

4

Making Choices: Choosing Futures - A Question of Paradigms¹

Seán Healy and Brigid Reynolds

Ireland's economic growth since the early 1990s has been dramatic. Wealth, employment and production have grown steadily. This growth has been held up by most commentators as a key indicator of progress. Continuing on this path is seen as the way to building a society which will see everyone having access to the good life, having all that is required to live life with dignity, being happy. Commentary on the recent slow-down in the growth rate focuses on the concern that this kind of society might not be attained if economic growth does not increase at a faster rate than is the case in 2008.

This understanding is very consistent with the conventional economic wisdom which argues that continuing on this economic growth path for the foreseeable future is the way to produce a world where everyone has a stake and where the good life can be accessed by all. It is presumed that everyone, in a world population twice as large as now, can reasonably aspire to and achieve the high-consumption lifestyle enjoyed by the world's affluent minority at present. This is seen as progress.

Ireland at this point in its development needs to make some crucial choices. The future that emerges will depend on the choices made now. Consequently, it is very important that Ireland's decision-makers realise that this conventional economic vision of the future is unattainable. Environmental degradation, encroaching deserts, unemployment, starvation, widening gaps between rich and poor,

¹ This chapter is a development of earlier work we have published cf. for example Healy and Reynolds (2006)

exclusion from participation in either decision-making or development of society, these are the global realities being faced in our world today. These are the issues confronting decision-makers. Economic globalisation and environmental stress are accompanied by social inequality, endemic deprivation, social unrest and violence. Millions of people in the richer parts of the world recognise these problems and are seriously concerned about the plight of the billions of people on all continents whose lived experience is one of constant exclusion from the resources and the power that shapes this world.

Ireland's own experience over the past decade confirms the need to question the dominant model that is being followed. Many good developments have resulted from the economic growth of the Celtic Tiger years. But they have been paralleled by closely linked negative developments or failures. For example:

- On income: While per capita income grew dramatically seventeen per cent of the population still live in poverty with incomes below €11,400 a year for a single person and €26,400 for a household of four.
- On work: The number of jobs almost doubled, unemployment fell dramatically and Ireland had to depend on unprecedented levels of immigration to fill the available jobs. However, the cost of seeing work defined more and more as paid employment only, has resulted in unpaid work (e.g. caring of children, older people and people with disabilities, community building etc.) becoming a residual category. Public policy has failed to address effectively the huge challenges posed by these developments in the new Ireland.
- On participation: While many people have far more money than before, the demands of the new order require them to commute long distances in private transport to their places of employment (making them time-poor) and the new order has not put the required level of services in place in areas such as education,

healthcare and welfare. Consequently, people feel they have little time or opportunity to really participate in their local community or, at another level, are not really involved in shaping the decisions that affect them.

- On sustainability: Major questions have arisen concerning the sustainability of Ireland's current development model. Environmentally, serious adjustments seem to be required. Economically, it is clear that the approach of the past decade and a half is not sustainable. Socially, questions arise concerning whether or not people want to live their lives in a society that seems to make ever-increasing demands on their time and fails to provide the infrastructure and social provision required to enable all to live life with dignity.
- On wellbeing: Research on wellbeing is showing that people want to lead rich and fulfilling lives – developing their capabilities, fulfilling their potential and leading socially useful lives.² In reality increased income is important but does not lead directly or inevitably to a happier life. Securing wellbeing requires more than merely increasing people's income.

People feel powerless. The media present one vision of the future and assume it is the only desirable or viable future. Politicians, more concerned about the next election, rarely discuss the fundamental causes of, or long-term solutions to, the issues and problems they confront every day. It is crucial that questions be asked concerning the core assumptions which underpin and support the present situation. What model of development is being followed? Is it likely to produce a good life for all the world's citizens? What constitutes progress? What are the underpinning values on which decisions are made in shaping the future? Are we at ease with these values and the structures which flow from them? Is it possible to envision a future where

² For a comprehensive treatment of these and related issues see Marks, Shay and Westall (2004).

everyone really would have a stake, be respected, have meaningful work and adequate income, where all could genuinely participate? These are the questions addressed in this chapter.

Ireland is at a crossroads. It has the resources and capacity to choose a wide range of different options. Decisions made now will have major effects on the generations of the future. Consequently it is essential that the questions raised here be addressed by policy makers. The authors offer their views on these issues as a contribution to the public debate which is so badly needed at the present time.

Paradigms

The source of many of the problems people are facing today lies in the development paradigm being followed and in its view of progress. Capra generalised Kuhn's definition of a scientific paradigm to that of a social paradigm, which he defined as

'a constellation of concepts, values, perceptions, and practices shared by a community, which forms a particular vision of reality that is the basis of the way the community organises itself.' (Capra 1996)

A paradigm contains core beliefs and assumptions. It is a model or framework from which analyses, decisions and actions flow. 'The world is flat' is a good example of a paradigm. If one accepts this, then one holds certain values, takes certain actions and expects certain results. On the other hand if one's paradigm is that 'the world is round' then one holds different values, takes different actions and seeks very different results. Moving from a framework which sees the world as flat to one that sees the world as round is a paradigm shift.

Paradigms are extremely powerful as they determine one's 'world view'. They underpin decisions concerning what constitutes a problem,

how it should be approached, what action should be taken and what the desired outcome might be (Healy and Reynolds, 1993, 2006).

History shows that if a paradigm is producing negative results, however, it is not always changed immediately. Thomas Kuhn (Kuhn, 1970) analysed how paradigm change was effected in the natural sciences. Changes did not occur through a process of cumulative research which brought people ever closer to a final solution to the problems encountered. “Rather it happened through a ‘revolution’ in which a small group of scientists recognise that the existing frame of reference is inadequate for the resolution of newly emerging problems” (McCabe 1996). They seek out a new paradigm. Change, however, is resisted and the transition is never smooth (Dunne, 1991). As the existing paradigm becomes more recognisably inadequate the new one attracts more and more support until the old one is finally abandoned. Tension and conflict are usually part of the transition process as are rearguard actions in defence of the outdated paradigm. Total acceptance of the new paradigm can take a long time as was the case for example in the world of science in the shift from the Copernican paradigm to the Newtonian one and again in the later shift to the Einsteinian one.

The dominant paradigm underpinning public policy-making today is mechanistic. Capra describes it as follows:

The paradigm that is now receding has dominated our culture for several hundred years, during which it has shaped our modern Western society and has significantly influenced the rest of the world. This paradigm consists of a number of entrenched ideas and values, among them the view of the universe as a mechanical system composed of elementary building-blocks, the view of the human body as a machine, the view of life in society as a competitive struggle for existence, the belief in unlimited material progress to be achieved through economic and technological growth, and – last, not least- the belief that a society in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the

male is one that follows a basic law of nature. All of these assumptions have been fatefully challenged by recent events. And, indeed, a radical revision of them is now occurring (Capra, 1996).

This world view dates back to the 16th century when developments in astronomy and physics resulted in a paradigm shift. Galileo reflecting the focus of the time taught that science should be restricted to the essential priorities of material bodies. By 'essential' he meant priorities that could be measured like shapes, numbers, movements, etc. Colour, sound, taste and smell were excluded. In other words the human senses and emotions were not considered reliable means of 'measuring' the universe. Galileo's strategy of directing scientists' attention to the quantifiable properties of matter has been proved very successful. But it was a development in one direction only and has had its cost. As R. D. Laing has said:

Out go sight, sound, taste, touch and smell and along with them has since gone aesthetics and ethical sensibility, values, quality, form; all feelings, motives, intentions, soul, consciousness, spirit. Experience, as such, is cast out of the realm of scientific discourse, (Laing, 1982)

Isaac Newton formulated the fundamental laws of physical reality. This resulted in a shift from an organic view to a mechanistic view of the material universe (including people). Nature was seen as the perfect machine, composed of distinct parts and governed by exact laws. However there was no measurement to show that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Philosophers and sociologists followed in Newton's wake, drawing on his approach and sought to discover the basic axioms and principles of social reality. The machine was used as the basic model and was applied both to the state and to individuals. Mechanistic physics became the dominant paradigm of the modern world. It has had many positive effects and opened up great new possibilities ranging from the development of technology to the emergence of liberal democracy. But it also has had dramatic

limitations which were unseen by the thinkers and policy-makers who adopted it with enthusiasm.

These limitations are especially obvious to people encountering current global problems. The ecological crisis, the emphasis on hierarchy, addressing the issue of difference through conflict and confrontation, defining work in a very narrow way, these are simply a few, very varied, effects which flow from adoption of this mechanistic paradigm. One of its key outcomes however, is in its impact on the understanding of progress.

Progress

Economics accepted Newtonian physics as the dominant paradigm. Progress came to be seen principally in terms of economic growth. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) became the measurement used by policy-makers. Growth in GDP came to be seen as the key indicator of progress. Everything with a market price, which was paid for, was assumed to add to the national well-being. The family and the local community are accepted by most people as essential components of their well-being. These are omitted, however, from this indicator. The natural environment is also accepted as being crucial for human survival, yet its plundering and destruction are added to this measure of progress as a plus while costs, such as the consumption of finite resources, are not deducted. It is significant in this context to note that Ireland's current national agreement *Towards 2016* contains a commitment to study the possibility of developing 'satellite' national accounts which would incorporate some of these items.³ However, despite our best endeavours, progress has not been made to date on honouring this commitment.

The adoption of an economic indicator as the widely accepted measurement of progress also had another side-effect: economists became the ultimate authorities on most areas of public policy. We see

³ Department of the Taoiseach, (2006) p.33.

this clearly today in Ireland both in the context of Government decision-making and of media commentary. Over and over again the views of economists are accepted, often unquestioned, unless economists disagree among themselves. If there is no disagreement their views are given the status of absolute truth!

The end result of all of this is that growth in GDP, which is a measure and means of policy, became an end of policy in itself (Cobb, Halstead and Rowe 1995). Because GDP growth was seen as the key to progress other aspects of policy development were not considered or given any real priority. Alternative analyses or ideas were most often dismissed without any serious consideration. The policy-making process assumed that everything people needed or wanted would follow once economic growth was sustained. Once growth is maintained, according to this approach, jobs will emerge for everyone seeking them. These in turn will produce adequate income which will see the end of poverty and the emergence of the good life for all.

There are some very serious problems with this approach, however, as Ireland's experience demonstrates. The basic economic injustice of this approach is that the costs of economic growth are generally borne by those who are vulnerable, those least able to afford these costs. The major benefits of economic growth go, for the most part, to those who are already better off. All one has to do to prove this case is to compare the increases in the incomes of people at or below the average industrial wage with the rise in the incomes and wealth of the richest twenty per cent of the population.

At the global level, economic growth has been dramatic yet the number of people living in poverty has never been higher. The redefinition of work as paid employment which has accompanied this approach has resulted in ever-larger numbers of people being excluded from meaningful work. Many types of work that are not paid employment have been devalued because they are not remunerated. As a result unpaid work in the home, in the community, in the wider society, that is essential for society's survival is not valued by a society and a

generation that measures the value of everything in terms of its cash value. Nor do the vast majority of people benefit from the growth which is produced. In fact, poverty, unemployment, exclusion, poor healthcare and inadequate accommodation are the lot of an ever larger number of people on this planet.

In Ireland, economic growth has also been dramatic over the past decade and a half. Yet serious problems remain on core issues already identified e.g. income, work, participation and sustainability. Choices made on these issues will determine the shape of the future. Will we have a society that sees an improvement in people's sense of wellbeing? Will Ireland be a fairer society? Much improved incomes have not delivered on these core objectives for many people. If there is to be genuine progress then sustainable pathways are required to secure fairness and wellbeing for all in a land that now has more than sufficient resources to secure both. (Healy and Reynolds, 2005, 2006).

While economic development is important there is more to progress. Economic development is a means to an end, not an end in itself. The New Economics Foundation argues that

“For people to lead truly flourishing lives they need to feel they are personally satisfied and developing, as well as functioning positively in regard to society. Unfortunately too many people are instead languishing - living unhappy, unfulfilled lives as well as lacking social and community engagement. Estimates from the US suggest that less than 20 per cent of the population are flourishing and over 25 per cent are languishing, with the rest being somewhere in between.” (NEF, 2004:5)

We need indicators of progress that measure fairness and wellbeing as well as economic development.

Alternatives Needed

The paradigm underpinning decision-making in the social policy area is not adequate to the present situation; likewise with the generally accepted measurements of progress. What could serve as a fundamental reference point when evaluating the present situation and making decisions concerning future directions? What should guide the choice of real progress indicators? Alternatives are required. Finding agreement on what these should be, however, is not easily achieved. What should provide the anchor for an alternative paradigm or framework or model? Capra suggests an approach:

The new paradigm may be called a holistic worldview, seeing the world as an integral whole rather than a dissociated collection of parts. It may also be called an ecological view, if the term 'ecological' is used in a much broader and deeper sense than usual. Deep ecological awareness recognises the fundamental interdependence of all phenomena and the fact that, as individuals and societies, we are all embedded in (and ultimately dependent on) the cyclical process of nature. (Capra, 1996)

The present authors have long argued that underlying the guiding paradigm or the choice of measurements of progress lie sets of values. The shift of paradigms requires not only a change in our way of thinking but also of our values. The existence of such values is sometimes accepted, more often denied. Daly and Cobb summarise this situation and its implications succinctly:

One of the central limitations of the academic disciplines in contributing to wisdom is their professed aim of value neutrality. That there is here a large element of self-deception has been pointed out frequently and convincingly. The ideal of value neutrality is itself a value that is generally highly favourable to the status quo. Which economic questions are taken up and in what terms, even within the range allowed by the disciplines, often depends on the interests of the economists or even of someone who

has commissioned the study. More objectivity is in fact obtained by bringing values out into the open and discussing them than by denying their formative presence in the disciplines ... as long as the disciplines discourage any interest in values on the part of their practitioners, they inevitably discourage the ordering of study to the solution of human problems. (Daly and Cobb, 1990, p.131)

A similar position is enunciated by Fritjof Capra:

...there can be no such thing as a 'value-free' social science Any 'value-free' analysis of social phenomena is based on the tacit assumption of the existing value system that is implicit in the selection and interpretation of data.... Economics is defined as the discipline dealing with the production, distribution and consumption of wealth. It attempts to determine what is valuable at a given time by studying the relative exchange values of goods and services. Economics is therefore the most clearly value-dependent and normative among the social sciences. (Capra, 1982)

Uncovering the underpinning values and having them discussed, scrutinised and evaluated is crucial if there is to be any agreement or consensus on what constitutes real progress (Wogaman, 1986). This is an issue that arises in many spheres and is the often unarticulated question at the root of people's concerns. In policy making today there is huge pressure to accept only one way of thinking and to reject all alternatives as non-viable (i.e. 'the end of history' view). Attempts to challenge this view meet with one of Hirschman's three classic reactions: alternatives are dismissed as perverse, futile or putting one's own best interests in jeopardy (Hirschman, 1991)

Much work has been done on the development of a world ethic. We do not intend to review this work here⁴. However it is important that we draw attention to what we believe the key underpinning values of a viable alternative system should be.

⁴ cf. the authors' work especially in Healy and Reynolds 2006, pp. 9ff.

Relationships

What should be the fundamental paradigm to replace the present mechanistic one? A new world view is required which recognises that not only living systems but also inanimate matter are interconnected. This understanding of inter-linkage calls us to form relationships. We argue that a new paradigm should be based on developing right relationships. Developments in ‘new physics’ give huge support and credibility to the centrality of relationships in the universe.

Approaches to understanding human existence in the social and psychological sciences see it as made up of a series of relationships. These relationships can be divided into four categories which correspond to different levels of human existence.

- relationship with self and God (*interior life*). By getting in touch with self and the Transcendent we grow and become more human;
- relationship with people (*social life*). Our humanity is developed and enriched through our relationships with people;
- relationship with institutions (*public life*). If institutional structures and relationships are right human development is facilitated by social institutions and structures.
- relationship with the environment (*cosmic life*). Each of us is related to all the generations that have gone before us and to the generations that will follow us. Also we have a relationship with all other people living at this time and with the environment. Life itself depends on basic elements like air, water and minerals to survive. We must recognise the intrinsic value of all living beings and see humans as one particular strand in the web of life.

We grow as persons through these four sets of relationships. A just society is one that is structured in such a way as to promote these right relationships so that human rights are respected, human dignity is protected, human development is facilitated and the environment is respected and protected.

Recognition and promotion of human rights are central to building a just society understood in terms of right relationships. This is highlighted by Mary Robinson, the former President of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, when she argues that “respecting human rights is the surest basis on which to build a culture of peace“ (Boyle, 2006). She goes on to argue that with globalisation has come the growing sense that we are all responsible in some way for helping promote and protect the rights of our neighbours, whether they live on the next street or the next continent.

We cannot claim that right relationships are the norm in a world where immense wealth and power exist alongside widespread poverty and severe deprivation. Nation states have been failing to provide an enabling environment for addressing these contrasts and securing fairness and well-being for all. Sometimes the language of human rights is weakened by overuse or misuse. Side by side with human rights there is also a need to recognise the importance of sustainability. There is a growing awareness that sustainability must be a constant factor in all development, whether social, economic or environmental. This fact was reiterated by Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, at the opening of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa (September 2002). There he stated that the aim of the conference was

to bring home the uncomfortable truth that the model of development that has prevailed for so long has been fruitful for the few, but flawed for the many.

And he added that

the world today, facing the twin challenges of poverty and pollution, needs to usher in a season of transformation and stewardship – a season in which we make a long overdue investment in a secure future.

Sustainable development has been defined in many different ways. Perhaps the best-known definition is that contained in *Our Common Future* (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987:43):

...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

As we stated at the beginning of this section we argue that the new paradigm should be right relationships and these relationships should include the personal, (spiritual and social) institutional/public and cosmic areas. The work of building a just society should focus on the sustainability of these right relationships. In this context sustainability includes environmental, economic and social sustainability.

In practice this understanding requires that a number of core values be recognised and promoted effectively. Among these are the following:

- Dignity of the human person⁵. As we commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights it is appropriate to recall Article One which states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” This core value is also at the core of the Catholic Social Thought tradition. The dignity of each and every person must be recognised, acknowledged and promoted effectively.
- Participation. A person is social in nature and can only develop through interaction with other people. Consequently, participation in social processes is a fundamental human right and is also a part of one’s social obligations to the community.

⁵ For a fuller treatment of these core values cf. Charles M. A. Clark, (2008).

This needs to be acknowledged particularly in the economic arena. Economic activity is a means to an end, not an end in itself. It is not sufficient to focus economic activity on producers and/or consumers only. Its purpose should always be the development of people.

- The Common Good. The concept of the ‘common good’ originated over two thousand years ago in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. More recently, the philosopher John Rawls defined the common good as “certain general conditions that are...equally to everyone’s advantage”. We understand the common good as “the sum of those conditions of social life which allows social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 26). The common good, then, consists primarily of having the social systems, institutions, and environments on which we all depend, work in a manner that benefits all people.
- Universal Destination of Goods. The goods of the planet are destined not just for a small elite who benefit from them today; they are also meant for all others alive today and for coming generations yet to be born. The present generation must recognise it has a responsibility to ensure that it does not damage but rather enhances the goods of the planet that it hands on - be they economic, cultural, social or environmental.
- Preferential Option for the Poor. The universal destination of goods requires that those who are vulnerable, poor, marginalised should be given special protection and priority. If people’s living conditions or life options prevent them from living in right relationships then this situation must be addressed effectively.
- Subsidiarity. This value requires that larger entities should not assume the roles and functions of smaller entities unless it is absolutely necessary. The unwarranted assumption of roles and

functions by larger authorities often lessens social participation and should only be undertaken to increase participation.

- **Solidarity.** For right relationships to prevail it is essential that people recognise and respect the need for their actions to be grounded in a respect for those whom they meet and with whom they interact. Solidarity requires us to reach beyond our face to face community and take responsibility for the impact of our actions and lifestyle on people and communities we will never see. It is essential in this context to recognise that economic development and social development are complementary, they need each other and neither should be allowed to be dominant over the other.

These seven core values lie at the heart of developing a new paradigm that will overcome the problems being encountered by the dominant paradigm today.

Ten Key Choices

All of which brings us to the question: What choices should be taken now to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past and to build a society characterised by right relationships at all levels and in all contexts. We suggest the following ten choices would go a long way towards building the future desired by most people today.

1. Move towards introducing a Basic Income system

The present income tax and social welfare system was developed for a world that no longer exists. Neither is efficient nor effective in the emerging reality of the twenty first century. CORI Justice has argued for a long time that the present tax and social welfare systems should be integrated and reformed to make them more appropriate to the changing world of the twenty-first century. We suggest that the present system be replaced by a Basic Income system. A Basic Income is an income that is unconditionally granted to every person on an individual

basis, without any means test or work requirement. In a basic-income system every person receives a weekly tax-free payment from the Exchequer, and all other personal income is taxed, usually at a single rate. For a person who is unemployed, the basic-income payment would replace income from social welfare.

For a person who is employed the basic-income payment would replace tax credits in the income-tax system. Basic income is a form of minimum income guarantee that avoids many of the negative side effects inherent in social welfare payments. A basic income differs from other forms of income support in that

- it is paid to individuals rather than households
- it is paid irrespective of any income from other sources
- it is paid without conditions. It does not require the performance of any work or the willingness to accept a job if offered one
- it is always tax free.

As CORI Justice has designed it, a basic income system would replace social welfare. It would guarantee an income above the poverty line for everyone. It would not be means tested. There would be no “signing on” and no restrictions or conditions. In practice a basic income recognises the right of every person to a share of the resources of society. The Basic Income system ensures that looking for a paid job and earning an income, or increasing one’s income while in employment, is always worth pursuing, because for every euro earned the person will retain a large part. It thus removes the many poverty traps and unemployment traps that may be in the present system. Furthermore, women and men get equal payments in a basic income system. Consequently the basic income system promotes gender equality because it treats every person equally. It is a system that is altogether more guaranteed, rewarding, simple and transparent than the present tax and welfare systems. It is far more employment friendly than the present system.

A new system is required for the twenty-first century. Basic income is such a system.

There are many reasons favouring the introduction of a basic income system. Here are ten such reasons:

- It is work and employment friendly.
- It eliminates poverty traps and unemployment traps.
- It promotes equity and ensures that everyone receives at least the poverty level of income.
- It spreads the burden of taxation more equitably.
- It treats men and women equally.
- It is simple and transparent.
- It is efficient in labour-market terms.
- It rewards types of work in the social economy that the market economy often ignores, e.g. home duties, caring, etc.
- It facilitates further education and training in the labour force.
- It faces up to the changes in the global economy.

2. Recognise all work, not just paid employment

A major question raised by the current labour-market situation concerns assumptions underpinning culture and policy making in this area. One such assumption concerns the priority given to paid employment over other forms of work. Most people recognise that a person can work very hard even though they do not have a conventional job. Much of the work carried out in the community and in the voluntary sector fits under this heading. So too does much of the work done in the home. CORI Justice's support for the introduction of a basic income system comes, in part, from a belief that all work should be recognised and supported.

The need to recognise voluntary work has been acknowledged in the Government White Paper, *Supporting Voluntary Activity* (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2000) and by former Taoiseach Mr Bertie Ahern TD, who stated that “voluntary activity forms the very core of all vibrant and inclusive societies”. The current national social partnership agreement *Towards 2016* also contains commitments in this area. In that agreement the Government undertakes to:

. . . continue to develop policies on volunteering arising from the package of measures initiated in February 2005. A key principle underlying the Government's approach is that volunteering finds meaning and expression at a local level and that supports and funding should seek, as far as possible, to recognise this reality. The Government remains committed to further developing policy to support volunteering, drawing on the experience in delivering these measures and informed by the recommendations of the Task Force on Active Citizenship.

An insight into this issue was provided by a report presented to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. It established that the cost to the state of replacing the 475,000 volunteers working for charitable organisations would be a minimum of €205 million and could cost up to €485 million per year.

CORI Justice believes that government should more formally recognise and acknowledge all forms of work. We believe that everybody has a right to work, i.e. to contribute to his or her own development and that of the community and the wider society. However, we believe that policy making in this area should not be exclusively focused on job creation. Policy should recognise that work and a job are not always the same thing. A basic income system would create a platform for meaningful work. It would benefit paid employment as well as other forms of work.

3. Place a strong focus on strengthening participation by all

The need to strengthen participation by all has two aspects. One concerns participation in development at an economic and/or social level. This has been addressed to some extent under the preceding item i.e. the need to value all work. The second aspect concerns participation at a political level.

Democracy means 'rule by the people'. This implies that people participate in shaping the decisions that affect them most closely. What

we have, in practice, is a highly centralised government in which we are 'represented' by professional politicians. The more powerful a political party becomes, the more distant it seems to become from the electorate. Party policies on a range of major issues are often difficult to discern. Backbenchers have little control over, or influence on, government ministers, opposition spokespersons or shadow cabinets. Even within the cabinet some ministers seem to be able to ignore their cabinet colleagues.

The democratic process has certainly benefited from the participation of various sectors in other arenas such as social partnership. It would also benefit from the development of a new social contract against exclusion and/or a new forum for dialogue on civil society issues.⁶

The decline in participation is exacerbated by the primacy given to the market by so many analysts, commentators, policy-makers and politicians. Many people feel that their views or comments are ignored or patronised, while the views of those who see the market as solving most if not all of society's problems are treated with the greatest respect.

Markets have a major role to play. But it needs to be acknowledged that markets produce very mixed results when left to their own devices. In terms of many policy goals, they are extremely limited. Consequently other mechanisms are required to ensure that some re-balancing, at least, is achieved so as to improve participation by all in twenty-first century society.

4. Put sustainability (economic, environmental and social) at the core of all policy-making

As we have stated already the search for a humane, sustainable model of development has gained momentum in recent times. After years of people believing that markets and market forces would produce a better life for everyone, major problems and unintended side effects have raised

⁶ For a further discussion of these issues see Healy and Reynolds (2003: 191-197).

questions and doubts. There is a growing awareness that sustainability must be a constant factor in all development, whether social, economic or environmental.

This fact was reiterated by Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, at the opening of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa (September 2002). There he stated that the aim of the conference was to bring home the uncomfortable truth that the model of development that has prevailed for so long has been fruitful for the few, but flawed for the many. And he further added that the world today, facing the twin challenges of poverty and pollution, needs to usher in a season of transformation and stewardship – a season in which we make a long overdue investment in a secure future.

Sustainable development has been defined in many different ways. Perhaps the best-known definition is that contained in *Our Common Future* (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987:43): development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

It is crucial that the issues of environmental, economic and social sustainability be firmly at the core of the decision making process.

5. Measure what matters

A central initiative in putting sustainability at the core of development would be the development of “satellite” or “shadow” national accounts. Our present national accounts miss fundamentals such as environmental sustainability. Their emphasis is on GNP/GDP as scorecards of wealth and progress. These measures, which came into widespread use during World War II, more or less ignore the environment, and completely ignore unpaid work. Only money transactions are tracked. Ironically, while environmental depletion is ignored, the environmental costs of dealing with the effects of economic growth, such as cleaning up pollution or coping with the

felling of rain forests, are added to, rather than subtracted from, GNP/GDP. New scorecards are needed.

A further argument in favour of such a development is the disconnection that is emerging between economic growth and people's sense of happiness. For long it was assumed that the former would lead automatically to the latter. This is now seen not to be the case.

Some governments have picked up on these issues, especially in the environmental area. They have begun to develop "satellite" or "shadow" national accounts, which include items not traditionally measured, such as those already mentioned.

Towards 2016 commits the Irish government to examine the application of satellite accounts in the area of environmental sustainability. This is a welcome development. It was scheduled to occur during 2007. However, to date this process has not happened. We strongly urge government to deliver on this commitment without delay.

6. Reclaim our time

A huge problem has emerged as Ireland's prosperity has grown. People are finding they spend a greater part of their time serving their paid employment whether doing the job itself or commuting to and from their place of employment for great lengths of time. There has been a deterioration in people's work-life balance. While the term work-life balance may itself be problematic because of its one-dimensional understanding of work we use it here to denote the greater time demands made by paid employment and the consequent lack of time people have to devote to themselves, their family or their community. Increasing prosperity has not led to better relationships or more vibrant communities.

Research shows that people consistently believe that 20 per cent more income would make them happier. But when their life satisfaction is measured several years later it is clear that while their incomes have

risen they are no happier⁷. In effect people spend more time in their paid job so as to bring an increase in income but this increase does not make them any happier. Economists would argue that people make choices based on what will make them happier. But the evidence suggests this is not the case. People continue to make systemic mistakes. One way of addressing this issue might be to end individual opt-outs to the EU Working Time Directive and thus institute a maximum 48-hour working week. In fact if society were to act on the basis of current research there would be a good case to be made for reducing the maximum working week by an hour a year until we reached a 35-hour maximum working week.

Research shows that this approach would not lead to an increase in unemployment⁸. However, such an approach would need to be accompanied by appropriate pension reforms - an issue addressed very well in the final chapter of this book. Finally, this approach would also need to be accompanied by measures to ensure that poor people did not lose out. Currently they work long hours to earn the money simply to survive. But making tax credits refundable or moving towards a basic income system would redress the problems that would otherwise emerge for this group of people.

7. Promote complete health

The whole area of healthcare is hugely problematic. A few statistics will serve to illustrate why this is so:

- Between 1989 and 1998 the death rates for all causes of death were over three times higher in the lowest occupational class than in the highest
- The death rates for all cancers among the lowest occupational class is over twice as high as for the highest class, it is nearly three times higher for strokes, four times higher for lung cancer, six times for accidents

⁷ For further development of this point see R. A. Easterlin, 2003.

⁸ For further elaboration of this issue see A Turner (2001)

- Perinatal mortality is three times higher in poorer families than in richer families
- The incidence of chronic physical illness has been found to be two and a half times higher for poor people than for the wealthy
- The rate of hospitalisation for mental illness is more than 6 times higher for people in the lower socio-economic groups as compared with those in the higher groups
- The incidence of male suicide is far higher in the lower socio-economic groups as compared with the higher groups
- The 1998 and 2002 National Health and Lifestyle Surveys (SLAN) found that poorer people are more likely to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol excessively, take less exercise, and eat less fruit and vegetables than richer people. Poorer people's lifestyle and behavioural choices are directly limited by their economic and social circumstances

A major re-structuring and huge increases in public expenditure are not seen to have delivered a better system or improved people's overall health or well-being.

The health system should take a 'whole of health' approach and consider its purpose to be the promotion of complete health, defined by the World Health Organisation as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."⁹ A substantial proportion of the expenditure on health goes on medical provision. Policy-makers recognise there is a need to move from a medical model to become more prevention oriented. There is still a long way to go. One step in the right direction would be to increase the proportion of the annual health budget going on prevention, community and continuing care (PCCC) and ring-fencing this allocation to ensure it cannot be re-allocated.

⁹ Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organisation as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19-22 June, 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 states and entered into force on 7 April, 1948. This definition has not been amended since 1948.

8. Broaden the focus of education to ensure it produces fully rounded human beings

Education can be an agent for social transformation. Education can be a powerful force in counteracting inequality and poverty. However, we need to acknowledge that, in many ways, the present education system has quite the opposite effect. Recent studies in Ireland confirm the persistence of social class inequalities which are seemingly ingrained in the system. Even in the context of increased participation and economic boom, the education system continues to mediate the vicious cycle of disadvantage and social exclusion between generations.

Early school leaving is a particularly serious manifestation of wider inequality in education, which is embedded in and caused by structures in the system itself. We believe that the core objective of education policy should be: to provide relevant education for all people throughout their lives, so that they can participate fully and meaningfully in developing themselves, their community and the wider society. Education should help to create capable and emotionally well-rounded people who are happy and motivated. To this end there needs to be much greater investment in early childhood education.

As in health, education should have a holistic approach. This would include issues beyond the curriculum and should include school culture and environment, participation and governance. There is evidence to show that putting too great an emphasis on testing and results can destroy learning, innovation and original thinking¹⁰.

The curriculum should also include the opportunity to cultivate the variety of ‘intelligences’ people have including musical, spatial, physical, interpersonal and intrapersonal.¹¹ This requires that the curriculum include sufficient time for areas such as sport, arts and creativity.

¹⁰ Cf. Deci, E and Ryan, R. (2002).

¹¹ For further development of this issue see H. Gardner (1993).

In all of this basic literacy is a fundamental requirement. The Department of Education's policy for tackling literacy problems among adults in Ireland is simply unacceptable. As part of the 2007 Government's National Action Plan for Social Inclusion a target for adult literacy policy was set stating that "the proportion of the population aged 16-64 with restricted literacy will be reduced to between 10%-15% by 2016, from the level of 25% found in 1997" where "restricted literacy" is defined as level one on the International Adult Literacy Scale. People at this level of literacy are considered to possess "very poor skills, where the individual may, for example, be unable to determine the correct amount of medicine to give a child from information printed on the package" (OECD). In numerical terms this implies that the aim of government policy is to have "only" 317,000 adults with serious literacy difficulties in Ireland by 2016.

The question needs to be asked, how can policy aim to be so unambitious? How will those with serious literacy problems function effectively in the economy and society that is emerging in Ireland? How can they get meaningful jobs? The lack of realistic policies to address literacy problems is in stark contrast to the government's commitment to increase dramatically the exchequer's contribution to fourth level education between now and 2016. To have effective fourth level education we need effective pre-school and first level systems.

9. Ensure mass media promotes genuine human development and responsible advertising.

Mass media, both electronic and written, are major transmitters of meaning in society. They communicate the core values, attitudes and assumptions that underpin society, its view of itself at present and the desired vision it has of itself in the future. The dominant values being transmitted by mass media at present assume that material goods will lead to well-being. The research evidence, however, shows that people who place all their confidence in material goods are less happy¹².

¹² cf. Kasser, T. ((2002).

Material consumption is also a primary driver of many environmental problems currently being recognised and experienced.

A related area, however, where policy action is possible is advertising. Much advertising is based on the assumption that material goods or services will deliver a variety of non-material benefits as well as happiness. This assumption is false. Yet it flows from the fact that one of the most significant factors in the formation of people's identity today is directed towards economic growth and profit; human beings tend to be viewed, and to view themselves, first and foremost as consumers, whose very existence is defined by what they buy and own.¹³ Advertising raises people's expectations of what is normal and of what is attainable by all. Much advertising lacks authenticity. Products should not be advertised pretending they can deliver outcomes that are beyond their capacity.

Much advertising is subtly targeted at children and young people. They do not have the critical capacity to discern false messages and stop these from influencing their decisions and their view of the world and of what is normal. Consequently, it would be good to follow the Swedish example and ban TV advertising aimed at under-12s and prohibit direct marketing aimed at children under the age of 16. Curbing commercial advertising directly aimed at young people would be a worthwhile initiative.

Media presentation of the possession of ever increasing material possessions as the key to happiness is connected to the upsurge in many people's new, favourite pastime i.e. shopping. This has replaced a range of more challenging activities that were seen as more important some decades ago. Another media-related change of behaviour in recent decades has been the increase in the amount of time many people spend passively watching television. Research shows that watching television passively produces a state similar to that of a mild form of depression. A flourishing society would see its citizens spending less time shopping

¹³ For a development of this point cf. Egan (2005)

and watching television and more time engaged in active pastimes such as sports, arts and a wide range of other hobbies. But to move in this direction the spaces and places for such active pastimes need to be available locally, free of charge or at an affordable price.

10. Strengthen social capital, civil society, social well-being and active citizenship.

Many of the initiatives already proposed have implications for civil society, social well-being and active citizenship. Research produced in recent years shows the profound importance of communities and relationships in determining people's quality of life. Robert Putnam describes social capital as "features of social organisation, such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit". He argues that the major components of social capital are trust, norms, reciprocity and networks and connections. Social capital has been shown to have positive economic effects while also impacting on people's health and general well-being. It has also been shown that community engagement not only improves the well-being of those who are engaging in such activity but also improves the well-being of others.

Ensuring the wellbeing of all is especially challenging for Ireland at this moment as the upsurge in immigration emphasises the importance of integration of the various communities in Irish society. The wellbeing of all requires a focus on the wellbeing of immigrant communities. In his perceptive analysis Tom Healy reminds us that David Myers defines well-being, at its simplest, as: 'the pervasive sense that life has been and is good. It is an ongoing perception that this time in one's life, or even life as a whole, is fulfilling, meaningful, and pleasant.' However, Tom Healy goes on to point out that well-being goes well beyond mental states of pleasure, happiness or satisfaction for individuals, important as that is. Social well-being concerns the match between our goals and the kind of life we experience. In other words it concerns what we value and seek and how we evaluate our lives in this light¹⁴. Drawing on reflections from Aristotle to latter-day

philosophers like Amartya Sen we can say that well-being involves coherence between the moral ends and chosen values of an individual or society, and the objective circumstances of life as perceived by them.

If such a situation is to emerge then it is important to practice what Tom Healy refers to as the four Rs. These are:

- Recognition
- Respect
- Redistribution
- Representation

Recognising, naming and valuing difference is a liberating experience. Too often and especially in the past particular groups or individuals in communities were not recognised. If human need and potential are recognised they must also be respected. This seems basic. But, how often is real respect lacking in the way people deal with each other? Respect for people should be at the heart of every public policy and community initiative. Redistribution is also required. But, redistribution is about more than redistributing income or tangible wealth. It is also about redistributing power – real power – which is invisible, pervasive and intangible at many levels of Irish society and in many sectors of business, legal, church and public administration life. As we have stated already it requires the effective representation and where possible the active participation of people in decision-making that affects them. (Tom Healy, 2005) Strengthening civil society and active citizenship will, in turn, lead to greater well-being across society.

Conclusion

At this moment Ireland is faced with decisions that will shape its future. From the individual to the government there are crucial choices to be made. The nature and extent of the impact of these choices and

¹⁴ For further elaboration on this see Tom Healy (2005)

decisions in 10, 20 or 50 years is unsure. But, that they have an impact is sure. Choices made today will shape the future. In this paper we have challenged the dominant paradigm underpinning Ireland's development and self-understanding. We have questioned the way progress is understood and measured. We have, in turn, proposed an alternative paradigm based on right relationships.

The prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament stated that "without a vision the people perish" and that remains a valid insight. We believe that the 'vision' guiding people should be of a world built on right relationships at all levels of existence. To move towards building a society characterised by right relationships we proposed ten key initiatives that should be taken, ten key choices that should be made at the crossroads at which Ireland now stands.

Finally, we believe a public debate is urgently needed around the issues of progress, paradigms and policy, around the future that is to be built and the choices that need to be made now if the world is to move towards that future. We offer this chapter as a contribution to that debate.

References

- Agenda 21 (1993), *The Earth Summit's Agenda for Change*, Michael Kearing, Centre for Our Common Future.
- Boyle, K. (ed) (2006) *A Voice for Human Rights: Mary Robinson*, Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press.
- Capra, F. (1982), *The Turning Point*, London: Fontana Books.
- Capra, F. (1996), *The Web of Life*, HarperCollins
- Charles M. A. Clark, (2008). *The Ethics and Economics of Basic Income: a Catholic Social Thought Perspective*, presentation to EEA/USBIG conference, Boston.
- Cobb, C. Holstead, T. and Rowe, J. (1995), "If the GDP Is Up Why Is America Down?", *The Atlantic Monthly*, October 1995.
- Curran, E. (1998), *Absolute Moral Norms in Christian Ethics*, Bernard Hoose, (Ed)

- Daly, H. E. and Cobb J.B. (1990), *For the Common Good*, London: The Merlin Press.
- Deci, E and Ryan, R. (2002), 'The Paradox of Achievement: The Harder You Push, the Worse it Gets' in Aronson, J (ed.) *Improving Academic Achievement: Contributions of Social Psychology*, New York: Academic Press.
- Department of the Taoiseach, (2006), *Towards 2016*, Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs (2000), *Supporting Voluntary Activity*, Dublin, Stationery Office.
- Doyal, L. and Gough I. (1991), *A Theory of Human Need*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Dunne, J. (1991), *The Catholic School and Civil Society: Exploring the Tensions in The Catholic School in Contemporary Society*, CMRS Education Commission.
- Erikson, R. (1993), "Descriptions of Inequality: The Swedish Approach to Welfare Research" in Nussbaum, M. and Sen, A. (eds), *The Quality of Life*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Easterlin, R. A. (2003), 'Explaining Happiness', *Proceedings of National Academy of Science* vol. 100, no. 19; pp 11,176-11,183, National Academy of Science: Washington DC.
- Egan, J. (2005), 'Not Logos but Jesus Christ, the Crucified Logos: Between Indignity and Dignity in the Age of Globalisation', in Healy, S., B. Reynolds and T. Jordan, *Human Dignity and Spirituality in a Globalised World*, Dublin: CORI Justice Commission in association with Dominican Publications.
- Fraser, N. and Gordon, L. (1994), "*Civil Citizenship against Social Citizenship*" in van Steenberg, H. (Ed.), *The Condition of Citizenship*, London: Sage.
- Gardiner, H. (1993), *Frames of Mind: the Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Basic Books.
- Ginsburg, N. (1994), "Agendas and Prognosis for Social Policy" in Page, R. and Baldock, J. (eds), *Social Policy Review 6*, Canterbury: Social Policy Association.
- Gould, C. (1988), *Rethinking Democracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Healy, S. and Reynolds, B. (2005), *Securing Fairness and Wellbeing in a Land of Plenty*, Dublin: CORI Justice Commission.
- Healy, S. and B. Reynolds (2003), "Ireland and the Future of Europe – a social perspective" in Reynolds B. and S. Healy (eds.) *Ireland and the Future of Europe: leading the way towards inclusion?* Dublin, CORI.
- Healy, S. and Reynolds, B. (1996), "Progress, Values and Public Policy" in Reynolds, B. and Healy, S. (eds.), *Progress, Values and Public Policy*, Dublin, CORI, pp. 11-59.
- Healy, S. and Reynolds, B. (1993), "Work, Jobs and Income: Towards a new Paradigm" in Reynolds, B. and Healy S. (eds.), *New Frontiers for Full Citizenship*, Dublin: CMRS.
- Healy T. (2005), 'Social Capital and Well-Being in Ireland' in Reynolds, B. and Healy, S. (eds), *Securing Fairness and Wellbeing in a Land of Plenty*, Dublin: CORI Justice Commission, pp. 50-65.
- Heater, D. (1990), *Citizenship*, London: Longman
- Held, D. (1987), *Models of Democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Held, D. (1989), *Political Theory and the Modern State*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Interaction Council. 1996 *In Search of Global Ethical Standards*, Vancouver, Canada No. 2.
- Jordan, B. (1989), *The Common Good: Citizenship, Morality and Self-Interest*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Kasser, T. ((2002), *The High Price of Materialism*, New York: MIT Press.
- Kelly, A. (1989), *A Cultural Policy for Ireland*, Administration, Vol. 32, No. 3, 1989.
- Kuhn, T. (1970), *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Kuper, A. (ed) (2005), *Global Responsibilities; Who Must Deliver on Human Rights?* NY: Routledge.
- Laing, R. D. (1982) *The Voice of Experience*, Pantheon, New York.
- Lister, R. (1998), *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives*, London: Macmillan.
- McCabe, M. (1997), "Clashing Paradigms: Leadership in the Church Today", *SMA Bulletin*, Christmas 1997, pp. 1-12.

- Marks, N., H. Shay and A. Westall (2004), *The Power and Potential of Wellbeing Indicators*, London: NEF.
- Marshall, T.H. (1950), *Citizenship and Social Class*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mead, L. (1986), *Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship*, New York: The Full Press.
- Mieth, d. and Vidal M. (1997), *Outside the Market No Solution?* London: SCM Press.
- National Economic and Social Forum (1996), *Equality Proofing Issues*, Dublin: NESF
- National Economic and Social Forum (1997), *A Framework for Partnership - Enriching Strategic Consensus through Participation*, Dublin: NESF.
- New Economics Foundation (2004), *A Well-being Manifesto for a Flourishing Society*, London: NEF.
- Novak, M., J. Cogan, B. Bernstein et al. (1987), *A Community of Self-reliance: The New Consensus on Family and Welfare*, Milwaukee: American Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Oldfield, A. (1990), *Citizenship and Community, Civic Republicanism and the Modern World*, London: Routledge.
- Oliver, D. and D. Heater (1994), *The Foundations of Citizenship*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Putnam, R. (2001) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, UK: Simon & Schuster Ltd.
- Plant, R. (1988), *Citizenship, Rights and Socialism*, London: Fabian Society.
- Reynolds, B. and S. Healy (eds.) (1993), *New Frontiers for Full Citizenship*, Dublin: CMRS.
- Scott, S., Nolan, B. and Fahey, T. (1996), *Formulating Environmental and Social Indicators for Sustainable Development*, Dublin: ESRI.
- Turner, A. (2001), *Just Capital*, London, Pan Books.
- Turner, B. (1990) "Outline of a Theory of Citizenship", *Sociology*, Vol. 24, No. 2.
- UNESCO (1982), World Conference on Cultural Policies, Mexico.
- Walzer, M. (1983), *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Walzer, M. (1994), *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad*, Terre Haut, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

Wogaman, J.P. (1986), *Economics and Ethics: A Christian Enquiry*, London: SCM Press.