



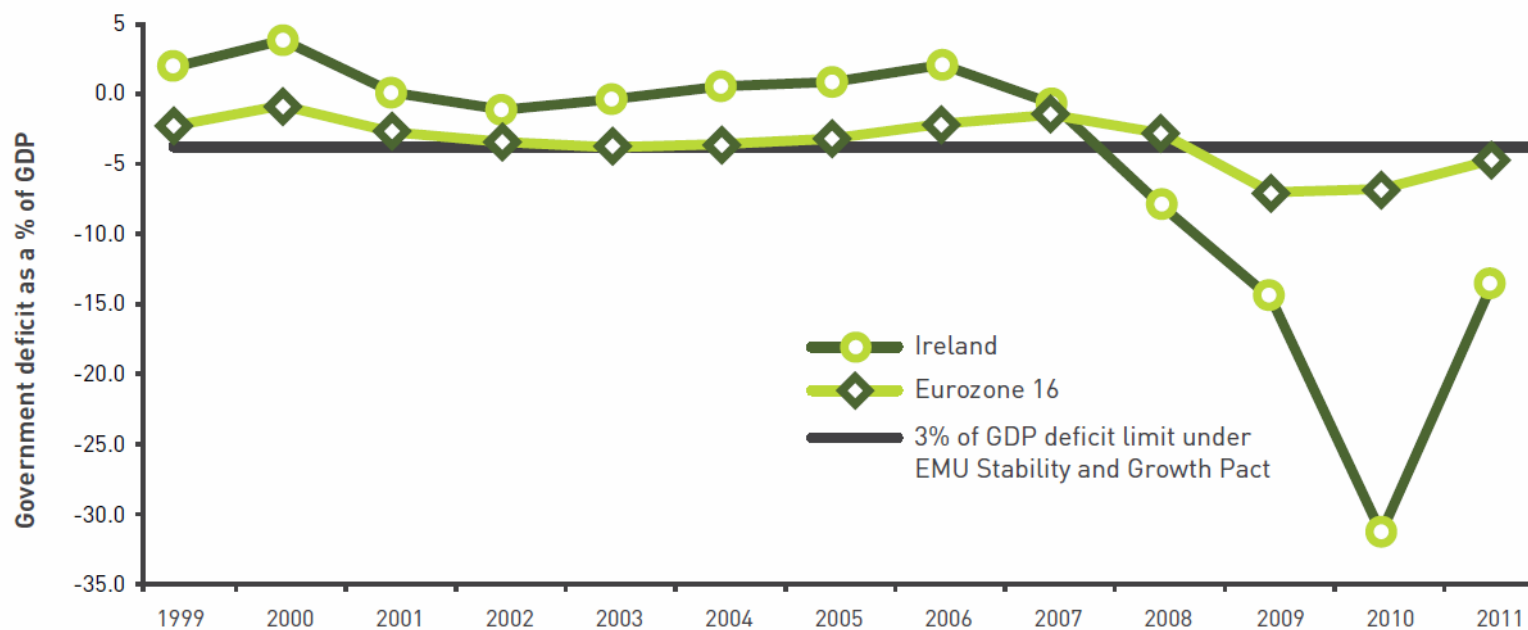
Energy and Society: An Irish Perspective

Gerard Mullally

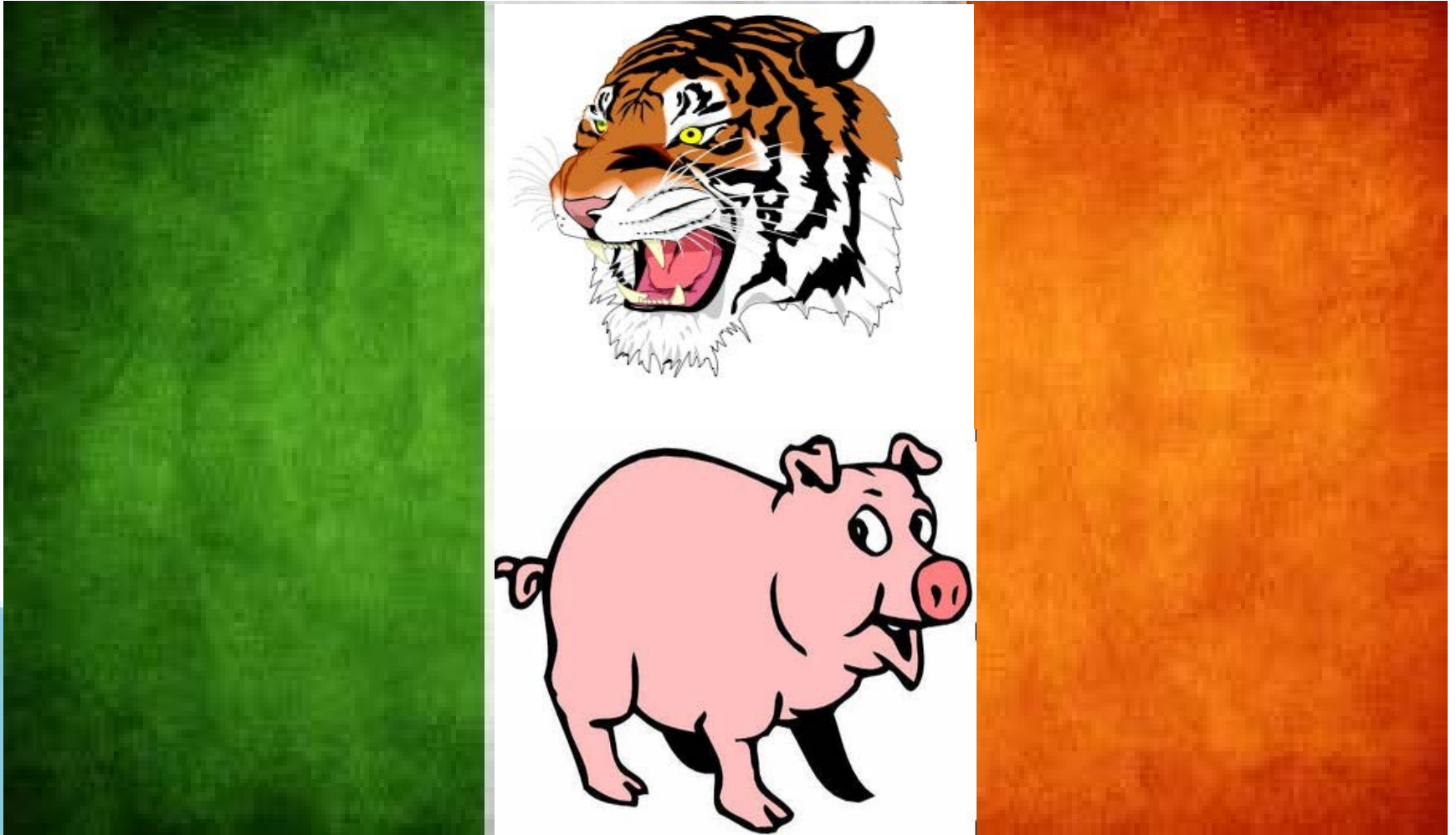
- **Transformation, Transition and Translation: Critical Reflections on Sustainable Energy in Ireland**
 - *‘Ireland has an extraordinary opportunity to use its own natural renewable resources to achieve energy independence. The nation is endowed with winds that are among the strongest in the world. There is significant receipt of solar energy that can be captured by advanced solar technology despite the clouds. The waves that crash against the west of Ireland are some of the most powerful on the planet. ...*

- *...the vision for energy independence in Ireland is an aspiration. It is currently out of reach, but within sight (John Travers **Green and Gold**, 2010): 195-200).*
- *‘Ireland is a series of stories it tells itself. None of them are true’ (**The Economist** 2011 [attributed Irish Novelist Anne Enright]).*
- *‘It was the best of times, it was the worst of times’, (Charles Dickens, **A Tale of Two Cities**)*

Government Deficit as a % of GDP For Ireland And the EU (FSSD 2012: 18)



Source: Eurostat, CSO National Accounts



A Tale of Two Irelands?



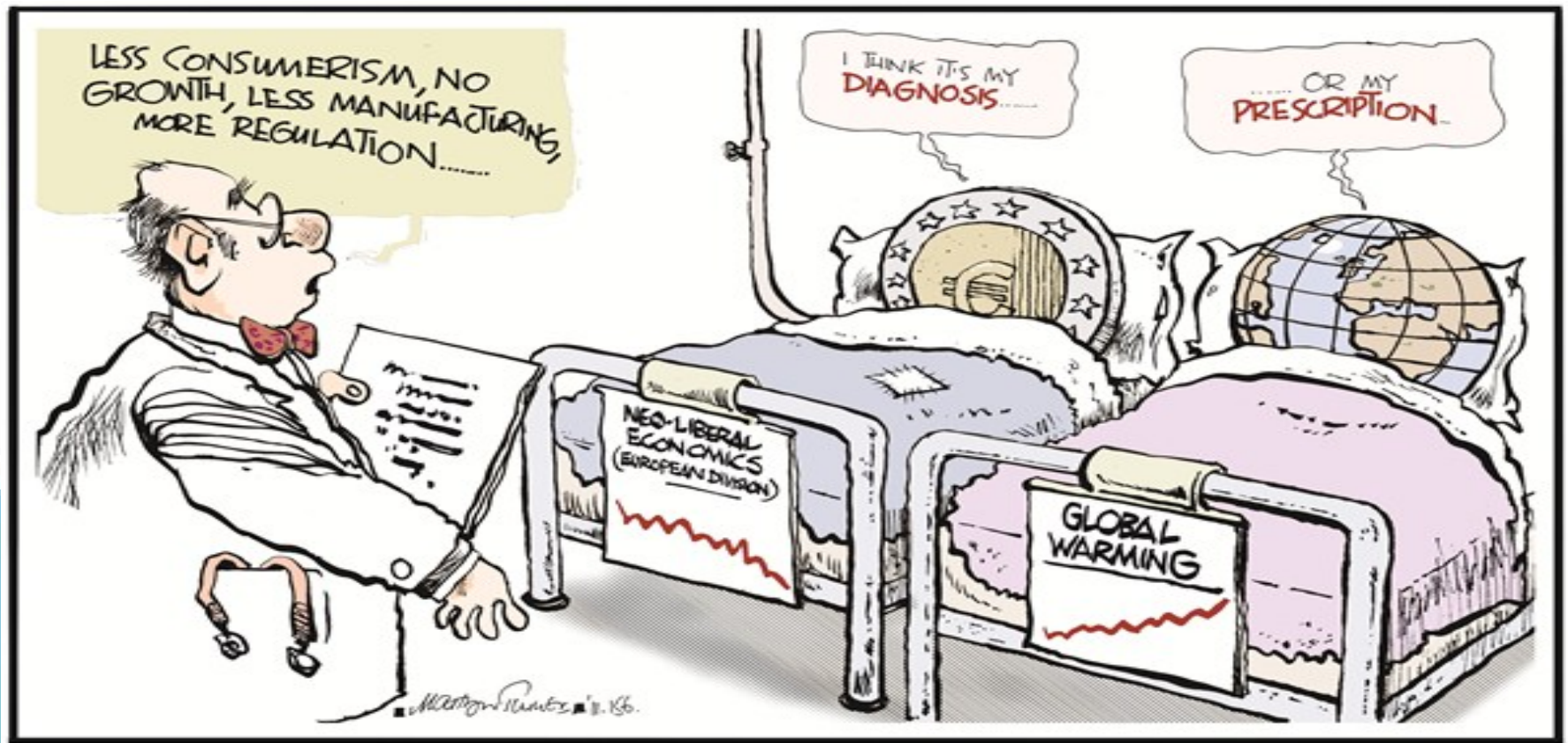
Sustainable Energy 2012

- We need to look beyond the current economic crisis: ‘forging a vision of how we can transition Ireland to a resource efficient, low carbon and climate resilient future’ (FSSD 2012).
- ‘The development of renewable energy is central to overall energy policy in Ireland. Renewable energy reduces dependence on fossil fuels, improves security of supply and reduces greenhouse gas emissions creating environmental benefits while delivering green jobs to the economy, thus contributing to national competitiveness and the jobs and growth agenda’ (DCENR 2012).

- ‘We need to learn from the mistakes of the Celtic Tiger years and transform our economy onto a resource-efficient path to bring increased competitiveness and new sources of growth through cost-savings, commercialisation of innovations and better management of resources’ (EPA 2012).



Every cloud has a [short term] silver lining? (Martyn Turner, Irish Times 2011)



Recession and the Energy Sector (Howley et al., 2011: 4).

- Since 2007, Irelands economy *contracted by 10%, returning in 2010 to 2005 levels. Energy demand has reduced by 9% to 2003 levels and energy-related CO2 emissions have fallen to 2000 levels.*
- Transport energy demand in 2010 was 18% lower than 2007 levels, with a 42% reduction in energy use for freight transport.
- Industrial energy demand in 2010 was 20% lower than 2007 levels even though industrial economic activity was 13% higher. Energy demand in Industry was down to approximately 1997 levels
- In 2010, Ireland's energy import dependency fell to 86 per cent, down from a peak of 90 per cent in 2006.

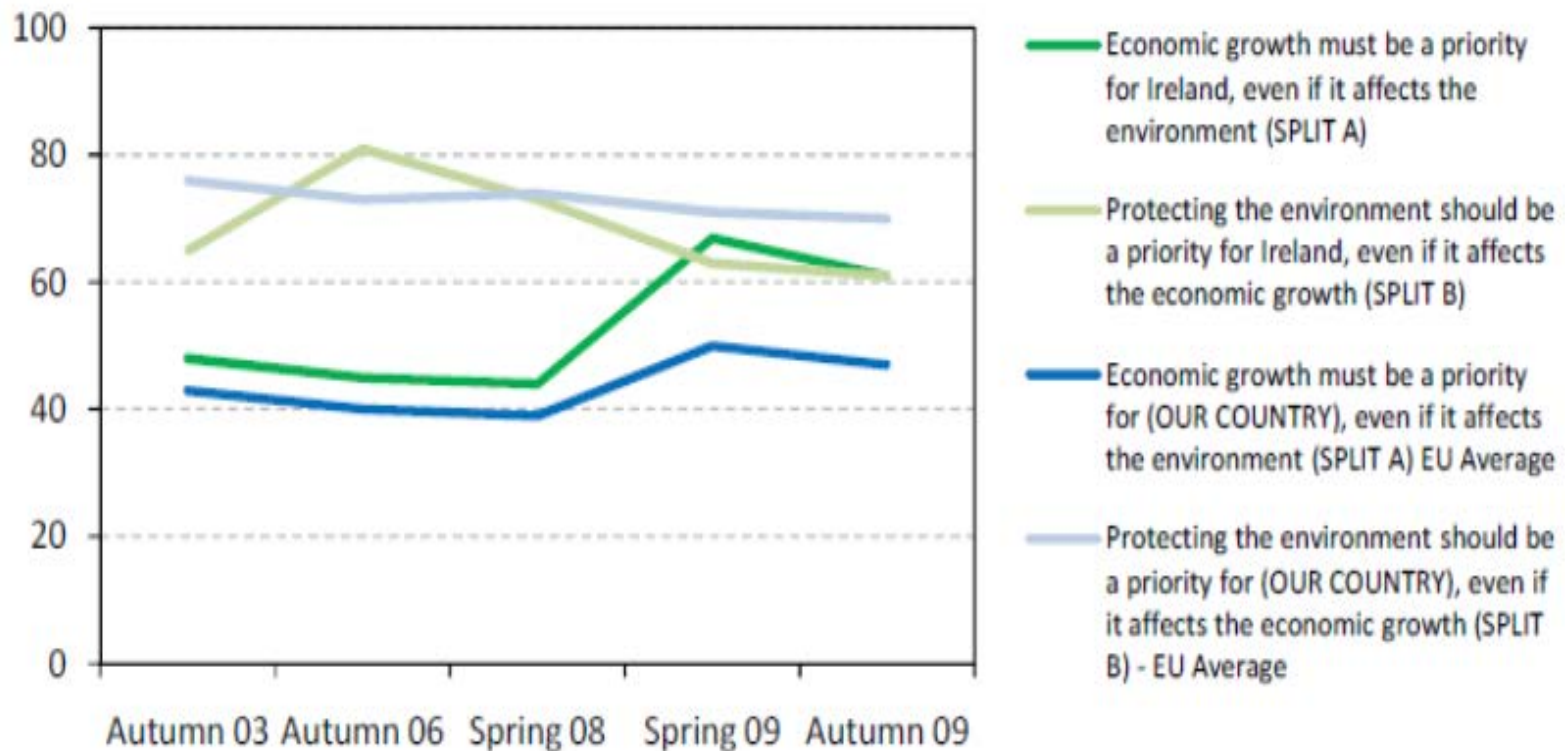
What about renewable energy?

- Renewable energy is a key part of the Irish climate change strategy.
- Electricity generated from renewable energy, primarily wind, reached 14.8% in 2010, surpassing the EU target for Ireland of 13.2% and approaching the national target of 15% of electricity consumption generated from renewables.
- Under the EU directive on the Promotion of energy from Renewable Resources Ireland faces challenging targets. Renewable energy is to constitute 16% of final energy consumption by 2020 (40% RES-E, 12% RES-H and 10% RES-T).

CO2 and the Irish

- The emission of CO2 has only a marginal impact on climate change? Agree or Disagree (EBS)
 - In 2008, 41% of Irish respondents agreed in 2008, 38% disagreed and 21% did not know (EBS 300: 34).
 - In 2009, this shifted substantially with an increase to 50% (EBS 313: 38).
- In 2008, there was 81% support for the introduction of the proposed Carbon Tax, when willingness to pay question were introduced support was transformed into opposition (Cunningham 2008: 317).

A favourable social climate for an energy transition? (Sinnott and McBride: 2009)



A positive relation between fighting climate change and the economy?

- In 2008, 62% agreed with this (EBS 300),
- In 2009, this increased to 68%, and
- in 2011 (in response to the amended question that included references to energy and jobs), this rose to 78% (EBS 372: 36).

Transitions, Translations and Trade-offs: Bottom Up Change?

- *Themes: social innovation and social energies*
- *Renewable Energy and Communities*
 - *'We cannot have wind farms at every crossroads in Ireland', (Minister for Energy, Communications and Natural Resources, Dail Debates June 26 2012).*
- community renewable energy is defined in terms of *processes* and *outcomes*: 'who a project is developed by and the level of engagement with the wider community (process) and secondly by how the benefits of a project are spatially and socially distributed (outcome), (Comhar/ Trinity College Dublin 2011: 9).

- community wind initiatives: full community ownership; developed between communities, NGOs or local government; co-ownership with the private sector; community gain/ compensation models.
- framed within the discourse of rural or regional development

Local Authorities, Climate Change and Energy

- Local Climate Strategies: a primary focus on energy (with an overwhelming emphasis on energy efficiency measures with some emphasis on renewable energy) with much less attention to a wider approach of mitigation and adaptation (McGloughlin and Sweeney 2011: 141-2)
- most local authorities do not have climate change strategies in place, and climate change is not mainstreamed into their plans

Sustainable Energy Communities Programme (SEAI)



Renewing Community Energies?

- Transition Towns Network (TTN)
- Began in Kinsale Co. Cork in 2005, now an international movement
- not alone *should* be begin to change from a normative perspective in the context of climate change, but that we are *forced* to change because of peak oil
- ‘power down’ for a post-oil, post carbon future, community resilience resonates with the discourse and practice of other sources : Green Party, FEASTA , Cultivate Centre in Dublin + environment groups (Barry 2011: 46)

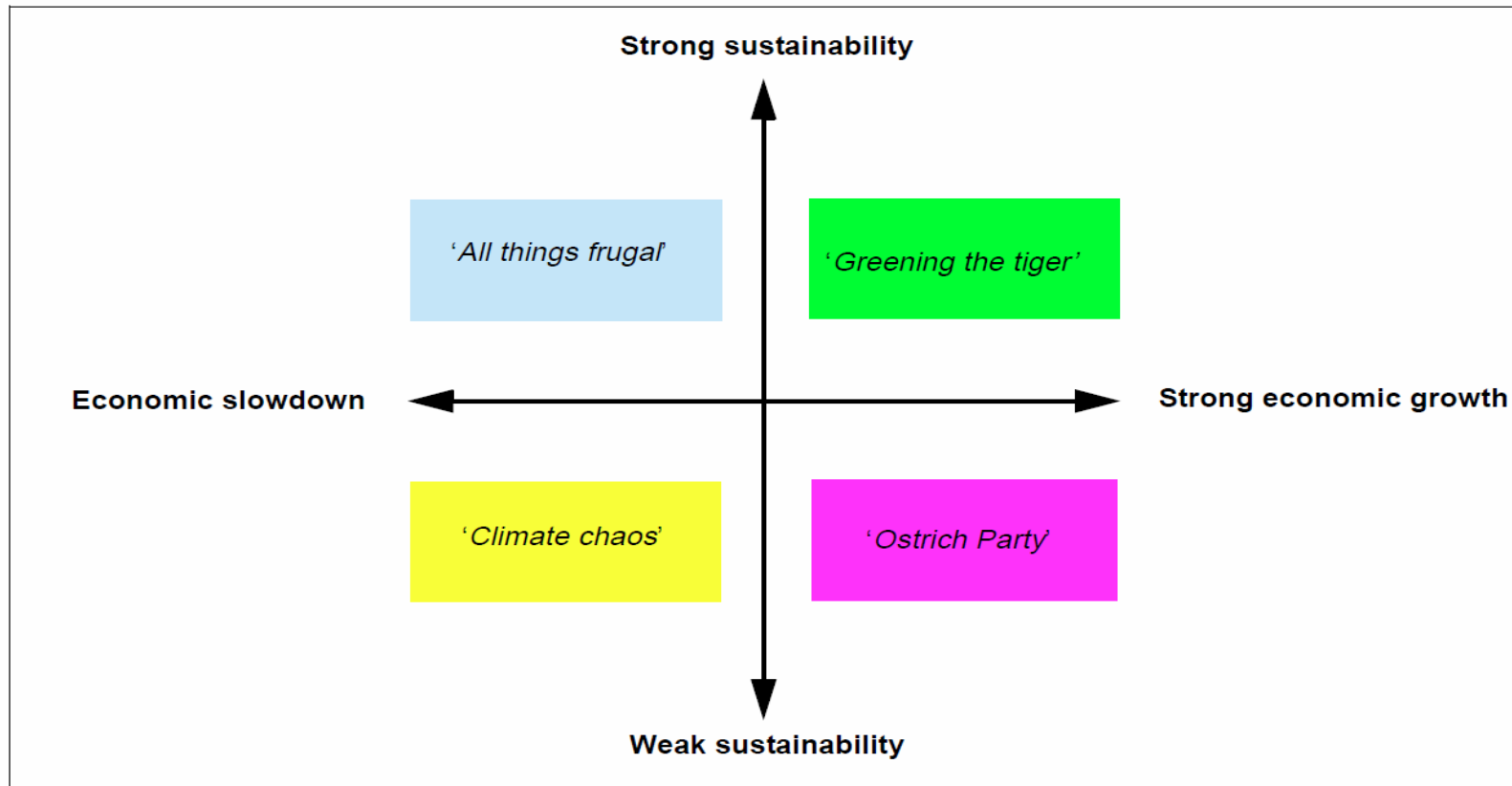
- Transition Sandymount
- Transition Ennis
- Transition Gorey
- Transition Blessington
- Transition Wicklow
- Transition Donegal
- Transition Town Kinsale
- Future Proof Kilkenny
- Transition Town Donard–Glen
- Trim 2025
- Transition East Clare
- Middleton Transition Town Group
- Hollywood Transition Town
- Transition Wexford
- Transition Galway
- Sustainable Skerries
- Sustain West Cork
- Transition Laois
- Transition Dublin 8
- Transition Town Omagh
- Sustainable Bandon
- FADA Newbridge
- Transition Town Clonmel
- Sustainable Clonakilty

Transition Towns Initiatives
(Murphy, Irwin and O'
Mahony 2012 : 42)

Community Workers Co-op

- Established an 'Approaches to Sustainable Development' Subgroup in 2008.
- *Strategy Guide for the Community Sector in Responding to Climate Change*, under the EPA Climate Change Research Programme 2007-2012.
- workshops based on discussions using different socio-economic scenarios to 2050 associated with climate change in Ireland.
 - need to undertake a social vulnerability study to understand the distributional consequences
 - discourse of 'climate justice'
 - Mary Robinson Foundation: Climate Justice in Dublin in 2010.

Scenario Matrix For Communities and Climate Change (Murphy, Irwin and O' Mahony 2012: 4)



Networking Networks

- ‘Implementing Sustainable Development: Empowering Local Communities’ (Comhar 2009).
- Greening Irish Communities Network, created in 2009 EPA/An Taisce
- to create an integrated programme of out-reach on climate change and resource efficiency, transform and integrate of public services working in these areas, and influence behaviour across society.
- ‘the idea is to build sufficient capacity within our society for changing behaviour that should then to other peers in other sectors (EPA Press Release, May 1 2009).

Working Towards Green Communities in Ireland (Matt Crowe EPA, April 2009)



Concluding thoughts

- Social innovation and social energies have a role mobilising communities in a transition to Sustainable Energy
- Networks can play a key role connecting ‘sandals, suits and civil servants’, but basic design flaws remain in Irish governance.
- Policies are struggling to keep pace with these mobilisations, but lessons have not been learned from previous sustainable development innovations