

Exploring Place-based Opportunities for Policy and Practice in Transition

RESEARCH PAPER

No.24 July 2022



NESD

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Eacnamaíoch agus Shóisialta
National Economic & Social Council

An Oifig Náisiúnta um Fhorbairt Eacnamaíoch agus Shóisialta
National Economic & Social Development Office NESDO



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Exploring Place-based Opportunities for Policy and Practice in Transition

Niamh Moore-Cherry*, Alma Clavin*, Tamara Krawchenko** and John Tomaney***

*School of Geography, University College Dublin

**University of Victoria, Canada

***Bartlett School of Planning, University College London, UK

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Executive Summary

Delivering effective regional development in a context of decarbonising the economy is not just challenging economically but raises the issue of social justice and equity. Ensuring a ‘just transition’ that appropriately addresses the needs and harnesses the potential of particular communities is therefore critical. This research paper explores place-based approaches to just transition in Ireland and the potential for adopting co-creation methodologies to identifying and implementing pathways to change. It draws on three case studies to understand perspectives on, and pathways towards, more climate-resilient and equitable futures in three areas outside the major metropolitan areas. The Capability Approach (CA) is adopted as a wellbeing framework to operationalise a place based approach for a just transition in our study areas. The CA has become one of the most influential theoretical tools for conceptualising questions relating to social justice. Key to achieving a just transition is to understand what communities want themselves and we adopt a co-creation approach to identify mechanisms and approaches to enhance the capabilities of rural communities, which are constrained due to differences in income, housing, health, education and commuting patterns as well as demographic changes.

Three broad types of rural areas based on their relationships to functional urban areas have been identified by the OECD (2016), each facing different challenges but also embodying different potentials, opportunities and thus varying policy needs. We adopt this typology to explore potential just transition pathways in three study areas:

- Inishowen Peninsula, Donegal (rural area close to a functional urban area)

- North Leitrim (rural area far from a functional urban area)

- Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath (rural area close to a functional urban area)

Effectively addressing climate change and social justice requires recognition that not all places are equal, with smaller towns and rural areas facing much more challenging transitions. Using the framework of individual and community wellbeing we consider quality of life alongside other material conditions and the ways these are shaped by the natural, human, social and economic capital, and influence capabilities. The success of just transition initiatives will depend on how they are received on the ground, how ‘decent jobs’ are defined and how people’s lived experiences are impacted. Moving beyond a ‘one size fits all’ approach to just transition policies, mechanisms and supports and instead understanding the contextual – place-based - nature of transitions is critical.

Effective place-based policy making requires an understanding of how territories operate at different scales, an appreciation of community assets and opportunities, and an awareness of how places are functionally connected. Timely and relevant territorial data across a range of key indicators at the community level is critical, alongside a relational understanding of how communities perceive themselves and their connectivity/linkages. The territorial analysis undertaken in Chapter 3 demonstrates that Ireland is a deeply unequal country with significant development and growth on the eastern seaboard and in the metropolitan areas, standing in stark contrast to more remote areas and particularly the north-west. These disparities exist across multiple dimensions. Some of the areas that have suffered historic under-investment or lagged behind are also the regions which will face the greatest transformations as a result of the climate transition because of their economic reliance on carbon-intensive activities. It is therefore critical to understand the specificities of these places and their capability to respond as part of ensuring a just transition in Ireland.

A just transition becomes meaningful when it acknowledges the specific context of place, acknowledges challenges and past experiences and identifies place-sensitive opportunities. Based on interviews and our community co-creation process, in Chapter 4 we identify a set of common conversion factors - individual, social, environmental or economic factors that need direct attention in order to enhance wellbeing and quality of life of those individuals and groups transitioning to a lower carbon economy – across the agriculture and energy sector, as well as with regard to more effective planning for quality of life. Significant transformations in governance and leadership at local authority level in particular are required to support a just transition in Ireland. Co-creation approaches and dialogue can provide a mechanism to engage communities from the bottom-up with just transition as a meaningful concept with real-world

resonance. Realising the potential of just transitions in Ireland will be shaped by re-localisation of markets and suppliers, readjusting identities that embrace new - as well as more traditional - practices, improving information and communication, and capacity building.

A place based approach to just transition has significant potential but must start with identifying rights holders, stakeholders and community members and developing common understanding of what a just transition means for them, and for where they live and work. Inclusive local-regional dialogues and engagement are key to identifying place-based assets, opportunities and challenges for a just transition. These approaches will help identify what communities are transitioning to opening up new spaces of possibility. Although places have diverse capabilities, national planning and development support and empowerment for local-regional just transitions is critical.

The research has identified seven specific recommendations for policy and practice that will help:

- Build capacity for a place-based just transition in Ireland
- Ensure that governance mechanisms, policies and practices support a just transition
- Ensure that a just transition is delivered and appropriately monitored.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhance capabilities through re-skilling, training and digital connectedness.
2. Engage meaningfully with communities through co-creation to define what just transition means in their specific context and to address immediate issues, such as housing, through a just transition lens.
3. Reimagine the urban-rural relationship and then supported it through policy, practice and funding streams that stimulate new opportunities for rural enterprise, aligned to the revitalisation of rural towns.
4. Prioritise significant innovation in central, regional and local government with dedicated senior leadership and accountability mechanisms is required.
5. Equality-proof new environmental projects to ensure that quality of life and societal wellbeing is balanced with environmental objectives.
6. Develop bespoke just transition initiatives responding to the particular nature and timing of transitions and potential in different geographical areas.
7. Audit all data that can usefully support a just transition to ensure that sufficient, quality data at the appropriate scale and time intervals is available to monitor the impact of particular interventions.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Rural Ireland is in the midst of change. Home to around a third of the country's population (Eurostat definition), rural communities were disproportionately harmed during the last economic recession (Faulkner *et al.*, 2019). While Ireland has seen impressive growth in the intervening years, this growth has concentrated in the Eastern region and more effective regional development is a core ambition of the National Planning Framework (2018). The vulnerability of many rural communities and smaller towns has become all too apparent in recent months with announcements of bank branch closures by two major institutions, illustrative of retrenchment and regionalisation of services, but resilience is also challenged by population decline, lack of economic diversification and lower investments in critical infrastructure. While there is some indication of new short-term population migrations back to rural areas enabled by remote working during the Covid-19 pandemic, the longer-term impacts of this are not yet clear.

Across the country, the additional challenge of the climate and biodiversity crises renders 'quick fixes' inappropriate. Delivering effective regional development in a context of decarbonising the economy is not just challenging economically but raises the issue of social justice and equity. Ensuring a 'just transition' that appropriately addresses the needs and harnesses the potential of particular communities is therefore critical. The literature on rural governance tends to be deeply contextual and place specific. It often focusses on the role of networks, social connections, social capital, and critically, framework conditions such as accessibility to services, infrastructure, effective transportation links, broadband, education, healthcare and other enabling conditions for development. Understanding the opportunities and challenges to increasing economic and environmental sustainability for rural communities requires a place-based view on the nature of local economies, assets and community governance and capabilities. To date, this place-based approach to just transition has been significantly under-developed both in Ireland and elsewhere.

For the purposes of this report, we draw on the NESC (2020) definition of a *just transition as providing decent jobs, a good quality of life and wellbeing as we move to a low carbon economy*. Given the significant transformations that will be required in ways of life and livelihood building, this is a major challenge. Krawchenko and Gordon (2021b) argue that, to date, policies and strategies for just transitions in advanced economies have not adequately addressed community engagement and regional development more broadly. Developing place-based approaches to understanding transition, that avoid a one-size fits all approach, will be critical in fostering support from the bottom-up. How climate actions and transitions play out at the local level is critical to livelihoods, individual and community wellbeing, and environmental health but reaching national targets successfully can only be achieved with the support of the full community. How to engage front-line actors and communities in charting and delivering this transition is under-studied and requires the deployment of new conceptualisations, approaches and technologies. Drawing on three case studies, the research documents how specific place attributes, partnerships, engagement and dialogue can support and inform just transition debates and action.

1.2 Purpose of this report

In June 2021, a team led by UCD School of Geography (see Appendix 1) was commissioned by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) to deliver a research paper exploring place-based approaches to just transition in Ireland and the potential for adopting co-creation methodologies to identifying and implementing pathways to change.

The paper is based on a qualitative, case study approach to understanding perspectives on and pathways towards more climate-resilient and equitable futures in three areas outside the major metropolitan areas. Specifically, the paper:

Examines the role of place-based policies in regional development, particularly of rural areas. Geographic disparities in advanced economies are becoming increasingly entrenched leading to growing concerns that hinterlands outside of metropolitan areas are being 'left behind' (Gbohoui *et al.*, 2019; International Monetary Fund, 2019; Mackinnon *et al.*, 2021; OECD, 2014). Given the nature of restructuring that will be required as part of the climate transition, ensuring that existing inequalities and disparities are not further entrenched is a major challenge. Identifying and harnessing existing assets and capabilities will be key to a 'just transition'.

Explores the development trajectories, challenges and pathways towards transition in three case study locations in Donegal, Leitrim and Westmeath. As each place has unique development trajectories, challenges, assets and

capabilities, a case-based approach provides an opportunity to explore place-based approaches to just transition. The lessons from the three study areas are used to inform a wider discussion on the potential of place-based approaches to just transition.

Drawing on the literature on place-based policies, our empirical work and co-creation approaches, we *identify lessons and recommendations* that could support co-created, place-based approaches to just transition in Ireland.

1.3 Methodology

The research design is a qualitative, multi-methods approach beginning with a broad literature review, national territorial analysis to inform the selection of case studies, and subsequently a case-study approach that informs broad lessons. It was undertaken in four stages.

1.3.1 Stage 1: Literature and methodological review

Literature on place-based sustainable regional development and co-design methodologies is of particular significance given the scope of the project. Work of particular interest related to place-based regional development, by Rodriguez-Pose and Wilkie (2017), Salvia and Quaranta (2017), Makkonen and Kahlia (2020) and Tomaney et al. (2019), focuses on how spatial inequalities at a national scale can be mitigated by promoting more sustainable and inclusive growth, grounded in a place-based approach. The research also explores a variety of co-design methodologies including work related to community wealth building, the building of community-based coalitions in both urban and rural areas (for example the [UrbanA network](#)), best practice in co-creation (e.g. Horvath and Carpenter, 2020) and the people's transition (McCabe, 2020). Co-creation practices have the potential to build capacity for a just transition but also offer the opportunity to open up dialogue about any conflicts that may exist between sustainability and justice goals (Ciplet, 2020) for a just transition.

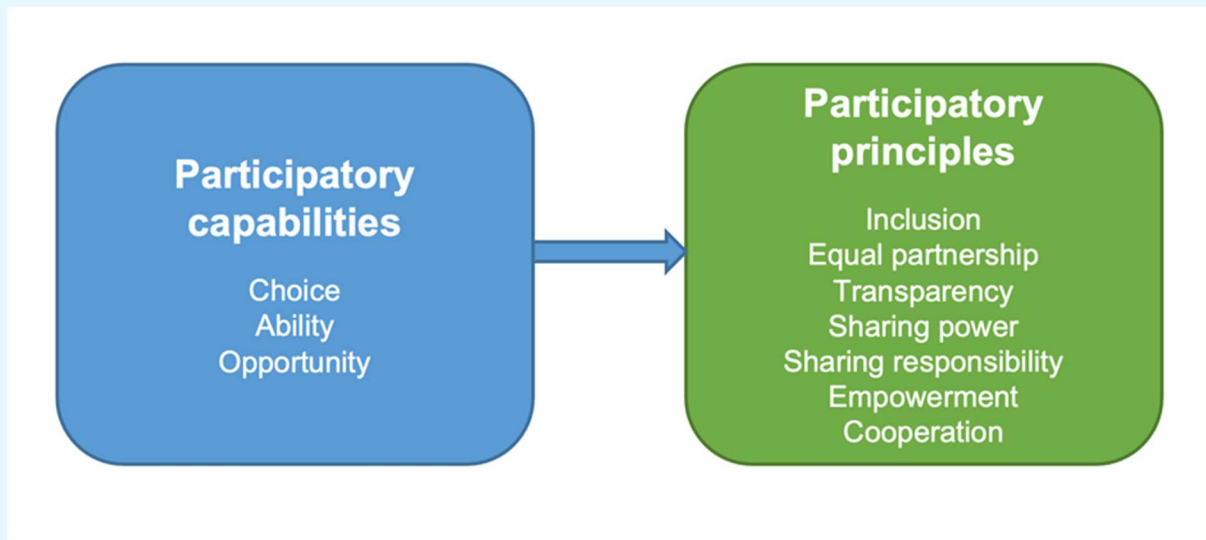
The Capability Approach (CA) (Sen, 1999) is adopted as a wellbeing framework to operationalise a place based approach for a just transition in our study areas. The CA has become one of the most influential theoretical tools for conceptualising questions relating to social justice and there is now a growing literature combining the CA and energy justice (Melin et al., 2021); participatory approaches for place making (Clark et al. 2019; Frediani, 2021); and a grassroots, people's just transition (Belda-Miquel et al., 2020; Mc Cabe, 2020).

The core concepts within the CA are 'functionings' (the 'beings', 'doings' and 'havings' people value and have reason to value); capability (different combinations of functionings that one can achieve or choose from); and human agency - a person's ability to pursue and realise the goals that he/she/they value or have reason to value. For the purpose of this research there is a particular focus on evaluating those conversion factors that convert resources to capabilities and functionings that ultimately enhance wellbeing. Examining these conversion factors (personal, environmental, social) paves the way for understanding barriers to and pathways towards a just transition in particular places. A digital participatory tool ([commonplace.is](#)) was chosen to support people to express sentiments and identify potential place based opportunities for a just transition. The relationship between participatory principles and associated participatory capabilities is detailed in Figure 1.

1.3.2 Stage 2: Territorial analysis

A national territorial analysis is undertaken to provide the wider governance, economic and environmental context for the three study sites selected to inform the discussion of a place-based approach to just transition. Path dependency plays a critical role in influencing place-based development as it shapes both problems and opportunities. Understanding the broad context is important for identifying key actions, actors and institutions that can support or inhibit place-based development. The statistical profiling at a national scale provides the wider context and justification for the three study sites selected and highlights the varying character of the transitions faced across Ireland.

Figure 1: Participatory Capabilities



Source: redrawn from Frediani, 2008.

1.3.3 Stage 3: Identifying study areas

A case study approach is appropriate when in-depth or a rich understanding of a particular phenomena is under investigation. Given our desire to explore place-based potentials and opportunities for a just transition, we selected three study sites representing different opportunities in different types of areas informed by the territorial analysis, literature and overarching goals of the research. Given the increased importance in the literature and policy work (OECD, 2020c) on urban-rural dynamics for development, wellbeing and supporting transition, we focused on three rural areas with different relational dynamics.

The three case study locations are:

- Inishowen Peninsula, Donegal (rural area close to a functional urban area)

- North Leitrim (rural area far from a functional urban area)

- Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath (rural area close to a functional urban area)

Introducing Inishowen

Inishowen, a peninsula in the north of Donegal, includes Ireland's most northerly point (Malin Head) and has close functional connections to Derry City. Cross-border connections are part of the everyday lived experience and the north-west cross-border city-region (Derry-Letterkenny-Strabane) is a key part of the economic present and future (Figure 2). Inishowen comprises two local electoral areas – Carndonagh (LEA-4) in the north and Bunrana (LEA-5) in the south (see Appendix 1 for statistical profile).

Figure 2: Inishowen Peninsula and the north-west city-region



Source: © openstreetmap

The total population is 39,330; there is a slightly older age profile in Carradonagh, which is more remote and inaccessible, and a comparatively higher dependence (11%) on primary economic activities. Building and construction activity is more important to the local economy (average 8%) compared with the national average (5%). These sectors (agriculture, forestry, fishing, building and construction) are particularly vulnerable to the changes that will be needed to meet climate action targets and thus the transitions required here are likely to have significant impacts.

The north-west of Ireland has for many decades had weaker economic prosperity relative to the rest of the country and has been reclassified by the European Commission from a 'More Developed Region' to a 'Transition Region' for the Post 2020 (2021-2027) funding period (NWRA, 2020). There is a history of underinvestment in the area, low educational attainment and high unemployment and acknowledging this is the first step to examining a place based approach to just transition in Donegal and the North West city region. However there is also significant potential and the *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032* identifies sustainability as the fifth pillar of growth and central ingredient for successful places.

Based on census data and interviews, it is clear that at present, people travel elsewhere for work during the week, impacting on vitality and quality of life. There is poor transport infrastructure due to underinvestment and an over-reliance on car travel because of the highly dispersed population. In terms of farming, smaller farmers rely on subsidies and off farm income. Farm intensification causes pollution issues with knock-on effects for both tourism and quality of life. Donegal and particularly the Inishowen peninsula relies on tourism from Northern Ireland, and in particular Inishowen relies on visitors from Derry. The local development culture is strong in the area but local development organizations need increased capacity and resources to become involved in regional and national policy and associated practice. In particular, the mica crisis in Donegal is having a major impact on human wellbeing, quality of life and local economic development.

Historically there has been a relatively weak urban structure in this part of the country but the potential of embedding a successful North West city region through Letterkenny's development as a strategic Growth Centre in cross-border partnership with Derry and Strabane has been recognised by local authorities (Donegal County Council, Derry and Strabane district council), governments North and South and also the European Commission. Moving from a history of

underinvestment and a legacy of the troubles, the councils have worked towards creating the foundations for social and economic change and civic environmental behaviours. There is increased awareness around local greening and quality of life since the arrival of the Covid 19 pandemic. The city-region supports skills needed for the circular economy and links to further and higher education. Just transition is recognised in the plans for the North West City region and is seen as the optimal scale for climate action. It therefore provides a rich case-study to inform our work on place-based approaches to just transition.

Introducing North Leitrim

Situated in the North-west of Ireland, county Leitrim has a direct land border with Sligo, Roscommon, Cavan, Longford, Donegal and Fermanagh (Figure 3). A rural county, Leitrim has a population of just over 32,000 (Census, 2016) and also has the highest number of vacant properties in the country at 30%. This research focuses on north Leitrim, served by the Key Town of Manorhamilton which is also the local electoral area for our study. The population aged over 65 years (17%) is proportionately higher than the national average (13%) but there is also a marginally younger population, leading to a higher dependency ratio. With a population of 10,821 recorded in the Census of 2016, this is one of the most sparsely populated parts of Ireland. Sectorally, agriculture, professional services and public services are of more significance to the local economy than national averages with commerce and trade, transport and communications of lesser importance (see Appendix 1 for statistical profile). This profile is also reflected in socio-economic groupings which shows that the proportion of farmers is almost double the national average, lower skilled workers are also significantly higher, but higher professional and managerial cohorts are lower.

Figure 3: County Leitrim



Source: ©openstreetmap

Being located at the cross-roads of a number of counties, the development trajectory of Leitrim is influenced by its proximity to large urban centres outside the county boundaries and, in particular, Sligo and Sligo town. Interviewees suggest that the northern part of the county has more of an affiliation to Donegal, the south east looks towards Cavan for service provision, while the west of the county has strong connections to Sligo. The county has on average the lowest house prices in Ireland but, perhaps due to Covid-induced urban to rural migration, house prices are now increasing. The county has never had substantial and sustainable employment and there is a perception that there is a lack of political clout, perhaps given that it is combined with the larger and more influential county Sligo for parliamentary purposes. There is no strong manufacturing tradition and the county lacks a major urban centre. The primary urban centre (Carrick-on-Shannon) with a population of 4000 people is located in the south-west of the county, while many of the other larger settlements are also located south of Lough Allen. The county is beyond the influence of Dublin in terms of employment but there is migration to Dublin and other cities during the week. 90% of people in the county live outside a settlement of 15,000 people. This presents a significant challenge in terms of enhancing sustainability and meeting the objectives of the National Planning Framework which argues for more compact growth in urban centres of scale.

The county and North Leitrim in particular offers a unique opportunity to be away from the hustle and bustle of city life. Its rural character means that policies and practices focused on towns and villages can be seen as 'anti-rural'. The rural identity is reflected in the make-up of local councillors with the majority representing rural issues and people. There is 18.9% forest cover in the county, the highest in the country (Teagasc, 2020) and while this presents some economic opportunity, it is also generating concerns around quality of life, wellbeing and environment. Overcoming challenges in farming, forestry, urban/rural identities and accessibility will be key to the transition to a low-carbon economy.

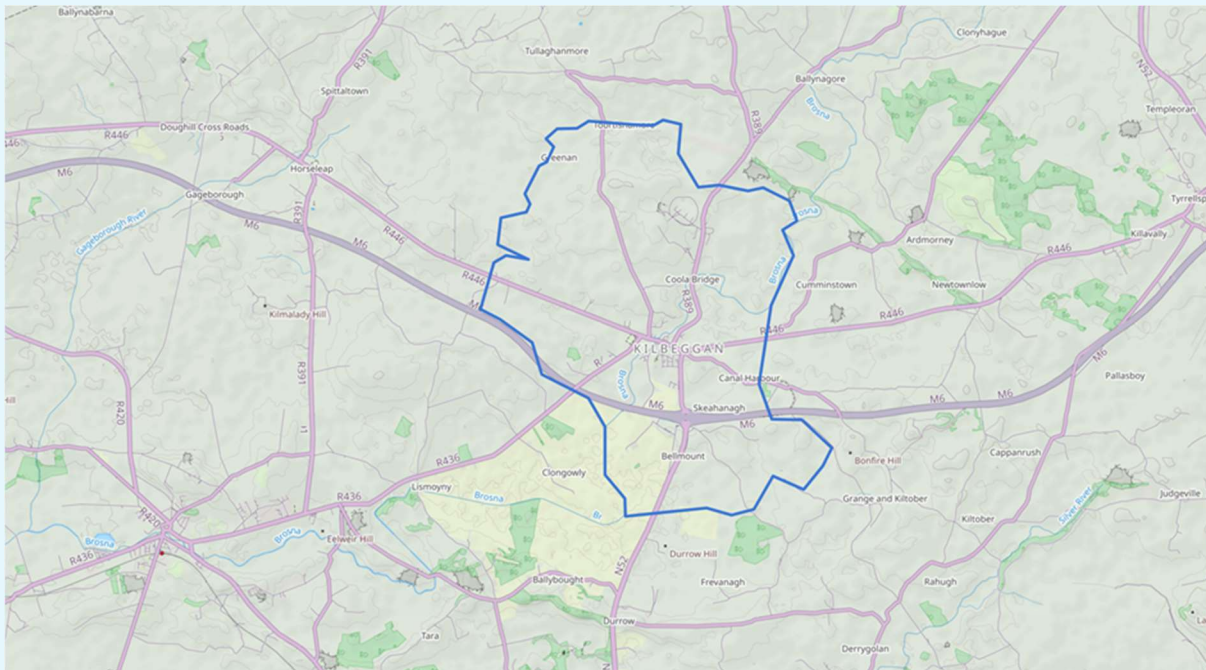
Introducing Kilbeggan

Kilbeggan is located in county Westmeath, in the Midlands regional sub-planning district. It is characterised as a rural area close to (but not within) a functional urban area, but practically it falls very much under the influence of the Dublin metropolitan area. Kilbeggan forms part of the larger local electoral area of Moate (pop. 18,444) but the town itself had a population of 1,288 in 2016 (see Appendix 1 for statistical profile, Figure 4). Increasingly Kilbeggan is viewed as a commuter town for Dublin with significant implications for the carbon footprint of the town, and there is a very heavy reliance on private car transport. Almost half of the houses in the town were constructed between 2001-2010 (CSO, 2016) catering for over-spill housing demand for Dublin. A significant proportion of the population are engaged in non-manual, skilled manual or semi-skilled occupations. There are higher proportions of the population working in extractive industries, building and construction and manufacturing. The challenges to be faced in transitioning effectively to a lower carbon economy are therefore potentially very significant.

County Westmeath has a strong rural identity but there is also strong recognition of the growing importance of urban centres. Farmers in the county are aware of the pressures on agriculture to reduce emissions. According to a recent KPMG report (2021:14), a national livestock reduction of 18% for dairy and 22% for beef with 30% reduction of emissions (against 2018 levels), would result in a reduction in full time equivalent (FTE) employment of 7,400 (-6%) up to 15,400 (-12%). With a livestock reduction of 45% for dairy and a 47% reduction for beef with a 50% reduction (against 2018 levels), there would be a reduction in full time equivalent (FTE) employment of 26,700 (-21%). Farmers in Westmeath are willing to do their part to reduce emissions but adequate supports need to be in place and consideration needs to be given to how rural towns and villages can support farming and local food producers.

Nationally, just transition as a concept has been synonymous with peat decommissioning, particularly in the midlands. Peatlands cover approximately 9% of county Westmeath (natura.ie). The main peatland type associated with Westmeath is Raised Bog, which are classified as rain fed, acidic and nutrient poor. The remaining peatlands of Westmeath cover an approximate area of 16,391 hectares and consists of 24 intact raised bog sites, 27 cutover raised bog sites, 24 cutaway raised bog sites and 69 fen sites. Engagement with landowners is a significant factor to overcome in achieving a just transition. The potential of a decommissioned peat bog for local development is currently being demonstrated in neighbouring Co. Offaly, but key to achieving a just transition in these areas is to understand what communities want themselves.

Figure 4: Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath and hinterland

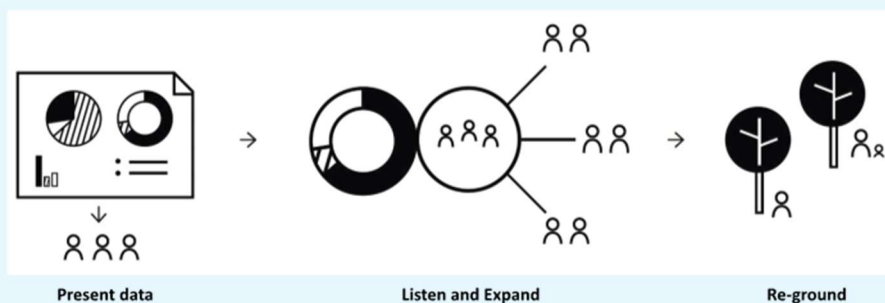


Source: ©openstreetmap

1.3.4 Stage 4: Case-based research and co-creation approach

Within each case study area, a co-creation approach was adopted. This was informed by the success of a similar approach by the team as part of the Mapping Green Dublin project (Clavin et al, 2021) and responds to the call by NESG (2020) to develop community-based approaches to drive local community and economic development, sharing local knowledge and developing approaches to transition that enable community action. Figure 5 illustrates the three stages of the co-creation process (Clavin et al., 2021). The research is also informed and shaped by the capabilities approach and a desire to enhance the capabilities of rural communities, which have been diminished due to differences in income, housing, health, education and commuting patterns as well as demographic changes (CSO, 2019).

Figure 5: Stages of the co-creation process



An initial mapping of key relevant stakeholders in each location was completed and semi-structured interviews undertaken with them (see Appendix 3 for list of interviewees). Combined with other documentary and media sources, the results were used to derive key themes of importance to inform the co-creation phase. Given the context of the pandemic and timelines for the research, in-person community engagement workshops were not possible. Instead, a digital platform (Commonplace.is), that has been widely used in the UK and elsewhere to engage communities with topical issues such as climate and regeneration, was used to reach communities in each of the study areas. The platform is open access and separate 'Commonplaces' were created for each study site based on key themes identified during the interviews. A difficulty that emerged from stakeholder interviews was a lack of general understanding on, and capacity to think about, just transitions and overcoming this barrier was a key concern in the design of the Commonplace sites.

For many stakeholders interviewed, even those working within local government, just transition remains an abstract concept although specific challenges identified by interviewees are clearly related to the climate challenge, how to manage transitions to a lower carbon economy, and how to support greener and fairer economic development. The 'Commonplaces' were therefore tailored to each location using grounded and accessible language to engage wider communities. Following the territorial analysis (present data) and stakeholder interviews about understandings of just transition in the three areas (listening), a specific just transition pathway was identified for each case study in order to explore what a place based approach might be and to focus on (re-ground) ideas for change. The three 'hooks' used to gather community ideas in each location were:

- [Inishowen Climate Conversations](#): Have your say on pathways towards a fairer climate future on the peninsula.

- [Eco-tourism in North Leitrim](#): Have your say on enhancing wellbeing and economic development in the area

- [Greening Kilbeggan](#): Have your say on how to create a fairer climate future for your town

In each location, a local partner from community development/ local government/government agency was sought to promote the platform and raise awareness. The links for each platform were first circulated via social media and through local community group Facebook pages and WhatsApp groups, within GAA clubs, town Facebook pages, through Tidy Town committees and through local parish newsletters and through the Public Participation Network (PPN). In a second stage of promotion, posters with QR codes linking to the websites were posted in libraries, cafes and central stores.

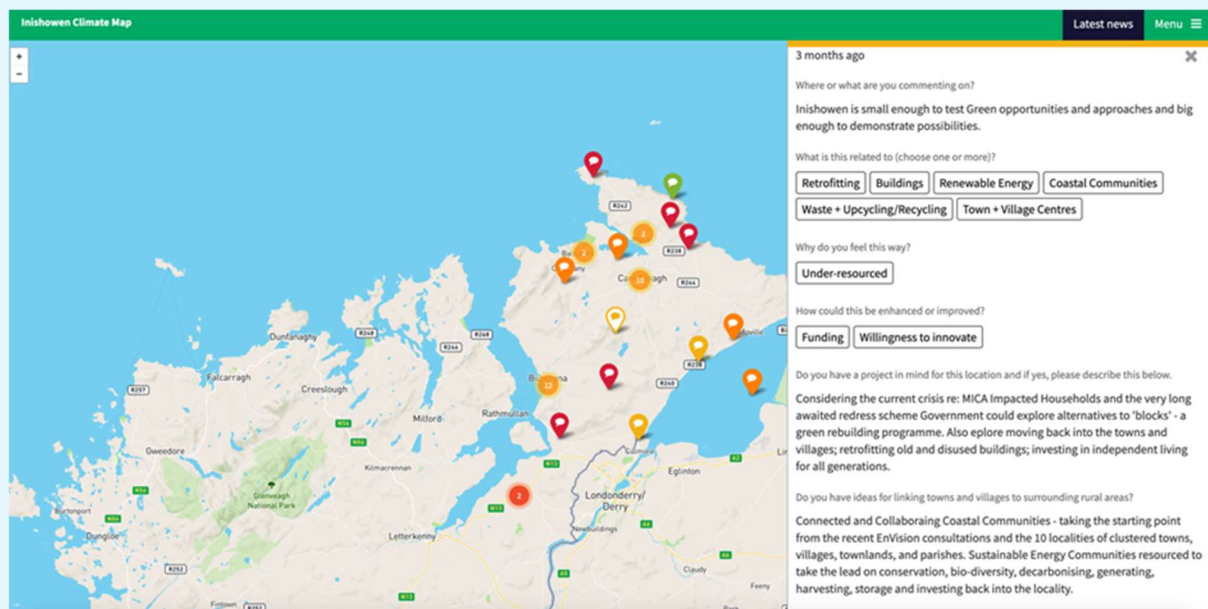
These platforms remained open for comments from November 9th 2021-December 31st 2021. Sites were then closed for comments but will remain online in perpetuity. Across the 6-7 weeks, the sites generated a good volume of traffic with a significant number of comments generating valuable qualitative data (Table 1).

Table 1: Responses to the Commonplace community engagement platform

	Kilbeggan	Inishowen	North Leitrim
Contributions (comments)	68	78	54
Respondents (people who contributed)	15	37	23
Total no. of visitors to site	279	340	305
News subscribers (those who want to know more)	12	27	11

Place-based carbon intensive industries, local concerns, resource deficits and inequalities were identified through the territorial analysis and in-depth interviews. The Commonplace platform provided a space for participants to state how they feel about particular places and spaces, using the geo-located tool and accompanying online survey prompt questions, and to share ideas about how deficits may be overcome and assets built upon. Participants were asked to share ideas for projects and pathways for a just transition in each locality (eco-tourism in Leitrim; greening the town centre in Kilbeggan; creation of a distinctive green peninsula in Inishowen) (See Figure 6 for an example). As numbers of comments increase, a heatmap is created to visualise sentiments i.e. how people feel about particular issues in particular places (green is positive – yellow is neutral – red is negative sentiment). The heatmap provides a visual account of how people feel about just transition related topics in the area. Participants can ‘like’ other comments and share the platform on Facebook and twitter to build momentum for certain ideas. This crowdsourcing element builds momentum for certain just transition pathways in particular locations.

Figure 6: The Commonplace digital tool for the Inishowen peninsula Co. Donegal



Source: www.inishowenmap.commonplace.is

The questions posed in each location differed reflecting the place-based nature of the activity. These are detailed in Appendix 4.

1.3.5 Stage 4: Data analysis, synthesis and reporting

The data gathering in each area was followed by thematic analysis of interview data using NVivo software as well as analysis of the data gathered on each of the three Commonplaces. The main carbon intensive industries, sectoral impact and historical and cultural context for each place was derived from both the territorial analysis and the in-depth interviews. In keeping with the language and framework of the capability approach a content analysis of the specific ‘conversion factors’ and associated pathways was carried out. The interviews were then coded to identify common themes across the cases that can convert potential resources into just transition pathways and impact on wellbeing and quality of life. The commonplace closed questions were analysed quantitatively (see Appendix 4) and the responses to the open questions were analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis. The team synthesised the findings from the literature review and case-based work to derive key factors underpinning a place-based approach to just transition, address the core goals of the research and produce this final report.

Chapter 2

Place-based Regional Development: A Literature Review

KEY TAKE-AWAY MESSAGES

- Effectively addressing climate change and social justice requires recognition that not all places are equal, with smaller towns and rural areas facing much more difficult transitions.
- Three broad types of rural areas based on their relationships to functional urban areas have been identified by the OECD (2016), each facing different challenges but also embodying different potentials, opportunities and thus varying policy needs.
- The framework of individual and community wellbeing considers quality of life alongside material conditions and the ways these are shaped by the natural, human, social and economic capital, and influence capabilities.
- Place-based policies recognise that regions and communities have different assets and capabilities and that local actors are often best-placed to realise their endogenous potential for development.

This chapter reviews some key literature to inform an exploration of place-based opportunities for policy and practice in transition. In its recent report *Addressing Employment Vulnerability as Part of a Just Transition in Ireland*, NESC (2020) set out a vision for Ireland in 2050:

“Our vision for Ireland is to become a resilient, sustainable, thriving net zero economy, environment and society, using innovation and collective preparedness to shape the future we want to achieve. It is a vision for an Ireland where the State plays its part in ensuring mission-oriented actions to achieve a high-quality jobs economy, and productively addresses employment vulnerability as part of a just transition”.

Speaking in 2020 President Higgins stated:

“‘Just transition’ is, therefore, about profound structural change that has personal and societal ramifications. However, it is a transformation that will be defined by the values brought to it, hence the importance of all partners, trade unions and socially concerned employers being involved in the dialogue as to how the industry or sector is to be restructured.”

Although widely used to signal the direction of travel to a zero carbon economy – notably in the 2015 Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – Krawchenko and Gordon (2021a: 15) note, the concept of a ‘just transition’ encompasses simultaneously, ‘a political imperative, a policy goal and a set of practices to minimise the harmful impacts of industrial and economic transitions away from polluting and carbon intensive industries on workers and communities’. A just transition raises thorny distributional, procedural and recognitional issues that raise attendant social challenges (e.g., generational, gender and racial inequality, geographical disparities). In effecting such a large-scale and complex transition there is a great challenge in defining tangible outcomes and measuring progress.

Much existing literature on the place-based aspects of the transition to a zero-carbon economy has focused on the challenges of industrial, and particularly coal mining, regions – potentially the most obvious losers (e.g., Alberta Federation of Labour, 2017; Galgóczi, 2014; Weller, et al 2011; see also Mercier 2020). The closure of coalfields has demonstrated that communities typically face challenges of out-migration, worsening health conditions, growth in poverty and social disadvantage, collapsing housing markets and worsening service provision. A broader societal transition will have uneven geographical impacts, potentially creating winners and losers among places and exacerbating local and regional inequalities. The existing literature suggests that top-down and bottom-up action and collaboration is required to mitigate these impacts, although the range of relevant studies that address policy actions at the local or regional scale remains limited (see Mercier, 2020).

Smaller towns and rural areas face added challenges in managing structural transitions, because they possess fewer services and amenities, have less diversified economies, rely more on personal transportation than public transport, and have isolated pockets of poverty. Moreover, existing policy priorities and systems mean that not all regions are treated equally by governments in terms of public expenditure. In this context, broad policies aimed at achieving a zero-carbon economy can have uneven geographical impacts and unintentionally generate new sets of crises. This suggests that solutions for communities must take a place-based approach to addressing specific challenges, identifying unique assets, determining appropriate priorities (Krawchenko and Gordon, 2021b) and ‘rural proofing’ national policies and programmes. Collaboration and engagement between communities and decision-makers, support for community-led initiatives, and evidence-based policies, can aid successful transitions, suggesting communities themselves should be the focus of analysis and policy action. This also suggests that policymakers and leaders need to be supported to develop new skills sets and partnership-based approaches to maximise the effectiveness of interventions.

2.1 Regional development beyond the metropolis

In recent decades, rapid urbanisation on a global scale has been associated with a growing concentration of population, production, innovation and trade in large cities. At the European scale, these phenomena are visible in the rapid relative growth of capital cities, contributing to widening regional inequalities in most countries. Capital cities have been growing faster mainly through positive net migration and tend to have a higher share of the working-age population and a lower share of people aged 65 and over. Moreover, migrants from other EU countries and especially from outside the EU are more likely to settle in capital cities, which tend to have a more highly educated population. Except in Germany, capital cities have higher levels of productivity than their national economies and typically the number of fast-growth firms per capita is highest in capital metro-regions (European Commission, 2016). Within the frame of urban economics, these outcomes reflect processes of urban agglomeration. The growth of cities reflects the scale, density and concentration of economic activities in them and the role of thick labour markets, specialised goods and services suppliers and knowledge spill-overs (Glaeser, 2012; OECD, 2015). Also, within this frame, cities potentially are more energy-efficient, and their further densification should aid the transitions to zero-carbon. Higher levels of urban density are associated with lower levels of per capita energy use as a result of smaller households using less energy for heating and from lower consumption of petrol for private car journeys and concomitant increased use of public transport (Glaeser, 2012).

Although cities will be at the heart of solutions to the climate and biodiversity crises, ‘city-centrism’ (Pike, 2018) – the prioritising of cities in public policy and political discourse – has been challenged by a populist political backlash across the Global North, often originating in regions that have faced severe industrial restructuring or in lagging rural regions (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018; see also Morgenroth, 2018). For example, in France, President Macron’s decision to raise fuel taxes in 2018 provoked the ‘gilets jaunes’ protests which drew support from small towns and villages which were disproportionately affected by the changes but reflected wider complaints about the ‘unfair’ treatment of small towns and rural areas (Colomb, 2020), while in the US context President Trump received high levels of electoral support in coalmining regions (McQuarie, 2017). The political consequences of such development have led even notable advocates of ‘city centrism’ to turn their attention to the problems of ‘left-behind places’ (Glaeser, 2018).

A focus on city-centrism risks neglecting the contribution to development and broad wellbeing of places outside major urban centres, including rural areas and overlooks how a wide variety of places can contribute to development. Flows and linkages exist between all rural and urban areas, with their scale and strength determined by the nature of economic, social and cultural transformations. The diversity of rural–urban linkages means that local and regional governments are best placed to identify local needs and develop appropriate plans for their management. Decentralisation of government and planning systems is a global trend with diverse outcomes (OECD, 2012; Pike et al., 2017). In principle, decentralisation allows a more tailored focus on local problems and greater democratic accountability of regional planning, but also raises challenges where local governments struggle to provide services due to their inability to raise sufficient revenue. These problems can be mitigated by fiscal equalisation mechanisms and also by inter-municipal cooperation, collaboration in multi-level governance systems, and ‘borrowing scale’ by improving the access of rural places to services provided in urban areas (Tomaney et al, 2019).

Mercier (2020) has emphasised that structural transitions are complex and take time and, while there are no general templates for the management of these processes, there are lessons to be learned from elsewhere. International experience suggests that path dependency in local and regional development shapes the process of transition. Local, regional and national governments and private and community-based actors, therefore, must plan for a just transition in a coordinated way. Social dialogue is a necessary, if insufficient, condition for fostering the trust that allows a problem-solving approach to a transition which may be contentious but necessary. Without robust institutional structures, effective social dialogue to create and achieve widely agreed targets and goals and adapt to changing conditions is unlikely. A focus on directly affected workers and companies is not enough to ensure a just transition; place-based, relational approaches that valorise and develop existing skills and regional assets and capacities are necessary to create long-term, high-quality employment and wellbeing. Governments at all scales have a coordinating and economic planning role and state investment to support alternative infrastructure is a key driver of a just transition. At the firm level, personnel restructuring processes in companies, such as early retirement and internal retraining, negotiated between companies and trade unions and brokered by government, can lead to an orderly phase-out for workers, although balance is required alongside the community and environmental interest. In short, comprehensive, multi-scale and integrated approaches are required (Krawchenko and Gordon, 2021b; Tomaney et al, 2019). Ireland is at a very early stage but breaking down urban-rural binaries will be a critical part of developing integrated responses.

Within developed countries, rural regions are home to 25 per cent of the OECD population and contain most of the land, water and other natural resources which are crucial for urban development. Rural areas are heterogenous and develop in diverse ways, but low densities of development, small workforces, high reliance on extractive industries and processing activities that are sensitive to transport costs and vulnerable to competition, together with low levels of innovation, can make rural regions less resilient than large, diverse urban economies. In some cases, though, rural regions are making novel use of their traditional resource base. Food security concerns, the desire to reduce food miles, and the desire for sovereign capabilities in (renewable) energy production, raise new development possibilities for some rural and peri-urban regions in terms of sustainable development. New or expanding activities create value, including rural tourism, wildlife conservation and the stewardship of landscapes. The shift to renewable energy production has boosted the development of rural areas and there is a new recognition of the ecosystem services, such as carbon capture and water management, which are provided by rural areas. Rural areas can be places of opportunity and some rural regions are growing at a fast rate, but this generates planning challenges (OECD, 2016).

The OECD identifies three categories of rural regions:

- rural regions within a functional urban area (FUA) – a city plus its commuting zone;

- rural regions close to a FUA; and

- remote rural regions.

These regions have different regional potentials, challenges and policy needs. Rural regions within or near to FUAs generally demonstrate the greatest potential for economic development. Proximity allows urban residents easy access to rural areas, while rural residents have easier access to advanced public and private services. Within OECD countries a large majority of rural residents and rural economic activity are found near urban areas. Urban and rural regions become increasingly connected and interdependent but remain distinct in terms of their economic functions, settlement patterns and ways of life. Moreover, the pattern of these links varies significantly between and within countries, further emphasising the need for place-based understandings and policy responses. In this context we can chart an evolution of regional planning for rural development from a centralised, sector-focused, top-down approach to one shaped by multi-level governance and integrated policies, which recognises the diversity of rural places and their relationships to urban areas (Table 2).

Table 2: OECD Rural Policy 3.0: Geography of Opportunity

	Old paradigm	New Rural Paradigm (2006)	Rural Policy 3.0: Implementing the New Rural Paradigm
Objectives	Equalisation	Competitiveness	Well-being considering multiple dimensions of: 1) the economy; 2) society; and 3) the environment
Policy focus	Support for a single dominant resource sector	Support for multiple sectors based on their competitiveness	Low-density economies differentiated by type of rural area
Tools	Subsidies for firms	Investments in qualified firms and communities	Integrated rural development approach – spectrum of support to public sector, firms and third sector
Key actors and stakeholders	Farm organisations and national governments	All levels of government and all relevant departments plus local stakeholders	Involvement of: 1) public sector – multi-level governance; 2) private sector – for-profit firms and social enterprise; 3) third sector – non-governmental organisations and civil society
Policy approach	Uniformly applied top-down policy	Bottom-up policy, local strategies	Integrated approach with multiple policy domains
Rural definition	Not urban	Rural as a variety of distinct types of place	Three types of rural: 1) within a functional urban area; 2) close to a functional urban area; 3) far from a functional urban area

Source: OECD (2016). Rural Policy 3.0. In *OECD Regional Outlook 2016* (pp. 131–219). <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264260245-en>

2.2 Place-based regional development

In recent research related to Ireland, Moore (2020) has suggested the importance of a focus on place and community involvement and the value of place attachment and local knowledge in the management of a just transition. She invokes the concept of ‘spatial justice’, as proposed by geographers, which highlights the fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and opportunities to use them. These ideas will need to be fleshed out if they are to guide planning for a just transition in Ireland. However, they can draw on work by Clavin et al. (2021) who have demonstrated how co-created green planning ensures that interventions respond to neighbourhood needs, have high social and cultural value within the community, maximise opportunities for community wellbeing and can be sustained.

Place-based development will require a significant shift in thinking by policymakers and require new policy and governing approaches. Questions of how, when and where to intervene to promote local economic development have been shaped in the Global North and the Global South over several decades by what might be termed, the ‘spatially-blind’ policy approach. This approach was set out in the World Bank’s influential 2019 *World Development Report* which called for policies to be ‘designed without explicit consideration for space’ (World Bank, 2019: 187). The assumption here is that policies aimed at redistributing employment to lagging regions generated inefficiencies and hindered the market allocation of resources to the most productive places which are assumed to be the major urban agglomerations. But, in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis, these ideas have been challenged. In the Global North, however, the populist backlash against globalisation and liberal democracy has often been founded on the resentments of places ‘left-behind’, as wealth and resources have been concentrated in major urban agglomerations (Rodriguez-Pose, 2018). This outcome provides a warning from history for debates about what an unjust transition looks like and draws attention to the need for policy alternatives.

In this context, recent debates about the value of place-based approaches to development ought to be considered (see Pike et al, 2017). Place-based approaches rest on several insights about what types of local development policies are most effective.

- Appreciation of context is critical to designing appropriate and effective development policies. Key here are the interactions between local institutions and economic geography.

- Sectoral policies inevitably have spatial implications, but these are often overlooked by policymakers. Place-based policies are aimed at identifying under-used potential in lagging regions through tailored policy interventions.

- Place-based policies can contribute to the achievement of spatial equity in addressing the differential ability to people to move to more productive regions with stronger labour markets.

- Place-based policies afford more attention to places outside the main urban agglomerations – such as intermediate and smaller cities and rural areas – whose development strategies cannot replicate those of metropolitan regions.

- In practice, ‘spatially-blind policies’ operate as de facto ‘place-based policies’ insofar as they underpin the growth of large urban economies and may even contribute to increasing agglomeration diseconomies.

- Analyses of the importance of local context are hamstrung by the absence of data availability and quality and the lack of mainstream economics engagement with the qualitative research identifying such effects.

- Some spatially blind approaches rest heavily on deductive and positivist frameworks that conceive of the economy in terms of macroeconomic aggregates (e.g., national GDP, unemployment, etc.) that abstract from local contexts and which have less purchase when we shift our metrics away from economic output to human well-being (see Stiglitz et al, 2011).

Figure 7 attempts to summarise how a place-based approach might be developed. In practice, people and place are inextricably intertwined. People are often deeply embedded in and attached to places for a range of economic, social, emotional, cultural and even spiritual reasons. Tuan (1971) asserts that a sense of place contributes to a sense of who we are. People live, learn, work and play not in abstract economies but in real places that they help to make. The physical, social, civic and cultural assets in places shape the formation, location and mobility of labour and capital and opportunities to earn wages and make profits. In this way, place-based policies can be justified insofar as they contribute to the upgrading of locally-specific ‘fundamentals’ that might include, ‘a well-educated local population, the result of a strong tradition of good schooling; a local culture of entrepreneurship; natural advantages of climate or resources; sustained public policy differences such as differences in tax rates and quality of infrastructure’ (Krugman, 2005: 38-39).

2.3 Community wellbeing and community development

A dimension of growing importance in considering place-based opportunities for policy and practice concerns new conceptualisations of the economy and economic development that go beyond the conventional understandings of growth focused on rising GDP (Stiglitz, et al 2011). The OECD proposes conceiving of development through the framework of well-being which considers quality of life alongside material conditions and the ways these are shaped by the accumulation and depletion of natural, human, social and economic capital (Figure 8). At the regional scale, place characteristics form the conditions in which these different forms of capital are produced (Figure 9).

Figure 7: Elements of a potential place-based approach

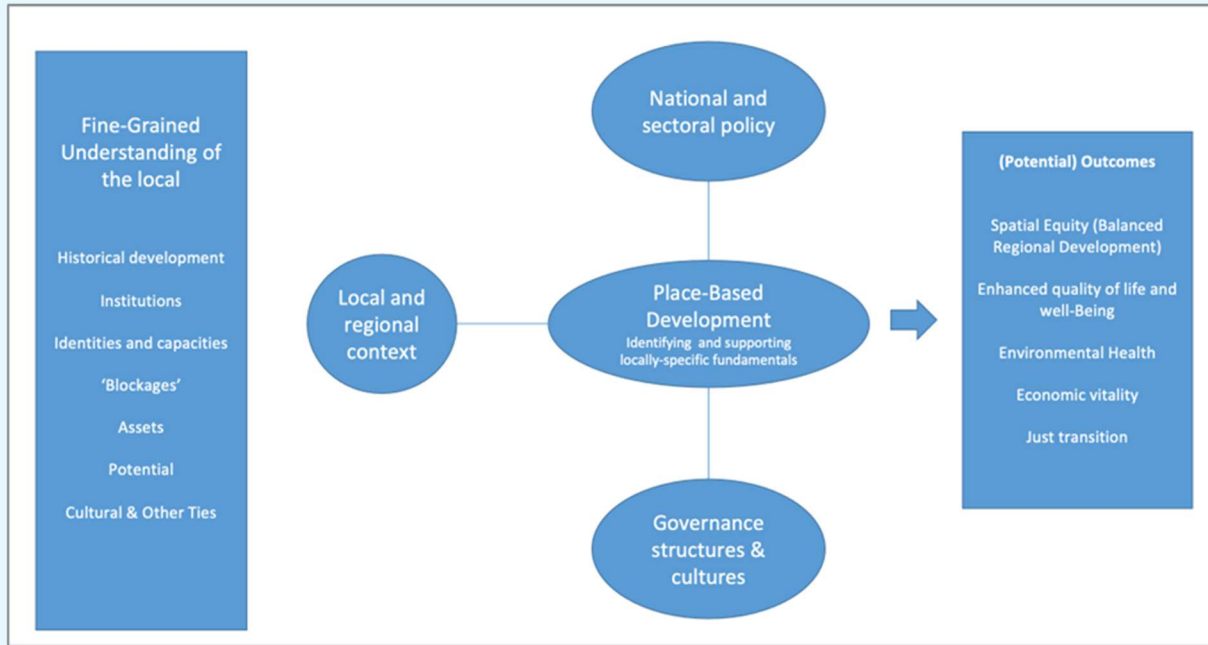
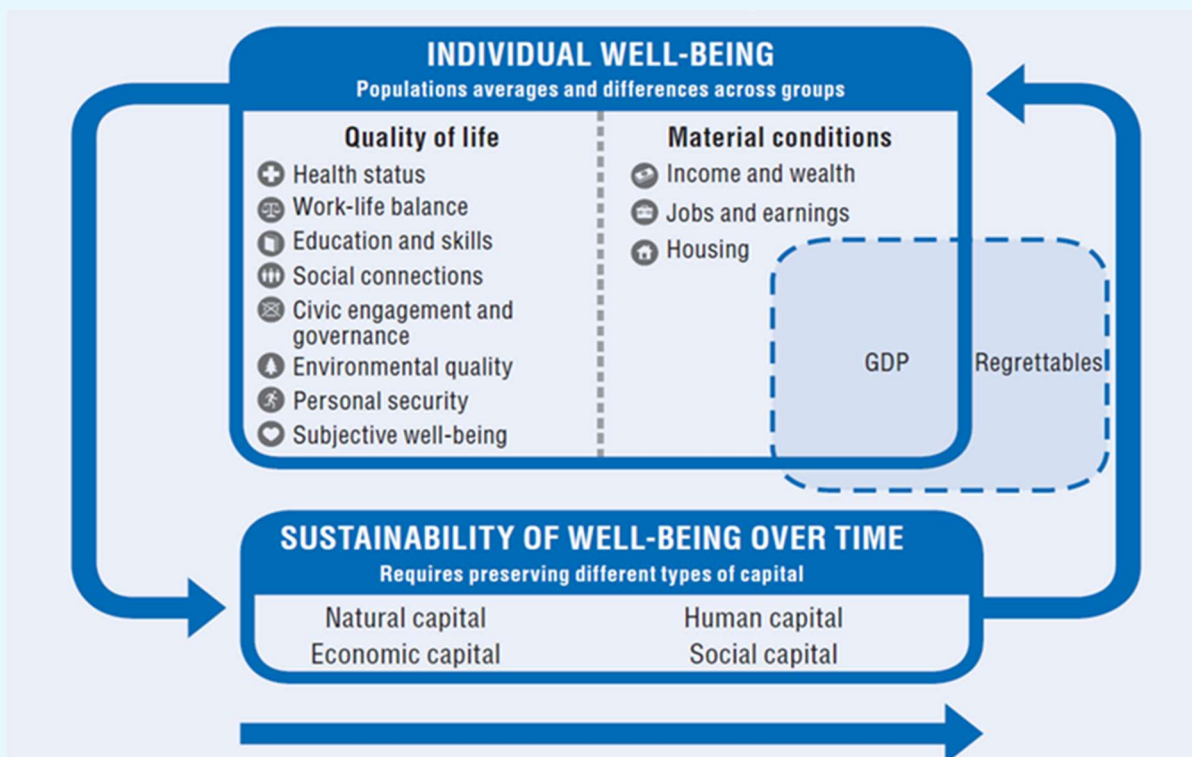
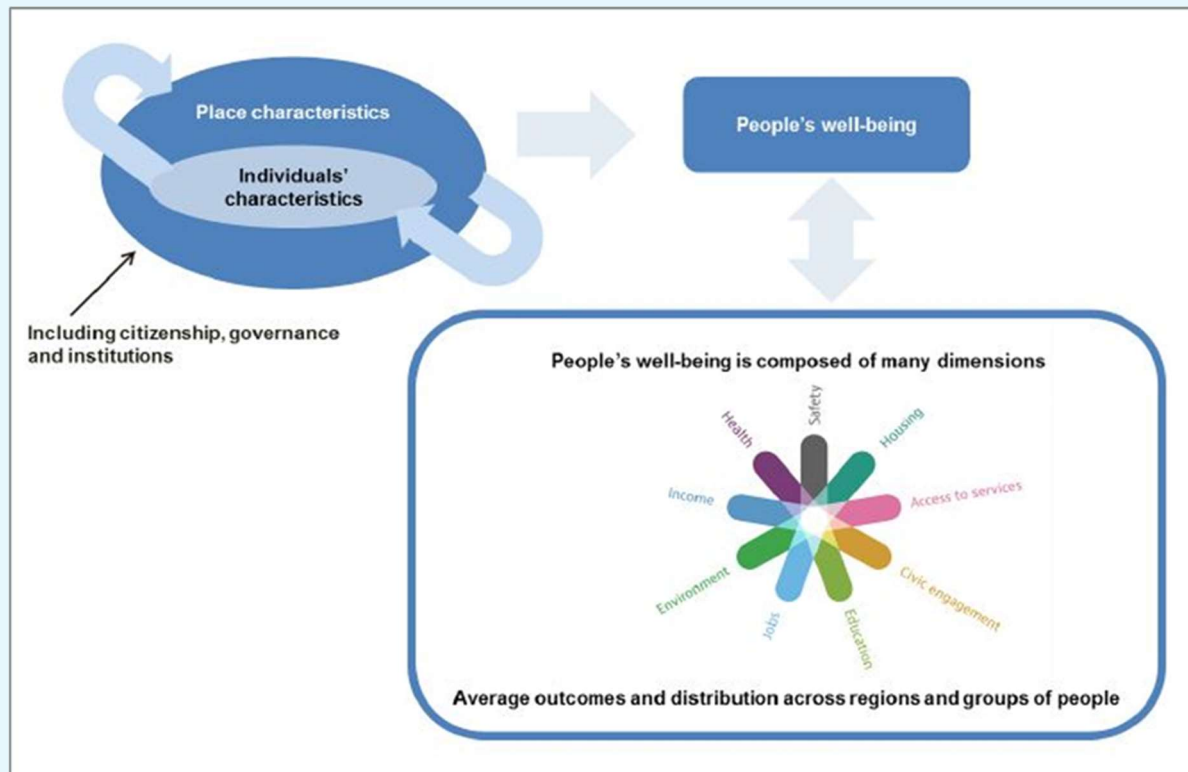


Figure 8: OECD Better Life Initiative Conceptual Framework



Source: OECD (2020a), How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-being, OECD:Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9870c393-en.s>

Figure 9: Regional well-being conceptual framework



Source: OECD. (2021) Framework to measure regional and local well-being . Retrieved August 26, 2021, from <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/regionaldevelopment/regional-well-being-framework.htm>

A well-being approach to development suggests the need to move beyond traditional policy approaches that favour the attraction of inward investment, promoting R&D and the provision of major infrastructure, which have typically reflected the policy preferences of national governments, but which often have little application in rural areas, or may even be to their disadvantage. Among the alternatives that are visible currently are community wealth building, re-municipalisation of services, the attraction of 'anchor institutions' and economies of sharing and caring. Each of these approaches is focused on aspects of place development and of harnessing the capabilities of communities at present.

One promising conceptualisation for thinking about place-based development challenges is the Foundational Economy (FE) (Foundational Economy Collective, 2018, Heslop, et al, 2019). FE refers to the basic requirements of civilised life for all citizens irrespective of their income and location. It includes material infrastructure – pipes and cables and utility distribution systems for water, electricity, retail banking, etc. – and providential services – education, health, dignified care for the elderly and income maintenance. Conventional ways of theorising and measuring the economy render the FE invisible and overlook its contribution to development. Orthodox thinking is fixated on the contribution of high-tech, knowledge-based industries and property-led regeneration to increases in GDP. But growth in GDP is not translating into improvements in living standards for many households and provides only a narrow and desiccated index of progress. Understanding the FE is essential to thinking about alternative forms of economic development, because it is welfare-critical for those with limited access to private provision; it underpins household consumption; and it is a large employer in sectors like water, energy and eldercare, which typically are sheltered from international competition. Moreover, neglected mundane activities, such as going to the supermarket, provide everyday necessities and can be linchpins of local economies. In current discussions about industrial strategy, with a few exceptions, the FE is rarely mentioned, but the supply of these services is critical to rising living standards and social wellbeing.

Recent work on the FE (FE 2.0) has addressed the importance of both place and the transition to a zero carbon economy and the relationship between the two (Foundational Economy Collective, forthcoming). It incorporates the concept of the 'reliance system', which refers to resource conversion systems that are defined by the capacity of their input/output relations to regenerate nature and considers its importance for the foundation zone of economic activities. Work on the wood economy in Wales has both demonstrated the potential contribution of the sector to sustainable development but also its reliance on complex backward and forward linkages, requiring complex multi-level policy interventions to shape its sustainable development. Such interventions require detailed understanding of place and the enablers and constraints of development. Simultaneously, place-based interventions must rest on an understanding that communities are complex assemblages of household groups differentiated by age, income, social experience, and political identification. Effective place-based intervention raises big questions about the capacity of the local, regional and central state to effect such change – in a sector like wood and forestry specialist technical knowledge is key to effective intervention. These questions apply in all jurisdictions but seem especially pressing in the Irish case.

2.4 Wellbeing and the Capability Approach (CA)

In this research, the capability approach is practiced as a way to draw out the potential of a place-based approach to just transition. This approach suggests that while theoretically everyone has the right to make choices or engage with policies that support their wellbeing, not everyone has the capacity or capabilities to maximise their quality of life and wellbeing. The Capability Approach (CA) therefore focuses on people and their quality of life, is focused on identifying how people's choices can be enlarged through supportive mechanisms (Haq, 2002) and offers an evaluative space for assessing human wellbeing (Sen, 1999; 2006; 2010).

In linking this to economic development, Amartya Sen proposes the advancement of real freedoms that individuals enjoy, rather than simply focusing on metrics such as GDP or income-per-capita or welfare economics more broadly. In conceptualizing and evaluating wellbeing, this human agency-led approach unpacks the 'beings', 'doings', 'havings' that people value and have reason to value. The core concepts within the capability framework (Nussbaum and Sen, 1993; Alkire, 2003; Sen, 2005) are 'functionings' which are the 'beings', 'doings' and 'havings' people value and have reason to value; capability – different combinations of functionings that one can achieve or choose from; and human agency – a person's ability to pursue and realise the goals that he/she/they value. Translating resources into functionings and capabilities that affect wellbeing is not direct and this process is mediated by conversion factors that can influence the extent to which capabilities can be enjoyed and functionings obtained. Conversion factors may include personal circumstances; environmental factors; and social factors (Sen, 1999; Crocker and Robeyns, 2010).

There is a growing multidisciplinary literature both adding to and critiquing the CA including commentary on the approach being theoretically underspecified and too focussed on individual wellbeing. According to Robeyns (2008) we need to better understand certain aspects of social and individual lives, and why states and processes are the way they are in particular places in order to reap the benefits of a capabilities approach in practice. Nussbaum (1990) does bring a partial theory of justice to the CA as she links capabilities to constituted guaranteed elements and holds the government responsible for maintaining these (Deneulin, 2002; 2011). She has asserted that while the aim of the government is to provide the structuring conditions for people to live a good human life, this does not mean that humans have no choice on how they live (Nussbaum, 1988: 150) and dimensions of wellbeing are flexible and dynamic.

As there are material and social structuring conditions to individual capabilities (such as a quality public health system is needed to give opportunities to be healthy, social norms of gender equality to give opportunities for all to be educated, etc.), so there are structuring conditions which do or do not enable people to have the opportunity to orient their freedom towards their own wellbeing and the common good (Deneulin and Townsend, 2007; Deneulin, 2011). A just transition requires a focus on both individual wellbeing but also an orientation to relational aspects of wellbeing, both in terms of social and spatial injustices but also in terms of opportunities for individuals and communities to flourish in a lower carbon economy and enact positive change. In Ireland, the CSO have been leading the development of a wellbeing information hub drawing together data on 11 dimensions of wellbeing comprised of 34 key indicators. Although Ireland scores well on factors like income and wealth and education and has levels of subjective wellbeing that are significantly higher than the EU average (scoring 44% v 25% on high levels of overall life satisfaction in 2018), other factors such as Environment, climate and biodiversity are less favourable with implications for the wellbeing of future generations.

In this research we therefore adopt a capabilities framework when we engage in co-creation and participatory place-based study. We use this framework as a tool to evaluate current circumstances, jobs, quality of life and to envision place-based change and transition over which people feel they have some level of control or choice, thereby enhancing wellbeing both now and into the future.

2.5 Place-based development in support of rural transitions and wellbeing

Place-based policies recognise that regions and communities have different assets and capabilities and that local actors are often best-placed to realise their endogenous potential for development. They are thus an indispensable complement to structural economic policies. The EU has spearheaded this community-led approach to rural development, through the LEADER programme, which was first adopted in the 1990s, and has played a critical role in reorienting rural development beyond agricultural policies and in support of community led local development (CLLD). This approach has been embraced in Ireland, however not without controversy—there are ongoing debates about how to best manage and negotiate top-down and bottom-up development approaches amidst differing communities capacities and agency (McDonagh, 2001). Place-based policies have gained heightened importance in the face of growing interregional disparities, which in Ireland are among the highest in the industrialised world (McCann, 2019). People living in rural areas in Ireland have lower disposable incomes and are less likely to have a third-level degree compared to those in urban areas (CSO, 2019). However, it is important to recognise that there is a great deal of diversity in types of rural places. For example, in 2019, independent urban towns, where less than 20 per cent of inhabitants worked in a city, had the highest unemployment rate at 6.3 per cent in Ireland while rural areas with a high urban influence had the lowest rate at just four per cent (CSO, 2019).

Places that are losing their economic functions, that are facing social or environmental distress or that are rural and remote and have fewer resources to draw on need supports to flourish. They cannot simply ‘pull their bootstraps up’. Since the Paris Agreement was signed in 2015, there has been recognition of the need for measures to accompany climate action to support workers and communities in order to gain their support for necessary adjustments. Governments now face the dual responsibilities of reducing GHG emissions and addressing social justice issues (NESC, 2020). In January 2020, the European Commission unveiled a Just Transition Mechanism that aims to mobilise EUR 150 billion (100 billion direct EC contribution, remaining matching funds) through three main mechanisms: the Just Transition Fund (matched funds through European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund Plus); an InvestEU scheme; and a new loan facility leveraged by the European Investment Bank (European Commission, 2020). The funds will certainly shape regional development imperatives in the present funding period. EU countries will produce Territorial Just Transition Plans to 2030 that will describe the nature of the social, economic and environmental challenges stemming from fossil fuel-related phase-outs and/or GHG decarbonising initiatives alongside plans for development, reskilling and environmental rehabilitation (EC, 2020).

This is a quickly changing area of government planning in Europe. Overarching national strategies may bring coherence to what are at present a patchwork of initiatives. Almost all countries are investing in innovation and green energy, but these are not necessarily linked to economic development plans and regional development initiatives or elements of justice (Krawchenko and Gordon, 2021b). Some countries have an energy transition fund (e.g., Belgium), but this is not linked to broader multi-level governance mechanisms. Furthermore, just transitions policies have tended to be reactive as opposed to proactive to industrial shifts. Governments have a role to play in mobilising regional actors to address future and ongoing transitions, and in supporting communities and fostering their initiatives. New Zealand’s Just Transitions Unit—a centre of governmental expertise on how to manage just transitions and broker partnerships in affected regions – is one potential model that could be examined in an Irish context given the similarities of scale and governance in both countries but also the importance of agriculture to both economies and communities. Accountability mechanisms are needed for determinations of justice in distributional (how different groups benefit or experience impacts of changes), recognitional (identify rights holders), and procedural (who is included and how) terms (McCauley and Heffron, 2018; Newell and Mulvaney, 2013). Much depends on the nature of the region, including the share of employment in a particular industry, the structure of the local and regional economy, endogenous assets such as quality of local infrastructure and institutions and geography and the robustness of the social security system. Whether regions are urban or rural, or economically advantaged or disadvantaged are important factors to consider in planning and evaluating transition responses. The literature on just transitions emphasises the importance of multi-level governance for coordinated actions across policy domains regardless of where and how the transition is unfolding.

Upper-level governments can help to mobilise and target supports where they are needed; this requires an understanding of community characteristics and needs. The added challenges faced by rural and small-town places (e.g., fewer services and amenities, less diversified economies, greater reliance on personal transportation, rural poverty, etc.) mean that solutions for communities must take a place-based approach to addressing specific challenges, determining unique assets and considering priorities (Weller, 2019) as well as capabilities. The economic stability of the region also influences receptiveness to climate action. Rural areas experiencing rapid development have been found to be more in favour of conservation than those living in weak economies (Mayer, 2018). Those with alternative, viable development paths can also be more receptive or positive towards climate change initiatives as the local and personal benefits are more easily identified.

Communities (rural or otherwise) are complex ecosystems composed of unique sub-groups and stakeholders who are also impacted by transitions on a social and personal level. In addition to workers in the impacted sector, families, businesses, service providers, contractors, local governments, non-profit organizations and marginalized groups have unique challenges as a result of transitions. The 'ripple effects' can be wide reaching and extend beyond challenges related to economic diversification and employment. Through careful consideration for procedural, distributional and recognitional elements of justice, just transitions could be achieved for communities by taking a place-based approach, while simultaneously reducing resistance to climate action and forwarding environmental objectives and progress (Newell and Mulvaney, 2013). Just outcomes must consider communities as unique units of study within greater socio-technical energy transition and sustainability transformations.

2.6 Summary

In a context where mitigating climate change and social justice are key imperatives, the challenges for policymakers, communities and other stakeholders are significant. Key to addressing these challenges is a recognition that not all places are equal. Understanding historical economic development pathways, institutional structures, urban/rural relationships and community capabilities will be key to managing climate transitions and developing responses. Support for alternative forms of infrastructure and the importance of place-based assets, including human resources, will be critical to enhancing wellbeing and quality of life. How successful just transition initiatives are will depend on how they are received on the ground, how 'decent jobs' are defined and how people's lived experiences are impacted. Moving beyond a 'one size fits all' approach to just transition policies, mechanisms and supports and instead understanding the contextual nature of transitions is critical and resource intensive with areas of traditional economic weakness being a particular challenge.

Chapter 3

The Evidence Base for a Place-based Approach

KEY TAKE-AWAY MESSAGES

- Independent urban towns are important service centres for the surrounding rural areas. Their dispersion across most of the Irish territory (with the exception of the northwest) is a key asset for territorial development.
- Ireland is experiencing demographic growth in most settlement types—larger urban centres but also smaller towns and rural areas. Strong continued population growth is expected to 2050 in all regions, urban and rural.
- The Irish economy has performed well in recent years but growth has been uneven, and disproportionately concentrated in the Dublin region.
- Ireland exhibits regional income polarisation. Projections to 2040 suggest continued economic divergence between leading and lagging regions.
- Ireland had the second highest GHG emissions per capita in 2019 among EU/EEA members states; agriculture dominated sectoral contributions at 35.38% out of total so will be a key sector to pro-actively engage in support of just outcomes to the climate transition.

Effective place-based policy making requires an understanding of territories across scales, community assets and opportunities and how places are functionally connected. Timely and relevant territorial data at the community level is a critical element, alongside a relational understanding of how communities see themselves and their connectivity/linkages. This chapter provides an overview of; i) territorial organisation (subnational governance and the organisation of territorial data and definitions) and ii) key territorial trends in Ireland, to provide the evidence base for engaging with communities during the co-creation process and to underpin the argument for a place-based approach to just transition in Ireland.

3.1 Territorial organisation

3.1.1 Sub-national governance

Ireland has a centralised, unitary system of government and is one of eight OECD countries for which there is no directly elected regional level of government. There are three Regional Assemblies (Northern and Western region; Eastern and Midlands region; and Southern region); each Assembly is comprised of members nominated by the local authorities in the region. Regional Assemblies are the Managing Authorities for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Operational Programmes for the 2021 – 2027 programming period.

The regional assemblies are responsible for the management of the EU regional operational programmes and other EU funding within their regions. As noted by Breathnach, O’Mahony and van Egeraat (2021):

“they have also been given a role of monitoring the financial and administrative performance of the county and city councils within their regions, in conjunction with the National Oversight and Audit Commission, established in 2014. A third, and potentially more important, role is the preparation of regional spatial and economic strategies (RSEs) for the NPF” (pg. 134).

The current OP designates the area managed by the Northern Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) as a ‘Region in Transition’, (GDP 75%-100% of the EU27 average) and the two areas managed by the Southern Regional Assembly as ‘More Developed’ (as GDP in each of the regions is over 100% of the EU average) (EU, 2021).

Ireland is also divided into four historical provinces (Leinster, Ulster, Munster and Connacht) that correspond to the boundaries of administrative counties. There are presently 26 administrative counties including the five administrative counties of Cork County, Galway County, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin (Ireland Central Statistics Office, 2021). There are five city and county areas—Cork City, Limerick City and County, Waterford City and County, Dublin City and Galway City (Ireland Central Statistics Office, 2021). There is one large metropolitan area with a population greater than one million – Dublin.

Ireland has significantly restructured its structure of municipal government. The 2014 Local Government Reform Act merged some first-tier county and city councils, abolished all second-tier town and borough councils, and created a new second tier of municipal districts covering rural as well as urban areas. This reform has reduced the total number of local authorities from 114 to 31 (26 county councils, 2 city and county councils, and 3 city councils) in a single local government tier, which is unique among OECD countries (Breathnach *et al.*, 2021). According to Ladners Local Autonomy Index, Ireland shows very low levels of legal autonomy, access, policy scope, political discretion, organisational autonomy and non-interference (Ladner *et al.*, 2019).

3.1.2 Territorial statistics

Regional statistics in Ireland follow the EU Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS). There are three larger regions (NUTS 2) and 8 smaller ones (NUTS 3). These correspond to the OECD Territorial Level 2 (TL2) and Territorial Level 3 (TL3) classification. Below these is a further level of geographic organisation, the local administrative unit (LAU), which corresponds to electoral divisions and municipal districts in most cases.¹ The smallest scale of geography for territorial statistics are Small Areas—areas of population comprising between 80 and 120 dwellings. These form the basis of Census enumeration and generally comprise either complete, or part of, townlands or neighbourhoods.

Ireland's Central Statistics Office defines urban and rural areas according to the following six-part typology. This typology emphasises degree of rurality based on urban influence wherein employment location is the defining variable (Table 3). Small areas form the basis of these classifications. The CSO urban and rural classification emphasises place of employment and not connectivity as is common with many other territorial typologies. Connectivity is for instance a key variable in the calculation of the OECD and EC's Functional Urban Areas (FUAs) definition (Dijkstra *et al.*, 2019). FUAs are a grid-based concept wherein degree of urbanity is based off clusters of contiguous cells and population density and commuting flows are used to identify which of the surrounding, less densely populated local units are part of the city's labour market (commuting zone). This is a useful way of understanding agglomeration economies—rural areas may be part of FUAs or outside it, indicating degree of rurality. More recently, international organisations have built on this work to develop the Degree of urbanisation (DEGURBA) classification which captures a rural-urban continuum across three different classes at level 1 of the degree of urbanisation classification and through seven different classes at level 2 (European Union/FAO/UN-Habitat/OECD/The World Bank, 2021). The building blocks for this classification are again the population density of grid cells and the degree to which they are contiguous. By this definition, rural areas are cells that do not belong to a city or a town and semi-dense areas (most of these have a density below 300 inhabitants per km²).

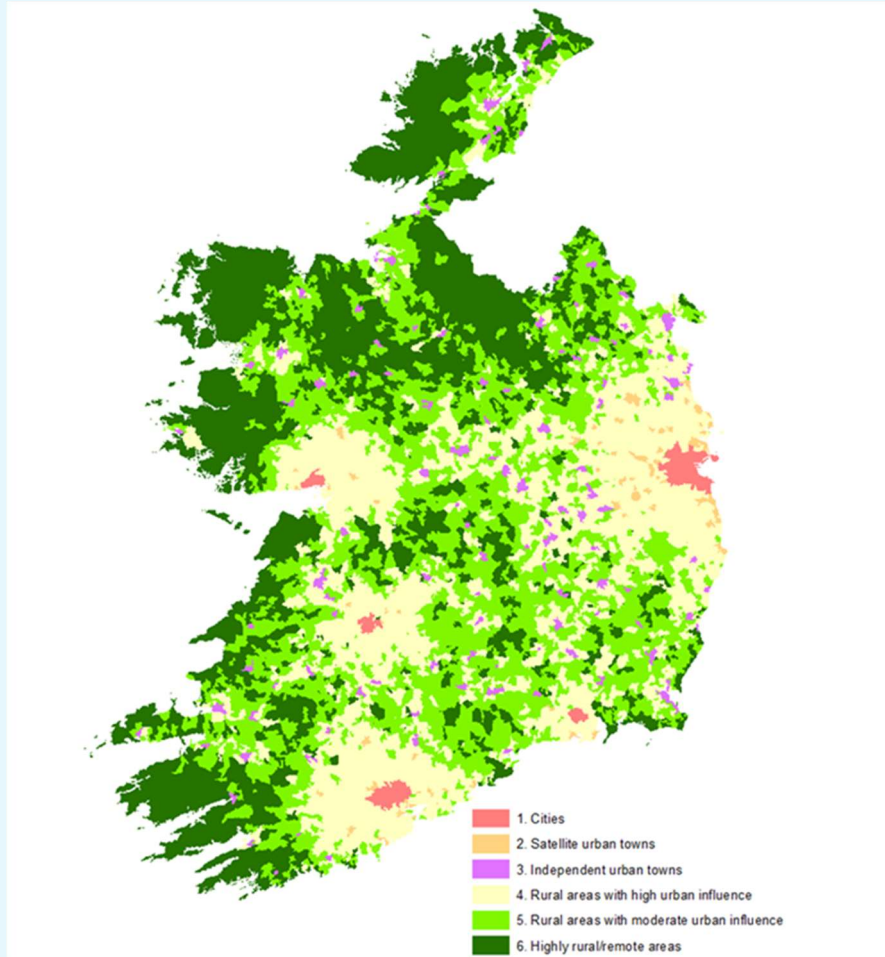
¹ Districts correspond with local electoral areas except in the case of the Dundalk, Kilkenny City, and Mullingar municipal districts and the metropolitan districts of Limerick and Waterford (Ireland Central Statistics Office, 2021).

Table 3: Urban and rural classification

	Type	Definition
Urban areas	<i>Cities</i>	Towns/settlements with populations greater than 50,000 – using Census 2016 definitions/breakdowns.
	<i>Satellite Urban Towns</i>	Towns/settlements with populations between 1,500 and 49,999, where 20 percent or more of the usually resided employed population's workplace address is in 'Cities'.
	<i>Independent urban towns</i>	Towns/settlements with populations between 1,500 and 49,999, where less than 20 percent of the usually resided employed population's workplace address is in 'Cities'.
Rural Areas	<i>Rural areas with high urban influence</i>	Rural areas (themselves defined as having an area type with a population less than 1,500 persons, as per Census 2016) are allocated to one of three sub-categories, based on their dependence on urban areas. Again, employment location is the defining variable. The allocation is based on a weighted percentage of resident employed adults of a rural Small Area who work in the three standard categories of urban area (for simplicity the methodology uses main secondary and minor urban area). The percentages working in each urban area were weighted through the use of multipliers. The multipliers allowed for the increasing urbanisation for different sized urban areas. For example, the percentage of rural people working in a main urban area had double the impact of the same percentage working in minor urban area. The weighting acknowledges the impact that a large urban centre has on its surrounding area. The adopted weights for: Main Urban areas is 2 Satellite urban communities is 1.5 Independent urban communities is 1 The weighted percentages is divided into tertials to assign one of the three rural breakdowns
	<i>Rural areas with moderate urban influence</i>	As above
	<i>Highly rural/remote areas</i>	As above

As depicted in Figure 10, highly rural and remote areas of Ireland by this classification are found along the north and western coastal areas, extending inward through parts of the north Midlands and extending towards the south-west. The five largest urban centres are surrounded by satellite urban towns and rural areas with high urban influence. Accessible rural areas within commuting distances of major urban centres have seen some of the highest population increases in Ireland over the last decade (Gkartzios and Scott, 2010). The city of Derry in Northern Ireland has metropolitan influence on parts of the northwest of Ireland, despite their perceived remoteness. Thus, cross border dynamics are important and the UK's withdrawal from the European Union has hardened this border, presenting additional challenges (Murphy and Evershed, 2021). Across Ireland, a large number of independent urban towns are important service centres for the surrounding rural areas. Their dispersion across the territory is a key asset for territorial development and may be critical in supporting place-based opportunities as part of the just transition. However, in the northwest, notably in most of County Donegal and County Leitrim, levels of urbanisation are very low.

Figure 10: Population distribution by six way urban/rural classification, 2016



Source: CSO (2019), Map 1.1, Population distribution by six way urban/rural classification, using Census 2016 results, Urban and Rural Life in Ireland, 2019, Ireland Central Statistics Office.

Rurality and urbanity exist on a spectrum. Different classifications and typologies privilege a certain understanding of places and how they relate to one another; each has their own usefulness. Classifications based on administrative units remain relevant for policy purposes since these correspond to territorial governance and service provision. Functional classifications are useful to understand connectivity and linkages including transport linkages and labour market commuting zones. Both are important for policy making and to understand rural trends. This chapter draws on a mix of CSO and OECD-EC classifications, in particular, the OECD rural/urban typology and Metro/non-metro typologies in the OECD regional database (Table 4).

Table 4: OECD Territorial Typologies

Small Region (TL3)	Rural/Urban Typology	Metro/Non-metro typology
Northern and Western (Large region, TL2)		
Border	Predominantly rural remote	Remote TL3 region
West	Predominantly rural remote	Non-metropolitan TL3 region with access to a small/medium city
Southern (Large region, TL2)		
Mid-West	Predominantly rural close to a city	Non-metropolitan TL3 region with access to a small/medium city
South-East	Predominantly rural close to a city	Non-metropolitan TL3 region with access to a small/medium city
South-West	Predominantly rural close to a city	Metro TL3 region
Eastern and Midland (Large region, TL2)		
Dublin	Predominantly urban	Large metro TL3 region
Mid-East	Intermediate	Large metro TL3 region
Midland	Predominantly rural remote	Remote TL3 region

Source: OECD Regional Database (2021), Regional Typology dataset.

Note that the OECD's territorial typology (TL) corresponds to the European Commission's Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics (NUTS). The three case studies for this study correspond to the following OECD TL3 and NUTS 3 regions:

- **Border region (IE041) and Derry City and Strabane (UKN10):** Derry/Letterkenny/Strabane triangle including its rural hinterland such as Inishowen peninsula
- **Border region (IE041):** Leitrim, a remote predominantly rural region
- **Midlands region (IE063):** Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath and hinterland, predominantly remote but just outside the immediate influence of the Dublin city-region.

The following analysis excludes UKN10.

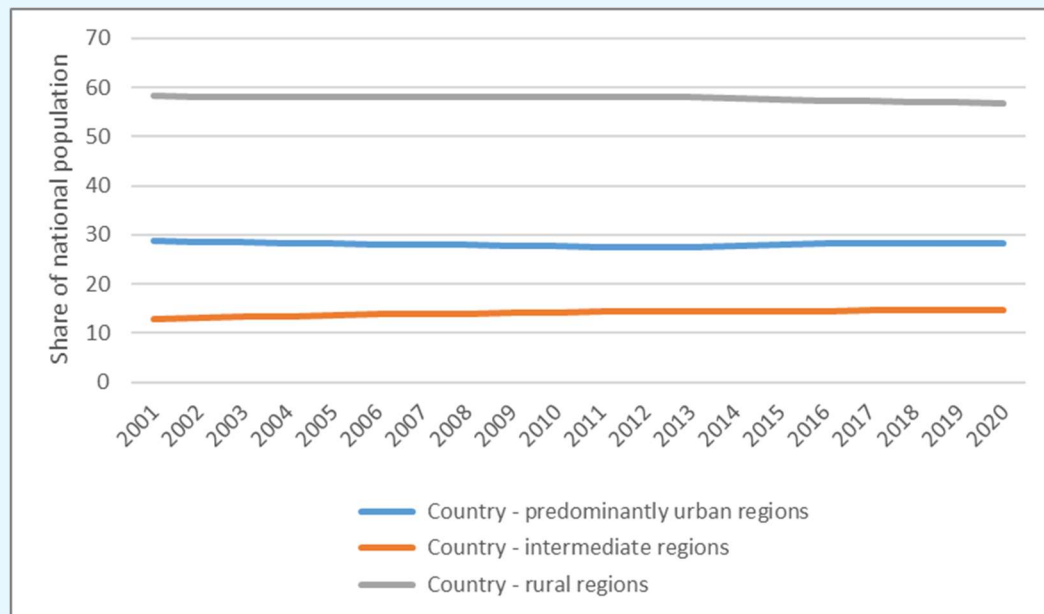
3.2 Territorial trends

3.2.1 Population and demography

Rural areas of Ireland had long experienced demographic decline due to outmigration and emigration, resulting in a loss of economic functions. However, this historical pattern has changed. Ireland experienced two strong periods of population growth from the 1990s up until the 2008 economic crisis and more moderately, from 2012 to present. This growth has taken place in larger urban centres but also smaller towns and rural areas. As reported by the CSO (2019), between 2011 and 2016 there was a slight fall of 0.6% in the number of people living in highly rural/remote areas; however, the proportion of people living in all five other area types increased over this time period. The largest increase was in independent urban towns (5.5%).

Population share by regional typology has been remarkably stable over the past two decades (Figure 11). By the OECD's regional typology, the largest share of the population—around 60%—live in rural regions (TL3). The share of the population living in predominantly urban regions has been relatively consistent at around a third of the population with the remainder living in intermediate regions. Rural regions in Ireland are important; of those living in rural regions, 33% live in a predominantly rural region close to a city and 24% in predominantly rural remote regions.

Figure 11: Share of national population, by OECD regional typology, TL3, 2001-2020



Source: OECD Regional Database, 2020. Note: OECD regional typology.

Population projections from Eurostat to the year 2050 estimate continued growth in all three types of regions. Between 2019 and 2050, the overall urban population in Ireland is projected to increase by +29.2%—the second highest rate in the EU after Malta (at +35.4%) (Eurostat, 2021). Over the same period, Ireland is also anticipated to have the most significant increase in the share of its rural population, increasing by +24.5%. Ireland is one of only four EU states where rural regions are anticipated to see population growth (the others are Sweden, Denmark and Belgium). Regarding intermediate regions, Ireland is again anticipated to experience the largest population increase in the EU (at +30.6%). Across all three regional types—urban, intermediate, rural—Ireland is anticipated to see population growth to 2050 which is significantly above that of the EU average. In fact, recent preliminary statistics from Census 2021 suggest that some population growth projections in the NPF may have been overly conservative. This projected growth underpins the national strategic objectives in the National Planning Framework (2018) which aims to ensure that this growth is dispersed beyond the eastern seaboard and that effective regional development is enabled. Recent government policies such as *Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025*, reinforce the importance of interdependence between urban and rural areas but also the centrality of vibrant rural places for economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing.

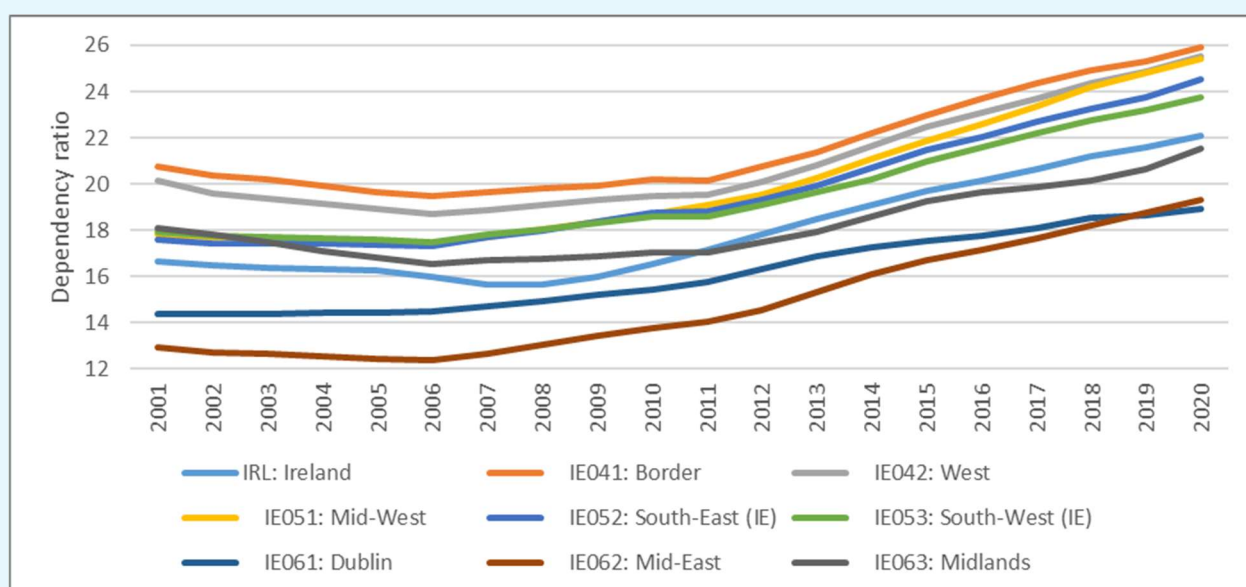
Ireland also stands out as having a younger age profile relative to the EU average. Table 5 outlines the average age of the population by six way CSO classification for the 2011 and 2016 census. Satellite urban towns have the lowest average age among all territories followed by independent urban towns and rural areas with high urban influence. Highly remote/rural and rural areas with moderate urban influence have the highest average ages. The median age of the population in all regions is less than 42 and is projected to remain so to 2050 (Eurostat, 2021).

Table 5: Average age, six-way urban/rural classification, 2011, 2016 Census

CSO Classification	2011	2016
Cities	36.1	37.0
Satellite urban towns	33.2	34.5
Independent urban towns	35.6	36.5
Rural areas with high urban influence	35.9	37.5
Rural areas with moderate urban influence	37.4	38.9
Highly rural/remote areas	39.6	41.2
Total	36.1	37.3

Source: CSO (2019), Urban and Rural Life in Ireland, 2019, Ireland Central Statistics Office.

While the median age in Ireland is lower in comparison to many regions across Europe, there remains a large and growing aging population. The population aged 65+ was estimated at 696,300 in 2019 and it is projected this will double to 1.56m by 2051 (Sheehan and O’Sullivan, 2020). These trends are most pronounced in highly remote/rural and rural areas with moderate urban influence, with our case study of Leitrim providing evidence of this. The dependency ratio—the ratio of the population aged 0-19 and 65+ divided by the population 20-64—shows an upward trend in all regions since 2001 (Figure 12). The border region has consistently had the highest dependency ratio among all regions, standing at 25.91% and the Dublin region the lowest at 18.92% in 2020. Ensuring a just transition and spatial equity will be critical to ensuring that the gap currently evident between regions does not further increase.

Figure 12: Dependency ratio, Ireland, TL3 Regions

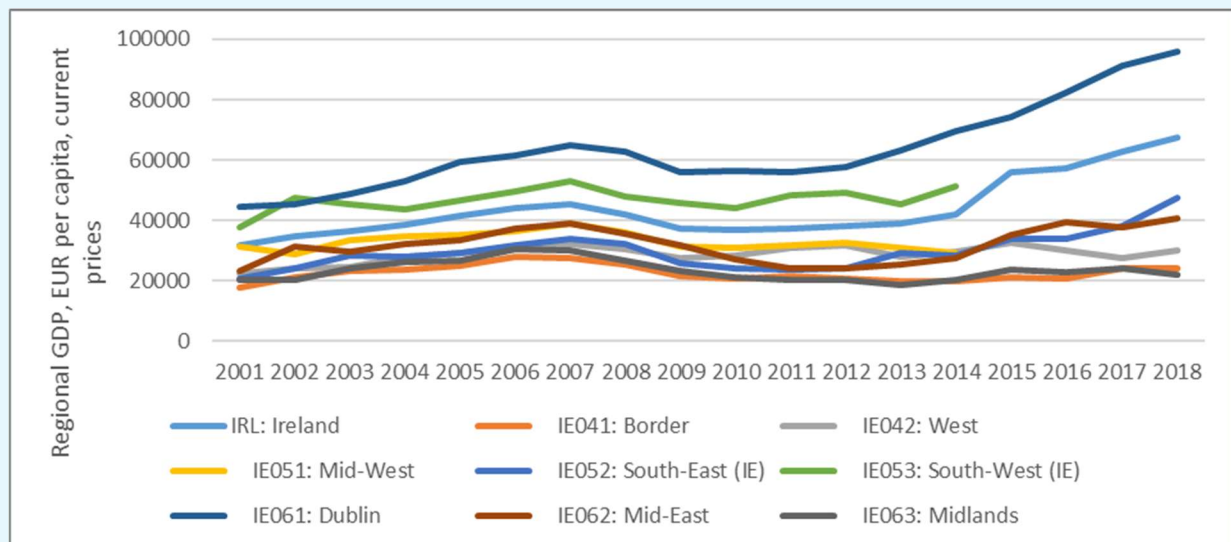
Source: OECD Regional Database, 2020. Note: The dependent population ratio is the ratio of the population defined as dependent (the population aged 0-19 and 65 and over) divided by the population 20-64, multiplied by 100.

3.2.2 Economy

The Irish economy has performed well in recent years: employment has risen annually since 2013; labour force participation has been increasing; the job vacancy rate has risen, putting an upward pressure on wages and investment activity continues to grow, driven by growth in housing construction (OECD, 2020b). The Covid-19 pandemic has of course slowed down this growth but there is evidence to suggest that the economy is rebounding more quickly than anticipated.

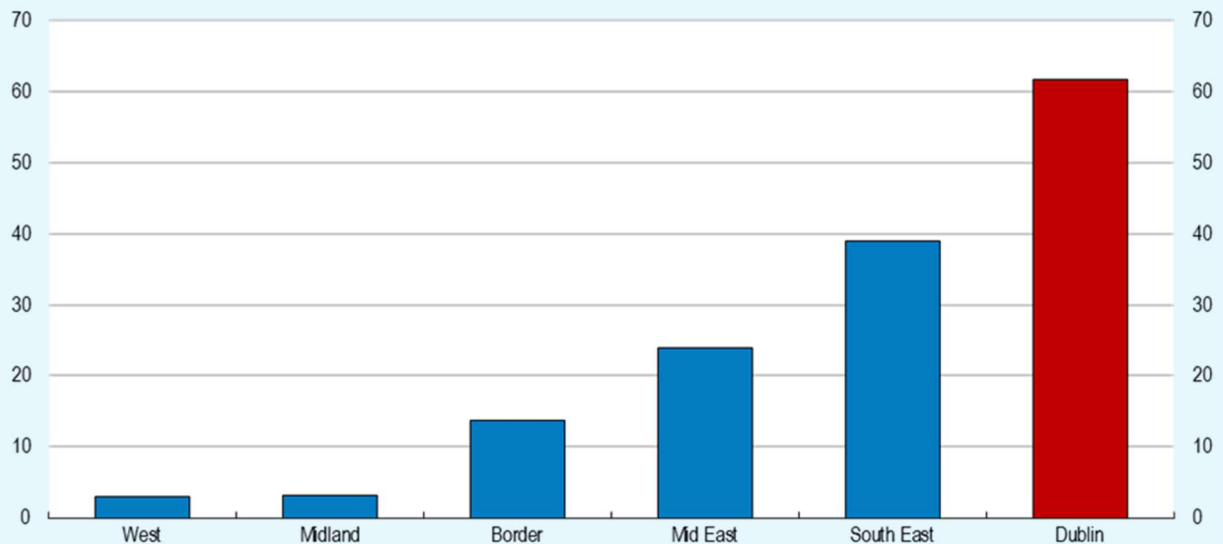
These overarching trends however conceal regional dynamics. Per capita GDP by region over the period 2001-2018 reveals the disproportionate economic dominance of the Dublin region (Figure 13). GDP per capita in Dublin stood at €95,733 in 2018 compared to the national average of €67,693. Among the lowest performing regions, per capita regional GDP in the border and western regions was around a third of that of Dublin (at €24,009 and €30,065 respectively).

Figure 13: Ireland, regional GDP, 2001 to 2018, EUR per capita, current prices



Source: OECD regional database.

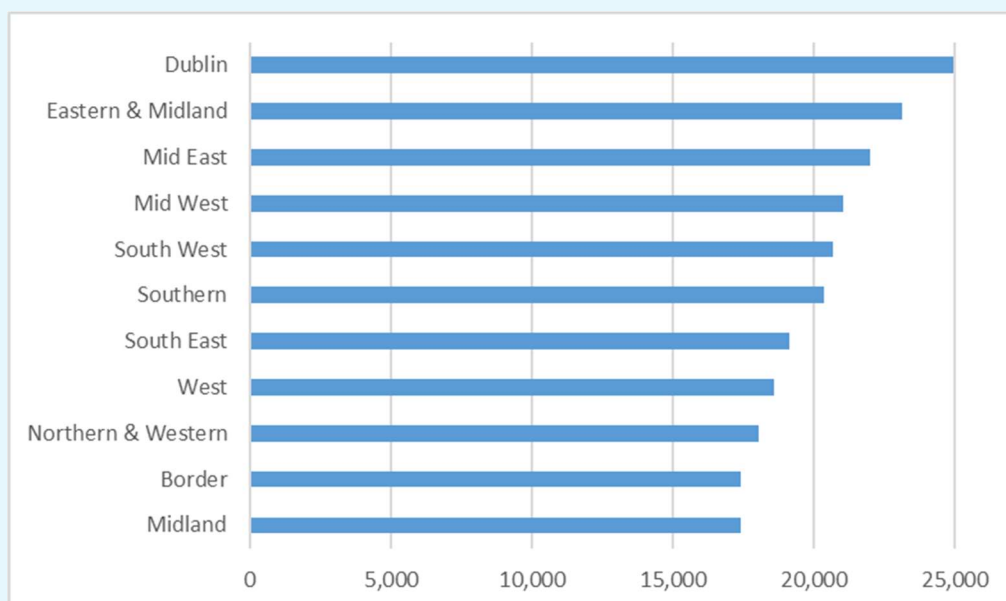
Further illustrating regional differences in growth dynamics, the percentage change in estimated gross value added in the Dublin region stood at a little over 60% between 2010-2017 compared to less than 5% in the West and Midland regions over the same time period (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Percentage change in estimated gross value added, Irish regions, 2010-17

Source: OECD (2020), "Dublin has experienced particularly fast economic growth: Percentage change in estimated gross value added, 2010-17", in OECD Economic Surveys: Ireland 2020, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/90702230-en>.

Note: The distortion to gross value added statistics in 2015 from the activities of some multinationals is addressed by interpolating between 2014 and 2016 based on the historical relationship between regional employment data and regional gross value added.

The Dublin region had the highest average disposable income per person in 2018—17.4% higher than the state average of €21,270 and approximately 5.7% higher than the 2017 figure of €23,621 (CSO, 2021). In 2018, only the Mid-East and the Mid-West had an average disposable income per person on a par with the state average (Figure 15).

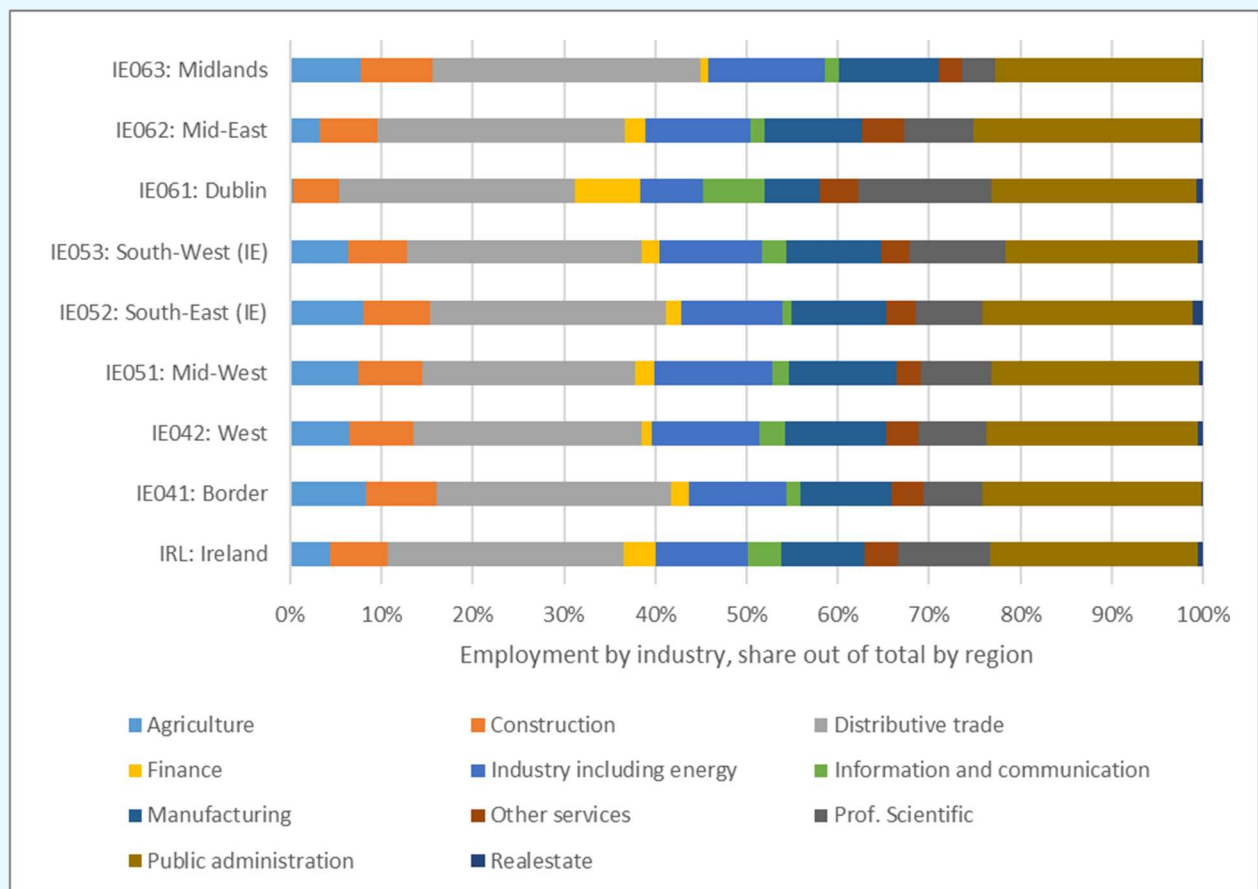
Figure 15: Estimates of Disposable Income per Person by Region and County, 2018

Source: CSO. (2021), "County Incomes and Regional GDP 2018 – CSO – Central Statistics Office", available at: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/cirgdp/countyincomesandregionalgdp2018/> (accessed 13 December 2021).

Without sub regional (TL3) GDP data by industry, employment by industry is a useful proxy with which to understand local economies. Figure 16 shows the share of employment by region and industry out of the total for each region in 2018. As such, it depicts the relative importance of major industries within each sub regional economy. Employment in Ireland as a whole is dominated by two main industries: i) distributive trade, transport, accommodation and food services activities (26%) and; ii) employment in public administration, compulsory social services, education and human health (23%). These sectors dominate employment in all regions but are particularly important in the Midlands and Mid-east. The Midlands had the highest share of employment (29%) in the first category in 2018 while the Mid-east had the highest share of employment in public administration at 25%. The large share of employment in public administration in the Mid-east may in part be due to employment in the Defence Forces. It also bears noting that commuting into Dublin impacts employment figures in the Mid-East and possibly Midland regions. As such, commuting may mask some aspects of regional inequality in employment opportunities.

After these two categories, industry including energy and manufacturing have the highest share of employment across all regions (Figure 16). These are particularly important in the Mid-west and Midlands (13% of total employment) and in the West, Mid-West, Mid-east and Midlands regions (11-12% of total employment). Also of note are the relative importance of agriculture in most Irish regions where they form between 6-8% of employment with the exception of Dublin and the Mid-east regions. This illustrates the scale and diversity of challenges facing different regions as we strive to de-carbonise the economy.

Figure 16: Share of employment by region (TL3), by industry (ISIC rev 4), out of total, 2018

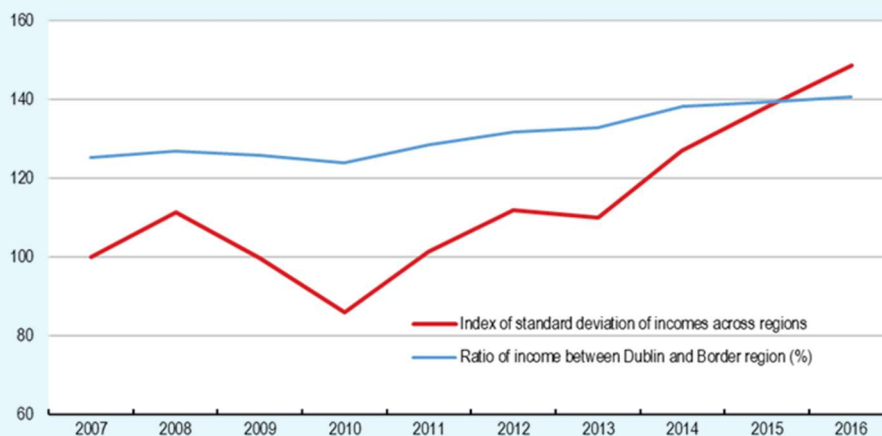


Source: OECD regional database. Note: Occupational categories according to International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC); shortened titles.

3.2.3 Income and labour

Ireland exhibits regional income polarisation. The index of standard deviation of incomes across regions shows an increasing trend since 2010 and the ratio of income between the high performing region of Dublin and that of the lagging Border region remains high and has increased between 2001-2016 (Figure 17). Projections to the 2040 period suggest continued economic divergence between leading and lagging regions with Dublin expected to have continued economic growth while lagging regions are at the greatest risk of labour shedding through job automation (OECD, 2020b), which will have significant impacts on quality of life, wellbeing and the perceived agency of individuals in their own lives.

Figure 17: Regional income disparity, 2007-2016



Source: OECD (2020), "Regional inequality has been rising: Measures of regional income disparity", in OECD Economic Surveys: Ireland 2020, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/dddb18d5-en>.

Note: Both measures in the figure are calculated based on disposable income per capita by Irish region. Calculations are based on data from eight Irish (TL3) regions; Border, Midland, West, Dublin, Mid-East, Mid-West, South-East, South-West. Dublin is the leading region and the Border is the lagging region in each of the years across the 2007-16 period.

Over the period 2010-2015, the lowest disposable incomes per person were in Donegal (15705), Roscommon (16582), and Offaly (17242) while the highest were in Dublin (23298), Limerick (22187) and Kildare (20944) (Table 6). The largest declines in disposable income per person over the same period were in Roscommon, (-8.35), North Tipperary (-6.13) and Leitrim (-5.78) while the greatest increases were in Limerick (11.81), Wicklow (10.03) and Dublin (8.78). These regional disparities highlight the importance of ensuring that the transition to a low carbon economy does not further disadvantage areas that are already challenged. As Table 6 demonstrates, our case study areas of Donegal and Leitrim are among the areas in Ireland facing the most significant challenges historically with an ongoing downward trajectory that will impact significantly both on what is possible and acceptable for the future.

Table 6: Disposable income per person by county, 2010 and 2015

Region and county	Disposable income per person		Change in disposable income per person 2010-2015	Index of disposable income per person	
	2010	2015		2010	2015
Border	17,822	17,641	-1.0	91.1	86.8
Cavan	18,694	18,261	-2.3	95.6	89.8
Donegal	16,345	15,705	-3.9	83.6	77.2
Leitrim	19,407	18,285	-5.8	99.2	89.9
Louth	19,333	18,946	-2.0	98.8	93.2
Monaghan	16,538	17,589	6.4	84.6	86.5
Sligo	18,280	19,001	3.9	93.5	93.4
Midland	17,726	17,846	0.7	90.6	87.8
Laois	18,504	17,935	-3.1	94.6	88.2
Longford	17,621	17,828	1.2	90.1	87.7
Offaly	16,707	17,242	3.2	85.4	84.8
Westmeath	18,038	18,309	1.5	92.2	90.0
West	18,891	18,174	-3.8	96.6	89.4
Galway	19,682	18,991	-3.5	100.6	93.4
Mayo	17,849	17,390	-2.6	91.3	85.5
Roscommon	18,094	16,582	-8.4	92.5	81.5
Dublin	21,416	23,298	8.8	109.5	114.6
Mid-East	19,578	20,441	4.4	100.1	100.5
Kildare	19,870	20,944	5.4	101.6	103.0
Meath	20,308	20,086	-1.1	103.8	98.8
Wicklow	18,308	20,145	10.0	93.6	99.1
Mid-West	19,668	20,353	3.5	100.6	100.1
Clare	18,949	18,082	-4.6	96.9	88.9
Limerick	19,842	22,187	11.8	101.5	109.1
North Tipperary	20,386	19,136	-6.1	104.2	94.1
South-East	18,679	19,503	4.4	95.5	95.9
Carlow	18,768	19,352	3.1	96.0	95.2
Kilkenny	17,948	19,227	7.1	91.8	94.6
South Tipperary	18,509	19,386	4.7	94.6	95.3
Waterford	18,545	20,113	8.5	94.8	98.9
Wexford	19,381	19,335	-0.2	99.1	95.1
South-West	19,154	19,774	3.2	97.9	97.2
Cork	19,760	20,297	2.7	101.0	99.8
Kerry	17,104	17,908	4.7	87.5	88.1
Total	19,558	20,334	4.0	100.0	100.0

Source: CSO (2019), Urban and Rural Life in Ireland, 2019, Ireland Central Statistics Office.

Among labour market outcomes, Dublin has the highest labour market participation and employment and lowest unemployment rates (Table 7). Meanwhile, the Midland region has consistently had the lowest participation rate since 2012. Between 2012-2019, the unemployment rate shows a declining trend in all regions; in particular, the gap between the Midlands and Dublin region has narrowed from almost 9 percentage points in 2012 to around 1.5 percentage points in 2019. The employment rate shows an increasing trend among all TL3 regions between 2012 and 2019 with a strong and consistent gap between the region with the highest employment rate, Dublin, and that of the lowest, Midlands.

Table 7: Labour market indicators, by region, TL2, TL3, 2019

	Participation rate	Unemployment rate	Employment rate
IRL: Ireland	73.3	5.1	69.5
IE041: Border	70.5	4.3	67.4
IE042: West	73.7	5.4	69.7
IE052: South-East	70.8	7.5	65.5
IE051: Mid-West	70.5	5.5	66.6
IE053: South-West	72.9	4.7	69.5
IE061: Dublin	77.2	4.5	73.7
IE062: Mid-East	74.6	5.1	70.8
IE063: Midland	68	5.8	64.1

Source: OECD regional database.

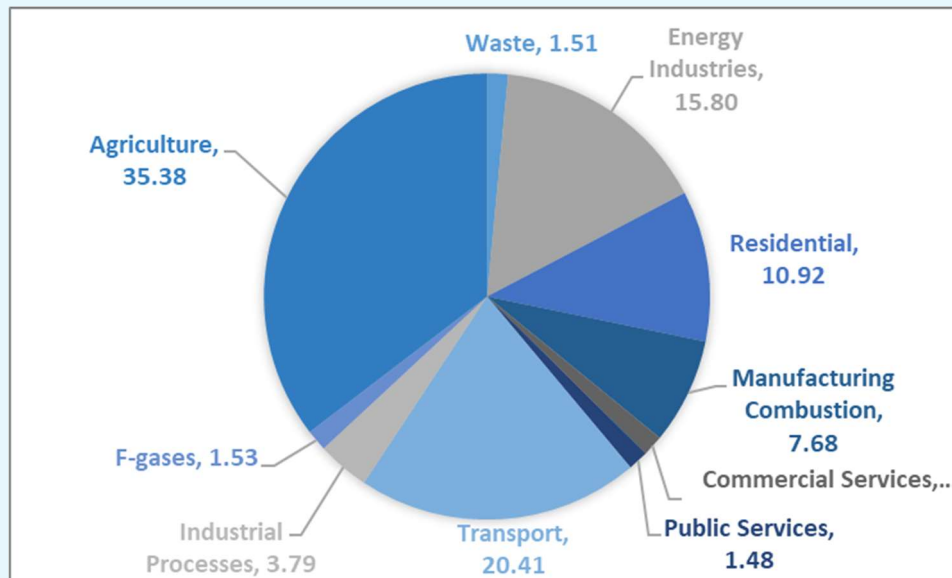
Note: Participation Rate 15-64 (% labour force 15-64 over population 15-64); Employment Rate (% employment 15-64 over working age population 15-64); Unemployment Rate (% unemployed over labour force 15-64);

3.2.4 Environment

Ireland had the second highest GHG emissions per capita in 2019 among EU/EEA members states; second only to Luxembourg (Environmental Protection Agency, 2021a). Emissions reductions have been recorded in six of the last ten years of inventory data (2009-2019); however, as noted by Ireland's Environmental Protection Agency, emissions reductions have been challenging in light of economic growth (Environmental Protection Agency, 2021a). Despite the lockdowns associated with Covid-19, Ireland's greenhouse emissions in 2020 were only 3.6% lower than in 2019. Much of this was due to reductions in transport emissions, both as a result of more working from home but also due to the widespread closure of society.

Figure 18 illustrates that the largest sectoral contribution to GHG emissions in 2019 was agriculture (35.38%), followed by transportation emissions (20.41%), and energy industries (15.80%). The sectoral contributions of the agricultural sector to GHG emission in Ireland have been consistent – the share has not changed since 1990. In contrast, the share of emissions from the transport sector has doubled since this time (at 9.5% out of total in 1990) while the share of energy emissions has decreased (from 20.8% in 1990 to 15.80% today). No subnational data is available on this.

Figure 18: Greenhouse gas emissions share by sector in 2019, Ireland



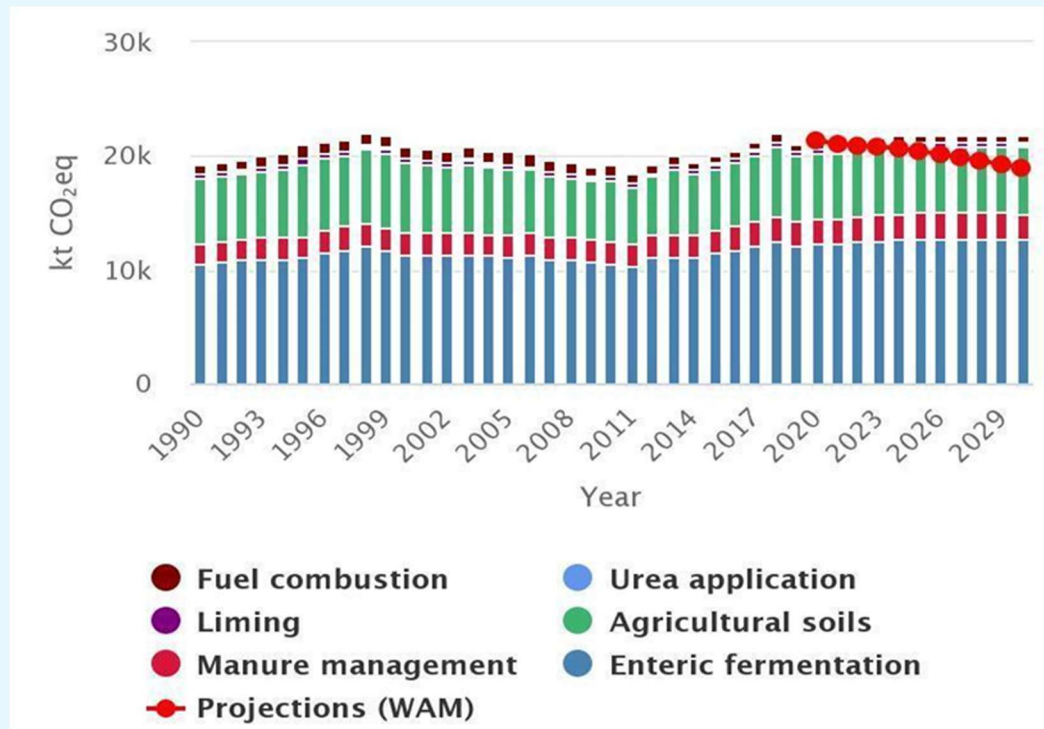
Source: Environmental Protection Agency (2021), "Latest emissions data", available at: <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring-assessment/climate-change/ghg/latest-emissions-data/> (accessed 5 October 2021).

Note: Ireland's latest greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 1990-2019 are final figures based on the SEAI's final energy balance released in November 2020.

In 2018, agricultural emissions reached a 30 year high (reference period 1990-2019) (Environmental Protection Agency, 2021b). The largest contributors to GHG emissions in the agricultural sector are methane from livestock, and nitrous oxide due to the use of nitrogen fertiliser and manure management. Dairy herd size (and milk production) has increased for nine consecutive years—these increases have been spurred by national plans to expand milk production under Food Wise 2025 and the removal of the milk quota in 2015 (Environmental Protection Agency, 2021b).

Ireland's Environmental Protection Agency projects that total GHG emissions from agriculture will increase by 2.7% over the period 2020-2030 if existing measures continue (With Existing Measures scenario) (Environmental Protection Agency, 2021b). However, with policy actions consistent with Ireland's Climate Action Plan (With Additional Measures scenario) emissions are projected to decrease by approximately 11.3% over the period 2020-2030 (Figure 19). But this will have significant impacts on those places where agricultural is of greater relative importance and where a dramatic agricultural transition is going to be required to meet government targets.

Figure 19: Agricultural emissions and projections, 1990-2030

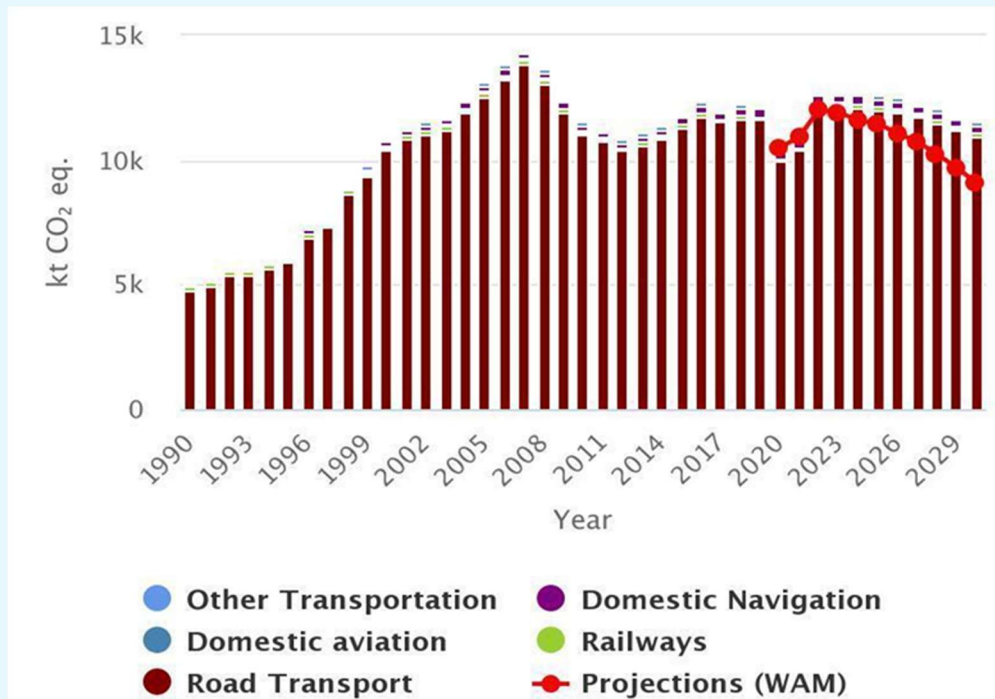


Source: Environmental Protection Agency. (2021), "Agriculture | Environmental Protection Agency", available at: <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring-assessment/climate-change/ghg/agriculture/> (accessed 5 October 2021).

The transport sector showed the greatest overall increase (137%) over the past 30 years (1990-2019), with road transport increasing by 142.6% (Environmental Protection Agency, 2021c). Emissions in the transport sector have been driven by population growth and reliance on private car travel as well as along with increasing road freight transport. Any proposal to move to a lower carbon economy will entail therefore a significant modal shift which can often be more challenging for rural areas. Recent announcements (29 October 2021) by government to invest €57million in rural public transport through Local Link may go some ways towards addressing this challenge and connecting rural areas to their county towns and other urban centres on a regular, daily basis.

While biofuels are being used in Ireland, there continues to be a reliance on diesel cars. If Ireland were to continue along the path it is presently on (With Existing Measures (WEM) scenario), transport emissions are projected to increase by 10.2% over the period 2020-2030 (Environmental Protection Agency, 2021c). However, with policy interventions (With Additional Measures scenario), emissions are projected to decrease by 13.4% over the same period – this scenario assumes almost a million new electric vehicles on the road by 2030 (Environmental Protection Agency, 2021c), but providing the necessary supporting infrastructure for charging will need careful planning and consideration particularly in more remote areas (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Transport emissions and projections, 1990-2030



Source: Environmental Protection Agency. (2021), "Transport Environmental Protection Agency", available at: <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring-assessment/climate-change/ghg/transport/> (accessed 5 October 2021).

Tackling the major sectoral contributors to GHG emissions are important but are only one part of broader policy actions to address the climate crisis. Actions like land use management for carbon sequestration alongside energy efficiency measures for buildings are also important. Subnational data sets such as the detailed energy system model of the residential sector by Uidhir et al. (2020) help to explore policy pathways for residential retrofitting. This may be particularly important in some parts of the country where housing construction issues (e.g. pyrite, mica, fire safety) associated with poor standards during the Celtic Tiger boom need to be addressed and could provide an opportunity to trial new residential energy efficiency measures.

3.3 Summary

As the national territorial analysis has demonstrated, Ireland is a deeply unequal country with significant development and growth on the eastern seaboard and in the metropolitan areas, standing in stark contrast to more remote areas and particularly the north-west. These disparities exist across multiple domains and have led to calls from the Northern and Western Regional Assembly for 'positive discrimination' in government policy to address these inequalities. Some of the areas that have suffered historic under-investment or lagged behind are also the regions which will face the greatest transformations as part of the climate transition because of their economic and demographic structures, and the built environment. Where the agricultural sector is economically significant, housing stock older and where there is a heavier reliance on private transport – due to poor public transport infrastructure – individuals and communities may face significant multi-pronged impacts. It is therefore critical to understand the specificities of these places and their capability to respond as part of supporting a just transition in Ireland.

Chapter 4

A Place-based Approach to Just Transition

KEY TAKE-AWAY MESSAGES

- A just transition becomes meaningful when it acknowledges the specific context of place, acknowledges challenges and past experiences and identifies place-sensitive opportunities.
- A set of common conversion factors - individual, social, environmental or economic factors that need direct attention in order to enhance wellbeing and quality of life of those individuals and groups transitioning to a lower carbon economy – can be identified across the agriculture and energy sector, as well as with regard to more effective planning.
- Significant transformation in governance and leadership at local authority level in particular is required to support a just transition in Ireland.
- Co-creation approaches and dialogue can provide a mechanism to engage communities from the bottom-up with just transition as an idea and meaningful concept with real-world resonance.
- Realising the potential of just transitions in Ireland will be shaped by re-localisation of markets and suppliers, reframing identities particularly of the farming community, information and communication and capacity building.

Just transition is a relatively new concept and has only recently been gaining traction in shaping approaches to policymaking on climate change, adaptation and mitigation. It is a complex issue with distributive, procedural and recognition justice dimensions to be considered. Because of this, there has been a tendency to frame transformation solely within discussions on particular sectors – e.g. the energy transition – which makes it difficult to achieve more broad-based support. A key challenge is also an apparent lack of general understanding of how to operationalise the concept in practice. For some citizens and communities, a just transition seems too distant, intangible and vague when more immediate issues such as housing affordability, the cost of living, and financial wellbeing are pressing. Just Transition therefore requires contextualisation and grounding in everyday life and experience to become meaningful. Local people and places need to be engaged and capacity building undertaken in order for policy aspirations to be fully realised, but this results in a need to move beyond a one-size-fits all approach. Given the diverse existing attributes of place as discussed in the previous chapter, a place-based approach to just transition is required in order to ground central and local government policies and to ensure relevance, appropriateness and impact.

A just transition becomes meaningful when it acknowledges the specific context of place, acknowledges challenges and past experiences and identifies place-sensitive opportunities. Just transition has been defined as the creation of decent jobs and quality of life as we move to a low-carbon economy (NESC, 2020). A place-based definition of just transition would specify the types of jobs to be created and highlight specific quality of life attributes with which people can relate that will emerge alongside specific transformations to ensure high levels of subjective wellbeing at local and regional level.

4.1 Barriers and opportunities for a just transition

Drawing from our extensive literature review, it is clear that the scope, scale and nature of all future planning is influenced by earlier development trajectories, current economic structure, resources, capacities, local sentiment and cultural norms. A uniform approach to what transition might look like and required interventions and supports will have limited effect, as local conditions play a critical role in determining effectiveness and impact. Based on our focused work in Leitrim, Inishowen (Donegal) and Kilbeggan (Westmeath) with diverse stakeholders and our community engagement platform, a range of issues emerged that influence the capacity of communities to achieve or enhance their wellbeing, underpinning the just transition. A set of common conversion factors - individual, social, environmental or economic factors that need direct attention in order to enhance wellbeing and quality of life of those individuals and groups transitioning to a lower carbon economy – were identified and provide lessons for policy and practice. We examine

these by sector in this first section, drawing on both the results of our stakeholder interviews and the Commonplace community engagement platform.

4.1.1 Agriculture and forestry transitions

Rural areas have a comparatively higher dependence on primary economic activities – particularly agriculture – than other types of areas. This generates commonalities of experience, concern and challenge and across our three study sites, common issues around the need for reskilling have become evident, building on the work carried out by Teagasc on knowledge transfer. While these challenges exist across our places of interest, similar factors can also have very local specificities related to history, identity and previous development opportunities (see Boxes 1 and 2). A common challenge is recognition of the need to reconsider farmer identities in order to ensure a just transition but the nature of how this occurs will be highly context-specific and in some cases political. In many places, given the rise of the organic movement and campaigns like ‘fork to farm’, the conceptualisation of farmers as food producers and custodians of the landscape rather than purely ‘productivist’ is already happening. This requires continued support from both people and town centres to engage with farmers selling directly to the market. Physical spaces are required for this to occur within and outside urban centres e.g. market spaces and shops at reasonable rental rates. In the more remote areas of Donegal and Leitrim in particular a focus on the local market first may enhance the agency of the farmers as food producers, giving them new choices in terms of livelihood building. Place based marketing of produce and services and a diversity of unique value chains can prevent competition amongst farmers. As a mechanism to enhance collective agency and control of resources in more remote locations, cooperative and/or mobile distributed processing and manufacturing units could be established creating employment, building social connectivity and supporting entrepreneurship. Access to markets is critical to diversify agricultural enterprises and ensure that livelihoods can be sustained and wellbeing enhanced. This is a key goal of the recently published Foodvision 2030 strategy which seeks to support viable and resilient primary food producers (mission 2) at the same time as delivering a climate-neutral food system (mission 1).

Similarly in our three study areas, forestry is considered as part of a sustainable solution for farmers but this is highly contentious and political, particularly in north Leitrim (see Box 2). A significant farmer-forester binary has emerged driven in part by ongoing disputes around investor-led forestry. How land is managed and stewarded is therefore a critical part of how just any agricultural transition is likely to be and communication with central government around carbon reduction measures, forestry and more locally around rights of way is crucial. More research and understanding about the diversity of certain farming regions and terrains is required as there is a complexity to these ecosystems and how they are and have been managed e.g. upland mountain terrain. Figure 21 summarises the key factors that have been identified as critical to acknowledge, discuss and address to support a just agricultural transition in our study areas.

Figure 21: Conversion factors in support of a just agricultural transition in Ireland



Box 1: Agricultural Transition in Inishowen, Co Donegal

There is currently no strong culture of change for farming in the county and there is a fear of losing subsidies in the face of a transition to a lower carbon economy. A reduction in farmer agency is in part due to a culture of subsidy support which may have contributed to de-skilling and a lack of dynamism in the sector. Soil and ecosystem health has been affected in parts by cessation of grazing and drainage. Specific pathways (opportunities) and barriers (termed conversion factors) point to a focus on diversified and re-localised markets with an associated mobile or distributed infrastructures, potentially developing local circular economies. Reskilling locally requires a strengthened skills network, building on current knowledge transfer programmes as developed by Teagasc and other agencies. For flexibility in innovation to occur, people need physical space to innovate and network and share resources as is the case of proposed cooperative processing units but also distributed technologies and mobile infrastructure such as mobile abattoirs.

A perceived lack of a strong regional social and economic driver has the potential to be addressed with the significant work being carried out to establish the NW city region (Letterkenny; Strabane; Derry). Diverse product streams and the identification of diverse and unique value chains both locally and within the wider region (Letterkenny; Strabane; Derry) and nationally (Sligo, Dublin) require improved transport (commencement of A5 between Strabane, Donegal and Dublin) and broadband infrastructure. Future farm payments need to support farmers to diversify and reframe the farmer as custodians of ecosystems across the three counties.

Box 2: Farming and Forestry Transitions in North Leitrim

In County Leitrim, forestry is promoted by policymakers as a priority for climate change mitigation but has become a significant wellbeing and quality of life concern. Currently seen as part of an unsustainable investor-led market, leaking investment from the area, forestry, in a different guise, may be potentially part of a sustainable solution for farmers. However, it is unclear where the responsibility for decisions about forestry lies and many local residents feel side-lined. Models such as agroforestry and Continuous Forest Cover (CFC) are currently underdeveloped but have potential to mitigate the forestry/farmer division in the area. These alternative forestry models could also enhance biodiversity, improving a poor functioning ecological zone at the understorey of sitka spruce forests. Opening up communications around forestry in the area may nurture a more localised and sustainable, hybrid farmer-forester identity.

A re-localisation of markets would forge a stronger connection between the farmer as food producer and customers, first locally and then in the wider region and nationally. Selling directly to the consumer brings added value and benefits that go beyond buying cheap food in supermarkets, which can be below the cost of production for farmers. This relationship between the local food producer and the local market and local customers is the first step to avoiding any feelings of disempowerment in the face of a loss of earnings in agriculture. Collective and cooperative structures and units, shared by farmers, may prevent individuals going into competition with each other, enhancing a shared sense of agency. This should go hand in hand with more diverse and unique value chains, promoting diversity of product streams. A face-to-face diversification hub could enhance learning and networking for diversification and an associated just transition.

4.1.2 Energy transitions

A common challenge for many places is how energy transitions are to be planned and managed, and their impacts particularly in areas that are relatively remote and have heavy reliance on carbon-intensive industries and transport. In areas where there has been a strong reliance on peat both for energy and for livelihoods, there are some diverse barriers to be addressed including around issues of culture and identity but also understanding. For example, how wind energy and cessation of peat cutting fits into the national and international strategy for reduction in carbon emissions needs to be much more clearly articulated. A focus solely on wind energy is not a sustainable solution yet this offer has become dominant in many locations. For example in County Leitrim, the hilly uplands are the most scenic areas and there are potential conflicts in the development of wind turbines as a just transition pathway. In county Donegal, there has been some history of negative environmental implications of wind farm development which gives rise to significant community concerns about further development, particularly in unstable bog areas. There is potential for renewable energy to be developed in a way that benefits locals but it must have appropriate and deep engagement with those affected and the outcome must be positive for local people, including perhaps through the development of community energy cooperatives. Further research and development is needed in relation to the cost-benefits of offshore wind and solar to de-emphasise on-shore wind energy production which is increasingly contentious. A more multi-faceted and diverse response is required from local councils and investors to the energy transition, but capacity building with communities is also key in order to access funding, to develop leadership, and to engage communities with low-carbon strategy development and implementation, for example through co-operative energy hubs.

A major aspect of the just transition debate to date in Ireland has been in relation to the closure of Bord na Móna factories and the employment consequences for former peat workers. This is particularly the case in County Westmeath (Box 3), but the issue of peat extraction has resonance across all our study sites. Peat landscapes can be physically re-invented for public amenity use, but peat cutting is also an important part of everyday life and identity for some individuals in very place-specific ways. Managing and rewetting bogs can create jobs and amenity value but this varies across localities and requires specific place-based responses, for example in the blanket bogs/raised bogs of Donegal or the raised bogs in the midlands. Creating these new opportunities requires specific skillsets so partnership between communities, local development organisations, colleges, universities and other further education institutes is required to support a just transition based on enhanced capabilities.

The [North-West regional energy strategy](#) (plus the associated energy agency) can be built upon to support a just transition in Donegal. The development of more local plans e.g. the Inishowen energy masterplan could be a mechanism to ensure the shift to lower-carbon activities are equality proofed. The county of Donegal and the Inishowen peninsula in particular has the potential to be an energy hub, with skills links to universities. Homes across the county affected by mica could be rebuilt to a high- specification with grant assistance, creating green construction jobs, reducing commuting to larger urban centres for construction employment, and enhancing general wellbeing for thousands of people. Based on our stakeholder interviews and community co-creation activities, Figure 22 summarises the social, economic and environmental factors that can support a just energy transition.

Box 3: Energy Transitions in County Westmeath

There is strong investor interest in renewable energy in the county (Flexgen, wind, solar) but there is resistance on the ground from local communities. In particular, the Bord na Mona renewable energy consultations on wind energy need to involve deeper and wider dialogue and engagement. Reliance on mainly one industry, peat, and now wind energy is seen to be an unsustainable pathway and a diversity of just transition solutions is required in examining the social, economic and environmental benefits of peatlands in the future. Engaging with landowners e.g. Bord na Mona, Coillte, Councils can be a challenge for communities and communities need to engage with the agencies who own the peatlands. There are difficult to reach groups within communities who need to be included and involved. The interface between top down and bottom up needs to be opened up, creating a space for dialogue between landowners/county council and communities. Real and meaningful engagement is needed for communities affected by the decommissioning of bogs and a thorough examination of what a decommissioned peat bog can bring to a community socially, economically and environmentally needs to take place.

A diversity of face-to-face and digital, flexible and multiple capacity building programmes are required to carry out inclusive engagement. Communities need to be supported to: access funding; nurture leadership and communications; strategically plan which requires time, flexibility and high levels of volunteerism, with capacity building support from the council and other groups. There is benefit in connecting up local community groups who have been successful in projects and funding applications to share knowledge. Support is needed to build dialogue between communities and landowners. Managing and rewetting the bogs and monitoring of carbon sequestration could potentially be jobs carried out by peat workers or farmers. There is a pathway to entice people to visit restored peatlands, guided tours and trains for tours through the restored peat bogs.

Figure 22: Conversion factors in support of a just energy transition in Ireland



4.1.3 Planning and quality of life

The creation of new, lower carbon employment and enhanced quality of life is central to the definition of a just transition. Key to achieving this in rural Ireland will be enhanced infrastructure and, in particular, high quality and extensive broadband provision. Digital transition is a key enabler of just transition as it provides the opportunity for individuals to work at home and commute less, reducing carbon emissions and travel costs. In Leitrim in particular broadband provision is seen as key to retaining Covid migrants who have been taking advantage of hybrid and remote working opportunities. These groups spend locally, re-balance spending power and enhance the vitality and viability of urban centres and small towns. Walking and cycling provision within 2km of towns and village would enhance active travel and this, along with greater public transport frequency and an increase in and incentives for electric charging points in homes would contribute to lower carbon emissions in the county.

However, a key challenge to sustainable urban development and the achievement of compact growth in both Donegal and Leitrim, is the ongoing pressure and desire for one-off housing, reflecting a desire for rural living and often genuine need for close proximity to farming and other rural place-based enterprises. Dispersed settlement patterns make the delivery of equitable and sustainable travel provision very challenging. Deeper and wider consultation is required for planning decisions, particularly for renewables and greenways, and for people to understand the trade-offs in terms of delivering climate mitigation and more sustainable living. For example, communication and ongoing maintenance and discussion is needed with farmers around facilitating cycle path provision. Active travel and EV need further consideration in more remote areas where there is reduced access to safe and established walking/cycling infrastructure and EV points. In Donegal, any costs for a transition to a lower carbon economy would put extra pressure on those severely affected by the mica crisis but further support from central government could generate a green 'build back better' program (Box 4), achieving multiple objectives – economic, social and environmental - simultaneously.

In Leitrim, there is significant potential for eco-tourism or slow tourism which would counterbalance what is seen as an unsustainable focus on pleasure cruisers and the hen and stag industry. Slow tourism may include water tourism, hiking, mountain biking, kayaking and the development of greenways. Remoter areas need to be 'opened up' and made accessible by maximising current transport links (e.g. the South Leitrim to Dublin rail line), building on existing greenway and blueway plans, and expanding infrastructure including accommodation for visitors. Eco-tourism measures not only enhance wellbeing and quality of life for locals through economic development, but also in local amenity provision. Many of the conversion factors for enhanced planning, quality of life and wellbeing are cross-cutting, but are outlined in Figure 23.

Box 4: Enhancing Quality of Life and Jobs in Inishowen, Donegal

The mica crisis has had serious implications for wellbeing and quality of life for those individuals affected and for the entire community. There is a strong interest in 'building back better' and enhancing the energy rating of re-built homes, paving the way for a greener peninsula in Inishowen, in particular. Simultaneously, more robust building control mechanisms are needed to prevent future issues in building quality and safety. The emerging NW city region is seen to be an appropriate framing for climate action and just transition work in the region with the NW Climate Action plan and NW Greenway (INTERREG) initiatives being funded and currently ongoing and under construction. Linking into colleges and universities in the region and nationally would encourage skills in renewable energy technologies, retrofitting and meet other JT skills requirements and opportunities.

Broadband provision is key to unlocking people's ability to work from home and, in turn, reduce car journeys. There is a low level of awareness around compact growth and transportation issues in and around towns and villages. Supports are required for smaller businesses in rural villages and there needs to be support and space for farm shops, farmers markets and market gardens within a town's footprint, potentially reducing geographical and community disconnect and the over-reliance on cars in the county. Massive investment is needed in public transport provision and awareness in Donegal to provide frequency in public transport.

Figure 23: Conversion factors in support of more effective planning and better quality of life in rural Ireland



4.2 Governance in support of a place-based just transition

New governance arrangements are required to shift the ‘business as usual’ approach to development in Ireland generally, and particularly in the areas studied as part of this project. A reconceptualization among policymakers and others of urban-rural linkages will be central to achieving just and appropriate place-based outcomes. Our study areas are all rural but with different existing relationships to urban centres and metropolitan areas. Rather than perpetuating an urban-rural binary in policy and identity, just transitions in rural areas will be most effective where integrated approaches are adopted. Strong urban centres can support food producers in creating a more vibrant local market for selling produce directly to customers, but this requires appropriate policy, vision, finance and placemaking support at local authority and central government level to attract people to live in towns and villages and open up markets and spaces for cooperative, mobile, distributed processing units. There has been some progress by government to deliver on this agenda through a range of sectoral strategies but a more coordinated and targeted place-based approach is required to maximise the impact.

With appropriate additional funding and support, community development organisations and partnerships and state agencies (e.g. Teagasc) are well placed to support this. Such efforts should be foregrounded by a reimagining of links and spatial scales, responding to place and specific local assets/resources. Logistics will therefore be critical - road and rail transport infrastructure to support just transition in more remote areas such as Donegal and Leitrim would both support urban centres, begin to address compact growth aspirations if it enhanced the viability of small towns, and facilitate food producers to link to markets in the region and nationally. Building on the work carried out by Teagasc, farmers and farming communities potentially have the capacity to be at the centre of a just transition in rural Ireland but this requires reskilling and more integrated policy frameworks.

Leadership at regional assembly and local authority level is needed for a vision for stronger urban centres and linking places. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies provide a high level approach to many of these issues, and funding streams such as the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) could be harnessed to deliver on some of these potentials. One exemplar of imaginative thinking is the north-west city region, the cross-border collaboration between Letterkenny, Derry and Strabane. In the rural Inishowen peninsula, a strong city region is recognised by communities and other stakeholders as a critical economic and social driver for a just transition in the wider area. Linking into strong regional growth centres is critical to addressing deficits in employment, health and education and protection of greenspaces in rural towns and areas but policy and funding streams need to be developed that specifically support proposals that build urban-rural linkages and capacity.

Greater leadership is also required in local authorities to envision and develop place based just transition programs, linking up natural resources, greenways, strengthening urban centres and ensuring climate plans are equality proofed. Local authorities, as the scale of government closest to people and places, are ideally placed to lead on place-based just transitions but they need to be resourced and tooled up to do so. A senior climate change officer is a missing link in the local authority structure to implement just transition programmes and more guidance is needed to help deliver on initiatives such as Decarbonisation Zones (DZs) that could indicate how climate measures impact on particular groups.

Building capacity is key to building trust and confidence across all just transition programmes, but it needs to be supported and resourced locally in the community development and NGO sectors, funded and supported at the local authority level, and supported regionally by CARO. In the midlands, Irish Rural Link operate a number of projects/initiatives such as the Community Wetlands Forum and FarmPEAT who work locally building capacity e.g. in Cloncrow bog County Westmeath. The FarmPEAT (Farm Payments for Ecological and Agricultural Transitions) Project is developing a locally-led, innovative, results-based farm scheme for farmers who manage lands that surround the bog. The programme will reward farmers for improved management of habitats on peat soils along with other important landscape features such as eskers, field boundaries and watercourses. The programme will be results-based in that farmers will get paid depending on the scores they achieve, with higher scores (indicating higher environmental quality) generating higher payments. It is hoped that this programme will form a basis for future agri-environmental schemes in these areas. As such it presents an opportunity for farmers to be involved in developing policy that could provide long term environmental and economic benefits to their communities into the future (farmpeat.ie).

Building capacity for community based coalitions to include health, wellbeing and quality of life, and linking strong urban centres to surrounding rural areas, is key to a more deeply engaged just transition. The work of Irish Rural Link with peat communities provides a model for how to build capacity but this needs to be extended to the range of rural communities. Community development organisations require support for funding, leadership, communications and strategy building for a just transition and ideally this would come from the local authority level where there is greater knowledge of the specific place-based requirements. There is emerging support at government level, including by An Taoiseach, (<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2022-03-29/10/#s12>) to the merits of community-based interventions, but there is a need to ensure that the distinction between previous area-based approaches and meaningful place-based approaches are fully understood. The local and regional authorities will also be critical to bridging communications between communities and large state bodies such as Bord na Mona and Coillte. Local champions in the community supported by more capacity building resources are required to diversify economic opportunity. Multi-level governance and distributed leadership are therefore critical to harnessing the potential of new paths to development that can enhance quality of life and create greener jobs.

4.3 Engaging and communicating with communities

For a just transition to become a reality, an inclusive definition of ‘communities’ and ‘citizens’ is required to include all of those living, visiting and working in the area. For new just transition initiatives to thrive, a market has to be present and a whole community approach taken. McCabe (2020) makes the case for people-centred climate action and a just transition but based on our research, there currently appears to be a democratic deficit in just transition engagement. The result is a lack of clarity at the local level on what it means and how it impacts, but also on where and how people can ask for advice and support. The latent potential and creativity that clearly exists within the communities studied in this research could be nurtured through expertly facilitated deep listening and engagement processes. A combination of retraining/reskilling/strengthening markets/enhancing liveability in towns and villages has the potential for an abundance and surplus of ideas and projects that could be operationalised both within a transparent and structured just transition programme, and outside of this programme to encourage more sustainable and long term economic development that strengthens quality of life and wellbeing. However, how communities are engaged and can be empowered to contribute and use their own agency is critical.

In co-creation, a first step to building trust is to acknowledging deficits, which in the case of rural communities in our study areas also includes explicitly recognising historical underinvestment and deep-rooted inequalities. Deep listening, particularly with and for hard to reach groups is necessary before new ideas, coalitions and associated governance structures can be developed and actioned. For example, in Donegal, the mica crisis heavily impacts employment and quality of life. In county Leitrim potential mining and current forestry impacts hamper the ability of some to re-envision their area and plan for a just transition, given that mining in particular seems to be a heavily carbon intensive activity with negative environmental implications that runs contrary to what farmers in particular are being asked to do.

A positive approach to just transition could be fostered by explicitly defining from the bottom-up what a decent job and quality of life means for people in different places. If farmers have lost a sense of agency through reliance on farm payments, individual and community wellbeing and the ability to engage effectively and harness opportunities for change is reduced. Any further pressure to comply with carbon reduction measures will impact both financial wellbeing and the sense of agency and freedom to make choices about their farm purchases and enterprise design. Wider and deeper communication is required both at a local level and with farm unions and lobby groups to shape positive just transitions within the farming community. How we engage with and support our agricultural sector will be at the heart of a just transition in rural Ireland. Enabling communities to enhance local spending on locally grown food and products is the first step to opening up an enterprise to the market and local diversification.

Meaningful engagement with communities is time and resource-intensive. Funding at the local authority level and through Teagasc is required to build capacity, confidence and the support needed at local level. New technologies will need to be trialled to work with communities and harness their ideas, such as through the Commonplace platform which was effectively used in this study. The platform may be used to innovate and make decisions to enhance quality of life and local jobs in a lower carbon economy which may support everyday, local, small circular economies. Given how connected identities, place and activities have historically been, a certain amount of empathy and compassion (Nussbaum, 2013:201) is required to deal with any sense of loss from the transition from previous carbon intensive

activities and associated behaviours to new jobs and a different mode of consuming and living. Community capacity building and deep listening is an important part of this process of acknowledging public emotion and coping with change.

Communities require a better understanding of how plans for cessation of peat and the introduction of wind turbines (Midlands and Leitrim), and the increase in forestry cover (Leitrim) is aligned with national and international plans for carbon reduction. Direct communications with the relevant government departments and agencies and other semi-state bodies who are government policy enablers (e.g. Coillte; National Parks and Wildlife Service; Bord na Mona) is necessary to clearly signal who has responsibility for these decisions and can be held accountable for the resultant impact on people and landscape. This is essential to building back trust in decision making, a commodity that is in short supply based on recent research (Policy Institute, Kings College London), and ensuring that central government policy has just and meaningful impacts.

4.4 Identifying possibilities for a place-based just transition

New understanding and conceptualisations for just transition should focus on purposeful livelihoods and quality of life for all, particularly for those affected by job loss. But how do we get beyond narrow understandings to open up possibilities for what future decent jobs and good quality of life might look like or be realised? Place-based analyses can identify specific pathways to just transition. Our Commonplace community engagement tool enabled contributors to associate a place based 'sentiment' with each comment (positive/negative/neutral) and thereby acted as a probe to open up discussion about what works well but also area deficits and things that are not currently working well. The sequence of questions then led the user to share opinions, ideas and understandings of local assets. Finally participants were then asked to share their ideas about potential projects and initiatives and how they could be actioned to deliver better quality jobs and enhance wellbeing. Drawing on this information, some possibilities for place-based just transitions emerged, focused on activating eco-tourism potential; strengthening town centres; and creating a distinctive green geographical identity for a strong rural community. All of these highlight the importance of policies, financial supports and other mechanisms in strengthening urban-rural linkages.

4.4.1 Activating Eco-tourism in a dispersed remote rural economy: North Leitrim

Features, resources and interventions required to realise eco-tourism potential

Connectivity and access, as well as training and marketing, are the most important elements for development of eco-tourism. Creating connections and networks provides an opportunity to foster eco-tourism initiatives from the bottom-up, perhaps based in a cooperative community-based model. Many areas nationally have greenways that are in process or not yet connected up and these are important missing pieces of infrastructure for dispersed locations in order to link with adjacent counties and with other forms of public infrastructure. Dispersed and remote areas of Ireland have a unique, quiet beauty, a silent agency, that offers potential to attract slow tourism as well as eco-tourism benefitting both people and the environment. Building connectivity requires cross-county, regional and national coordination and leadership but also requires integrated policy approaches to ensure that sectoral policies are aligned in support of this new low-carbon economic opportunity, with significant employment potential.

Barriers to eco-tourism development

The main barriers identified are resourcing, poor communications and lack of connectivity for walking and cycling that would drive eco-tourism. In addition to fragmented walking and cycling links and associated infrastructure, broadband connectivity is vital to support business and market development, as well as operating businesses in a digital age. This physical infrastructure is necessary to secure a just transition away for example from intensive, traditional agriculture and towards eco- or agri-tourism. Concerns about inappropriate location of windfarms and a monoculture of wind turbines and sitka spruce forestry, while considered important environmental projects, have significant potential to undermine a more just transition and limit the capacity of many people to enhance their own opportunity and wellbeing. This concern is reflected in anti-wind and anti-forestry campaigns that are currently very active in multiple counties in Ireland with significant eco-tourism potential, such as Wicklow, Kerry and our study area in Leitrim.

Supporting eco-tourism as a just transition pathway

Specific recommendations for eco-tourism include:

- Planning and other policies that mitigate against monocultures and inappropriate location of forestry and wind turbines that may impact on the current unspoilt and quiet landscape and eco-tourism potential.

- Training and funding for eco-tourism that will benefit farmers in particular and enable them to pro-actively re-frame their identities with and beyond current agricultural practices, in a way that builds surplus and diversity.

- Local pilot projects funded through local authority schemes and central government initiatives to develop nature-based community projects to actively engage people with the area and foster new relationships with nature that enhance wellbeing and community identity.

- A connections and network map of proposed projects and ideas starting with the connections made on the commonplace website (<https://leitrimmap.commonplace.is/>) and link to other landscape studies for the area.

- Strong local authority leadership on active mobility measures to further develop and coordinate green and blue infrastructure and associated walking and cycling routes. This provides opportunity to open up further eco-tourism initiatives such as cafes, water sports and prolonged access to high quality assets.

4.4.2 Strengthening Town Centres: Greening Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath

Features, resources and interventions required to strengthen the potential of town centres

Placemaking is a critical element in urban design and of growing importance in economic development and overall community wellbeing. A strategic approach to urban greening provides an opportunity to strengthen town centres by increasing connectivity, enhancing liveability (quality of life in the urban area), promoting engagement with community heritage and addressing traffic and parking management.

Community initiatives that harness a diverse skills set but also have the potential to develop new skills in a community that is transitioning away from a reliance on the peat industry include restoration of heritage buildings, grant-aided community retrofitting, community nature gardens, and a community managed park. Numerous unconnected walks/greenways could be connected up for local use and to attract visitors, but requires meaningful communication with landowners regarding rights of way outside the town. Flexible working arrangements and the presence of digital hubs in town centres – such as the National Hub Network, a government initiative - would increase footfall and vibrancy and vacant buildings offer a potential opportunity to support hybrid working and limit out-commuting, also driving business to local café's, restaurants, other retail and potential outdoor markets. Increased walkability and cyclability would reduce the need for parking, while a 30mph speed limit and more traffic calming measures would go some way to improving the town centre environment for walkers and cyclists. Pedestrianisation opportunities in town squares improve social connection and could provide more pleasant spaces for farmers markets that build linkages with the rural hinterlands.

Barriers to strengthening of town centres

Many Irish towns are seen to have a 'run down' look and many have high levels of vacancy and derelict buildings. The by-passing of many towns has not led to a decrease in overall traffic and heavy traffic impacts on liveability, heritage enjoyment in town centres and connectivity for walkers and cyclists. Community structures are often not in place and/or under resourced and financial and organisational support is required for community owned/led or managed initiatives. Current high levels of car and HGV traffic impact negatively on walker and cyclists and modal choice is currently mainly the car. Unsafe, unpleasant and unwalkable town centres become unattractive but also generate negative environmental externalities including under-utilisation of the building stock, air pollution and contribute to sprawl and the desire for unsustainable one-off housing. Community plays an important part in creating a more liveable

environment but if there are not pleasant places to meet easily within the town centre, this hampers development of both bonding and bridging social capital which are important elements in practicing and supporting just transitions.

Supporting eco-tourism as a just transition pathway

Specific recommendations for strengthening of town centres to support a just transition include:

- Exploring the potential of derelict town centre buildings to be used as remote working digital hubs

- Grant-aiding community led retrofitting to support the revitalisation of buildings, energy upgrading and local skills development.

- Enhance and increase play spaces and biodiversity access for children, and more generally in the town and environs to create better psychological connections between town and country.

- Engaging in pro-active traffic management and traffic calming, pedestrianise town squares and some streets to reduce traffic through-flow, carbon emissions, enhance safety and general wellbeing.

- Improve broadband connection in the towns and their hinterland

- Use the enhanced urban squares and spaces to expand farmers markets, creating a clear food link between the town and its rural hinterland, but also expanding the potential local market to farmers who may be diversifying their activities.

- Connect up and expand greenways and walking routes within and beyond the town environs, linking into lake amenity, to attract new visitors and generate tourist revenue, as well as encouraging people to spend more locally.

- Potential for new employment generation as well as enhancing urban vitality and vibrancy through promoting and linking together historic/heritage amenities within the town and linking to heritage trails that may be associated with earlier forms of economic development including distilleries, quarries and the peat industry. This would align closely with aspirations for Cultural Heritage in the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

- Small town settings may offer particular opportunities to create an elder/disability/dementia friendly environments specifically taking into account the everyday access needs of the elderly.

4.4.3 Creating a Distinctive Green Identity: Inishowen community climate conversations

Features, resources and interventions required to create a distinctive green identity

Resources or interventions required to support a greener identity for remote, dispersed or peripheral areas include a re-examination of how 'community' is understood and how communities can share resources, support independent living and liveability for all. Like other areas, supports that can enable just transition include linking walkways, understanding and acknowledging current social and spatial inequalities, targeting specific funding and resources at clearly defined projects, and linking into the strong urban centres within the wider region.

Peripheral areas that rely on tourism may widen out the concept of 'community' to include visitors and those who travel through/work in the area for the purposes of planning for a move to a lower carbon economy. Just Transition clinics/hubs within towns and villages with experts could make just transition efforts more focussed and visible and support collective problem-solving is support of climate action. These would centre around strong communities built on social capital and sharing initiatives that already exist and have flourished during the Covid 19 pandemic. Strong

communities can also then develop the leadership capacity and social capital to invest in community owned/led initiatives such as renewables, food growing, composting. The very strong community development sector in Inishowen provides an important resource that should be harnessed to develop and support just transition pathways, connecting with works already done in area of climate, energy and behaviour change.

To improve connectivity and quality of life, more frequent and better connected public transport is needed, as well as more active travel corridors on the outskirts of towns to allow people access in a low-carbon way to natural amenities or urban centres. Incentives are required to encourage people to move into towns and villages and thereby support compact growth and more viable service delivery by consolidating population, retrofit old and disused buildings, and invest in independent living for all generations. In Inishowen there is a particular appetite and opportunity to engage in cross border biodiversity projects and to develop the idea of a decarbonisation region, learning from and linking in with Derry and the environmental initiatives happening there on sustainability and the circular economy. This cross-border work is happening incrementally and on an ad hoc basis but could be further institutionalised through Shared Island initiatives.

Barriers to creating a distinct green identity

Issues that create trauma for local people and negatively affect quality of life and wellbeing need to be acknowledged and impacts understood before plans for a just transition can occur. When one's focus is on immediate and basic needs such as shelter and housing, there is less appetite and capacity to engage in longer term, strategic thinking and planning for a just transition. For example, in Donegal, the mica crisis demonstrates a perception among local people that their physical peripherality creates significant distance from decision making and this diminishes their capability to enhance their own wellbeing.

High levels of car-based traffic in towns and some unsolved pollution sources are also seen as barriers to promoting Inishowen as a green peninsula. For border counties the additional challenges of administrative or legal differences on either side of the border may impact on working together for a common goal towards a just transition. Enhanced and improved communication as part of the wider development of the north-west city region to outline the benefits for farming, markets and other initiatives could unlock the potentials of this regional identity.

Supporting green identity as a just transition pathway

Specific recommendations include:

- Consider the relationship between just transition and impactful issues such as the mica crisis as part of the potential of creating a green peninsula. Meeting people where they are now the first step in moving together towards future goals.

- Participants on the Commonplace platform provided very specific and detailed technical recommendations regarding 'building back better' and associated climate solutions, demonstrating the importance of an approach grounded in community and lived experience.

- More clarification from local authorities and other state bodies on climate mitigation and adaptation, and practical guidance on how communities can play a role in delivering them.

- Sustain and intensify the development of the north-west city region to provide more local/regional work opportunities and combat the migration of workers (during the week) to Dublin and other large cities, which may generate social instability but also has significant impact on emissions from car-based travel.

- Focus on connecting up blue/greenways to support more active travel on an everyday basis but also to support green domestic and cross-border tourism.

4.5 Linking urban and rural for a just transition

As discussed in chapter 2, rural areas can be places of significant opportunity but just transitions will not be easy nor straightforward. In areas dominated by primary economic activities, rural tourism, enhanced roles and interest in the stewardship of natural resources, more emphasis on sourcing foods closer to markets and reducing ‘food miles’, and green technologies provide new opportunities. How well positioned any place is to take advantage of these depends on assets, capabilities, funding and policy priorities. Urban and rural regions are increasingly connected and interdependent but the diversity of rural places and their relationships to urban areas (OECD, 2016) are context-specific and require place-based policies to maximise their potential. There are a number of high-level actions however that have potential resonance across different settings:

- Improving local access routes and transport are key to improved mobility. Currently the working definition of active travel requires a town to be within cycling distance and this needs to be re-examined for more rural areas to improve multi-modal mobility. Other barriers to mobility and communication include the poor state of footpaths on roads leading out of towns and the need to extend fibre broadband to ensure rural businesses are supported and connected.

- Linking walking and cycling routes benefits both local communities and visitors. Local link buses need to take bicycles. To encourage cycling for families in rural areas, driver education about road safety is critical but there is also a need for enhanced communication with farmers as active stakeholders in developing walking routes. Better communication (interpretation and signposting) of places to visit outside of towns and high quality nature experiences e.g. as part of eco-tourism initiatives need to be more affordable to urban dwellers to enhance overall wellbeing. More liveable, local urban centres (towns and villages) may also enhance quality of life for older people and encourage a move into towns and villages for independent living.

- Enhancement of green infrastructure in towns can link to surrounding green areas building on local food growing projects and examining barriers to participation. The farmers market and local produce provision can be built on in most places with a greater diversity in type and number of farmers markets (organic and non-organic).

- Urban centres need to be reimagined as a support for the farming community and surrounding rural areas. Such a symbiotic, supportive framing for just transition may overcome issues around urban-rural binaries and anti-urban sentiments around urban living or urban policies. Town and village centres may also provide spaces and training for local food growing and for growers to build capacity for food production in local urban areas. Currently there are barriers (psychological/social) to participation in community growing and this needs further investigation.

- Relationship building between the farming community and other stakeholders needs to be supported as part of efforts to build and nurture relationships between towns, villages and surrounding rural areas, but also support agricultural innovation and diversification.

4.6 Summary

This chapter has illustrated the importance of a place-based approach to just transition that is contextualised and grounded in everyday life and experience. Across sectors, there are common challenges and experiences, yet these often present in different ways depending on the differing historical path dependencies, existing assets and acknowledged deficits. Drawing on our three study sites, realising the potential of place-based approaches to just transition in rural Ireland will be heavily shaped by:

- **Re-localisation of markets, reskilling and a renewed understanding of farmers** as diverse food producers and custodians of ecosystems. The development of strong urban centres will provide local markets for food producers and other small businesses. Strong and liveable urban centres will also attract people to live and create an employment pool in remote areas. However, there needs to be greater awareness and support for the benefits of town centre living and support for farmers and businesses to set up there (e.g. making vacant properties available; remote working hubs; creating space for cooperative units). More mobile and distributed manufacturing and processing requires space and a local place for people to access. Once the local market is flourishing, producers can connect to larger strengthened urban centres regionally and nationally. Creating more liveable town centres also attracts visitors expanding the market. Linked up greenways/blueways benefit both locals and visitors, creates employment in slow and eco-tourism and supports active travel thereby reducing transport emissions. However, this should not be seen as an ‘anti-rural’ policy and can go hand-in-hand with a firm policy on flourishing rural livelihoods and living in rural areas plus stricter building and design regulations regarding quality of rural build in light of the mica crisis.

- **Information and communication** is key to understanding who has responsibility for decisions around peatlands, wind energy and afforestation. The overall national energy strategy needs to be communicated more effectively so particular communities do not feel they are being taken advantage of, especially in terms of on-shore wind or forestry. National decision-making needs to be aligned to ensure that in areas where communities feel they are being disadvantaged by the energy or agriculture transition, investors are not benefitting from monoculture forestry, fracking or mining, all of which have potential negative environmental and biodiversity impacts.

- **Building capacity** is key to building trust and confidence in just transition programs, this needs to be further supported locally in the community development sector, NGO’s but mainly at the local authority level, supported regionally by CARO. If the agricultural and energy transition is to be just and more emphasis is to be placed on urban centres, empathy, compassion and both bridging and bonding social capital need to be supported and understood. Communities need to be engaged on their terms and resourced to develop their own agency, initiatives and ideas.

Chapter 5

Lessons and Learning for Place-based Just Transition in Ireland

KEY TAKE-AWAY MESSAGES

- Place based just transitions start with identifying rights holders, stakeholders and community members and developing common understanding of what a just transition means for them, where they live and work,
- Meaningful and deep local-regional dialogues and engagement can help identify place-based assets, opportunities and challenges for a just transition. These processes identify what communities are transitioning to thereby opening up new possibilities.
- Places have diverse capabilities. National support and empowerment for local-regional planning and development of just transitions is critical.

5.1 Understanding a place based just transition

Place based approaches offer collaborative and multi-faceted responses to tackle complex concepts such as a just transition. Such ‘wicked problems’ relating to sustainability and climate action are often seen to be insurmountable and in our empirical work the concept of just transition is seen as vague, too abstract and hard to grasp by those at the coalface. There are wide ranging definitions and conceptual frameworks associated with place-based approaches but there are also points of convergence around community engagement, collaboration, holistic thinking, and adaptation to local contexts whilst considering the need to accelerate and advance actionable knowledge (Victoria State Government, 2020). Place is a valuable focus for analysis and a locus for government to target skills and investment and to design solutions holistically and systematically. To improve how we work in and through place to transition to lower carbon economies, we need to consider how we talk about and understand place, how we understand just transition and how we understand just transition in that particular place – each place may have different ways of working that require different objectives.

In our research, we draw on the NESC (2020) definition of a just transition as providing decent jobs, a good quality of life and wellbeing as we move to a lower carbon economy. Our approach to just transition emphasises the need to open up debates around structural changes and the value-laden aspects of implementing a just transition. Combining this with a place-based approach to just transition encourages us to ask the questions – what are decent jobs and what does quality of life mean for people in different places? Reaching national targets successfully can only be achieved with the support of people, and any place-based approach to just transition must involve appropriate collaborations and spatial scales, full community engagement, and be responsive to the local context.

Based on the empirical work undertaken in the three locations – Inishowen, Leitrim and Kilbeggan - we suggest the following questions that should be central to place-based approaches to just transition:

Landscape and place

- What are the distinctive local assets and strengths that support a just transition? (community assets; visitor attractions; landscape and soil; population; location; proximity to markets)
- What are the diverse farming regions and terrains and ecosystems and how have they been managed historically?
- What are the major components of climate, topography, landscape, water access in this place at any scale? (garden, farm, neighbourhood, town + hinterland; county; region and appropriate spatial scales)
- What are the green and blue assets that can be linked up, locally, county wide and nationally?
- What are the current programs and policies that can be built upon? (e.g. knowledge transfer; energy strategies; climate action plans; biodiversity action plans)

Workers and place

- What are the current worker identities and everyday working rhythms and are there worker identities that may be positively re-framed for a just transition to occur? (e.g. farmer as food producer; peat worker as custodian of the landscape)

- What are the unique value chains and diverse product streams appropriate to this context; how can these be supported; where are the markets located?

- What are the barriers to strengthening urban centres? (e.g. connectivity; vacancy; traffic; resources at local authority level; broadband)

- Are there spatial binaries that need to be re-framed for a just transition to occur? (e.g. urban-rural; town-country to create more dynamism and symbiosis between town centres and surrounding farming areas)

- What are the barriers to people living and working in more rural counties (e.g. broadband? quality and liveability of urban centres)

- Where are the Universities and training colleges to link into for re-skilling and training? (e.g. retrofitting; marketing; tourism; trade skills; business development; ecology)

We also draw attention to the importance of timing. To mitigate panic and resistance from communities that may be facing significant challenges given their previous economic trajectory and reliance on more carbon-intensive activities, all stakeholders need to be proactively planning ahead *before* transition happens to ensure that individuals, groups and communities do not get left behind. This has been happening at national scale in a number of countries, for example through the Future Skills initiative in Canada, but in most cases has been aspatial and led by central government. Building this approach into place-based analyses and approaches to just transition provides a unique opportunity to ground these conversations, skills audits, and planning in local communities to get early buy-in and build capacity.

5.2 Just Transition and the Capability Approach (CA)

5.2.1 Human agency and just transition

The questions listed above flow from the conceptual framework – a place-based application of the Capabilities Approach to frame our understanding of a just transition – that we developed in the early sections of this report. The open and normative framework provided by the Capability Approach allows its application to differ in different contexts. Furthermore, it's apparent under-theorisation, nudges us to question ideas and theories of justice implied and then practiced when using the term just transition, to ask what is more or less just in different contexts, and whose values are realised? In terms of social and spatial justice, the language of remoteness, marginality, underinvestment, and neglect flowed through interviewee responses. There is also a feeling from some that a just transition is being imposed from elsewhere, affecting a sense of individual and collective agency.

Within the framework of the Capability Approach, agency is defined as the ability to act and bring about change (Sen, 1999) and to pursue and realise goals that people value (Nussbaum, 2000). Amartya Sen's capability approach emphasizes the importance of freedom and choice in leading the life that one values. In the capability approach, a person converts resources into achieved functionings – the beings, doings, havings that people value and have reason to value. This conversion space depends upon personal, social, economic and environmental factors. Different people in different contexts may require different quantities or qualities of resources to achieve functionings and enhance wellbeing (Velástegui, 2020). The actual freedom that an individual may have to pursue their valued ends varies and depends on personal attributes and circumstances (e.g. gender, class, age, ethnicity) and social context (e.g. cultural identities; social norms). Here, human diversity is a fundamental aspect of enhancing wellbeing as we move to a lower carbon economy. Conversion factors are important because they may constrain the capability achievement of individuals, a matter that is especially important for those who are feeling disempowered. Interviewees spoke of fear and panic amongst individuals and groups in the face of a changing climate but particularly within the farming and peat

working communities. Crisis or panic mode is seen to be disempowering, hindering creativity and change. Deep listening and capacity building in local communities builds dialogue and trust, enhancing both individual and collective agency. In progressing the just transition agenda in Ireland, it may be necessary to carry out local needs assessment workshops first to then figure out the next step with communities in transition. This process requires deep listening and flexibility with experienced facilitators and adequate resourcing linking to enhanced individual and collective agency.

5.2.2 Building capacity for a just transition

Across the case studies, building capacity amongst groups and individuals is identified as critical and key to enhanced human agency. Both farmers and those in forestry are willing to engage in dialogue but there does not seem to be an effective approach, mechanism or governance structure in place for this to occur and as a result workers feel side-lined. Specifically in Westmeath and the wider midlands, what a peatland can provide environmentally, socially, economically is unclear as it depends on what the community wants itself. Deep capacity building work with communities through meaningful co-creation is needed to balance the current top down approach as communities currently feel they are left in the dark, both economically and in terms of information. Spaces need to be created to enable new networks develop in support of more skills based, re-localised farming, energy and food futures. Farmers need to have the support that allows them to define and design the system that best fits their own farm. There are ideas from the grassroots and there is training available but there seems to be a lack of a facilitating structure to implement ideas. Further resourcing and empowerment at the local authority level is essential to provide a link between people and pathways for a just transition. Links to Universities in all case studies is a clear pathway to identifying local solutions. Local groups, NGOs and a programme led by the local authority and local authorities working together is key here.

5.2.3 Co-creation as an approach to community engagement for a low carbon economy

To operationalise a place based just transition, plans must be co-created with local communities to ensure they are appropriate to context. Such a definition of ‘community’ should consider those who live in the area but also those who work in the area, own land, property and regularly visit it. The three step (Mapping - Listen – Reground) co-creation approach (Clavin et al. 2021) was practiced in the three case study areas through territorial analysis; in-depth interviews and a digital public engagement tool with capacity for people to develop project ideas for a just transition. Public engagement was, for this research, limited to the use of an online participatory tool (commonplace.ie) due to the lingering Covid 19 restrictions (2021). This digital tool is innovative and effective in gathering comments and expressing sentiment about certain topics and places, but is most effective when used as part of a suite of participatory methods for in-person, deeper dialogue and deeper mapping of sentiments, conversion factors and pathways for a just transition.

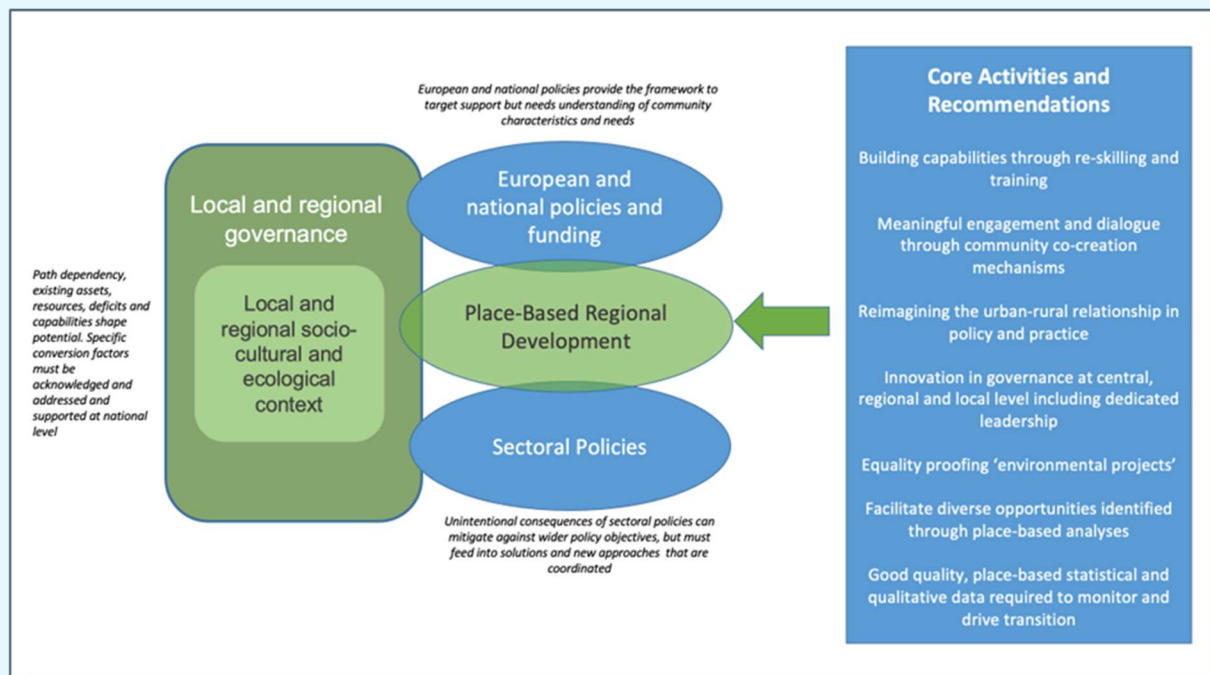
The visual and spatial elements that the digital tool provides, introduces a new way of commenting about place. The focus on sentiment and the affective components of place (what are you commenting on; how does this make you feel), acknowledge deficits and inequalities but also positive aspects of place and potential to build on local assets. However, this is not a substitution for the deep, creative (Hovarth and Carpenter, 2007) and agonistic dialogue (Mouffe, 2007) that is often necessary before a group can start to think about counterfactuals and innovate new projects.

The Commonplace tool is, however, very effective in providing an open source, crowdsourced picture of how people feel about particular places and it provides ample space for people to suggest projects and innovate together. There is a place for technology in communities and more distributed, diversified economies need such supporting tools to visualise, accelerate and advance actionable knowledge, enacting change.

5.3 Approaches to support a just transition in Ireland

Our framework for understanding the development of policies, approaches and mechanisms to support a just transition in Ireland is set out Figure 24. This illustrates a multi-level governance framework designed to respond to diverse local contexts but also identifies core activities and recommendations to inform local action.

Figure 24: Framework for place-based just transitions in Ireland



The recommendations and activities emerging from this research fall under three broad headings: capacity building; governance, policy and practice; driving and monitoring transition.

5.3.1 Capacity building

The appetite for community engagement for a just transition is clear but needs to be led by a senior designated officer to build capacity with communities. Nationally the money spent on climate action and just transition within communities is seen to be minimal compared to that spent on transport and road adaptation e.g. raising levels of roads affected by flood waters. The procurement process is suited to this type of spend and it is easier to procure correctly and efficiently. Working with community groups and capacity building with communities is a different order of funding and procurement can be more complex and uncertain for such projects. At present, there is also lack of wider understanding of just transition with many communities primarily associating it with the closure of the bogs and redundancy of Bord Na Móna workers in the Irish Midlands. The element of good, decent work is often left out of discussions around just transition and this will mean different things to people in different places. New jobs and opportunities for the displaced workforce, and newly created green jobs must consider the interests and priorities of workers; they should be high-quality, attractive to people who lose employment in traditional industries, and they should maintain prevailing wage standards and conditions (Cha, 2017).

Presently, just transition as an idea seems out of reach for many communities and local policy makers who are concerned with more immediate pressing issues such as housing for example. How can just transition be connected into these more immediate issues to create a coordinated response? The literature on just transitions emphasises the importance of public engagement and social dialogue. New Zealand has developed such a bottom-up approach. In the Taranaki region of New Zealand (an oil and gas economy), the national government supported a wide-ranging dialogue on how the region could manage the just transition to a post carbon economy. The resulting Taranaki Roadmap 2050 was co-created with communities, iwi (tribes), local and central government, businesses, educators, unions and workers and identifies 12 Transition Pathways. The framework and action plans were developed by volunteers and funded by the national government and the private sector. Each Action Plan identifies the network and resources needed to coordinate and specific projects for implementation. There is a budgetary ask to the Central Government for these resources alongside the anticipation that private sector funding will be leveraged.

In rural Ireland, many of the opportunities that would support a just transition depend on high quality broadband and digital infrastructure. Our research highlights the importance of digitisation as a pre-cursor to an effective climate transition. The role of the digital is critical in a place-based just transition to ensure that barriers to opportunity and innovation are removed. For example in Småland and the Islands (Sweden), historically a strong forestry and manufacturing region, counties within the National Area such as Kalmar are experiencing industrial decline. Efforts to renew the economy have been concentrated on strengthening cultural development, business growth and innovation. There are also efforts to achieve sustainability, improve technology and increase labour market participation. Kalmar's planning is guided by a *Regional Plan*, a *Regional Development Strategy* and an *Innovation Strategy*. Each of these policies is founded in achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals. Business, culture, tourism, rural development and SME's are seen as areas with the greatest growth potential and are supported through funding, administrative support and project development tools provided through Kalmar County Government programs. Given the importance of sustainability transitions, businesses have access to business plan support to help them comply with environmental legislation requirements. Infrastructure projects in the county are focused on improving digital connectedness, broadband expansion, transportation and health, indicating a clear transition from an industrial-based to a service-based economy.

Building capacity for a place-based just transition in Ireland therefore will require:

Recommendation 1: Enhancing capabilities through re-skilling, training and digital connectedness

Recommendation 2: Meaningful engagement with communities through co-creation to define what just transition means in their specific context and to address immediate issues, such as housing, through a just transition lens

5.3.2 Governance, policy and practice

Central government plays a critical role in developing the frameworks for a just transition. But action is frequently hampered by a silo mentality with different departments pursuing different objectives in ways that can undermine coherent action. A pre-requisite of meaningful action is the need for a whole of government, cross-sectoral approach with clear accountability frameworks that are linked to GHG emissions reductions commitments. It also requires a re-imagining of government policies and funding mechanisms, building on the National Planning Framework (2018), that supports and advocates interlinkages between the urban and rural sphere. In particular, recently announced funding under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme as part of *Our Rural Future* places a strong emphasis on bringing town centre buildings back to life and could provide significant opportunities for rural enterprise. In particular, funding of 28 remote working hubs could be critical in sustaining the rural economy and retaining Covid migrants in place. While there has been significant effort by the public service in developing a range of policies and targeting investment, this has lacked alignment at times. Strategic coordination between and across sectors to maximise impact and secure beneficial outcomes is critical.

International examples of innovations in governance that could inform the Irish approach to addressing this issue abound. OECD countries have a range of approaches. For example, the Government of New Zealand has established a Just Transitions Unit (JTU) within its Ministry of Business and Innovation, a centre of expertise in government for managing transitions. It presently has two teams—one focusses on just transitions partnerships for regional planning while the other on understanding and modelling economy-wide transitions (e.g., impacts on labour, circular economy). The Just Transitions Unit helps to coordinate with other Government Ministries to identify funding opportunities and fill in gaps where there are no other alternatives for regions in transition. In Scotland, the Government established a short-term Just Transitions Commission in 2019 to provide “practical, affordable, actionable” recommendations to Scottish Ministers on how to achieve those principles. It also mandated that climate action targets accord with just transition principles. Over two years, the Just Transition Commission engaged the public and key stakeholders in meetings, town hall events and site visits. Its final report to Government was submitted in 2021 with four main recommendations:

- Pursue an *orderly, managed transition* to net-zero that creates benefits and opportunities for people across Scotland.

- Equip people with the *skills and education* they need to benefit from our transition to net-zero.

- Empower and invigorate our communities and *strengthen local economies*.

- *Share the benefits* of climate action widely; ensure costs are distributed on the basis of ability to pay (Just Transition Commission, 2021).

In response, Scotland will create a national Just Transition Planning Framework that will set out how it will transition to a net zero economy, alongside detailed plans for specific industries. A junior ministerial post—Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work—has been created to coordinate these actions. A new, permanent, statutory Just Transitions Commission will advise, monitor and evaluate progress on key targets. This is the government’s framework to manage a just transition. There is clear Ministerial accountability as well as arm’s length evaluation. It is also important to note that just transition principles are baked into Scotland’s just transitions targets. Scotland’s climate change plan calls for a rapid transformation across all sectors of the economy and society while “ensuring the journey is fair and creates a better future for everyone – regardless of where they live, what they do, and who they are” (Scottish Government, 2022). In Ireland, the 2021 Climate Action plan proposes to establish a Just Transition Commission to integrate just transition principles into climate policy in all sectors but arguably this needs to extend beyond climate policy alone and have clear timelines for action and accountability mechanisms.

As discussed in section 2.5 above, the success of place-based approaches rests on the actions of strong and effective local and regional institutions, including local and regional government, non-governmental organisations, and active citizen engagement. In comparative international terms, Ireland has a highly centralised system of government, very weak local government, and the substantive absence of regional governance militates against effective place-based solutions. Yet, our case studies of Donegal, Leitrim and Westmeath illustrate the highly diverse local challenges in effecting a just transition. Strengthened local government is a necessary condition for addressing the uneven geography of transition and building capacity on the lines we describe above. Moreover, regional governance mechanisms that capture the ‘larger than local’ dimension of transition need to be strengthened. At the same time, strengthening local government is likely to be insufficient unless it is accompanied by measures to broaden citizen engagement in local policymaking and communities feel their voices are being heard. This requires a specific skillset and innovations in how all levels of governance operate but particularly at the local authority level. Not every county has a climate change officer and a senior climate change officer is required in each county to specifically support just transition and work collaboratively across county-boundaries, sectors and agencies. Senior leaders must demonstrate a broad and holistic understanding of the barriers to and opportunities for just transition. For example, the Welsh Government have introduced the Future Generations Act and established a Future Generations Commissioner whose role involves examining the long-term impacts of government decisions and prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities, and climate change. There is potential for an initiative such as this to hold decision makers to account, to ensure that environmental projects deliver on broad objectives, and incentivize actions that emphasize long-term gains rather than short term political wins that do not extend beyond electoral cycles. Progressing and supporting the vision contained in the new Wellbeing Framework for Ireland (2021) and developing data to assess progress at the sub-

national level would be a major step forward in understanding the lived experience of just transition and ensuring that the push to achieve environmental targets does not diminish quality of life.

To ensure that *governance mechanisms, policies and practices support a just transition*, we propose that:

Recommendation 3: The urban-rural relationship must be re-imagined and then supported in policy, practice and funding streams to stimulate new opportunities for rural enterprise, aligned to the revitalisation of rural towns.

Recommendation 4: Significant innovation in central, regional and local government with dedicated senior leadership and accountability mechanisms is required.

Recommendation 5: Each new environmental project must be equality-proofed to ensure that quality of life and societal wellbeing is balanced with environmental objectives.

5.3.3 Driving and monitoring the transition

As discussed in Chapter 2, how successful just transition initiatives are, will depend on how they are received on the ground, how ‘decent jobs’ are defined and how people’s lived experiences are impacted. Understanding the contextual nature of transitions is critical to developing approaches, policies and frameworks that are meaningful and generate support. While initiatives may differ by region, they must be informed through place-based understandings that respond to the particular nature of the transition taking place in specific geographical areas. For example, Ontario (Canada) provides a strong example of a sectorally and territorially targeted programme to manage industrial transition through the Ontario Automotive Sector Strategy. As another example, just transitions initiatives in Wales (UK) and Piedmont (Italy) provide a strong focus on reducing social inequalities through the Equality Planning Strategy and the We Care Regional Strategy, respectively.

To ensure that interventions are generating the desired outcomes, an evidence-based and reflective approach to developing initiatives, monitoring their implementation and assessing their impacts is required. To do this successfully requires high-quality data at an appropriate scale (sub-national and sectoral). In Ireland at present, there is a significant lack of environmental data at sub-national level and gaps in the type of data being deployed in climate policy development. While there are attempts by the CSO and others to improve data frequency and availability, through for example using administrative data in new ways, the data available is relatively limited to basic demography. Developing data infrastructure that is fit for purpose and can aid monitoring, and if necessary redirection of policies that may unintentionally be creating adverse and unjust impacts, will be a critical component in a successful transition.

To ensure that a just transition is delivered and appropriately monitored, we suggest that:

Recommendation 6: Just transition initiatives must be bespoke responding to the particular nature and timing of transitions in specific geographical areas.

Recommendation 7: An audit of all data that can usefully support a just transition is undertaken to ensure that sufficient, quality data at the appropriate scale and time intervals is available to monitor the impact of particular interventions.

5.4 Summary

The climate and biodiversity crisis is the major environmental challenge of our time. Ensuring that our responses to these crises are grounded in justice and do not exacerbate existing social, economic and geographical inequalities and negatively impact wellbeing will be critical in fostering broad-based support. Krawchenko and Gordon (2021b) argue that, to date, policies and strategies for just transitions in advanced economies have not adequately addressed community engagement and regional development more broadly. In this report, we advocate a place-based approach to just transition that takes account of how climate actions and transition play out at the local level. We argue that a multi-level governance approach that newly or differently empowers central, local and regional government working equitably, inclusively and in partnership with communities is crucial. The first step in adopting a place-based approach to just transition is engaging in dialogue that takes account of local identities, assets, deficits, historical development patterns and capabilities.

Our framework (Figure 24) is underpinned by the values of: inclusion; meaningful partnership; transparency and accountability; sharing power and responsibility; empowerment through capacity building; and cooperation. This will require imaginative re-thinking of traditional boundaries and binaries – urban/rural; farmer/forester; sectoral/spatial – and considering where and with whom power resides. It requires investment in enhancing local capabilities but also creating and building the capacity of senior leadership with a specific focus on just transitions. Without a focus on spatial and social justice, our responses to the climate and biodiversity crises will beget new crises of wellbeing and quality of life.

Chapter 6

Appendices

Appendix 1: Statistical profiles of study areas

Statistical profile of Inishowen

Local Electoral Areas (2019) LEA-4 Carndonagh			
Age profile (share out of total)		Population, 2016 Census	
	23%	Total	16,964
0-14	60%		
15-64	16%		
65+			
Industry (share out of total employment)		Socioeconomic group (share out of total)	
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	11%	A Employers and managers	13%
Building and construction	9%	B Higher professional	4%
Manufacturing industries	7%	C Lower professional	10%
Commerce and trade	17%	D Non-manual	14%
Transport and communications	5%	E Manual skilled	10%
Public administration	4%	F Semi-skilled	8%
Professional services	26%	G Unskilled	4%
Other	21%	H Own account workers	8%
		I Farmers	11%
		J Agricultural workers	1%
		Z All others gainfully occupied and unknown	18%
LEA-5 Buncrana			
Age profile (share out of total)		Population, 2016 Census	
	24%	Total	22,366
0-14	63%		
15-64	13%		
65+			
Industry (share out of total employment)		Socioeconomic group (share out of total)	
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	6%	A Employers and managers	13%
Building and construction	7%	B Higher professional	5%
Manufacturing industries	10%	C Lower professional	10%
Commerce and trade	21%	D Non-manual	16%
Transport and communications	6%	E Manual skilled	12%
Public administration	6%	F Semi-skilled	8%
Professional services	24%	G Unskilled	5%
Other	20%	H Own account workers	6%
		I Farmers	6%
		J Agricultural workers	1%
		Z All others gainfully occupied and unknown	17%

Statistical profile of Leitrim

Local Electoral Area (2019) LEA-6 Manorhamilton			
Age profile (share out of total)		Population, 2016 Census	
		Total	10,821
0-14	22%		
15-64	61%		
65+	17%		
Industry (share out of total employment)		Socioeconomic group (share out of total)	
Agriculture, forestry and fishing		A Employers and managers	10%
Building and construction	9%	B Higher professional	6%
Manufacturing industries	5%	C Lower professional	14%
Commerce and trade	12%	D Non-manual	17%
Transport and communications	17%	E Manual skilled	9%
Public administration	4%	F Semi-skilled	9%
Professional services	8%	G Unskilled	3%
Other	28%	H Own account workers	6%
	16%	I Farmers	10%
		J Agricultural workers	1%
		Z All others gainfully occupied and unknown	14%

Statistical profile of Kilbeggan

Local Electoral Area 2019 Moate			
Age profile (share out of total)		Population, 2016 Census	
		Total	18,444
0-14	22%		
15-64	63%		
65+	14%		
Industry (share out of total employment)		Socioeconomic group (share out of total)	
Agriculture, forestry and fishing		A Employers and managers	13%
Building and construction	11%	B Higher professional	5%
Manufacturing industries	7%	C Lower professional	11%
Commerce and trade	13%	D Non-manual	15%
Transport and communications	20%	E Manual skilled	11%
Public administration	5%	F Semi-skilled	8%
Professional services	7%	G Unskilled	3%
Other	23%	H Own account workers	6%
	15%	I Farmers	12%
		J Agricultural workers	1%
		Z All others gainfully occupied and unknown	15%

Appendix 2: The research team

The *Cities, Governance and Sustainability* research group at UCD School of Geography engages in research at the interface between the built environment, lived experience and governance structures in support of addressing major societal challenges. Our group and international collaborators focus on understanding, developing new approaches, and engaging with policy related to city-regional and neighbourhood development; wellbeing in local economies; societal health; urban policy, practice and institutional structures; and the relationships between city-regions and other settlement types. We seek to not just investigate and understand key urban issues, but to support activism and engage with a diversity of stakeholders to share new thinking and ultimately support the emergence of more sustainable and equitable cities and communities.

Professor Niamh Moore-Cherry leads the group. Her research is strongly interdisciplinary and she has a strong record in policy analysis and community engagement. She is also Honorary Professor at the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London.

Website: <https://people.ucd.ie/niamh.moore>

Dr Alma Clavin is a researcher in the Cities, Governance and Sustainability group at the UCD School of Geography. Alma's research interests merge the fields of geography, art, architecture and design. She has published on co-creative approaches for community-led urban greening strategies and on the impacts of urban grassroots food growing initiatives on human agency and wellbeing. Currently her main research activity involves engaging with art and design practitioners and theorists to enhance critical participative enquiry in everyday urban environments (See: www.repairacts.ie).

The team at UCD School of Geography worked in partnership with two international collaborators:

Professor John Tomaney is Professor of Urban and Regional Development at the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London. John's research has been principally concerned with development of cities and regions as socioeconomic, political and cultural phenomena and the role of public policy in the management of these. He was a member of the influential UK2070 Commission, chaired by Lord Kerslake, which investigated regional disparities in the UK.

Website: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/planning/prof-john-tomaney>

Dr Tamara Krawchenko is an Assistant Professor in the School of Public Administration and member of the Institute for Integrated Energy Systems at the University of Victoria, Canada. Dr. Krawchenko is an expert in comparative public policy and regional development. She is currently leading two research projects: *How can we manage a just energy transition? A comparative review of policies to support the just transition from carbon intensive industries* and *Canada's 'left behind' places: Understanding rural and small-town economic restructuring and government policy responses*.

Website: <https://www.uvic.ca/hsd/publicadmin/people/home/faculty/krawchenko-tamara.php>

Appendix 3: List of interviewees

Individuals from the following organisations took part in the research interview process:

- Donegal County Council

- Derry and Strabane District Council

- Inishowen Development Partnership

- Irish Agroforestry Forum

- Irish Farmers Association (IFA)

- Irish Rural Link/Community Wetlands Forum

- Leitrim County Council

- Save Leitrim

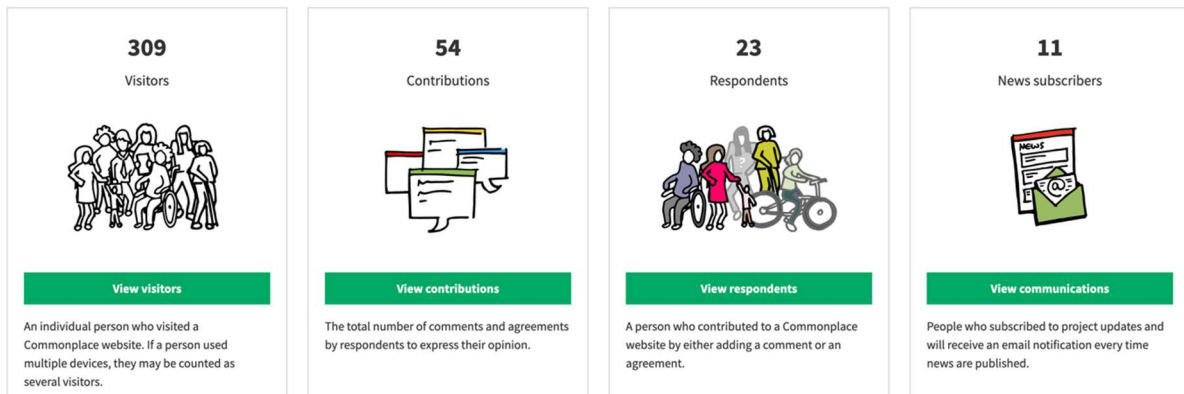
- Teagasc (Donegal)

- Teagasc (Leitrim)

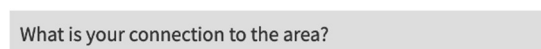
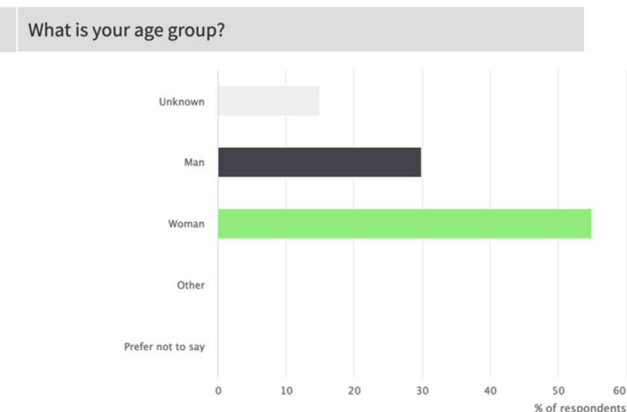
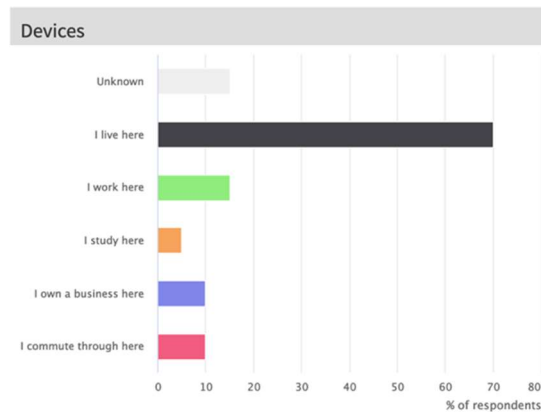
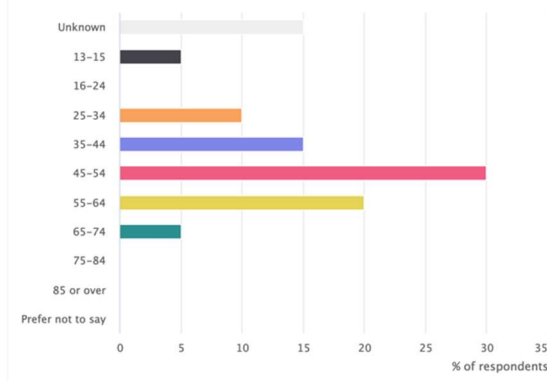
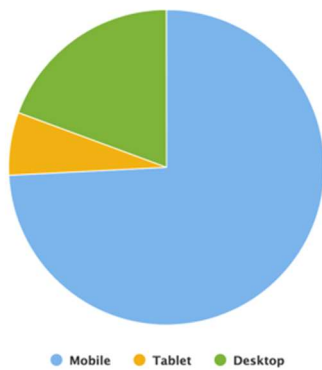
- Westmeath County Council

Appendix 4: Digital co-creation data (Commonplace) sites

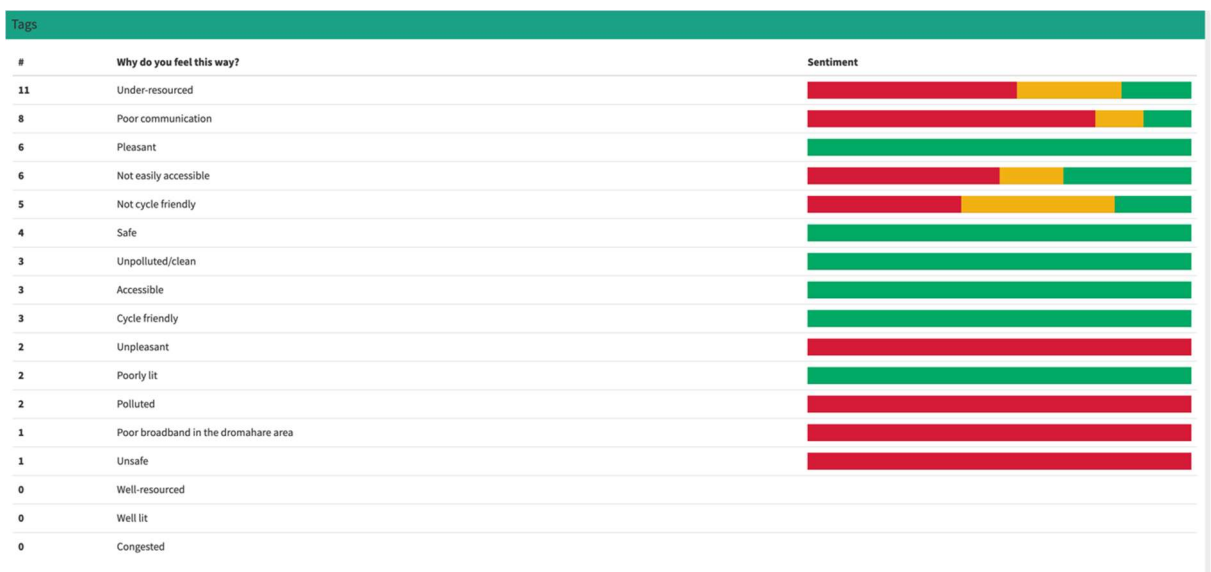
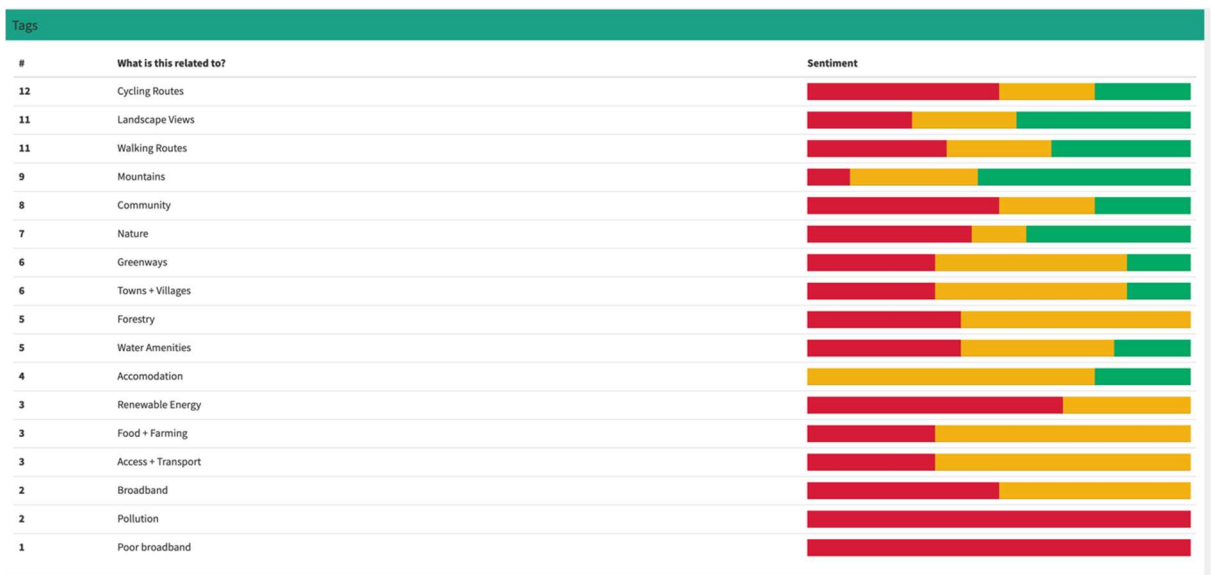
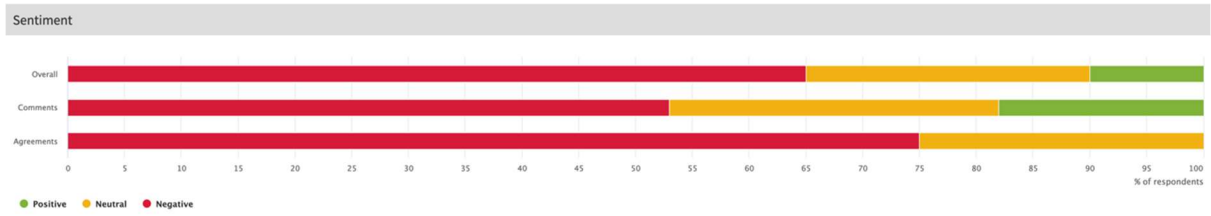
The Commonplace Eco-tourism in North Leitrim web platform <https://leitrimmap.commonplace.is/aboutwntent> live on November 9th 2021 and remained open until December 31st 2021. The following table shows the numbers of visitors, respondents and comments.



The graphs and charts below provide further information on those who engaged with the platform and how.

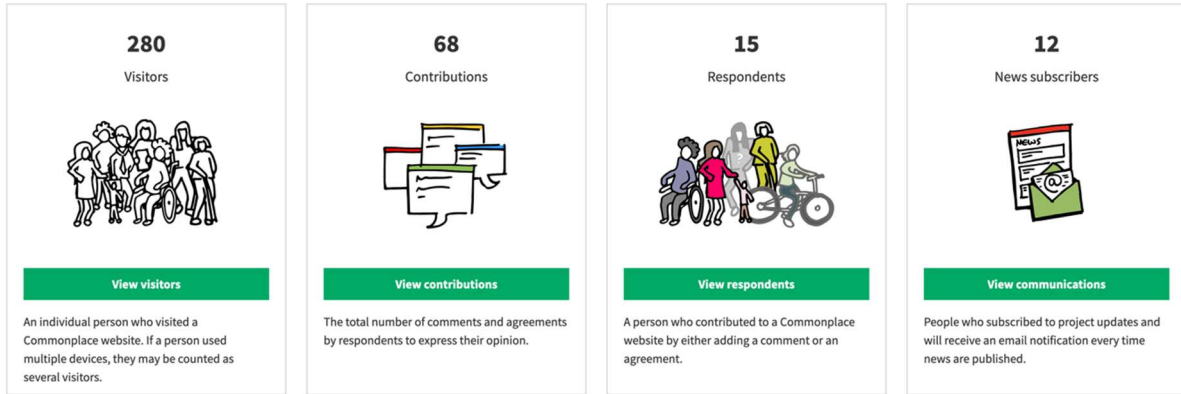


The info graphs below illustrate the types of comments that were made and the associated sentiment (positive, neutral, negative). Open questions and comments are available on the platform.

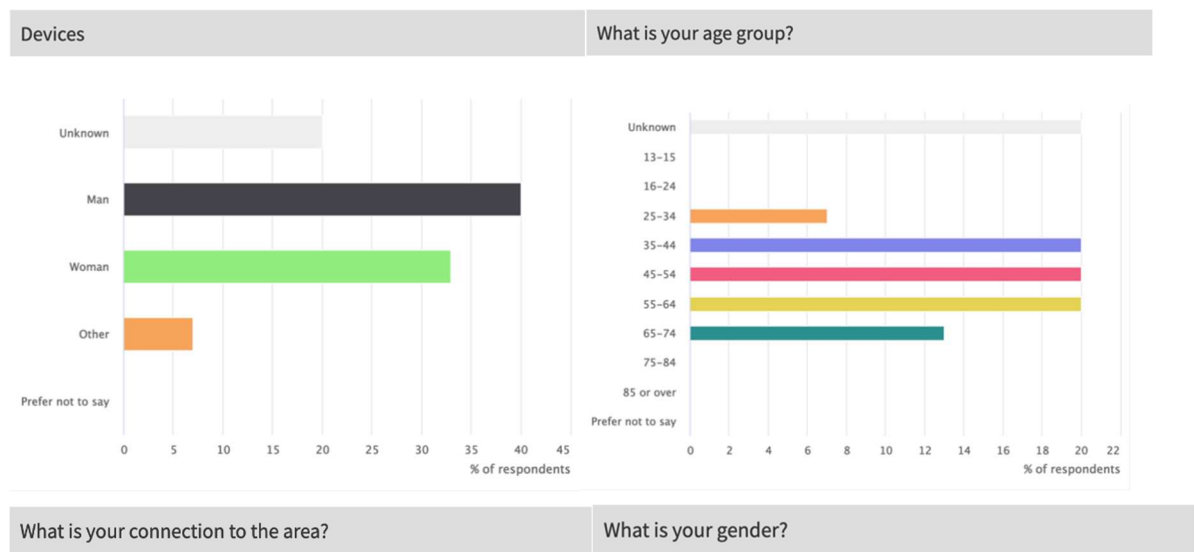
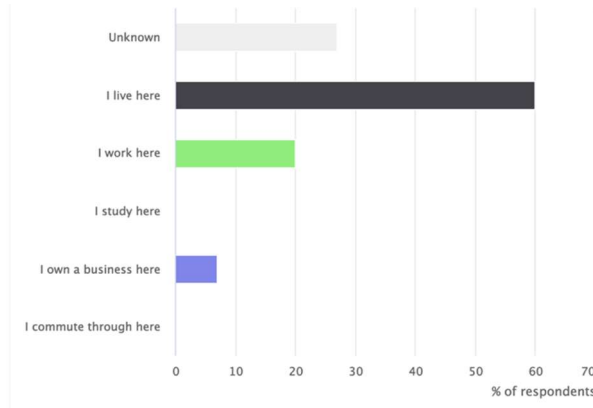
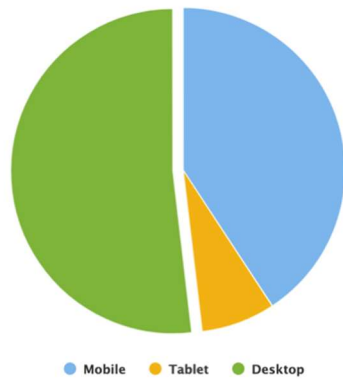


Tags		
#	How could this improve?	Sentiment
12	Funding	
9	Greenways	
9	More places to cycle	
8	Community engagement	
8	Increase biodiversity	
8	Better access	
8	Footpaths	
7	More places to walk	
6	Safer roads	
4	Better communication	
4	Training + reskilling	
3	Better monitoring	
3	More accomodation	
2	Better public transport	
2	Enforcement	
1	Funding and cables for quality broadband	
1	Better marketing on the beauty of Leitrim	
1	More amenities / attractions	

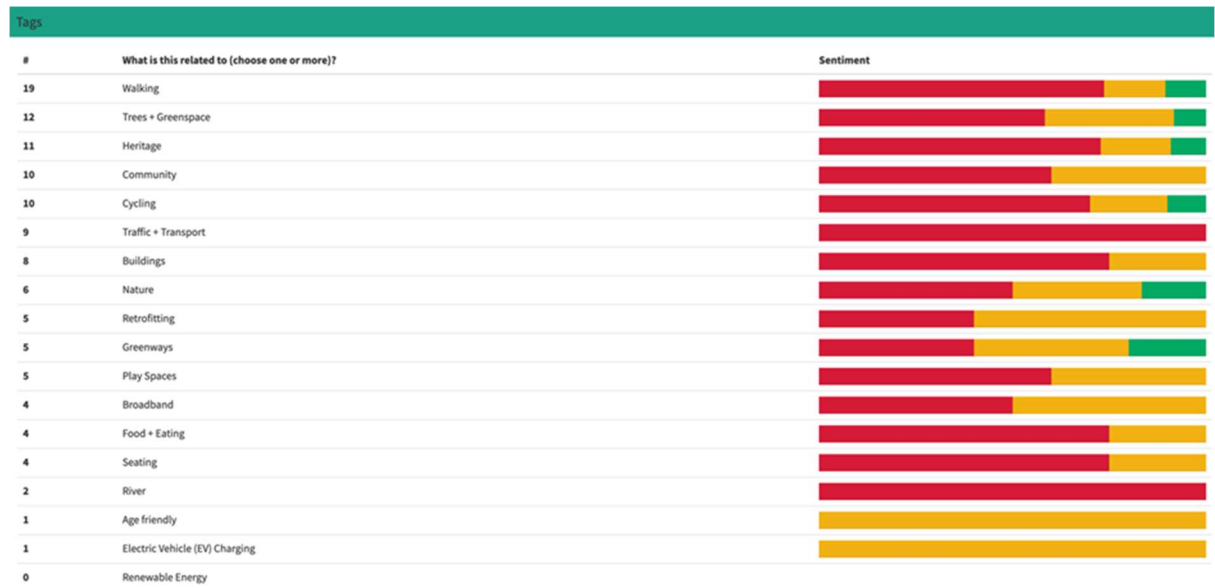
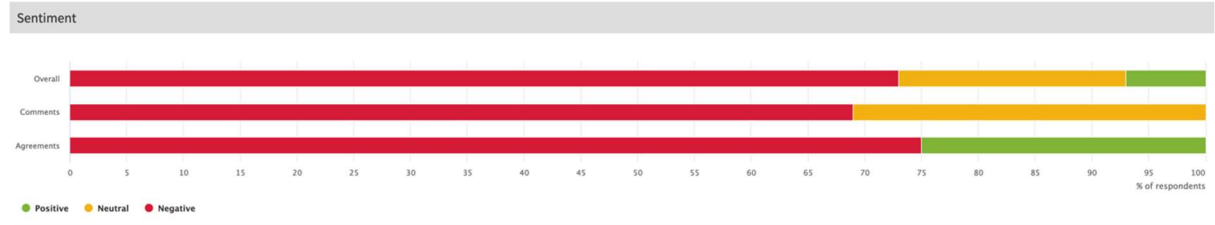
The Commonplace [Greening Kilbeggan web platform](#) went live on November 9th 2021 and remained open until December 31st 2021. The following table shows the numbers of visitors, respondents and comments.

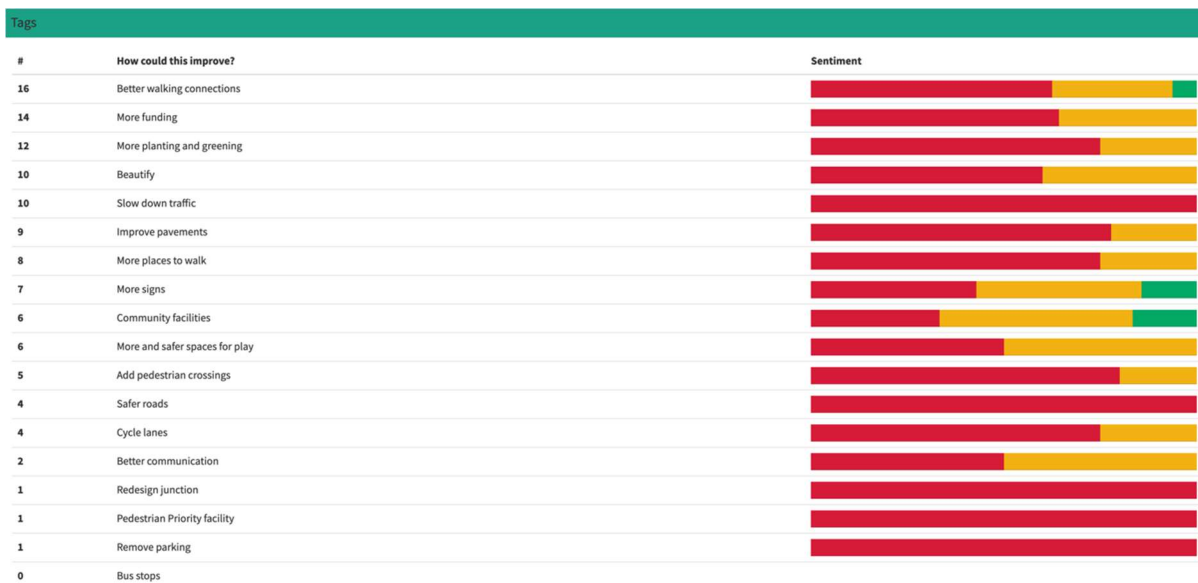
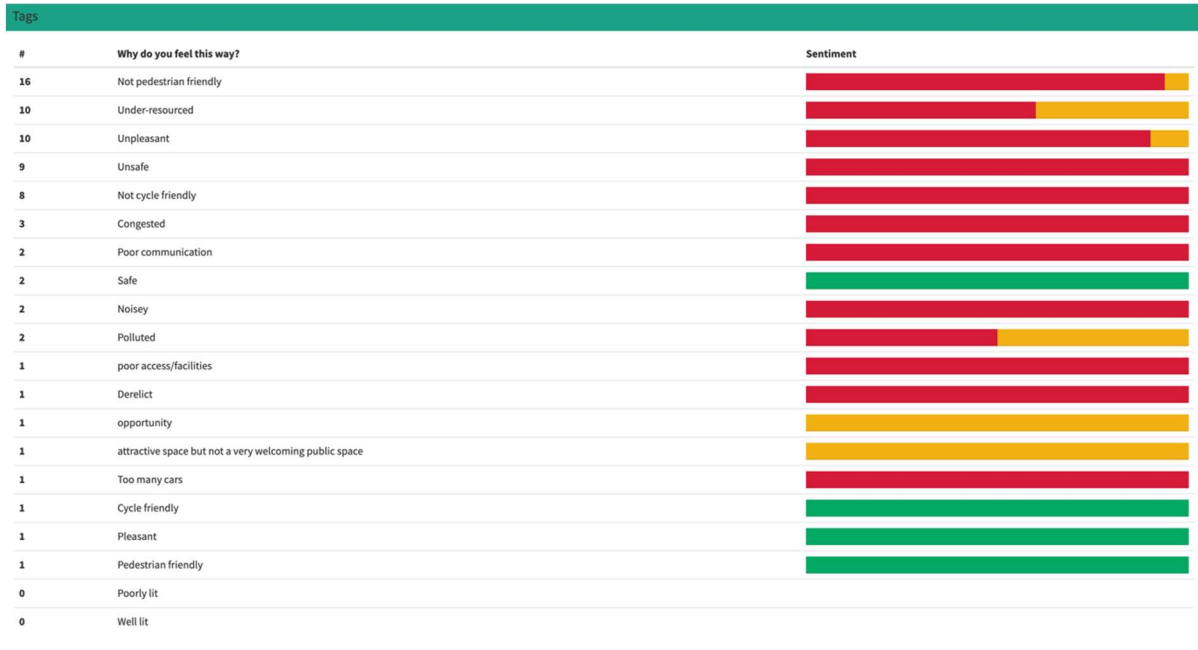


The graphs and charts below provide further information on those who engaged with the platform and how.

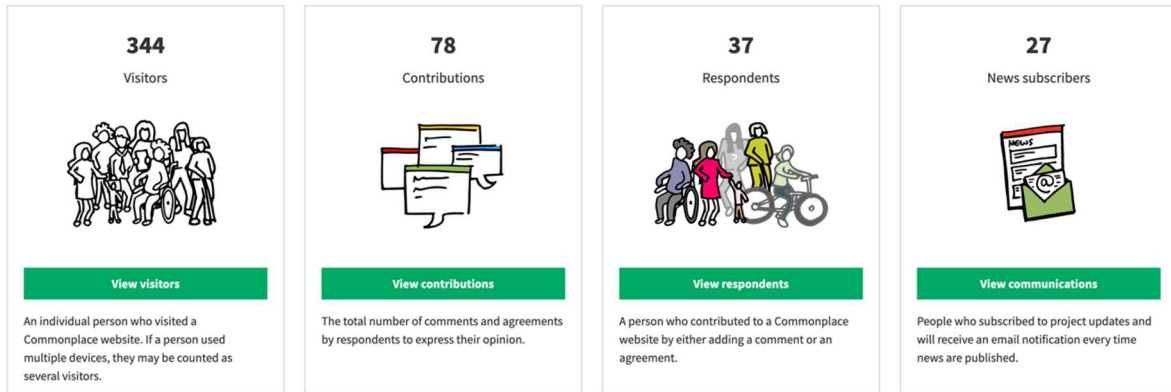


The infographs below illustrate the types of comments that were made and the associated sentiment (positive, neutral, negative). Open questions and comments are available on the platform.

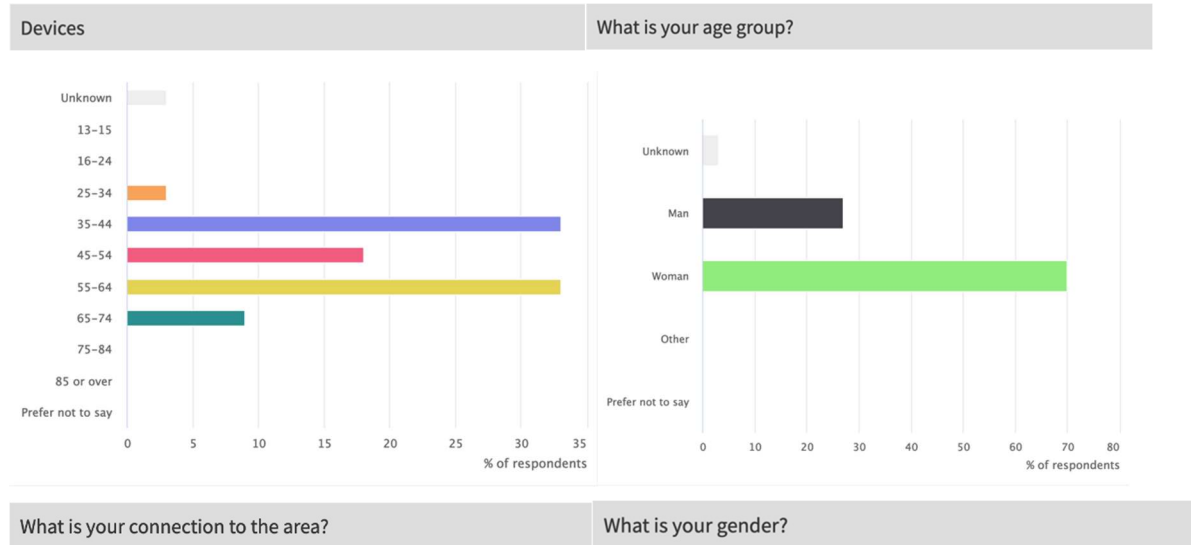
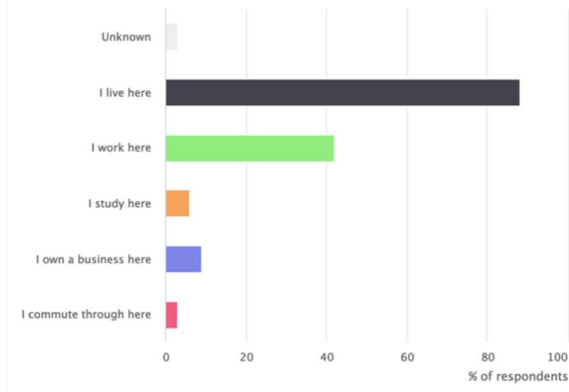
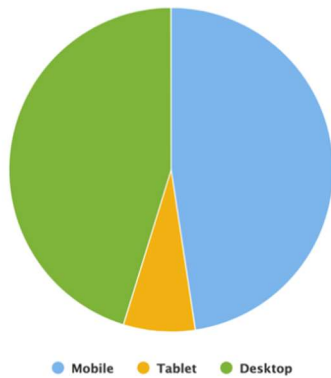




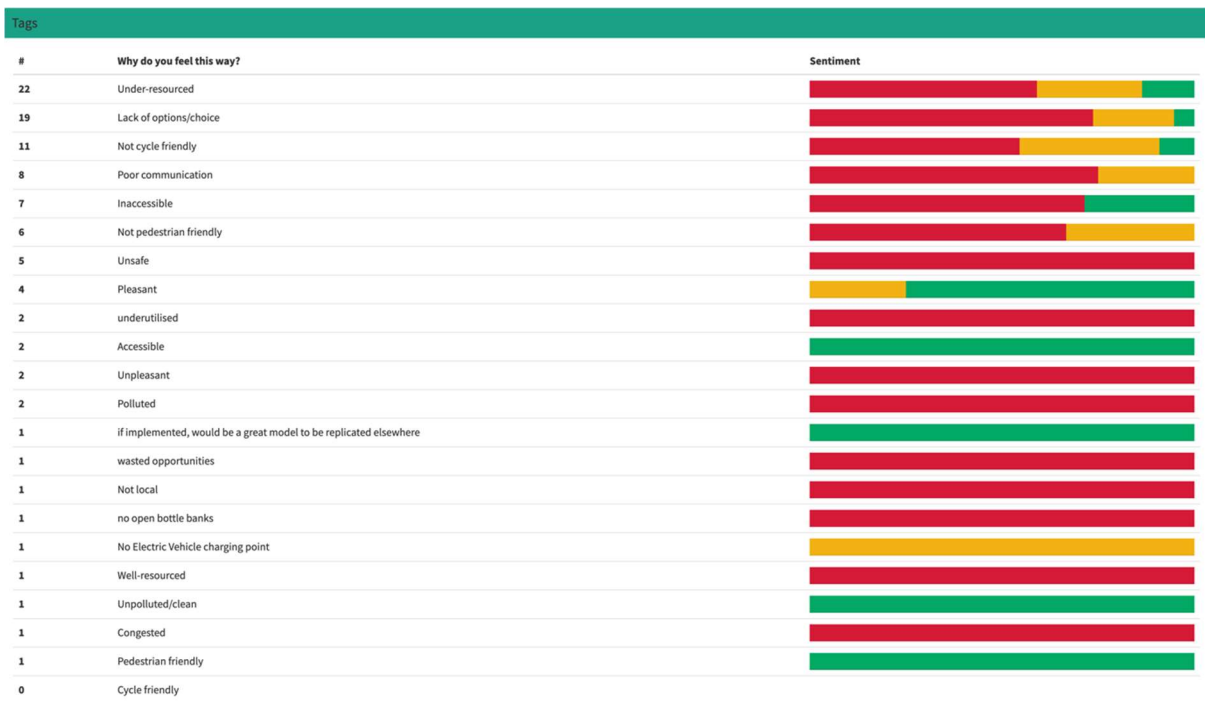
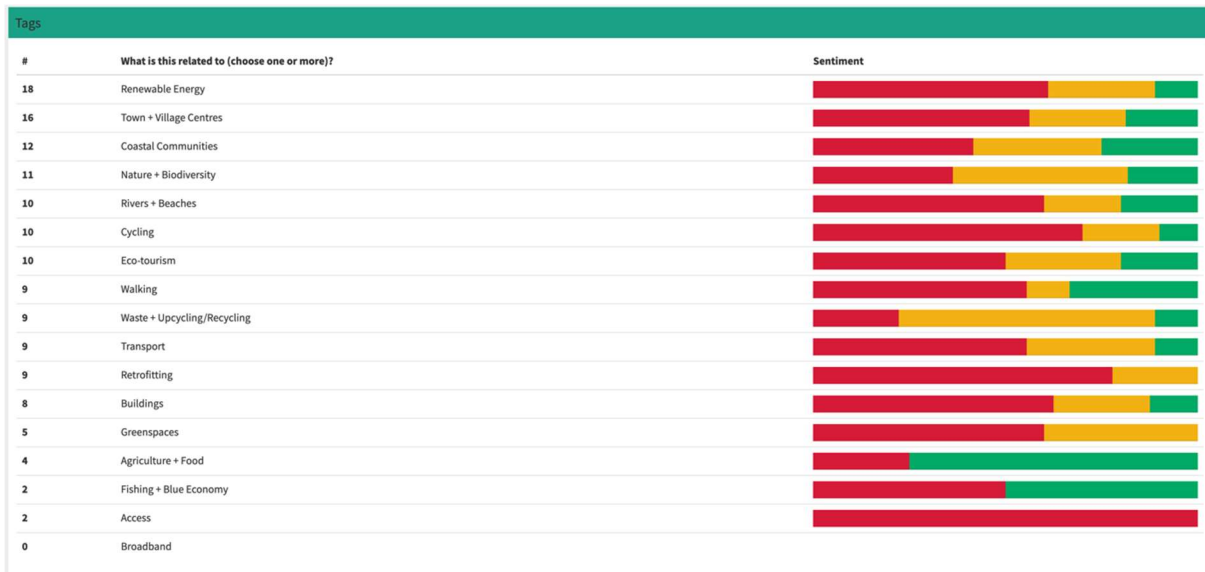
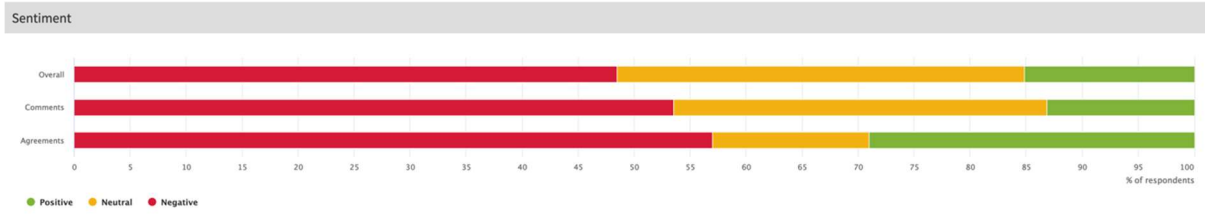
The Commonplace [Inishowen Climate Conversations](https://inishowenmap.commonplace.is/) web platform went live on November 15th 2021 and remained open until December 31st 2021. The following table shows the numbers of visitors, respondents and comments.



The graphs and charts below provide further information on those who engaged with the platform and how.



The infographs below illustrate the types of comments that were made and the associated sentiment (positive, neutral, negative). Open questions and comments are available on the platform.



Tags		
#	How could this be enhanced or improved?	Sentiment
22	Funding	
20	Community engagement	
14	More cycle lanes	
12	Cost/affordability	
10	Training and reskilling	
10	Safer roads	
9	Better communication	
9	Slow down traffic	
8	More places to walk	
7	Bus stops and shelters	
5	Add crossings	
3	Enforcement	
1	add evening times for buses	
1	willingness to engage and invest locally	
1	bottle banks that can be used when it suits, not in a center that opens 3 days a week	
1	investment	
1	Willingness to innovate	

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Publications

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National Economic & Social Council

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Parnell Square +353.1.814.6300
Dublin 1 info@nesc.ie
D01 E7C1 nesc.ie