

COOPERATIVES | CIRCULAR ECONOMIES | REGIONAL RESILIENCE
PLATFORM COOPERATIVES | COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING
JUST TRANSITION | LOCAL FOOD ECONOMIES | JUST RECOVERY

A QUESTION OF SCALE

“Imagining a co-operative, community-led approach to regional resilience”

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The process for this project was bringing together fresh ideas and new trends in shortening supply chains and strengthening local economies into a SCALE position paper. This was distributed to 50 researchers and cooperative advocates who were invited to a webinar organised to discuss these ideas held in September 2020. 10 illustrations as well as the findings from the webinar were then synthesised into this longer paper.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the many short, sharp lessons learned since covid-19 came into our lives is that people like to cooperate. When things get tough, our instinct is to share, to help each other out. This is good to know, because we are in the midst of multiple crises - climate, biodiversity, livelihoods - and we'll need to work together to make the best of these interrelated problems. In fact, taking an optimistic view of it, we can see this moment as one where existing good ideas and practices become necessary to not just survive, [but thrive](#).

As Dirk Holemans (GEF President) puts it: "Resilience is about more than simply being robust. It is about socio-ecological systems that are able to re-organise themselves without losing their function and structure."

Hello and welcome to SCALE – which stands for Supply Chains And Local Economies. In this project, we introduce the idea of imagining a co-operative, community-led approach to regional resilience. Already, you can see perhaps familiar terms – local, co-operative, community, resilience. Building upon these, we intend to introduce concepts such as a just transition, the social and solidarity economy, community wealth building and ecological economics, and see how we might apply them in the real world.

This compact project, involving Green European Foundation, Green Foundation Ireland and Cultivate, will use a variety of tools – this paper, a webinar, a more developed illustrated paper and a podcast – to help us all learn how, on a regional level, in the context of enormous social and ecological challenges, communities can come together to help themselves.

Here we:

- Explore some interrelated ideas on how we can work together in a resilient fashion, including the social and solidarity economy as well as co-ops older and newer; doughnut economics; the commons; community wealth building; and just transition.
- Identify 'Blockers and Enablers' to a co-operative, community-led approach to regional resilience
- Focus in on energy, livelihoods and the midlands of Ireland.
- Outline some initiatives and resources for further collaboration.



HOW WE CAN WORK TOGETHER

SCALE is, as it should be, a collaborative project. We've brought a number of people together to build this paper. First we developed an initial scoping paper, then we held a webinar to get dozens more inputs from a wide set of interested parties, next came a podcast to further explore the issues with contributors, then finally this paper you are reading.

Here we will first present some theoretical frameworks within which regional resilience can operate – the social and solidarity economy, doughnut economics and the need for a just transition can be seen as overarching. Community wealth building and the commons add important tools or approaches to our considerations, which are relevant in certain contexts. Each of these we see as having utility in understanding how we can work together and constructively, including at the regional level.

Then we will explore elements or approaches within these broad frameworks – co-ops, federated co-ops, and new co-operative or commons approaches such as land trusts, digital platform co-ops, technological sovereignty as a concept and practice, and multi-stakeholder co-ops. We explore just transition via the lens of community energy. We feature initiatives from the past and present to shed light on what could be possible in our future. We will also unpack a range of blockers and enablers to making the necessary change, take a regional focus, and add some useful resources.

THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

The approach to regional resilience SCALE promotes can be seen in the work people and organisations involved in the social and solidarity economy (SSE) do. Traditional co-ops, community wealth building, new co-ops and collaborations (platform co-ops, farm hacks, etc), new approaches to economics, can be seen as approaches that really try to integrate people into social and economic life, in a way that doesn't just externalise the damage – the pollution, the waste, the runaway climate change or biodiversity collapse.

"In the social and solidarity economy (SSE) ordinary people play an active role in shaping all of the dimensions of human life: economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental. SSE exists in all sectors of the economy production, finance, distribution, exchange, consumption and governance. It also aims to transform the social and economic system that includes public, private and third sectors. SSE is not only about the poor, but strives to overcome inequalities, which includes all classes of society. SSE has the ability to take the best practices that exist in our present system (such as efficiency, use of technology and knowledge) and transform them to serve the welfare of the community based on different values and goals." RИPESS (an intercontinental network for the promotion of social solidarity economy).



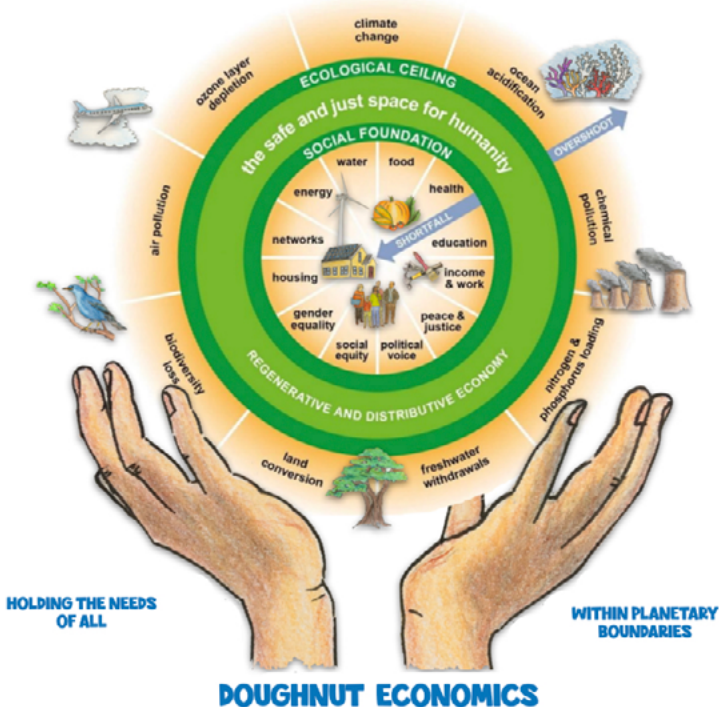
DOUGHNUT ECONOMICS (CAROL POWER)

There are a number of models that add necessary elements to economics – these include feminist and ecological economics. One that’s emerged quite strongly in recent years is doughnut economics. The concept of the doughnut recognises that there is both an ecological ceiling and a social foundation required for sustainability.

For too long, governments have prioritised economic growth, determined by indicators such as GDP, over ecological and social wellbeing. This approach persists despite unequivocal evidence and acknowledgement of the associated environmental degradation and the failure of growth to address social inequality. Developed

by economist Kate Raworth, doughnut economics provides an alternative to the conventional economic growth mind-set. The doughnut represents the safe space in which humanity can enjoy good quality of life within social and [planetary boundaries](#).

Derived from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by the UN in 2015, the social foundation comprises twelve elements, ranging from the very basics required to sustain life, such as food and water, to those needed for social justice, such as gender equality and political voice. Where there is a shortfall in these social elements, people fall out of the safe space.



Doughnut economics has been developed into a transformational framework that can be scaled down for application at different spatial scales, from countries down to neighbourhoods. The city of Amsterdam launched its Doughnut Project in March 2020 with the aim of making the city a thriving place where people can flourish while respecting the wellbeing of people and planet. The involvement of citizens is integral to the transformative process. The vision of what it means to thrive is created through [inclusive and meaningful engagement](#) with citizens' networks, start-ups, SMEs and civil society, along with government, business and knowledge institutions.

[Amsterdam's Doughnut Coalition](#) seeks to connect people and ideas, creating the conditions for the 'self-organisation and co-creation' that will underpin the transformation.

Working in a meaningful way towards the SDGs involves not just high-level national and international governance institutions but action at the grassroots within communities. Within communities all over Ireland, people are actively engaged in initiatives that seek to enhance local resilience and quality of life and protect the ecosystem. The doughnut approach offers a framework to foster active civic engagement, leveraging the spirit of 'meitheal' to share ideas and experiences and to collaborate in order to develop innovative solutions that foster a flourishing society within planetary boundaries.

Dr Carol Power lectures in the UCC Centre for Co-Operative Studies on the MSc on Co-Operatives, Agri-Food and Sustainable Development. She is published in [a number of academic journals](#) on co-operatives and related topics.

JUST TRANSITION (SINÉAD MERCIER)

Just transition, popularised since the Paris Agreement of 2015, has in fact deep roots. It has roots in the history of environmental and trade union groups working together to improve the working conditions of workers and their communities, and was part of the call of global south countries for access to clean energy as a human right and public good in the face of in particular privatisations.

The phrase 'just transition' itself was first popularised by Tony Mazzocchi, leader of the Oil Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW), who worked to bring trade unionists into the 1970s 'ban-the-bomb' peace movement, alongside a campaign to protect atomic workers in the transition to disarmament. In the 1990s,

Mazzocchi proposed a 'Superfund for Dirt and Workers' similar to the 1944 'GI Bill' he benefited from after the Second World War, which provided a range of education and health benefits for returning veterans. This would ensure that, as countries effectively regulated polluting companies, workers in those industries would be granted free access to higher and university education to upskill and retrain if they lost jobs due to environmental regulation.

With climate action, just transition has broadened to recognise damaging economic relations over the last 40 or so years, [while inequality has increased](#). It is not a mere call for a smoother transition for all to a low-carbon world, neither is it '[an invitation to a fancy funeral](#)'.

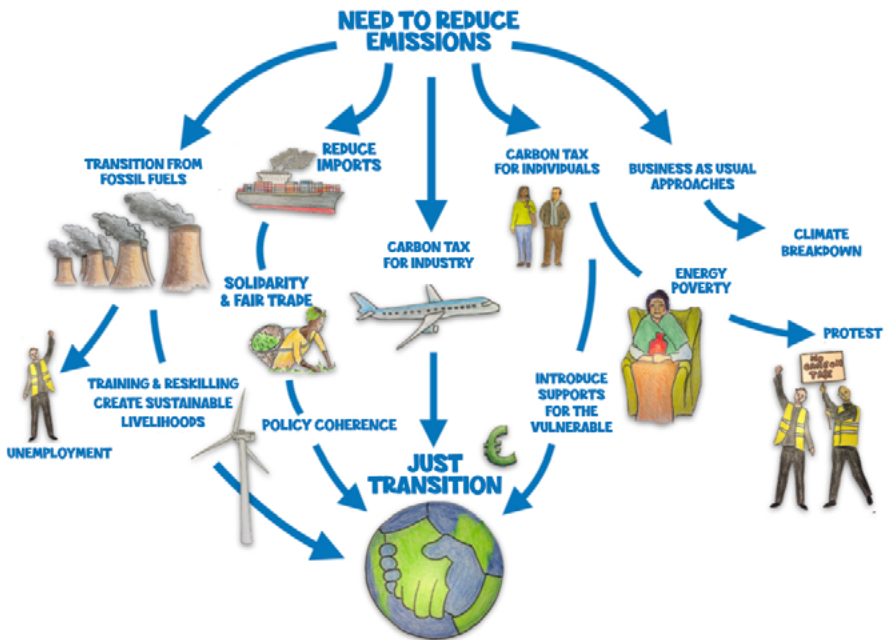


For too long climate action has been seen to necessitate an ‘ends justify the means’ approach to social goods, while leaving high-carbon free market regulations to operate unhindered. This approach is now being challenged, as the IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C and the upcoming Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) both conclude that a world in keeping with the aims of the Sustainable Development Goals is the best means of achieving 1.5°C. The IPCC joins with the UNEP, the IPBES, climate strikers, Green New Deal advocates and even Pope Francis’ ‘Laudato Si’ in pointing to this need for a fundamental re-orientation of our economy towards protecting people and planet.

Many workers and communities facing transition are already dealing with a refusal to engage from high carbon industries. Wages are being cut, phase-outs are accelerated, collective bargaining is breached, redundancies

reduced, pensions undermined, community engagement processes are being ignored, and current workers are not being re-deployed. Climate action is being used to accelerate these existing attacks on workers’ rights and the rights of vulnerable groups. Frameworks to protect rights, alongside practical, hands-on assistance, is needed as a priority.

Sinéad Mercier wrote Four Case Studies on Just Transition: Lessons for Ireland’s Transition, which was published in May 2020 for NESCC – the National Economic and Social Council (NESCC). Ireland’s President Michael D. Higgins spoke of just transition at NESCC’s annual conference, and you can [read](#) and [watch](#) this here.



THE COMMONS (KEVIN FLANAGAN)

In 2009 the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in memory of Alfred Nobel [was awarded to Elinor Ostrom](#). Ostrom's empirical research found that commons can and have been sustainably managed by communities for generations. She showed Garrett Hardin's assertion of 'The Tragedy of the Commons' - the notion that people take too much of an ever decreasing shared resource base - to be false, and she challenged the prevailing common sense among economists that the only way to efficiently manage resources was through either public administration or privatisation and the creation of market incentives.

So what today are commons? The environmental movement can be seen as one dedicated to our common ecological living systems. Decolonial and indigenous movements are often on the frontline in resisting enclosure and protecting customary and traditional practices of resource management. Commons approaches to management of resources, such as forestry and fisheries, have been shown to help recover ecosystems and the species that depend on them. This also transforms the relationship of communities that depend on those resources for their livelihood. They become stakeholders, stewards and caretakers, at once protecting ecosystems and securing their own futures in the process.

In cities around the world we find the creation of urban commons, neighbours organising in their communities, taking collective action, resisting speculative urban development and gentrification, fighting for the right to the city, the right to liveable cities with parks, public spaces, civic and cultural centres. Communities often assert

these rights through protest and occupation of neglected public spaces and properties, claiming their use on behalf of communities. Some succeed in establishing formal arrangements with municipal governments which recognise communities' rights to self-manage public facilities in what are sometimes termed public-community partnerships. The cities of Bologna in Italy and of Barcelona in Spain have gone further and embraced the paradigm of the commons, promoting citizens' participation as partners in the design and provision of public services.

The technological revolution of the last three decades has given rise to the emergence of new forms of knowledge and cultural production. This new world is enabled on the one hand by the technological ubiquity of networked computers and communications devices which enable people to communicate and organise, even when communities and collaborators are distributed throughout the world. This form of networked production is known as peer production or peer to peer. Further still, this is supported by legal innovations.

In contrast to exclusive copyrights, copyleft licenses free users to share and modify creative technological and cultural goods. Prominent examples are the Linux operating system on which most internet servers today operate; the Linux kernel is also at the heart of all Android mobile phones. While today there are a variety of licences, the GNU Free Software License is the original copyleft licence used in free software development. Its equivalent in the domain of knowledge and cultural production is the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike licence.



This is the licence that makes Wikipedia possible and you can find it referenced at the bottom of every page. These licences guarantee users and creators rights to access, share and modify creative works, and not only support the creation of knowledge commons, but new collaborative modes of production and social value creation accessible to all. Innovative examples of this new mode of production are transforming so many areas of human social life and organisation, constituting a complex commons based collaborative economy, the maker movement, 3D printing and open manufacturing, citizen science, the open access movement in scientific

research, participatory democracy and open government, and in the social economy with open and platform co-operatives.

The world of the commons is diverse and dynamic; these few examples offer a glimpse of these new ways of organising and meeting social and ecological needs.

Kevin Flanagan is a PhD researcher at the Department of Anthropology, Maynooth University. He has previously worked with the P2P Foundation (Peer to Peer Foundation).

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING (SEÁN MCCABE)

TASC is working with the Foundation for European Progressive Studies to explore how community wealth building can create the enabling environment for a just transition in rural communities. Community wealth building seeks to channel local and national government resources into community owned initiatives that bring as many actors together as possible to help strengthen local economies.

Community wealth building uses ‘anchor institutions’ – local, enduring non-profit institutions like hospitals and universities – to channel public spend into community economic development so as to build democratised wealth and co-operative business ownership in low-income neighbourhoods ([community-wealth](#)). This approach has been called the [Cleveland model](#) (video by Democracy Collaborative), while other places such as [Preston](#) in the UK have taken it up too..

To date, most community wealth building has taken place in an urban context, where there typically exists a greater concentration of anchor institutions. The work being undertaken by TASC seeks to understand how action to combat climate change could itself become an anchor institution and a catalyst for local sustainable development in both rural and urban settings. Here Seán McCabe of TASC applies community wealth building in a rural Irish context. (Seán’s more detailed work on this can be found on the TASC Blog [here](#), along with his work on a [Just Transition for Rural Ireland](#).) Detailed notes from a recent event on the Preston Model/Community Wealth Building which [can be found here](#); while a feature on local authority integration into change initiatives can be [found here](#).



What each of these approaches tells us is that we need to more comprehensively and holistically integrate socio-ecological considerations, if we are to truly work our way out of the complex, interlocked crises we collectively face. There are resources and institutions in regions that can be engaged with. Our thinking needs to be broader, more connected, more creative and more considerate of real people in situ – people

who might be left out otherwise, from workers in fossil industries to energy poor communities.

Seán McCabe works with TASC (Think-Think for Action on Social Change) as Senior Researcher and Policy Officer on Just Transition. Download The People's Transition: Community-led Development for Climate Justice by Seán McCabe [here](#).



FROM PATTERNS TO DETAILS

What can we draw together from these border approaches, before we look at some on-the-ground examples?

In the first instance, it is clear that there are different ways to do our economic relations. With the challenges we face, pure, simplistic economic considerations are simply too blunt, crude and damaging. The commons, for example, can be seen to include not just shared, clean water and air, but also our common reservoir of CO2 and other greenhouse gases: there is a planetary boundary and we are surpassing it. In this context, climate legislation could become the anchor institution for community wealth building in itself. Not only that, taking a global

perspective, we can see that, as [Jason Hickel](#) points out in a recent study, 92% of emissions above what is considered by the IPCC as the safe operating space for humanity – 350 parts per million – have emanated from the global north. This then brings a new dimension to just transition in our thinking, while also emphasising that solidarity in the social and solidarity economy is globally focused too. Moreover, doughnut economics also integrates both planetary boundaries and the SDGs, with its focus on gender equality and other broader necessary elements.

Finally, it is worth emphasising that the social and solidarity economy is where we started our

introduction of better approaches to living, as it were, because, as a concept and practice, it has taken a necessarily broad approach to the lived experience of human interactions and how power dynamics work within them. So, as an approach, it is always already aware of the need to integrate care work – which has usually been unpaid work by women – into the economic orbit. This is not to say that these approaches are all one, or even are all we need. In many ways, the [food sovereignty movement](#), driven as it is globally by La Via Campesina, has many good ideas for resilient regional living with a solidarity focus, and could easily have been featured in this paper too. However the examples we have brought together have some synergies worth exploring, emphasising and critically assessing beyond agri-food, as we build our own version of regional resilience. Now to dive deeper into some details.

CO-OPS

Co-operatives, both formal and informal, have been around for a very long time. The mutual fire insurance company of 1752 could be seen as a co-op; more typically the Rochdale Pioneers of 1844 are seen as the initiators. The basic idea is foundational for the type of approach we are proposing here – a group of people coming together for their mutual aid. While some co-ops can act as what Silvia Federici calls gated commons in [Re-Enchanting the World – Feminism and the Politics of the Commons](#) – good for members, not especially useful and essentially exclusionary for outsiders – in the first instance, the co-operative ideal represents a strong basis to build from.

FEDERATED CO-OPS (NOREEN BYRNE)

Co-operatives have never seemed more relevant than they do in the current times of precarious work, unstable supply chains, health care systems increasingly driven by profit rather than care, unaffordable housing, environmental degeneration and heightened interest in the local and regional response. Co-operatives, as user owned and controlled enterprises built on sound principles of equity and fairness, have huge potential here. How can this potential be realised?

Firstly, there is a need for people (whether that is small scale farmers, food industry workers, musicians, artists, health care workers and their clients, and so on) to acknowledge the limits of a market solution in the COVID-19 and economic downturn context we are facing into, and to look towards building more equitable alternatives.

We are seeing new co-ops emerge to deal with new situations.

- In Ireland, as legislation changes, farmers have come together to set up a [hemp co-op](#).
- In Italy, migrant workers have set up a [fruit co-op with deliveries](#), which has really taken off in the COVID-19 era
- And the [Open Food Network](#), a digital farmers' market platform owned by the members, and covered in more detail elsewhere in this report, has grown at an enormous rate since the COVID-19 restrictions came into place.



Secondly, existing co-operatives need lead in re-organisation the economy to work for people. Scale is needed, but are co-operatives doomed to lose their transformational potential once they grow? Not necessarily.

There is a third way – federation. Federation combines scale and regional-scale local embeddedness. There are some great examples of this – [Mondragon in the Basque Country](#) and the [West Cork Agricultural Co-Operatives in Ireland](#) (Carbery). Federation allows co-operatives to grow and stay connected at the same time. This connectedness to the member keeps co-operatives attuned to members’ needs, relevant and innovative: Carbery, for example,

have consistently paid the highest price for milk of any co-op or company in Ireland, including post milk quota fluctuations (see 2020 figures for Bandon, Barryroe, Drinagh, and Lisavaird, which makes up Carbery [here](#); see a report on their 2015 performance [here](#)). The tools to build a co-operative economy are all at hand, and we must turn our attention towards them.

Dr. Noreen Byrne lectures in the UCC Centre for Co-Operative Studies on the MSc on Co-operatives, Agri-Food and Sustainable Development. She is published in a number of academic journals on co-operatives, credit unions and related topics.



NEW CO-OPERATIVE APPROACHES: PLATFORMS AND SHARING

(OLIVER MOORE)

Platforms where people can contribute, share, buy and sell have changed how much of the economy works – from music to mobility, holidaying to housing. So while corporations like Uber, Spotify, AirB&B or TripAdvisor offer convenience in exchange for data and surplus value, there are also alternatives that put people first – iterations which reinvest wealth, reward work and creativity and, at their best, build resilience through regenerative practices.

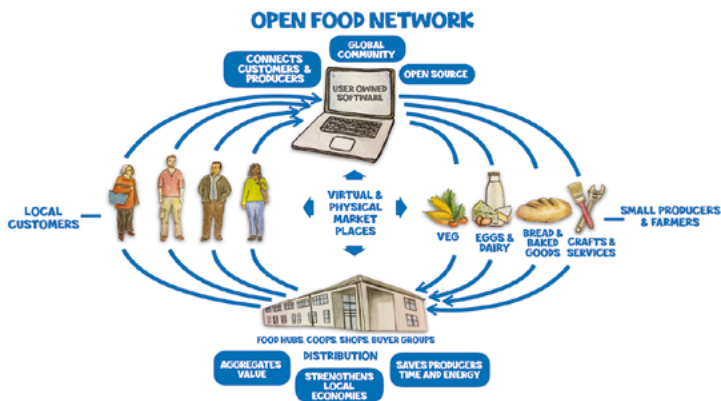
So while digital platforms such as Upwork allow people to find commissions, other platforms do a lot more. Some are owned by the users, and reward them too. Platform co-ops such as [sMART in Belgium](#) have allowed a disparate array of freelancers to gain many of the benefits of a traditional union, while maintaining the flexibility they need to act like self directed actors. This platform co-op takes care of many of the annoying, mundane and inefficient elements of the freelance life – like invoicing and organising your social insurance and tax – and even managed for a time to bring [Deliveroo's cyclists on board](#). Members get paid at the end of the month even if the client hasn't paid up. There are many more too.

Notwithstanding the Deliveroo setback, the good news on cycle couriers is that [newco-op initiatives are emerging](#) such as [CoopCycle](#), while others [have joined](#) the International Worker of the World IWW.

The COVID-19 era has seen renewed emphasis on sourcing local food, and has seen agroecological producers coming together - in the [US](#), in [Italy](#) in fact [all over Europe](#) and [the world](#). Moreover, from [commoning](#) to [mutual aid](#), there are a number of ways we've seen [learnings from the recent past come to the fore](#) - from transition towns to food sovereignty. In all of these approaches, people come together to share resources, skills, ideas and effort. Here we point to four innovative co-operative initiatives, including platforms or resource-sharing;

OPEN FOOD NETWORK

Digital farmers markets are increasingly popular, but [be careful who you sign up with](#): as they [consolidate and globalise](#), they may even withdraw from your country because of the growth demands of venture capitalists. The [Open Food Network](#) however, is different.



[OFN](#) is a team of people and community supported software, allowing digital farmers' markets to thrive. It allows small scale regional producers to find local customers, without taking a huge cut. This is efficient because the ordering is done digitally over the course of a week, making pick up and drop off day far more efficient. The code is owned by a charity, the focus is agro-ecological producers, and the whole thing is run by and for those involved. Open Food Network Ireland is being established as a multi-stakeholder/solidarity co-op.

TECHNOLOGICAL SOVEREIGNTY

Farmers also use technology to share their new developments in agro-ecologically-appropriate machinery: plans for affordable, nimble tools, parts and even buildings, are shared and improved upon by both [Farm Hack](#) and [l'Alterier Paysan](#) in France. The latter have five articulated lorries on the road and do impressively large skill share meetups.

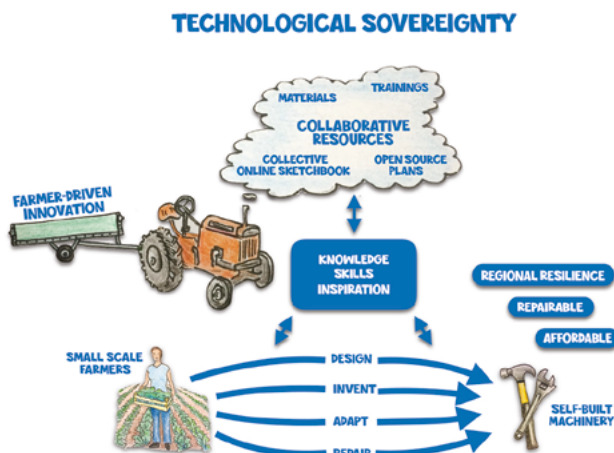
Julien Reynier explains:

“L’Atelier Paysan is French non-profit co-operative. We started in 2009 in the South of France as a project with a group of organic farmers dealing with a new global appropriation of farm technology. Based on the principle that farmers are themselves innovators, we have been collaboratively developing methods and practices to reclaim farming skills, achieve self-sufficiency and a technical sovereignty in relation to the tools and machinery used in organic farming. Our goal is to make farmers imagine, and collectively create, adequate equipment and the means of production on the farm. This is in contrast to a trajectory of over-investment, over-indebtedness and over-sizing.”

This is technological sovereignty then, for a regenerative farming era, where farmers co-learn, co-own and co-develop the plans.

MACHINERY CO-OPS

While [tool libraries](#) are becoming more and more popular, in France, it's typical in some regions for farm machinery to be owned collectively rather than by individuals or contractors. These machinery co-ops, called CUMAs, reduce costs and risks, while providing the most efficient use of the tools of the trade: many items are only used for a small part of the year, so it can be very inefficient to do otherwise. Members contribute to investments and running costs based on how much they use each item.



LAND SHARING

Land Trusts such as [Terre de Liens](#) and multi stakeholder land management initiatives like [Landcare](#) are both increasing in popularity, and helping integrate socio-ecological considerations into how farming happens. [Community Supported Agriculture](#) also integrates a range of people into how farming happens. The risks, rewards and responsibilities of farming are shared between eaters and producers. There are many models, some farmer-driven, some community-driven, but in general members make at least a one year commitment to the initiative, which helps with farm planning, purchases and investments. The farmer engages with the members, adjusting plans, possibly using participatory budgeting, and in general bringing people more into the working of the farm - including extra voluntary labour to maintain agroecological principles from time to time - aka weeding!

Community owned renewable energy is a step in the right direction, but is it enough?

It's worth exploring the situation, as two related but differing positions on community energy emerged in our conversations.

One perspective emphasised that there is a need to acknowledge the systems of power and influence green energy operates in. Renewable energy still relies on high growth activity. Even community-owned energy can be sometimes just about the resource ownership - good for landowner and members, but what about heat poverty in the self-same community?

Another perspective stressed that advocates for community energy are aware of this conundrum, and are focused on cooperatives, municipal projects and collaborations between the two. They argue that community energy is not exclusively bound up with market liberalization. Work is ongoing to protect community energy as a sector from the extremes of neoliberal market force at EU level. Advocates want energy to be treated as a common good for all and not to be commodified.

Further reading:

- > [More on this from Trade Unions for Energy Democracy.](#)
- > [Are energy co-ops key to reducing emissions, or just “antisocial rich people trying to disconnect from the grid”?](#)



In this discussion, we see another iteration of the gated community commons vs inclusive community commons conundrum Silvia Fedrechi outlined.

A REGION – THE IRISH MIDLANDS

What would a just transition in the Irish midlands look like? The middle of Ireland has been extracting the fossil fuel peat for decades, and industrially since 1946. Now, with legislative changes and the climate imperative, the midlands need significant effort put into re-imagining the region as one with sustainable post-peat livelihoods by 2030, the year Bord na Móna have earmarked for the end of peat extraction.

Some progress has been made recently with 48 projects in the Irish midlands receiving over €130 million [under the Just Transition Fund](#), including Bord na Móna. This will enable Bord na Móna’s large-scale peatlands restoration project, which has the potential to sequester carbon, build biodiversity and employ former Bord na Móna workers.

Thinking back to our just transition section, however, we need also to consider how other people in the midlands will be included in these processes, not just the former workers. And for these workers, we need to ensure that the terms and conditions of these new jobs will be good - unionised high-skilled jobs ideally. Otherwise, we are back in a workers’ fancy funeral scenario, as described earlier.

Could Centres for a Just Transition be established in places that require them – places where workers

will lose out faster due to limiting fossil fuel extraction? And where energy poverty could be amplified without the local turf as a burnable resource? What would this Centre look like – is it a traditional building somewhere, or a set of interconnected places and people in a region? How would it relate with other entities and initiatives in the region? Considerations would include:

Type of Activities – demonstration, training and education on all aspects of a just transition, from basic climate literacy out.

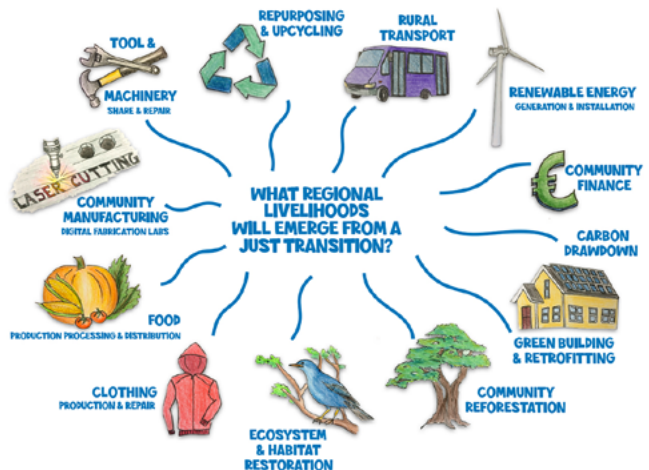
Research and Development – developing transition plans for rural areas led by the relevant communities.

Networking – with other entities at the local regional national and international levels.

The categories outlined in the Kinsale Energy Descent Plan of 2005 (see below) could be modified and adapted. It will be interesting to see – and engage with – [the Midlands Regional Transition Team](#).

BUILDING REGIONAL LIVELIHOODS

In many ways, the templates set down by the transition towns movements in an earlier era



are still a good basis to build from. These plans mapped out local needs and a way to reduce fossil fuel dependency over time. The [Kinsale Energy Descent Plan \(2005\)](#) is perhaps the most famous. Interestingly, 2021 was the year it targeted. Food, energy, housing, waste, transport, education and community awareness, youth, health, tourism and community networking and a sustainability centre all feature. Many iterations have followed, in transition towns and beyond.

Our own regional livelihood session used similar categories, and built upon them. Also added were: community reforestation; democratising care work; developing practical skills and training in repair, appropriate tech development; mental health, artist integration.

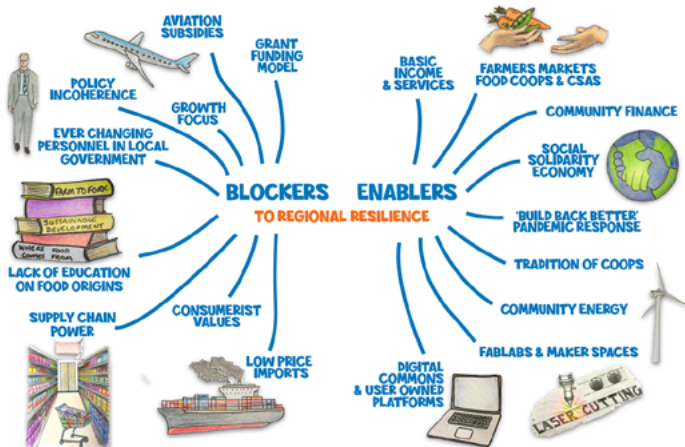
BLOCKERS AND ENABLERS

A word on policy

In the broadest terms there are a range of blockers and enablers to regional resilience. The policy sphere sees CAP – the Common Agricultural Policy – to a significant extent shaping the Irish landscape, life in the countryside and all our food choices. While some parts of CAP (such as the smaller of its two defining areas, or ‘Pillars’

– Pillar 2) are more targeted, agri-environmental and rural, there is stubborn resistance to adjusting CAP to other more recent EU policy imperatives such as the European Green Deal’s Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies (see [ARC2020’s CAP](#) and [Farm to Fork](#) sections for more). Nevertheless the European Green Deal is [in motion](#), is [CAP-and-rural related](#), and is [driving some broader policy changes](#) which can enable rather than block change.

CAP and other policies then integrate into each country or region in the EU: LEADER for example has been used for community and rural development in an especially proactive way in Ireland and is part of the Pillar 2 of CAP. At the same time, CAP and other Irish agri-food and rural policies such as Food Wise 2025, has generated a type of rural landscape via area based payments which work more for livestock than horticulture; which see the [average farmer age in Ireland as 57](#); which sees a lack of mixed diverse farming and other issues which also in turn lower the overall overall rural population. Along with CAP, Ireland has its own relevant policies, from the overarching [Ireland 2040 strategy](#), to [social enterprise policy](#), [community and voluntary strategies](#), and [rural action plans](#).



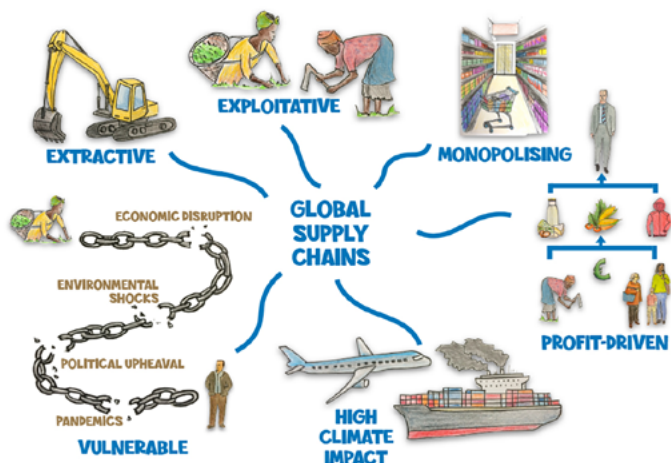
These plans and strategies however, are only so good as the funding and motivation behind them and incoming policy which will need to grapple with entrenched power blocks if progress towards resilient communities and a just transition are to be made. There are also broader blockers and enablers, some historical,

some cultural, some financial – indeed, categories in doughnut economics, for example, can be seen to have elements of both. At our participatory webinar, a number of blockers and enablers emerged.

Below we list some;

Blockers	Enablers
<p>Funding – few community-orientated options, but lots of excessively complex time-consuming and profit-prioritising administration.</p> <p>A rigged game – hidden or subtle subsidies for business-as-usual, from road to air, from CAP to agri-diesel.</p> <p>Agri-food system – powerful supermarkets; lack of information on local food; lack of supply-chain connectedness of local options; poor procurement decisions by institutions; land ownership.</p> <p>Systemic – GDP focus, value-systems, co-option of potentially transformative initiatives in energy, food, etc; gated co-ops that serve members not full communities.</p>	<p>Existing – human-to-human connections; local provisioning systems, for example, farmers' markets and community gardens; social farming; rural and community finance initiatives (e.g. LEADER); small-scale place-based projects; energy communities that include the local community not just co-op members; a jobs guarantee; community (not just local-but-export-focused) economies; reorientation towards priorities of food energy shelter in COVID-19 times.</p> <p>Potential – basic income/basic services; land tax; positive narratives on local initiatives; community-supported everything (not just agriculture), for example, fab labs and maker spaces; ethical supply-webs not just local provisioning.</p>

Caroline Whyte of Feasta added: "An expanded community/public banking sector, combined with the Dutch-style 'safe haven' banking proposal, could reduce the volatility of the financial sector and make it much easier to plan for the future".



INSPIRING INITIATIVES

There are many inspiring initiatives around Europe and the world to draw on and from when thinking about resilient regions.

OVERARCHING - BOOKS

Lots of great examples in Rob Hopkins' "From What is to What if" and George Monbiot's "Out of the Ashes".

[Ecolise](#) The European Network of Community-Led Initiatives for Climate Action and Sustainability and its [Communities for Future](#) action programme.

[FEASTA](#) Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability, including this [Enough is Plenty](#) series.

Mutual aid initiatives via [Shareable](#) - people powered solutions for the common good.

[Positive regen](#) - a movement for regenerative businesses.

[Abundant Earth Foundation](#) - raising money for grassroots permaculture and regenerative agriculture.

[Global Community Project](#) - wellbeing mapping.

[Open Source Ecology](#) (see also [Farm Hack](#) and L'Aterier Paysan in Technological Sovereignty section)

[Purpose Economy](#)'s support for Steward-Ownership.

[Covenant of Mayors](#) for local climate and energy actions.

[Making Energy Democracy Happen](#) - GEF 2019. Donore Credit Union is Ireland's first Credit Union, set up in 1958. It was established to provide community access to finance. The Credit Union model in Ireland is rightly lauded for doing this so successfully. Now, Donore is the first Credit Union to undertake a Social Return on Investment study. It found that for every one euro invested, there was a social return of ten. Read more [here](#).

INSPIRING EXAMPLES FROM AROUND THE WORLD:

[La Roue](#) - French approach to local currencies, running for 9 years successfully. In France, local currencies are supported by a bank called NEF bank. When Euros are exchanged for La Roue (for example), those Euros are put into a fund to support local projects.

[Fat Macy's](#) independent living pathways for those in temporary accommodation (London)

HISTORICAL

[Feminist restaurants network](#)

[Lucas Plan 1978 \(video\)](#)

[Mondragon 1980 \(video\)](#)

[Human Scale Revisited](#)



CONCLUSION

We can, it is suggested, use some metaframes to begin to build resilience under shock – to make regional supply chains and local economies more robust. The ideas and practices of the social and solidarity economy and doughnut economics can make society more liveable, fair and integrated. Community wealth building shows us how to bring in a wide range of institutional actors into a solidarity frame. A just transition should underpin change, local and globally (cosmo-locally), while understanding the breath and utility of the commons shows us we have much we share and value, from the internet to air, from water to GHG emissions.

The co-operative approach is key, and it's a solid base to build on. We've seen how co-ops can federate to increase their clout, while we've also been introduced to some of the new and exciting co-operative approaches which have emerged in more recent times. These include digital farmers' markets which aggregate value and keep costs down for producers, the development and use of appropriate technology collectives, of machinery co-ops and equipment makers; and we've seen a variety of ways land management can integrate wider community considerations, from land trusts to community-owned farms. All of these new co-operative and collaborative approaches give us pointers for making regions more robust. In all of this, there are blockers and enablers, and at all levels – from the personal to international.

Just how just the transition can be was the subject of our short examination of energy. There are both blockers and enablers in general and specifically in regions. We also spotlighted a regional Irish midlands focus, building on the transition towns momentum.

There is more to do and more to add. Join us on this journey where we create a better collective future, where we – as SCALE suggests – imagine a co-operative, community-led approach to regional resilience.

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Green European Foundation - <https://gef.eu>

The Green European Foundation (GEF) is a European level political foundation funded by the European Parliament. It is linked to, but independent of, other European Green actors such as the European Green Party and the Green Group in the European Parliament. The mission of GEF is to contribute to the development of a European public sphere and to foster greater involvement by citizens in European politics, ultimately forging a stronger, more participative democracy. GEF strives to mainstream discussions on European policies and politics both within and beyond the Green political family. It works to create a common Green vision for Europe and to communicate this to the wider public.



Green Foundation Ireland - www.greenfoundationireland.ie

Green Foundation Ireland aims to create an awareness of the importance of an ecological and sustainable Ireland through education and community projects.

Cultivate - The Sustainable Ireland Cooperative - www.cultivate.ie

Since 2000 the Sustainable Ireland Cooperative Society who operate as Cultivate Living and Learning, has played a key role in furthering ecological sustainability, community resilience and the collaborative economy in Ireland. Cultivate works to illuminate a community led, citizen engaged, cooperative approach to sustainability, and accelerate the transition to a resilient and low carbon society.



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