal change for equality through the functions of the public sector.

Engaging the artist in community-building can call on a tradition in the field of community arts, as a tactic for civil society for equality and environmental sustainability. However, community arts has been and continues at the margins of the cultural sector, and the relationship between artist and activist has never been easy to negotiate.

Mouffe points to the importance of the artistic and cultural fields in the pursuit of societal change, identifying the role they play at an affective or emotional level. She notes their capacity to "play a decisive role in construction of new forms of subjectivity" (9). The cultural sector of civil society, however, has been slow to mobilise in any widespread, consistent or coherent manner behind or alongside projects of societal change for equality and environmental sustainability.

McGonagle, a prominent figure in Irish contemporary art, points to a transformative potential in the arts, where: "art's purpose is, and always has been, centred on the creation of empathy – the act of seeing self in other. That is what art is for, whatever form it takes, in whatever situation, to embody and not just re-present that core negotiation of meaning" (10). He suggests that a re-centring of societal models on empathy cannot be achieved by politics or economics as they currently operate, so the task falls to the cultural space: the task to "create and distribute other models of socio-cultural relations, in practice and in situ" (11).

McGonagle calls for internal change in the cultural sector. This is reflective of the new models of trade unionism and new forms of community sector endeavour identified previously as central in brokering new collaboration across civil society for equality and environmental sustainability. McGonagle suggests "a turn is also required in the total art process of art education, art practice/production and distribution, experience and participation". He notes that "It is difficult for the art process, if understood only as production of product, to turn quickly but we could start with a different discourse around expectations and processes in order to nourish other ways of thinking and doing that are predicated not only on the solo agency of the artist but also on the shared agency of reciprocal practice" (12).

Blue Drum, a community arts organisation, has been a long-term advocate for community arts and its potential contribution to societal change and has given valuable leadership in promoting community arts and enabling new relationships between artists and activists. Its 2014 Community Culture Strategy sought a renewal and reinvention of community arts, re-situating this practice of arts and culture back from the margins, where it suffers from limited funding and lack of dedicated policy. It advanced community arts as central to the cultural sector.

Blue Drum points to community arts as a form of partnership between the artist or arts organisation and communities experiencing inequality, where such communities are not just consumers of arts and culture but also producers. It notes: "Community arts practice has been the field of endeavour that has made a particular contribution to stimulating and supporting cultural expression in, and affirming the cultural heritage of, communities that experience social exclusion" (13).

The Blue Drum Community Culture Strategy aimed to: develop an organisational platform for community arts and social inclusion; stimulate a mainstreaming of community arts in the institutional infrastructure for arts and culture; support new models of community arts relevant to a changing context; and achieve a visibility for and perspective on community arts among key stakeholders (14).

Blue Drum was the lead partner in the City (Re)Searches: Experiences of Publicness project in 2012 and 2013, with the Community Arts Partnership (Northern Ireland), and Kaunas Biennial (Lithuania). The contested nature of community, culture, and publicness were the field of inquiry for this project that spanned Cork, Belfast, and Kaunas. The inquiry involved deliberations, artist engagement, site visits, dialogue with local organisations and artists, and reflection within the project team.

Crowley (author), one of the City (Re)Searchers, recorded the participative deliberations hosted across the three locations. Arts and culture were identified, in these deliberations, as becoming political through enabling people that experience inequality to reflect on their past and their history, to explore and understand their present, and to dream of and imagine a different future. Alliances between artists, community arts practitioners, and social justice groups were understood as central to this endeavour. The community creativity involved, was viewed as needing recognition, mobilisation, production, and expression. Arts and culture were seen to serve as a mirror for values, a source of values, and a means of making alternative values public (15).

O'Baoill, another City (Re)Searcher, presented the ground-breaking community arts work undertaken as part of an urban regeneration project in Fatima Mansions and the Rialto area of Dublin. He identified the key features of this cultural work, including:

- the powerful nature of story-making and rituals in combating debased views of community;
- the introduction of creative consultative processes in determining the nature and design of local housing, public buildings, and public spaces;
- the strong synergies developed between cultural and arts based processes and social and political education and campaign work;
- the effective alliances forged between community organisations and youth organisations, and between artists and art organisations, working in carefully negotiated collaborations;
- the evolution of a local arts infrastructure and programme of work to achieve high levels of participation in the arts in the area; and
- the creation of an evidence base and documentary tradition to underpin local learning and enable the development of arts education pedagogies in a community context (16).

O'Baoill pointed to the "dysfunction of official culture and established arts traditions" which he saw as "protecting the status quo while avoiding any responsibility around addressing the true extent of cultural inequality within our society". He suggested that "community now be regarded as a primary source of origin, influence, and context for arts and culture development" (17).

Pursuing litigation in confronting the power of the state and the vested interests that sustain the status quo, has had a new lease of life as a tactic in recent times. This tactic is currently pioneered by: the Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC), an organisation concerned with equal access to justice; and Friends of the Irish Environment, an organisation formed by environmental activists.

FLAC pursues its advocacy by enabling use of the law in the public interest. FLAC defines public interest law as working with the law for the benefit of disadvantaged people. This involves taking cases, proposing law reform, and promoting legal education as tools of change. Public interest law integrates legal initiative and social justice work. FLAC has pursued this approach by acting in equality cases before the Workplace Relations Commission, and in human rights cases before the Courts, whether as amicus curiae (friend of the court) or in representing individual claimants.

FLAC reported 102 active casefiles in 2020, with 41 new casefiles in 2020 in addition to the 61 casefiles from previous years which remained active. Housing (39%), discrimination/equality (34%), and social welfare (22%) matters were the areas of law in which legal representation was most often provided. A specific Traveller legal service was launched in 2020 to pursue strategic litigation alongside providing training and support to advocates working with the Traveller community. Housing and discrimination/equality are the main focus in this service to-date (18).

Friends of the Irish Environment have used litigation to good effect for an environmental agenda. In October 2017, they applied for a judicial review of the 2017 National Mitigation Plan. The case challenged the state's decision to adopt a National Mitigation Plan that involved greenhouse gas emissions increasing by about ten percent over the period 1990-2020, while the government itself had agreed that a reduction in emissions of twenty-five to forty percent over this period would be needed to help avert dangerous climate change. In 2020, the case was won in the Supreme Court which held that the National Mitigation Plan failed to specify the manner in which it is proposed to achieve the "national transition objective", as required by the Climate Act 2015 and required the Government to revise its national climate policy.

2020 was a good year for Friends of the Irish Environment litigation. They won what had been a twelve year legal battle in securing a High Court order quashing An Bord Pleanala's decision to grant planning permission for a Liquid Natural Gas terminal on the Shannon. In 2008 they lost a High Court challenge against this planning permission. However, the planning permission had lapsed and, by way of judicial review, sought by Friends of the Irish Environment, the High Court ruled, on foot of a decision from the European Court of Justice on the matter, that no project that has planning permission which is due to lapse, and for which an extension is being sought, can receive that extension without a review of previous environmental assessments and public consultation to see if anything in the environment or in scientific knowledge has changed in the interim.

Organising public protest with a capacity to both disrupt and mobilise has long traditions in civil society. However, this is a tactic that is little used in the current repertoire of civil society for equality and environmental sustainability. It was particularly evident in the Right2Water campaign, described in chapter seven, and is emerging again in the actions of Extinction Rebellion.

McKibben, in identifying the importance of the "new technology of non-violence", emphasises that "we have the tools (nonviolence chief among them) to allow us to stand up to the powerful and the reckless, and we have the fundamental idea of human solidarity that we could take as our guide". He points to the need for a "full-spectrum movement that stretched from the electoral to the illegal", a movement more focused on "shifting culture than on winning narrow legislative victories" (19).

Over the short period from its emergence, Extinction Rebellion has deployed this "technology" of non-violent protest in its activities in Ireland, organising a wide range of creative actions, stretching from traditional demonstrations alongside occupations of public spaces.

Extinction Rebellion coordinated knocking on doors to urge voters to make climate action a key issue in the 2020 general election. It blocked the streets of various cities with 'die-ins'. Members locked themselves to the gates of Dáil Eireann, and glued themselves to the building housing the Department responsible for climate action. It launched its own shadow climate-specific budget to coincide with the Government's. It organised the pouring of fifteen litres of fake blood at the entrance of a hotel hosting a petrochemical conference. Members disrupted the first day of the Irish Open golfing competition in 2019, drawing international attention to climate crisis.

Engaging in strategic and tactical reflection has been little used as a tactic by civil society for equality and environmental sustainability. The spaces for reflection and learning, to enable and assist civil society organisations to innovate, have not been created. In a context of sustained busyness, organisations have rarely invested time and resources in their own internal reflective processes, in a manner that could underpin tactical innovation. There have been important exemplars, however, of such processes of reflection. These include the community and voluntary sector-wide Advocacy Initiative, and the work of individual organisations such as Community Work Ireland and Age Action.

Mc Kibben, in his exploration of the emergence of non-violent protest and its importance to the environmental movement globally, emphasises the importance of creating spaces for reflection and learning to sustain and strengthen the movement for social change. He points out that while "a powerful technology", the breadth and level of knowledge about the field of non-violence remains low. He compared this to the understanding of military power where "almost every nation on the planet has an academy or two devoted to the study of war". He concludes that "We are still early in the learning curve and we lack a West Point or an Annapolis, but people around the world are trading lessons" (20).

Harvey has emphasised the importance of such reflective processes, suggesting that voluntary and community organisations need to establish a "self-critical space where they may reflect on their current situation, develop a narrative of the events of the past two decades, come to terms with their fear of the state, develop strategies to survive, challenge inhibition and suppression, put forward practical proposals to address the experience outlined here, while working to create an enlightened model of civil society" (21).

The Advocacy Initiative was a philanthropy funded, short-term initiative of reflection, organised within the community and voluntary sector from 2011 to 2014. It sought to:

- contribute to knowledge and understanding of social justice advocacy;

- stimulate informed debate on social justice advocacy within the sector and with the state; and
- facilitate strengthened capacity of social justice advocates.

The Advocacy Initiative pursued a scope of activity that merited a longer timeframe, for its capacity to enable reflection that could drive innovation for civil society. It left an important legacy of documentation, however, that recorded the reflection involved and the inputs developed for and the learning from this process.

The COVID-19 pandemic provided a stimulus for reflection by Community Work Ireland and its members. This network implemented an initiative to review the practice of community work in the context of the pandemic. This involved an engagement with practitioners to explore and reflect on: the constraints in and learning from the current context of the pandemic; and the application of this learning in thinking through new approaches for pursuing societal change in this context and into the future. This reflection was used in a series of capacity-building events for members, culminating in production of a resource document to enable further reflection at an individual, an organisational, and a sectoral level (22).

Age Action took time out to reflect on the learning for the organisation from the widespread adaptations made in its work during the COVID-19 pandemic. In doing so, it took the opportunity to further review its work through the lens of being an advocacy organisation, teasing out the implications of this primary role for all its various operations. In its reflection, Age Action posed an advocacy organisation as: starting from the needs, perspectives, interests, participation, and co-creation of those it represents; working to an agreed theory of change, and how change can be made happen; and building a power base to drive change (23).

In conclusion, innovation is evident in the tactics of civil society for equality and environmental sustainability, even if not in a widespread manner. While elite dialogue, persuasion, and negotiation dominate in the repertoire of the tactics, there is a wider set of tactics to-hand with greater potential to advance transformative change, if these tactics could achieve a critical mass of deployment.

This innovation is evident in the exemplars of: values-led approaches to social change; cultural initiative for transformative change; litigation to protect equality and human rights and the environment; peaceful protest and civil disobedience; and internal reflection. This is a trend that would need to be sustained. Most importantly, it is a trend that would need to be accompanied by a more effective means of replicating and spreading the new tactics that are developed.

Part 4: Civil Society: Reimagining Purpose and Potential

Part 4: Civil Society: Reimagining Purpose and Potential

Chapter 11. There is an Alternative

Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability finds itself in a difficult situation. The achievement of equality and environmental sustainability remains distant, and at times seems ever more distant. The belief that there is such an alternative society and economy, and that it is possible to achieve the required transformative change to realise such an alternative, is in short supply.

Civil society is faced with a low energy politics that has demonstrated little capacity to advance significant change outside of a crisis situation. Even in a crisis situation, a recovery agenda is swiftly established to establish a route back to some form of the previous status quo. Vested interests, national and global, have substantial control over and easy access to power holders, draining politics of any energy for real change. This is a politics that is itself badly in need of transformative change.

Civil society, over the past two decades, has been corralled into a constrained space for its advocacy. Engagement with the state as a form of partnership, the dominant form of advocacy pursued by these organisations, has pushed many organisations into a convention that change comes solely through problem-solving and a persuasive argument, rather than through the balance of forces mobilised behind an argument.

Civil society faces a hostile external environment for its work. Funding dependency on the state has shifted its priorities into a service provision mode and induced a level of caution in what is left of its advocacy. Organisations have been weighed down and distracted with an ever increasing bureaucratic and administrative burden.

Civil society remains fragmented along the lines of the various issues that different organisations work on, the specific communities they work with, or the political analyses they bring to their work. It is divided by internal competition for political space, funding, and media attention. It mourns a previous standing and potential influence, to a point where ritual can dominate its advocacy processes.

Civil society is limited to the pursuit of incremental change. The transformative change required to achieve equality and environmental sustainability is deemed beyond their scope and potential. Founding values remain a constant for these organisations, however, for many, a more managerial culture, driven by funder demands and other external influences, have caused a values drift away from these founding values which underpin the pursuit of transformative change.

The question inevitably arises, therefore, as to whether civil society organisations are fit for purpose in progressing transformative change. In seeking an equal and environmentally sustainable society, is there value in investing time, resources, and creativity in this part of civil society as the standard bearer? Belief that there might be an alternative model for this civil society and for its advocacy, and that it might be possible to create such an alternative, is in short supply.

Civil society organisations, however, can call on a body of ambition and innovation in organising to pursue goals of equality and environmental sustainability, exploring and defining a different future for society, collaborating and coordinating for influence, and testing out different tactics for advancing such transformative change. This body of invention illustrates the continuing potential in civil society to be a key driver for transformative change. It suggests that there is indeed an alternative route for civil society organisations to follow, and provides a body of learning for it to do so.

This body of work includes:

- establishing diverse organisations, spaces, and platforms for a civil society for equality and environmental sustainability to take structure, to operate free from the constraints of statutory demands, and to engage in organising people for an agenda of transformative change;
- creating frameworks for a vision of, and broad agenda for, an alternative model of development capable of progressing and achieving an equal and environmentally sustainable society;
- brokering new relationships for collaboration and coordination across different sectors of civil society, in pursuit of shared goals of equality and environmental sustainability; and
- applying creativity in the tactics employed, enabling actions for change that surprise, disrupt, engage and mobilise.

This body of work suggests that civil society for equality and environmental sustainability can reinvent itself in ways that are fit for purpose in seeking transformative change. It is a body of work that needs to evolve, grow and proliferate, if its potential is to be realised. This body of work does not provide readymade answers, merely points up new directions to be pursued by these civil society organisations. This is a challenge worth investing time, energy and creativity in, given the opportunities presented by the current moment of crisis and the imperative behind addressing the interlinked challenges of climate disruption and inequality.

Realising this potential and meeting this challenge requires an act of imagination that is future-focused both in terms of the society that is sought, and of the means required of civil society organisations to achieve it. This latter requirement of new means will not be a nostalgic return to idealised past forms of civil society advocacy that might have existed prior to, or even during the past two decades of restriction. Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability must imagine new forms of advocacy and muster the resources required for their effective deployment behind its goals. Civil society has, however, a body of work to call on, and learn from, in meeting this challenge of reinvention.

A sustained process of reimagination and reinvention is needed of what it means to be an advocacy organisation and how such advocacy is undertaken. Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability would usefully take advantage of the disruptions attendant on the pandemic to reassert its potential to contribute to much needed transformative change. It has to create the conditions for internal change as part of the strategies for reinvention. It must then assert a new presence and scale in its work for change if it is to effectively contest the vested interests that currently constrain politics. Ultimately, it has to build power behind its strategies for change.

Chapter 12. Create the Conditions

The conditions have to be created to enable and support a reimagination of civil society for equality and environmental sustainability, a recognition for its potential to advance transformative change, and the democratic space required for its effective contribution. The creation of such conditions requires:

- space and time for reflection on advocacy for transformative change and how it is pursued;
- investment of resources to put new advocacy thinking into practice, with new sources of support and funding developed and made available; and
- an evolution of democratic processes such that people can have a say and communicate demands with effect.

Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability would usefully create spaces and supports for reflection if it is to develop, access, and apply new ideas for its pursuit of equality and environmental sustainability. The reflective initiatives of the Advocacy Initiative, and more recently of Community Work Ireland, and Age Action, described in chapter ten, hold learning and content in developing this strand of activity for reflection.

The starting point for this process of reflection has to be a shedding of the busyness that currently characterises much of civil society. Reflection requires a prioritising of the demands inherent in an act of imagination over those demands of the current rush of activity that enmeshes those involved in these civil society organisations. Civil society organisations could usefully analyse the myriad of daily undertakings they engage in, with a view to identifying what can be stripped back in order to open up the space required for devising and advancing the internal change required to realise their full and true potential in advancing transformative change.

Spaces need to be created and sustained for organisations to engage in shared reflection on:

- the change they seek, how that change could now happen, and the manner in which they can intervene in making such change happen;
- the work they currently engage in and how it fits with this analysis of change and how change happens;
- the pitfalls faced in current advocacy work, in particular the ritualistic tasks undertaken and whether and how these have and are contributing to change, and the opportunities for future advocacy work;
- the innovation they are involved in or they can access from other sectors or jurisdictions, that could offer new thinking for new approaches to advocacy for equality and environmental sustainability; and
- the structures, agendas, and tactics demanded of a civil society for equality an environmental sustainability if it is to take its place in the struggle for necessary transformative change.

These spaces could be once-off initiatives for reflection or sustained platforms for exchange and learning. They could be pursued within individual organisations, across existing civil society networks, and within new platforms engaging different sectors of civil society concerned with equality and environmental sustainability.

Deliberation would be a vital practice in such spaces, where civil society activists engage with each other in: talking through their organisational context, current situation, and change strategies; sharing analysis of the current moment and ideas for the future; and exploring what might be effective ways forward for their advocacy to have an impact. Fruitful deliberation will require time and thought in its design if it is to produce results. Fragmentation, division, and competition must be put aside. Deliberative approaches would: place these civil society activists as the key authors of the critique of and evolution of their advocacy work; build peer support for the change required for the their work to be more impactful; and enable a cross-fertilisation of perspectives across different strands and sectors of civil society pursuing goals of equality and environmental sustainability.

Particular relationships could be brokered in support of this reflection. Some parts of the arts and culture sector have already shown willing to engage a part of a civil society for equality and environmental sustainability. Ongoing and diverse exchanges between artists and activists could be facilitated to further explore the potential in this relationship to contribute to effective reflection and deliberation, and to unleash imagination. Community arts has a particular investigative tradition that could be deployed in support of such processes. The work of Blue Drum, described in the chapter ten, holds value as an exemplar in this regard.

Relationships brokered with academia, across different centres of learning, could assist in building a tradition of research and learning that would serve civil society reflection. Some of these relationships are already in place, though more often involving individual academics than academic institutions. Research stimulated and enabled through more formal relationships with academia could build a coherent body of knowledge to serve reflection and be a focus for ongoing informed deliberation. This research would be of a participative nature and would usefully include research to:

- track, review and analyse the efficacy of the current advocacy work and change strategies of civil society; and
- explore the current and future nature of, role of, and methodologies for civil society advocacy in its pursuit of a more equal and environmentally sustainable society and economy.

International links between civil society organisations in different jurisdictions around the globe have an important contribution to make in feeding this process of reflection and imagination. This could be facilitated through the European and international networks that many civil society organisations are involved in. It could also be pursued directly, engaging with contacts in jurisdictions that might not be present in such networks but have traditions of movement building and advocacy that offer learning for the Irish context.

Such an international exchange of ideas and innovations in civil society is not new and could call on existing linkages of these organisations, even though these linkages have not been well sustained over the two decades of restrictions. Relationships could be brokered with the global development sector to serve such exchange, building on the links that have already been established with this sector in pursuing advocacy on equality and environmental issues.

A literature on civil society advocacy for equality and environmental sustainability would usefully be developed through these various processes where research, reflection and the outcomes of deliberation are documented for wider dissemination, ongoing application, and further critique. There is currently a notable absence of such a literature coming from within civil society for equality and environmental sustainability.

There is, valuably, the previous work of the Advocacy Initiative to draw from, though this has not be widely disseminated. The St Stephen's Green Trust, a philanthropic organisation founded in 1992, has played a valuable role in supporting a documentation of civil society innovation, including a series of legacy documents from the Claiming Our Future Initiative. This support has enabled some further availability of a legacy that can be drawn from in the reflection now required of civil society organisations.

These processes of reflection and deliberation should underpin the emergence of new forms of advocacy for equality and environmental sustainability and new strategies for transformative change. These, in turn, will require resources if they are to be implemented to the scale required for impact. New sources of funding and support are necessary to enable this evolution. These could come through a mix of mobilising new philanthropic and statutory sources, alongside new initiatives to underpin self-funding.

The philanthropic sector is underdeveloped, not just in scale, but, more problematically, in diversity. It has too often brought its own conditionalities to bear on civil society that have been unhelpful to the pursuit of transformative change. New models of philanthropy are needed to enable the change strategies of a reimagined civil society for equality and environmental sustainability to achieve their potential. There is some limited track record of innovative philanthropy that can be called on in creating these new sources of funding and support, such as the approach of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, noted in chapter five. Many of those few philanthropic organisations that would still pursue such an approach, such as the St. Stephen's Green Trust, are constrained in scale and resources.

Civil society could take a lead in defining the new models of philanthropy required for new forms of advocacy, and in engaging with relevant individuals, groups, and organisations in the development of such models. Co-creation of new models of philanthropy would underpin new roles for, and relationships between donors and recipients of such funding. These new models of philanthropy would usefully:

- be based on and designed in alignment with values named and shared between donors and civil society organisations;
- reflect commitment to shared endeavour and mutual learning in giving expression to these values;
- enable civil society organisations in fronting and leading effective and creative advocacy for equality and environmental sustainability; and
- be open to risk, in testing out new models of advocacy and in accepting the contention inevitable in the pursuit of transformative change.

Statutory funding is unlikely to be available for new and expanded forms of advocacy for transformative change for equality and environmental sustainability, nor to test out and explore innovation in such advocacy. However, the case for statutory funding for this civil society advocacy would usefully be made. There is a democratic imperative for such forms of advocacy, in giving voice to minority, under-represented, and excluded groups, perspectives, and interests in society and in achieving more participatory forms of democracy. Democracy in its current form leaves little room for such voices to be heard or have influence. There is a further democratic imperative for such advocacy, given the nature of challenges posed to society by inequality and climate disruption.

Where statutory funding comes available on foot of such argumentation, the terms on which it is made available would have to underpin civil society independence, innovation,

and impact in strategies for transformative change. Such funding conditions would need to respect that civil society is not a replacement for public sector underfunding or deficits in service provision, but an additional creative actor on its own account with a specific democratic purpose and role. This suggests the need for civil society organisations to continue to design and advocate for new models in the provision of statutory funding for their work that would reflect and underpin this imperative of democracy.

The environmental sector offers useful models for independent funding through membership fees and donations. There is an attendant risk to this approach that must be managed, of membership needs or demands consuming energy and diverting focus from transformative societal change priorities. Crowd funding has also been effectively used in civil society campaigns on such issues, however, this is an increasingly competitive arena. Own fundraising capacity has served some civil society organisations well. This has been more successful in the field of service provision, though it has also served some advocacy initiatives.

Despite the challenges involved in each of these different approaches, they respond to the need for civil society organisations to develop their own sources of funding or to establish their own funding terms to pursue new change strategies for equality and environmental sustainability. Further innovation in these approaches to independent funding could enable more collective and solidarity-based funding initiatives for civil society, in place of current competitive funding regimes. These funds could be specifically dedicated to collaboration and coordination for equality and environmental sustainability.

New avenues for civil society to engage effectively with the political system are required if transformative change is to be progressed. Low energy politics and the capture of political systems by vested interests that stymie transformative change, need to be addressed if civil society is to realises its potential and if new models of advocacy are to advance equality and environmental sustainability goals.

Politics needs new forms of accessibility and accountability if it is to reflect a democratic imperative, in engaging with people and hearing the voices of all groups. Politics needs new ways of governing if it is to deploy a capacity to address the challenges of inequality and the perils of climate disruption. An agenda of political reform is required to reach towards and enable a new high energy politics.

This could call on the work of Unger in regard to high energy democracy, in particular: combining features of representative democracy and direct democracy; strengthening popular engagement and weakening the influence of those with wealth; resolving deadlocks between different actors, through popular engagement; and ensuring a basic level of resources to all in society (1).

There is a body of work in the change agendas developed by civil society, noted in chapter eight, that could be drawn from in seeking such reform in democratic systems. This work points, in particular, to the imperative of developing forms of governance that are more participatory and accountable. These new forms of governance need to be sought by and co-created with civil society. This is not about a return to engagement with the state through partnership and problem- solving. It must involve:

- the decentralisation of power to the local level and a commitment to subsidiarity;
- the establishment of democratic arenas at local level and within key institutions, where diverse voices and perspectives can meaningfully participate in defining and influencing change agendas;
- specific engagement and empowerment of the voices and perspectives of those groups that experience inequality and social exclusion; and
- systems to link and integrate participative and representative forms of democracy and to achieve a constructive and empowering interaction between the two.

New political levers are required to enable people to: put issues on the political agenda; achieve political action on these issues; and secure an accountability from the political system. Such levers have never been adequate in the current political system, given its particular taste for clientelism, and its dependency for accountability through media debate that tends to the passing soundbite rather than sustained investigation.

The political levers required would usefully include:

- forms of petition where, with sufficient support, issues are designated for political debate to secure legislative or policy-related action;
- more frequent forms of referenda where specific legislative or policy proposals can be decided by popular vote;
- broader forms of citizens' assembly that are empowered to ensure impact: a model which has already been used on specific issues, though with mixed success to-date and with inadequate powers to ensure follow-up action;
- systems to recall political representatives who are not performing as they promised or who have exhibited incompetence, lack of integrity, or corruption in their political work; and
- political reforms for accountability such as empowered Oireachtas committees, and a redesign of the Seanad in terms of roles and composition.

This political change agenda could usefully be further developed and deepened by civil society in its processes of reflection, and become a focus in its work in developing transformative change agendas. Such change is not going to be easily won and this area of political reform will be a key testing ground for the new strategies for achieving transformative change to be developed by civil society for equality and environmental sustainability.

Chapter 13. Build Power

Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability must be concerned with building and deploying power if it is to contest the vested interests that seek to preserve the current status quo of inequality and climate disruption, and to advance its transformative change agenda effectively. The change strategies that emerge from a process of ongoing reflection would usefully prioritise a focus on building civil society power to drive transformative change agendas.

This emphasis on building civil society power marks a departure from current strategies for civil society advocacy that are dominant. These emphasise the importance of developing evidence-based policy positions and making a good argument for their adoption. Persuasion through elite dialogue has been prioritised in recent periods as the key to achieving change and has been ineffectual, on its own at least, in advancing any form of transformative change.

The traces and legacies of resistance in civil society initiative for equality and environmental sustainability over the past two decades, however, provide a trove of learning in regard to building and deploying power. It will be important to mobilise and draw from this learning.

In this regard, Silva provides a useful framework of the different forms of power:

- Associational power: with an emphasis on organisation and organising, and a focus on the need for "adequate associational space for citizens to congregate publicly" if political power is to be contested, involving "organising along lines of class, identity, or other specific interest" and "confederations of like organisations".
- Ideological power: with an emphasis on ideas, and a focus on "the capacity of ideas to shape policy options and principles of social organisation", and the use of "cognitive mechanisms to shift perceptions about problems", "mechanisms that transform movements and demonstrations from isolated instances of protest into growing streams of mobilisation".
- Collective power: with an emphasis on collaboration and coordination, and a focus on linking different "power clusters" to coordinate action and form alliances involving different social sectors including "popular sector organisations, middle class groups and political parties and military and state officials", and the use of "brokerage mechanisms" to "connect grievances and goals to broader policy and political purposes" (1).

There is a further dimension of 'creative power' evident in the work of civil society over the past two decades. This emphasises innovation in the tactics deployed by civil society organisations and a focus on the repertoire of tactics required to surprise and appropriately disrupt the current status quo, and to energise and engage a popular demand for change.

Build Associational Power

A new organising impetus would usefully be pursued across civil society for equality and environmental sustainability. There are four strands of initiative required to strengthen the associational power of civil society:

1. Renew an internal organisational focus on advocacy by individual organisations, in essence reasserting their primary role as advocacy organisations;
2. Create and/or sustain organisational spaces or platforms for advocacy that are independent from the state and state funding;
3. Organise, in terms of building and mobilising a popular demand for transformative change; and
4. Develop stronger linkages between the different levels of advocacy for equality and environmental sustainability: local, national, international.

Two decades of restriction have left many civil society organisations as self-defined service providers in their engagement with the communities they represent. It has also left many as self-defined partners in the form of engagement they pursue with the state. This necessitates

a self-re-identification, first and foremost as advocacy organisations. This is not just a matter of definition or statement of purpose, but a reconceptualization, through the lens of their advocacy mission, of their raison d'être, the change they seek and how they pursue change.

Civil society advocacy organisations for equality and environmental sustainability exist to achieve societal change. Such advocacy organisations might pursue different priorities, implement different programmes, and deploy different strategies and tactics, however, what they share is the pursuit of common broad goals, albeit with varying levels of ambition.

The different elements in the work of an advocacy organisation are, therefore, designed to reflect its identity and purpose as an advocacy organisation:

- Public campaigns, political engagement, and all forms of communication are designed to mobilise a popular demand for change, and raise this popular demand with power holders;
- Research and reports are undertaken to evidence the nature and scale of the problem, the nature of the change required for a future society of equality and environmental sustainability, and the progress being made in this regard;
- Service provision activities are undertaken with a mainstreaming perspective and in a manner to prefigure the changes sought, in the way such services need to be conceived, designed, and delivered.

An advocacy organisation and its work needs to be rooted in its engagement with the community it seeks to represent: both in terms of the specific priorities it pursues and of the accountabilities it exercises. Such an organisation needs to prioritise an engagement with the general public in mobilising and organising, over an engagement with power holders and elites in dialogue. It needs to operate from a defined theory of change that establishes the transformative change sought, how such change happens, and where and how the organisation can and does make its contribution to that change process.

A process of civil society self-re-identification requires investment of time and effort in internal change. It is built on processes of review and continuous organisational reflection. These processes should inform the future-focused developments in its priorities, work processes, and internal structures and cultures, that are required to underpin its identity, shape its aspirations, and advance its purpose as an advocacy organisation.

Frameworks could be developed and supports provided to enable a widespread and ongoing process of organisational review and change of this nature within civil society organisations. The context of the COVID-19 pandemic has pointed up the need for such internal change and provides an immediate impetus for organisations to engage in this work of internal reflection and change.

The exemplars of Age Action and of Community Work Ireland, referenced in chapter ten, could inform the development of such processes for internal reflection.

Civil society advocacy spaces and platforms, free from state interference and misdirection, have been developed at local and national level in Ireland over the past two decades of restrictions. They are an important element in the associational power that can be mustered by civil society for equality and environmental sustainability. In establishing such spaces and platforms, civil society organisations have created cooperative arenas that give practical expression to the concept of a civil society for equality and environmental sustainability.

However, the organisations involved in their creation have not accorded sufficient priority to such spaces and platforms for them to be sustained and to deliver on their promise, with evident failures to invest necessary time and energy in their functioning and survival.

Many of these existing spaces and platforms owe their origins to partnership models of engagement with the state. They were formed to enable civil society to participate in such structures at national and local level. They can suffer from such roots given an original focus on processes of elite dialogue in these models. The purpose and approach of existing civil society spaces and platforms would, therefore, require review and resetting to adequately serve new models of advocacy behind new purpose and aspiration. There is learning and a starting point in the creation of organisations such as the Community Platform, its attempts to redefine itself after the collapse of Social Partnership, and its ongoing initiatives in this regard.

New independent platforms or spaces for cooperation in such advocacy might usefully emerge. Such new developments would usefully serve organisations advancing environmental sustainability-led agendas of a Green New Deal variety, such as Stop Climate Chaos, the One Future campaign, and the ongoing work of Friends of the Earth and Extinction Rebellion.

Civil society spaces and platforms for independent advocacy for equality and environmental sustainability should reflect a break from the fragmentation and competition that has beset civil society organisations concerned for these goals. They should enable civil society organisations to pool resources, expertise, and endeavour behind shared agendas and to mobilise and organise people behind such these agendas.

These processes could draw learning from initiatives such as Claiming Our Future and Right2Change.

Organising is at the core of associational power, giving evidence for and drive to the demand for transformative change. Organisations that pursue such popular organising need to provide the space in which people can engage with each other, deepen their analysis, and advance the demand for change through shared endeavour. Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability, as it rejuvenates its advocacy work and develops or strengthens the spaces and platforms for advocacy, would need to be concerned with such popular organising, building and giving expression to the demand for transformative change.

The focus for action on issues of immediate concern, while at the same time creating space to explore and progress a larger vision for equality and environmental sustainability, is important and holds potential, but has been difficult to achieve. In the approach taken, the tools of engagement of the artist and activist in a creative partnership for change, the more explicit articulation of and engagement with values for their motivational power, and the offer of sites of creative protest to give expression to the demand for change, hold potential for organising and mobilising people..

Investment in civil society organising for equality and environmental sustainability would involve a direct and ongoing engagement with people to recruit them into the organisations, spaces and platforms for change already in place or being created. It would involve developing opportunities where people can connect, learn, and develop skills to engage with the challenge of achieving transformative change. It would involve enabling agency for

people in being part of creating strategy for, and progressing this change, as well as enabling people to play roles required for recruitment, popular education, awareness raising, protest, prefiguring change, and negotiation.

Organising is about populating the organisations, spaces and platforms created, such that they are not of an elite nature and divorced from popular struggles, while at the same time offering vision for a new and different future. It is concerned with and leads to a sustained popular advocacy for transformative change, expressed through a diverse and creative repertoire of civil society advocacy.

In this, there is much to be learned from the Right2Water movement, the Spectacle of Defiance and Hope, Claiming Our Future, and Extinction Rebellion, as described in chapter seven.

Particular attention would usefully be given to deepening the links between local and national advocacy. Currently, there is a notable divorce between these levels. Cooperation and coherence between the local and the national has not been easy to achieve, despite various attempts, with both levels suffering as a result.

Effective linkages would enable local civil society advocacy to secure solidarity and critical mass from advocacy efforts advanced at the national level. These linkages would enable national-level advocacy to generate traction across the country, and build the broad popular demand necessary to advance change agendas.

Systems for dialogue are required as precursors for effective linkages, to ensure there is a parity of esteem between national and local level organisations, while also acknowledging the centrality of coherent action at each level to progressing change. Leadership should be shared rather than assumed by either level. The relationships between actors at national and local levels are in place to build this dialogue, what is needed is to engage these relationships in this purpose. It should not be assumed that dialogue will be easy as it involves exploring and agreeing shared agendas and aligned strategies. It will require: deliberation; negotiation; letting go of divisive competition for funding, policy space, and media attention; sharing learning; and compromise.

The operationalisation of such linkages, for cooperation and coherence between the national and local levels, needs to be given some priority, with the time and energy they require being invested. These linkages offer gains in enabling a reinforcement of the actions taken at each level and in driving solidarity and shared endeavour across these levels. Such links are most effectively pursued where there can be some mirroring of independent spaces and platforms at each level, to enable this cooperation and coherence both at each level and between each level.

The Right2Water movement was an important exemplar of these links and their value to effective advocacy.

Advocacy for equality and environmental sustainability is necessarily pursued by civil society on the wider European and international levels. Globalisation is a key feature of the neoliberal model of development, and transformative change can no longer be pursued in one jurisdiction alone. Globalisation has located many causal factors of inequality and climate disruption at the wider international level, therefore, advocacy efforts must operate at local, national, and international levels.

At the international level, civil society advocacy is largely rooted in forms of elite dialogue, at UN and the EU levels in particular. This has, however, proven fruitful in informing valuable international and European policy goals and standards for equality and environmental sustainability. It has been less effective in securing an ambition in these goals and standards, and in ensuring an impact from their full and effective implementation.

Impact has, largely, not been adequately addressed in the advocacy approaches pursued by civil society at this level. Systems for national implementation of these policy goals and standards, and systems for international monitoring of their implementation require evolution. This challenges civil society advocacy at international level, in terms of its focus and demands, and in terms of the manner in which this advocacy is pursued.

The most significant effort to-date, in seeking an incorporation and definition of national implementation and monitoring systems in an international standard, is evident in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This was a product of civil society advocacy and could hold lessons to build on, though it is early to come to any conclusion. The Convention includes the traditional international-level monitoring with a Committee on the Rights of People with Disabilities and a two-yearly reporting requirement on signatory states. The innovation lies in requirements to establish national implementation and monitoring mechanisms which has not been a feature of previous UN human rights treaties. The required mechanisms under the Convention are: a governmental focal point to oversee implementation; a mechanism to coordinate action across government departments; a framework to promote, protect, and monitor implementation that includes a mechanism independent of government; and a high level of participation by civil society (Article 33).

Advocacy at the international level can face similar pitfalls and barriers to the national level. In particular, these pitfalls include the off-putting impact on its potential power base of what is a complex technocratic approach required of civil society organisations at these international levels. The pitfalls further include the more predictable pitfalls of entrapment within elite dialogue, pursuit of problem- solving and incremental change over transformative change, and fragmentation of issues and organisations in a competition for access.

National-level civil society organisations could usefully be concerned to promote an exploration of effective advocacy at international level, addressing these pitfalls, as part of their involvement with international civil society networks. This could be based on evolving thinking within their own organisations as to their advocacy, ambitions, and strategies. A similar process of civil society internal reflection is required at the international level to that suggested, in chapter twelve, for national and local-level advocacy.

Build Ideological Power

A new model of development for society is needed for equality and environmental sustainability to be progressed and achieved. No complete or compelling alternative model emerged, from any quarter, on foot of the economic and financial collapse of 2008. The flaws in the neoliberal model that led to its, albeit brief, collapse were patched up, at great cost to people, and still persist. The Covid-19 pandemic, and the requirements for its management, have further intensified the pressures on this model of development. Ideological power rests on the extent to which civil society for equality and environmental sustainability has a convincing and compelling blueprint available to replace the neoliberal model, and engages effectively in its communication.

The imperative to build such ideological power points to the potential in: mobilising the contribution of current and further civil society think-tanks; building on the change agendas that have been developed by civil society to-date and addressing the gaps in these; engaging with the potential in the emerging concept of the Green New Deal; and the communication of change agendas in a manner that engages and mobilises wider audiences.

Civil society think-tanks dedicated to equality and environmental sustainability serve to build the knowledge base from which to shape the blueprint required for an equal and environmentally sustainable society. They offer an evidence base to underpin the convincing nature of such a blueprint. They provide an arena for debate and learning that can encompass a breadth of civil society sectors.

This is a field of endeavour that would usefully grow, to enable civil society to develop and continue to evolve change agendas that are adequate for the transformations required, and convincing to a wider public. Such think-tanks need to be reinforced and expanded to further enable ideological power for civil society for equality and environmental sustainability. This would involve a stronger resource base as well as attention to their institutional location and organisational standing.

The institutional location of such think-tanks, must enable their independence to bring forward new thinking and open up new agendas. However, while sustaining such independence, they also must be more effectively linked into civil society spaces and platforms. There is a challenge to ensure a responsiveness in informing and aligning with emerging civil society agendas and priorities. This would underpin their contribution to content for civil society ideological power.

The organisational standing of these think-tanks refers to the recognition of their organisation and outputs within civil society for equality and environmental sustainability, the general public, and political systems. Think-tanks in place could usefully strengthen this organisational standing with greater attention to profiling, engagement, and communication strategies, alongside the ongoing focus on quality of research outputs. This would underpin their contribution to the convincing nature of civil society ideological power.

There are models that can be drawn from in this regard. There is the experience of TASC noted in the chapter eight, with its commitment to research and public outreach and its focus on economic equality, social inclusion, democracy, and climate justice. It was able to carve out a location within Claiming Our Future that served this initiative well in its endeavours. There is the further example of the Nevin Economic Research Institute, established to gather information, develop analysis, prepare policy recommendations and undertake educational activities to inform and assist the pursuit of a just, sustainable and equitable society. This is funded specifically by the trade union movement and, thus, well located to serve this movement in its endeavours.

There has been a body of work by civil society organisations in building change agendas for an equal and environmentally sustainable society. In this regard, there is the work, described in chapter eight, of the Community Platform, Claiming Our Future, and Right2Change. These change agendas place society at the centre of the development model required, displacing

the dominance of the market. They accord an expanded role for the state in driving and providing for societal wellbeing. They are comprehensive in encompassing social, economic, political, environmental, and cultural elements, though unevenly developed across some of these elements. This body of work provides a valuable starting point for building the change agendas required for civil society ideological power.

There are gaps in the work that has been done. The change agendas developed to-date reflect more a listing of policy initiatives that needs to be taken in different fields, rather than being devised as an integrated model of development for society. They have yet to emerge as a holistic alternative and a comprehensive frame within which to drive the overall development of society and its economy. This presents a significant challenge to civil society, to evolve these agendas in this way and to do so in a manner that remains both convincing and compelling.

The different elements of these change agendas must first be more evenly developed by civil society. The agendas for social and political change have tended to be the more detailed in the work done to-date, with the environmental change agenda only now emerging with similar detail. The economic change agenda and the culture change agenda need significant further development.

The economic field is the most under-developed in the agendas put forward to-date, reflecting a lack of expertise in this field. There is an urgency to address this gap, both in terms of the nature and role of the economy in any new model of development, and of how the emergence of this new model can be financed and economically underpinned. Stronger links are required between civil society and those leading new thinking in the field of economics who share the values that motivate civil society's concern for equality and environmental sustainability. This should involve civil society in establishing a working relationship and ongoing engagement with academia and relevant think-tanks.

The culture change agenda needs to be encompassed in any blueprint for a more equal and environmental society. This new society and its emergence will demand a vibrant cultural sector that explores, gives expression to, and questions its vision and values and the manner in which these are pursued. Such a sector would look beyond elite performance, instead being primed to democratise both production and consumption of arts and culture. The development of this culture change agenda would usefully involve civil society in seeking new relationships with cultural institutions, where values are shared, new partnerships between the activist and the artist are developed, and a mobilisation of the potential in community arts is enabled.

This work on the cultural element can draw from the work of Blue Drum and the knowledge base it has developed, as explored in chapter ten.

Many current global initiatives in regard to imagining and creating new models of development, are rooted in the concept of a Green New Deal. These initiatives can vary in ambition and scope, but they are consciously constructed as a composition of integrated elements to form a new model of development for society. At their best, they are concerned with transformative change that encompasses social, economic, political, cultural and environmental elements. These Green New Deal initiatives provide the most likely sites from which a civil society blueprint for the future equal and environmentally sustainable society could now emerge.

While there are models to be drawn from elsewhere, this work on a Green New Deal is underdeveloped in the Irish context. The work of Friends of the Earth and the Stop Climate Chaos and One Future campaign, as described in chapter eight, offers valuable starting points to address this deficit. These initiatives would usefully be opened up to and engaged with by a broader spread of civil society organisations. It will be necessary to sustain and grow the ambition and detail in this emerging change agenda, in particular: the driving role to be played by the state; the integration of concerns for equality and for environmental sustainability; the need for a new economics; and the targets for change be set.

It would be important to build a broad ownership for this Green New Deal, in both its creation and communication. Deliberation that engages the full spectrum of civil society for equality and environmental sustainability, and that engages those communities represented by these organisations, should be a feature of its development. The development of this Green New Deal should involve, but not be confined to, those with requisite expertise. Most importantly, it must not be reduced to a product of an elite dialogue across vested interests and the compromises that would inevitably be involved in such an approach.

The exercise of the ideological power inherent in the change agendas that emerge, focuses attention on communication and dissemination and the creation of convincing and compelling messaging in this regard. Appropriate cognitive mechanisms need to be developed and deployed to build adherence to outcomes of the deliberation and co-creation involved in new change agendas.

A Green New Deal, offering a new model of development, therefore, needs to convince and inspire sufficiently to occupy centre stage in the popular demand for change and for the responses sought to current and emerging crises. It would need to be constructed in a manner that can convince to the point of shifting dominant ideologies. It should be communicated: in a manner that resonates with a public; to a scale that undermines a dominant conviction that there is no alternative; and in a manner that engage values that motivate a popular concern for and involvement in seeking the transformative change espoused.

There is little to call on by way of exemplars for such sustained civil society communication of transformative change agendas. There are the exemplars of the cognitive mechanisms, set out in chapter eight, to call on, in regard to the roadshows of Right2Change, and the deliberations of Claiming Our Future. There is a challenge, therefore, to invest civil society creativity and resources in devising and implementing a long-term communication and dissemination strategy to accompany the work of further developing the blueprint for an equal and environmentally sustainable society. The key audience for this strategy needs to be the general public, rather than the power holders, such that the strategy serves effectively in the exercise of ideological power, by mobilising adherence to and a demand for these change agendas.

Build Collective Power

New working relationships, that go beyond cooperation to more systemic collaboration and coordination, would need to be brokered, built and made operational, across civil society sectors for the pursuit of equality and environmental sustainability. At a minimum,

these relationships need to encompass: community and voluntary sector organisations working to address all forms of inequality; environmental sector organisations; trade unions; political parties; global development sector organisations; and cultural sector institutions and organisations. These are relationships that, if adequately mobilised to collaborate and coordinate, could achieve a significant level of collective power.

While some progress was made, over the past two decades, towards building such collaboration and coordination, the relationships involved remain fluid and have not been formalised, operationalised or sustained to an adequate extent. This is an area of civil society advocacy that would need particular and innovative attention, if an impact for transformative change is to be made in the face of the low energy politics that currently stymie such change.

Collective power involves linking different power clusters to enable collaboration and coordination across all their work to advance transformative change. Each of the traditional civil society sectors involved brings its own form of associational power to the mix:

- civil society organisations working for equality and/or environmental sustainability bring a power base of popular mobilisation;
- trade unions bring an economic power, with their membership within the workplace affording a capacity to bring economic activity to a halt;
- the cultural sector mobilises an affective power with a creativity that can shape a popular consciousness by engaging particular values and embedding specific narratives; and
- political parties bring a political power and their engagement within the political institutions.

In this, there is much to be learned from the agenda-led alliances pursued by Right2Change, the values-led coalition building of Claiming Our Future, and the issue-led alliances of the Equality and Rights Alliance and the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, as described in chapter nine.

The imperative and challenge to replace the pervasively harmful, yet increasingly unstable, neoliberal model of development, provides the common ground on which to build this collective power. The various issues that civil society organisations concerned with equality and environmental sustainability are grappling with, can be traced back to this model of development: inequality; climate disruption and biodiversity loss; precarious work and low pay; culture at the service of an elite and cultural production limited to a narrow understanding of the artist; and economic leverage over political power and political disenfranchisement.

Real progress on any one of these issues is not possible without advancing progress on all issues. This common ground still needs to be marked out and accepted. It is this shared opposition to the neoliberal model of development that provides the basis on which the relationships for collaboration and coordination can be brokered and operationalised.

Collective power might start from this common ground of what these different sectors do not want, the various indignities resultant from the neoliberal model. However, building collective power cannot progress far on a negative agenda. In such a context, the exercise of collective power would be limited to resisting developments that cause immediate harm rather than advancing alternatives for a different future.

Shared agendas setting out a positive vision need to be developed and agreed. Such agendas would: integrate the concerns of the different civil society sectors involved; encompass solidarity between these different sectors; and advance a new agreed model of development for achieving equality and environmental sustainability.

Participative civil society spaces for deliberation and consensus-building need to be facilitated . Such deliberations would be framed by shared values and shared ambitions for transformative change for equality and environmental sustainability. The initial deliberations required for building collective power for civil society would focus on:

- establishing shared agendas and an agreed model of development to be pursued;
- identifying strategy and tactics to be actioned, with a capacity to achieve transformative change; and
- devising the formal systems required for ongoing collaboration in joint initiatives, alongside coordination across all the functions and actions of those organisations involved.

The Claiming Our Future initiative, described in chapter nine, provides an exemplar for such a deliberative process and values-based consensus building.

Building collaboration and coordination between these different civil society sectors, requires collective structures and systems to enable ongoing deliberation, planning, and reflection. It is important that, while these do not involve significant cost or administrative burden to operationalise, they are suitable for and effective in ensuring sustained endeavour across a range of fronts. This can learn from but goes beyond the one-off initiative or campaigns that have characterised such collaboration and coordination in the past.

Building new relationships requires organisations across these different sectors to reinterpret their individual organisational mandates and processes in a manner that enables effective solidarity and facilitates operational linkages for collaboration and coordination. Collective power is built around organisational mandates that are stretched to capture, occupy, and grow the common ground for their work on equality and environmental sustainability. This evolution in how organisations define and pursue their core mandate is the foundation stone of sustained collective power.

Collective power is undermined where organisations strictly adhere to their specific area of focus and ways of working, and limit their concerns to their immediate narrowly defined constituency. This does not allow for acting in solidarity, as required for an expansive common ground, and undermines the space for effective collaboration and coordination to grow, as required for collective power.

The examples of the trade unions in the Right2Water movement, described in chapter seven, and the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland, described in chapter nine, offer pointers in regard to moving beyond and redefining their immediate mandates.

Collaboration and coordination necessarily involve specific spaces and platforms for shared agenda-setting and collective planning and review. They should include one-off joint action

or collective campaigns. However, to be effective as collective power, collaboration and coordination require deeper ties. They would involve a reshaping of strategy and tactics within each individual organisation to enable coherence of effort across civil society for equality and environmental sustainability. It is in this way that the impact of the collective of organisations is far greater than the sum of impacts of each of the individual organisations.

Build Creative Power

Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability would usefully enliven and broaden its repertoire of advocacy tactics in building its creative power. This enlivening of repertoire is necessary in addressing a situation where much of civil society's advocacy has become predictable and, in instances, a matter of somewhat jaded and circular routine. An expansion of repertoire is necessary to respond to narrow range of tactics, largely confined to partnership and persuasion, currently deployed by civil society.

In enlivening the repertoire of civil society advocacy, new tactics would serve to engage a wider public in a demand for equality and environmental sustainability and in active support of such goals. They would enable a disruption of dominant narratives, perceptions, and norms.

In broadening the repertoire of civil society advocacy, the focus would turn to:

- mobilising greater ideological, associational, and collective power to underpin demands for equality and environmental sustainability;
- seeking to deploy this ideological, associational, and collective power to maximum effect;
- confronting new forces emerging to contest equality and environmental sustainability goals; and
- responding effectively to vested interests as they mobilise to engage an empowered civil society.

The exemplars of civil society tactics in values-led strategic communication, the use of litigation, the engagement with the artist, and non-violent civil disobedience and public protest, presented in chapter ten, provide a useful starting point for developing this broader and enlivened repertoire of civil society advocacy.

In building this creative power, new strands of advocacy are required to engage on advocacy terrains that remain under-developed. The economic terrain and the cultural terrain are key fields for advocacy that civil society has yet to engage on with any scale or effect. They require attention if advocacy for transformative change is realise progress. Taking another perspective, the terrain of academia needs addressing for its potential to enable civil society advocacy and support its creative power.

The economic terrain is dominated by a body of learning and expertise that is firmly enmeshed in the values and model of development of neoliberal economics. There is, however, a body of learning and expertise within this economic terrain that has imagined and espoused alternative economic models compatible with an ambitious Green New Deal

and capable of financing the emergence of such a model of development. Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability needs to expand its advocacy repertoire in a manner capable of engaging effectively on this terrain.

If they are to engage consistently and coherently on this terrain, civil society organisations would usefully:

- build and sustain relationships with economic experts, that work from a shared value base and hold learning and expertise to serve the identification and pursuit of an alternative model of development;
- create a shared new values-led economic narrative on the nature and role of an economy for equality and environmental sustainability, as part of its model of development;
- establish their focus on and build their capacity to engage with the economic terrain, based on this shared economic narrative; and
- stimulate and create a network of skilled activists with a capacity to bring forward this economic narrative in public discourse, and engage effectively with those who would oppose it.

This engagement on the economic terrain could usefully build on the approaches of the Right2Water movement and of Claiming Our Future, described in chapter eight.

The cultural terrain is equally dominated by the proponents of the neoliberal model of development, who own and deploy the key means of communication, across all media forms. These are the same interests that fund or purchase and give direction to key means of communication in the arts, and in the advertising field. This dominance is reflected in a public discourse that regularly engages neoliberal values that reinforce individualism, competition, and the pursuit of personal wealth, status, and power, over concern for the common good.

Globally, the political right, and far-right movements have been quicker and more inventive in engaging on this cultural terrain. These forces have based their engagement on the inequalities generated by the neoliberal model, as a form of recruitment. They have effectively engaged affective and values-based communication strategies in recruiting and mobilising behind an agenda that serves neither equality nor environmental sustainability. This far-right endeavour is increasingly a problematic and challenging phenomenon for civil society for equality and environmental sustainability in Ireland.

Participation in cultural action would usefully be opened up as a new strand in civil society advocacy, strengthening its creative power. Civil society engagement at an affective and values-based level, on this cultural terrain, has yet to happen in any scale. This would require imagination and cross-sectoral engagement if an effective approach is to be devised and pursued. In this, civil society organisations would address the general public as their priority audience. Communication initiatives would have the particular purpose of mobilising public concern and demand for societal change.

This engagement on the cultural terrain must look beyond contesting or correcting narratives and positions of the proponents of the neoliberal model of development or of the political right and far-right movements. If not, the engagement would merely allow the opposition to set the agenda. This engagement on the cultural terrain must also avoid technocratic

fact-filled arguments, currently of preference in civil society communications, as they do not effectively contest the terrain in the way affective and values-based messaging would.

Cultural action by civil society would involve presenting alternative narratives of equality and environmental sustainability, and doing so in a way that engages those values that motivate a demand for and action on such goals. These values include dignity, autonomy, inclusion, participation, social justice, and environmental justice. Taking action on this cultural terrain would involve civil society organisations pursuing values-led strategic communication as a central strand in their advocacy.

Effective participation on this cultural terrain requires a critical mass of communication work by civil society, if it is to contest the dominance of this field by those with vested interests in the status quo. This critical mass can only be achieved through mobilising associational power and collective power and securing a coherent and consistent approach to communication work across a wide range of organisations, thus collectivising their limited resources for public communication.

The work undertaken by Values Lab, described in chapter ten, on models of values-led strategic communication provides a key resource in this field.

Building creative power could be further assisted by civil society building stronger relationships with academic institutions. Academia could contribute in providing a training ground for civil society activists to expand their repertoire of tactics, and to build and deploy the new forms of power civil society can and must mobilise.

Academic courses currently available to those who seek to work in the relevant fields, are mainly focused on individual professional development, rather than on resourcing the wider collective field to build power and enabling individual activists already involved in civil society to take on this challenge. These academic courses need to grapple with the challenge of enabling a re-imagined and empowered civil society advocacy and enabling an effective mobilisation and deployment of civil society power for an equal and environmentally sustainable society.

Academia, in partnership with civil society, would usefully provide spaces for formal and informal learning in the development and implementation of alternative and creative forms of civil society advocacy, and in the mobilisation and deployment of power in pursuit of the demand for transformative change.

Chapter 14. Final Word

The challenge is significant and urgent for civil society for equality and environmental sustainability. The intertwined goals of equality and environmental sustainability are stymied by a low energy politics that is in thrall to interests that are vested in a destructive status quo. Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability needs to fill the gap that is left by this low energy politics in driving transformative change. In doing so, it must imagine, pursue, and achieve a different future for people and planet alongside a different future for itself as the core advocate for this new society. It has the potential, but action is needed if it is to be geared up and made fit for purpose to respond to this challenge.

The restrictions on civil society advocacy over the past two decades have been and continue to be significant. They are evident in political hostility that breeds civil society caution, and in legislation and regulation that limits civil society action, including by imposing a significant administrative burden. These restrictions are evident in funding regimes that direct civil society towards service provision, and in an engagement with the state that traps civil society in partnership arrangements whose ambition is confined to problem-solving, and incremental change.

Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability has withstood restriction and constraint, but at a cost. Ambition has been curtailed and a preference for advancing piecemeal change through elite dialogue asserted. Routine has replaced imagination and creativity in civil society advocacy. The challenge to survive and the trap of ingrained habit, leave little room for alternative approaches. Dominant civil society values have shifted towards those that better serve the managerial demands of service provision.

At the same time, civil society for equality and environmental sustainability has found space to experiment and there are important legacies of learning from this endeavour. This work has focused on:

- establishing new platforms and spaces for advocating for equality and environmental sustainability and new ways of organising people behind these goals, thus building its associational power;
- devising the elements of new models of development for an equal and environmentally sustainable society, thus building its ideological power;
- brokering and forming new alliances across different civil society sectors based on shared goals, and enabling collaboration and coordination, thus building its collective power; and
- employing a creativity in the design of new tactics to advance change and broadening its repertoire in this regard, thus building its creative power.

This experimentation asserts and enables a civil society capacity to be a significant force for change for equality and environmental sustainability.

If civil society is to progress the goals of equality and environmental sustainability, a re-imagining of civil society advocacy is required, drawing from this body of experimentation. This re-imagining needs to focus on a different future for civil society for equality and environmental sustainability. It requires reflection on and re-imagination of what advocacy is for, how it is best pursued, and what it means to be an advocacy organisation. It requires an investment and engagement in building power: associational, collective, ideological, and creative.

Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability is challenged to prioritise the mobilising and deployment of power in establishing alternative models of development and advancing transformative change. Civil society for equality and environmental sustainability has the potential and the track record, and it is required to step forward and create the different future that is now required.

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Endnotes

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