

Sustainable Ireland Sustainable Europe

presentation at the NESC Seminar
“Ireland's Experience & Challenges in the European Union”
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Environmental Pillar
OF SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP

Persistent Environmental Problems

- ▶ Are:
 - Highly complex
 - Low visibility
 - Global dimension
- ▶ They need behavioural change and long term vision

But political thinking is generally short-term

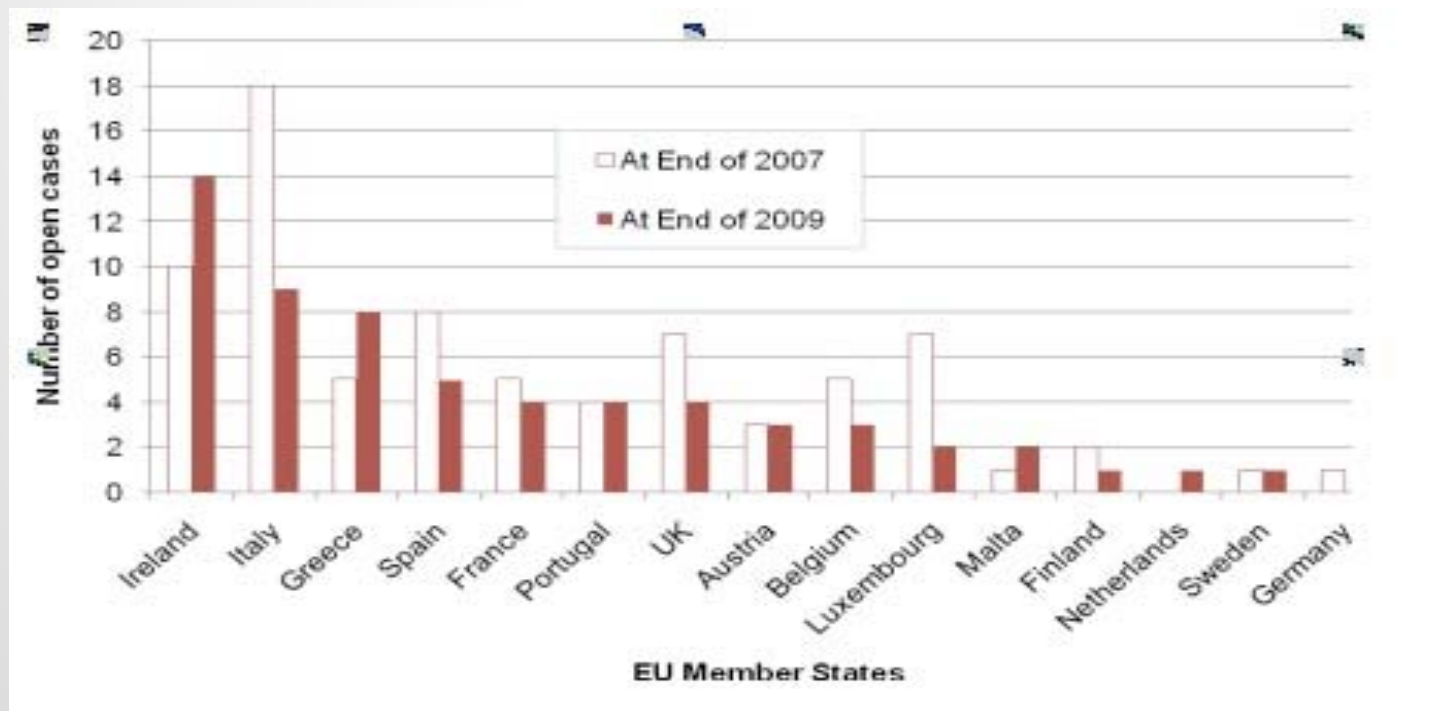
Examples are Climate Change and the Decline in Biodiversity

The Marriage of Hard Law and Experimentalist Governance

- ▶ The move by the EU towards the use of Framework Directives such as:
 - The Water Framework Directive; and
 - The Marine Strategy Framework Directive
- ▶ is a welcome progression, particularly because of the inclusion of the participatory practices required by the Aarhus Convention.
- ▶ It is to be hoped, however, that they are taken more seriously and better owned by the wider community in Ireland than many other environmental EU Directives have been.

Ireland the Worst Offender

- ▶ Ireland is responsible for almost 25% of all Environmental cases at the “contempt of court stage in the European Court of Justice”



Dealing with the “Big Picture”

- ▶ It is not possible for “experimental governance” tools such as the Water Framework Directive to deliver their full potential when their implementation is taking place in a situation where other plans programmes or activities have very different drivers that may in fact be in opposition to its aims.
- ▶ It is crucial that at the European and national level these tools are operating within the context of truly sustainable strategies. presented at the NESC Seminar. Ireland's Experience & Challenges in the European Union – 26th Jan

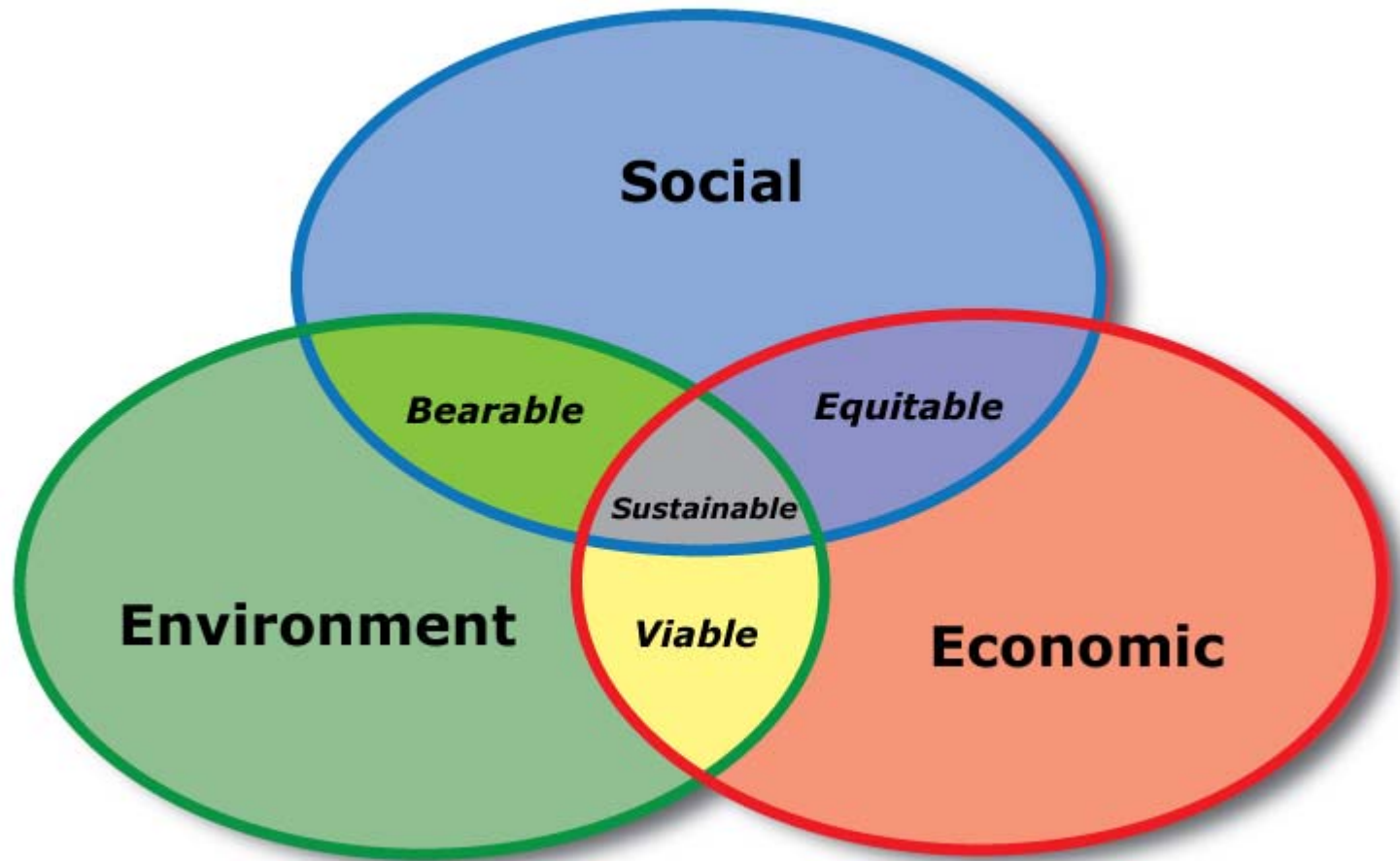
What do we mean by Sustainable Development ?

- ▶ The term was used by the **Brundtland Commission** which coined what has become the most often-quoted definition of sustainable development as development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".
- ▶ It is a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for future generations.

Interaction between the Pillars

- ▶ In the early model, illustrated on the next slide, the three pillars of sustainability were seen as not mutually exclusive and could be mutually reinforcing
- ▶ Whilst the use of this model initially improved the standing of environmental concerns it has since been criticised for not adequately showing that societies and economies are fundamentally reliant on the natural world.

The Three Pillars of Sustainable Development



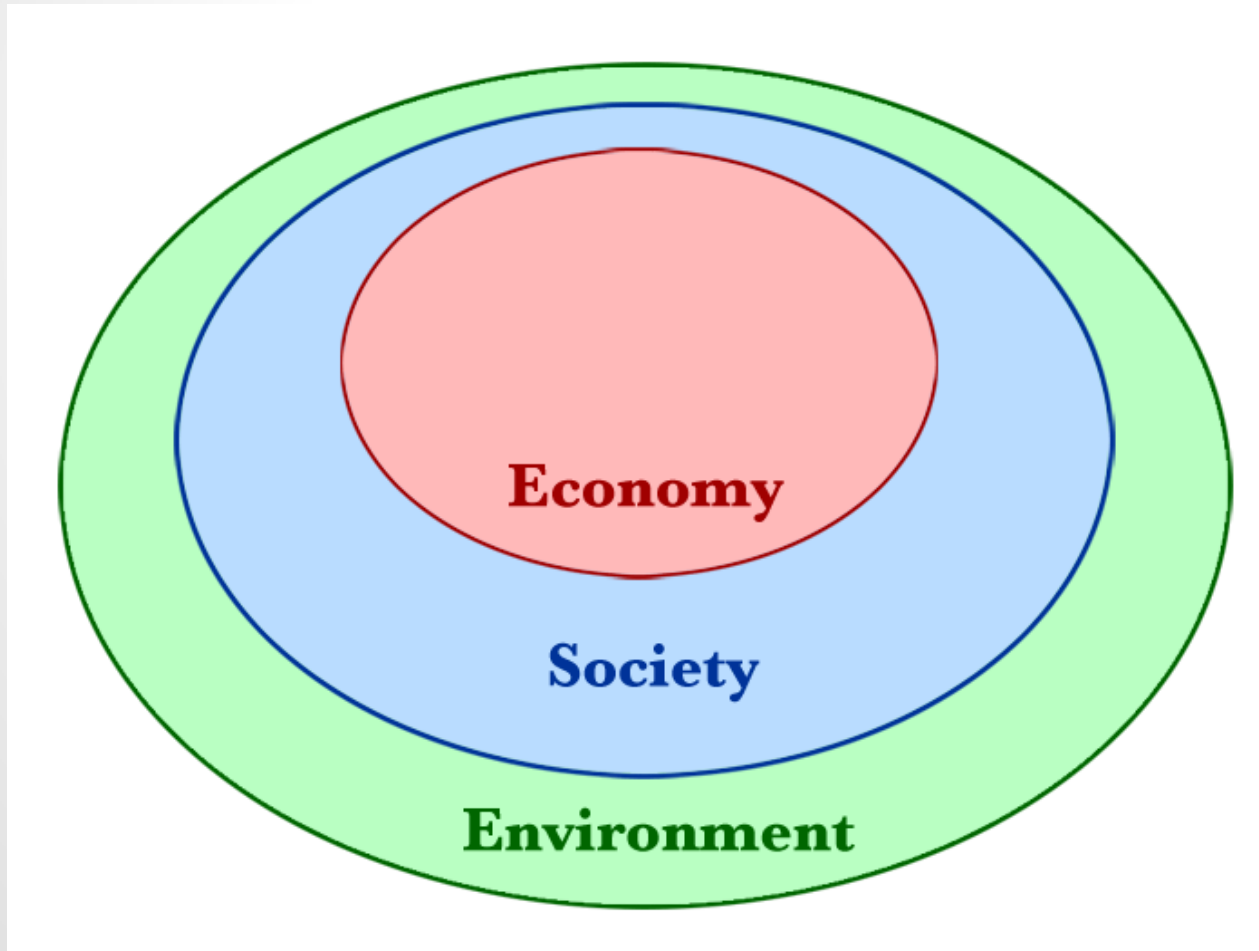
How do we now see the sustainable interaction of the Pillars?

- ▶ Sustainable development should tie together concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems with the social challenges facing humanity.
- ▶ As early as the 1970s "sustainability" was employed to describe an economy "in equilibrium with basic ecological support systems." Ecologists have pointed to *The Limits to Growth* and presented the alternative of a "steady state economy" in order to address environmental concerns.
- ▶ The use of ecosystem management goes mainstream and ecological accounting is born.

We are part of the environment

- ▶ "The economy is, in the first instance, a subsystem of human society ... which is itself, in the second instance, a subsystem of the totality of life on Earth (the biosphere). And no subsystem can expand beyond the capacity of the total system of which it is a part". For this reason the next diagram, known as the Russian Doll model, shows economy as a component of society, both bounded by, and dependent upon, the environment.

The Real Picture



“ No subsystem can expand beyond the capacity of the total system of which it is a part”

– Jonathon Porritt



We don't have all the answers!

- ▶ But at least we are asking the questions

Why is almost all our attention focussed on the economy?

What has more real value for human well-being?

- “Futures” or forests
- “Hedge Funds” or Hedges
- Oil Wells or Healthy Oceans
- “Derivatives” or Biodiversity

The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB)

- ▶ In 2007, environment ministers from the governments of the G8+5 countries, meeting in Potsdam, Germany, agreed to
- ▶ “initiate the process of analysing the global economic benefit of biological diversity, the costs of the loss of biodiversity and the failure to take protective measures versus the costs of effective conservation.”
- ▶ To show how economic concepts and tools can help equip society with the means to incorporate the values of nature into decision making at all levels.

Providing Clarity and Fairness

- ▶ Applying economic thinking to the use of biodiversity and ecosystem services can help clarify two critical points:
 1. Why prosperity and poverty reduction depend on maintaining the flow of benefits from ecosystems; and,
 2. Why successful environmental protection needs to be grounded in sound economics, including explicit recognition, efficient allocation, and fair distribution of the costs and benefits of conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

Valuing Natural Resources

- ▶ Valuation is seen not as a panacea, but rather as a tool to help recalibrate the faulty economic compass that has led us to decisions that are prejudicial to both current well-being and that of future generations.
- ▶ The invisibility of biodiversity values has often encouraged inefficient use or even destruction of the natural capital that is the foundation of our economies.

Bringing biodiversity into policy-making

- ▶ The aim of TEEB is to provide a bridge between the multi-disciplinary science of biodiversity and the arena of international and national policy as well as local government and business practices.
- ▶ Ideally, TEEB will act as a catalyst to help accelerate the development of a new economy: one in which the values of natural capital, and the ecosystem services which this capital supplies, are fully reflected in the mainstream of public and private decision-making.

GROWTH 1960 – 2000:

- POPULATION: DOUBLED **2x**
- ECONOMY: SIXFOLD **6x**
- FOOD PRODUCTION:
TWO AND A HALFFOLD **2,5x**
- USE OF FRESH WATER: DOUBLED **2x**
- CUTTING OF FOREST FOR PULP
AND PAPER: THREEFOLD **3x**
- DAMMED RIVERS:
FOURFOLD **4x**

... DURING
THE SAME PERIOD
OF TIME THE EARTH
HAS NOT GROWN A BIT.



Seppo Lehtinen, Earth
seppo.net



Important steps needed

1. A National Sustainable Development Strategy that is developed through an inclusive participatory process and that is binding by law on all government departments.
2. To be leaders in planning for and working towards a steady-state economy world-wide.

Resources

- ▶ TEEB for Policy Makers
<http://www.teebweb.org/ForPolicymakers/tabid/1019/Default.aspx>
- ▶ TEEB for Local and Regional Policy Makers
<http://www.teebweb.org/ForLocalandRegionalPolicy/tabid/1020/Default.aspx>
- ▶ TEEB for Business
<http://www.teebweb.org/ForBusiness/tabid/1021/Default.aspx>
- ▶ TEEB for Citizens
<http://www.teebweb.org/ForCitizens/tabid/1022/Default.aspx>
- ▶ CASSE – Centre for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy
<http://steadystate.org/>
- ▶ Participatory Democracy
<http://www.environmentaldemocracy.ie/>

Thank You
Go Raibh Maith Agaibh

www.environmentalpillar.ie



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