

Part Three

Ireland and the future of the
European Social Model

5.

*The European Social Model and Ireland – Re-imagining for the twenty first century*³⁹

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The European Commission's 1994 White Paper on social policy described the 'European social model' in terms of values that include democracy and individual rights, free collective bargaining, the market economy, equal opportunities for all, and social protection and solidarity. The model is based on the conviction that economic progress and social progress are inseparable: 'Competitiveness and solidarity have both been taken into account in building a successful Europe for the future.'... the European social model features in the Treaty of the functioning of the European Union where it states that the Union, in all its activities 'shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women.' Further, it states that the Union, in defining and implementing its policies and activities, 'shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health' (Article 9), and that the Union 'shall aim to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation' (Article 10).

The Treaty fully recognises the role of the social dialogue The European social model is considered to be unique in its dual focus on economic and social principles.

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

³⁹ This chapter draws on a number of previous publications by the authors most notably Healy and Reynolds (2009 and 2010).

February 24, 2012: *As the European Central Bank (ECB) continued to pour billions of euro into rescuing banks who had gambled recklessly and lost their bets, the President of the ECB, Italian Mario Draghi, declared that “the European social model has already gone”. In the course of a lengthy interview with the Wall Street Journal Draghi, a former Goldman Sachs banker who now commands the fate of Europe’s single currency, stated there would be “no escape” from tough austerity measures in all of the over-indebted countries; and this will necessarily involve giving up the European social model based on job security and generous safety nets.*
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A question of purpose

The European social model in its various manifestations has always been concerned with securing the well-being of citizens. In recent years the issue of well-being has been the subject of much discussion and debate. Many reports have been produced by significant bodies in the policy-making process internationally and in Ireland. These include reports by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 2007, 2011), the New Economics Foundation (NEF, 2004, 2011, 2012), the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (CMEPSP, 2008) and in Ireland, the National Economic and Social Council (NESC, 2009). These reports have all identified the importance of well-being for all societies and recognised that the purpose of public policy is ultimately to ensure the well-being of all members. Particular policies in specific economic, social, cultural, political or environmental areas are all measured by their ultimate capacity to contribute to the well-being of the members of society and to protecting the environment in which they live and on which they depend.

These reports and studies have identified a range of issues closely related to well-being. They include the issue of progress and how it should be measured; helps and obstacles to well-being; the inter-relationship between human and ecological systems; the relative importance of

economic growth and how it should be measured; the inter-relatedness or otherwise of economic growth, progress, the environment and well-being.

Flowing from these discussions there has been an emerging series of questions concerning the extent of the obligation on societies to promote the well-being of their members. How can the answers to such a question be decided? What are the implications of this obligation? What are the criteria by which this obligation is determined? Who should be involved in this discussion and who should make the final decisions? How can these be monitored on an on-going basis? How can directions be adjusted in light of emerging evidence?

A recent report by The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) defined well-being as follows: “A person’s well-being relates to their physical, social and mental state. It requires that basic needs are met, that people have a sense of purpose, that they feel able to achieve important goals, to participate in society and to live the lives they value and have reason to value.” (NESC 2009, p.xiii)⁴⁰ This is the well-being that *Social Justice Ireland* and the present authors would like for all members of all societies.

As far back as Plato it was recognised that the person grows and develops in the context of society. “Society originates because the individual is not self-sufficient, but has many needs which he can’t supply himself”⁴¹ (cited in George, V. 2010, p6). Down through the ages various philosophies and social arrangements have been proposed to meet the felt need in societies to fulfil their perceived obligations to their members. These varied from Aristotle’s position of favouring private ownership but common use of property to ensure the dire needs of people were met, to the emphasis of both Plato and Aristotle that education should be free and compulsory, to Cicero’s discussion of

⁴⁰ A summary of this report is included as a chapter in a previous volume in this series: Healy and Reynolds, 2009. That chapter was written by Helen Johnston of NESC who was the principal author of the report.

⁴¹ (Plato, in Lee 1987, p58, cited in George, V. 2010, p6)

equality, to the early Christian emphasis on sharing and forming community.⁴²

In more recent times the dignity of the person has been enshrined in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” This core value is also at the heart of the Catholic Social Thought tradition. *Social Justice Ireland* and the authors in particular, support the values of both these traditions. We advocate that the dignity of each and every person must be recognised, acknowledged and promoted effectively. This implies that society’s structures, institutions and laws should exist for the authentic development of the person.

The right of the individual to freedom and personal development is limited by the rights of other people. This leads to the second core value, namely, the common good. As we noted earlier the concept of the ‘common good’ originated over two thousand years ago in the writings of Plato, Aristotle and Cicero. More recently, the philosopher John Rawls defined the common good as “certain general conditions that are...equally to everyone’s advantage” (Rawls, 1971 p.246). *Social Justice Ireland* understands the term ‘common good’ as “the sum of those conditions of social life by which individuals, families and groups can achieve their own fulfilment in a relatively thorough and ready way” (Gaudium et Spes no.74). This understanding recognises the fact that the person develops their potential in the context of society where the needs and rights of all members and groups are respected. The common good, then, consists primarily of having the social systems, institutions and environments on which we all depend, work in a manner that benefits all people simultaneously and in solidarity. The NESC study referred to already states that “at a societal level, a belief in a ‘common good’ has been shown to contribute to the overall well-being of society.

⁴² For an interesting review of the historical development of welfare see George, V. (2010), *Major Thinkers in Welfare: Contemporary Issues in Historical Perspective*, Bristol, The Policy Press.

This requires a level of recognition of rights and responsibilities, empathy with others and values of citizenship” (NESC 2009: 32).

This raises the issue of resources. The goods of the planet are for the use of all people – not just those in better-off countries; they are also for the use of generations still to come. The present generation must recognise it has a responsibility to ensure that it does not damage but rather enhances the goods of the planet that it hands on – be they economic, cultural, social or environmental. The structural arrangements regarding the ownership, use, accumulation and distribution of goods are disputed areas. However it must be recognised that these arrangements have a major impact on how society is shaped and how it supports the well-being of each of its members in solidarity with others.

In recent years many people have argued that the market will resolve these issues. They believe that following the economic recession the market is the only mechanism that can restore a sense of social obligation and develop a viable response to the questions raised above. Consequently, they argue that the primary focus of government policy should be to support and encourage business efficiency through the social, economic, cultural and political structures of society. This is an ideology that gives primacy to the economy. It believes that people should serve the economy, not vice versa.

On the other hand many others have argued that an untrammelled market undermines any reasonable attempt to shape society in the interest of securing every person’s well-being. They believe that human dignity and human development are critically important as it is the right of every individual to realise his or her potential and aspirations. They look at history and say that the market has created inequalities rather than enhanced solidarity; that it has given huge priority to creating what is superfluous rather than redistributing necessities.

The authors believe that the economy should serve people and not the other way around. However, it is very important to note that we do not reject the market or the social role of private enterprises or profit or

finance etc. and their capacities to contribute positively to the well-being of society and its members. Rather, we believe that the market should be at the service of people and that all can contribute to deciding the aims and choosing the priorities that ensure that the market in its various manifestations is at the service of securing every person's well-being while respecting and protecting the environment on which current and future generations depend.

The welfare state

Down through the ages societies have struggled with these issues and responded to the challenge of securing and supporting the well-being of their members in a variety of ways. One approach to securing everyone's well-being has been the development of the welfare state.

According to Anthony Giddens "Welfare states are those in which Government plays a key role in reducing inequalities through the provision or subsidising of certain goods and services. Welfare services vary across countries but often include education, healthcare, housing, income support, disability, unemployment and pensions." (Giddens, 2011:518) In recent years the future of the welfare state has been discussed and debated across much of the 'developed' world. *Social Justice Ireland's* annual Social Policy Conference in 2010 addressed this topic and the papers of that conference should be read in tandem with this chapter and indeed with the other chapters in this book (Reynolds et al, 2010).

Most countries either are or aspire to be welfare states in today's world. The services provided or sought in each welfare state and the proportion of a nation's income spent on them vary widely. There has been much discussion on what the exact differences between countries are and on why they have emerged. Marxists see welfare as necessary for the survival of capitalism. Functional theorists see welfare systems as integrating the various parts of society and ensuring that all can deal with the difficulties and complexities of modern societies.

History and Frameworks

T.H. Marshall (1973) understood the welfare state to have emerged from a broadening understanding of citizenship and the rights that went with being a citizen. In the eighteenth century *civil rights* had emerged. These included rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of thought and freedom of religion as well as the right to own property and to fair legal treatment. These were followed in the nineteenth century by the emergence of *political rights* for citizens. These included the right to vote, to hold public office and to participate in the political process. Marshall saw the twentieth century as having produced *social rights*. These included the right to economic and social security through education, housing healthcare, pensions and other services. These are often referred to as social, economic and cultural rights. This third stage in the development of rights led to the acceptance of the view that everyone was entitled to sufficient income to live a full, active life irrespective of their background. The acknowledgement of social, economic and cultural rights advanced the idea of equality for all and promoted the goal of tackling inequality in society.

Marshall's interpretation was based on his experience of the UK. The evolutionary path he set out was not replicated by experience in other countries. Turner (1990) showed that countries such as Sweden, France and Germany had travelled different pathways towards these rights. There is also disagreement on whether or not Marshall saw his analysis as a description of what happened in the evolution of rights in the UK or whether he believed it to be a causal analysis that was, in effect, an evolutionary process. Either way, his core point that rights and responsibilities are closely linked with the idea of citizenship has been very popular in recent years as the idea of 'active citizenship' has been promoted.

Marshall's understanding of an evolving and expanding set of rights linked to citizenship continues to exercise major influence. Some would go so far as to argue that the evolution of rights continues and they point

to the emergence of rights and responsibilities towards the environment (called *environmental or ecological rights*) as a further development in this process.

G. Esping-Andersen (1990) took Marshall's work a major step further. He analysed how different countries had taken different pathways to securing these rights for their citizens. In the process he concluded that there were three major approaches that produced three different 'welfare regimes.' Esping-Andersen based his analysis on the concept of 'decommodification' – "which simply means the degree to which welfare services are free from the market" (Giddens 2011: 507). Where decommodification is high then welfare is secured by the State and is not linked to one's income or economic resources. In a situation where decommodification is low then welfare services are available through the market like other goods and services.

Comparing government policies in three areas, pensions, income support and unemployment, Esping Andersen concluded there were three types of welfare state: *social democratic, conservative-corporatist and liberal*. The first two are highly decommodified but they differ from each other in that states following the democratic model provide many universal benefits (i.e. they are available to all citizens) while those in the conservative-corporatist model do not.

Scandinavian countries such as Sweden and Norway are examples of the social democratic approach while Germany, France and Austria follow the conservative-corporatist approach. Access to welfare in the latter countries is strongly linked to ones position in society, particularly one's record of paid employment. The argument has been made that the conservative-corporatist approach is not very interested in eliminating inequalities in society, but rather is focused on securing social stability strong families and loyalty to the state.

The liberal approach is different. It is highly commodified i.e. welfare services are available through the market and all are expected to buy their own services in that market. For those unable to do so means-

tested benefits are available but usually for a limited time only. These benefits become stigmatized and dependence on them is seen as a sign of personal failure. The USA is the major example of this approach in practice.

This typology has been developed further since Esping Andersen produced his original work. Several southern European countries did not develop their welfare states until the nineteen seventies and eighties. These countries spend less of their public expenditures on welfare services even though this expenditure did increase dramatically towards the end of the last century; they have a strong focus on pensions and a low level of social assistance. These countries place strong conditionality on access by their citizens to social provision. They have rigid employment protection legislation and frequently resort to early retirement policies as a means of improving employment conditions. They could be seen as a fourth 'type' beside the three 'types' identified by Esping-Andersen.

A further additional category to those identified by Esping-Andersen can be seen in many of the EU's newest members who have fewer social protections. Coming out of the former Soviet Union they have a very different tradition which is not reflected as typical of their development in any of the four typologies identified above.

Ireland has a mixture of the liberal and conservative-corporatist approaches but has been tending ever more strongly towards the liberal model.

The European Social Model Today

For Marshall, social citizenship provided a mechanism to correct the injustices caused by the capitalist market. He understood clearly that civil and political rights, on their own, simply were not sufficient to protect people against social and economic exclusion. The welfare state,

however, with its social, economic and cultural rights would provide such protection. This protection, in turn, would secure social cohesion and solidarity as well as a productive economy and market. In practice this was the path followed by European welfare states in the decades following World War II.

In the quarter century before the crash of 2007/8 many countries increased their social spending. Between 1980 and 2005, for example, the 'Anglo-Saxon' countries along with other low-spend countries increased their social spending by about one fifth (as a percentage of GDP). Scandinavian countries were starting from a much higher base but they increased their spending by a similar amount. Japan increased its social spending by 75 per cent (principally to meet the needs of its aging population). The Mediterranean countries, which lagged behind other EU countries, had the fastest growing welfare states. Greece, Spain, Portugal and Italy increased their welfare effort by two-thirds in this period. Other countries in Western Europe saw their spending grow at a more modest rate. On average gross public expenditure on welfare across OECD countries increased from 16 per cent of GDP in 1980 to 21 per cent in 2005 (Adema and Ladaïque 2009).

Another development that needs to be noted in this context is that spending on social policy rose as a share of public spending across the Western world in the second half of the twentieth century. Spending on defence was reduced as a proportion of public spending and industrial subsidies were reduced as major basic industries were privatised.

Despite these developments there has been an on-going debate on the future of the welfare state and of the European Social Model for the best part of 30 years. Developments such as faltering economies, changing demographics, globalisation, migration and many more have fuelled these debates at different times. There is general agreement in the literature that the European Social Model has been changing in terms of both its purpose (ends) and its means. The positive and negative nature of these developments is disputed. Some have concluded that it has been very effective at resisting attempts to reduce its scope (Mishra, 1990; Pierson,

1994; Timonen, 2003). Others argue that it has seen substantial reduction in recent decades (Bryson, 1992; Leonard, 1997; Jamrozik, 2001).

One major change that is generally recognised is in the whole understanding of 'work' on which the European Social Model and the Welfare State has been extensively based. From a situation of jobs for life, paying a 'family wage' in a world of near-full employment, today the world of jobs is characterised by flexibility, risk and precariousness for a large and growing proportion of the labour force.

A second major change is in the movement from 'passive benefits' to 'social investment' in human capital. There is a strong emphasis on 'activation' programmes and people find they must participate in training or some form of 'make-work' schemes to access their benefits. In Scandinavian countries there has always been a strong emphasis on vocational training and activation but they have, and continue to, combine this with a strong commitment to the universal principle. Those following the 'liberal' approach have tended to reduce universalism more and more.

The emerging European Social Model sees a realignment between these three areas i.e. work, social investment and active participation. However, there is a flaw at the core of this process. It gives major priority to the individual and places great emphasis and faith in the individual's capacity to generate collective good. In fact, it places responsibility for securing social cohesion and solidarity on the individual rather than on society and the state. This is a fundamental change from Marshall's understanding of citizenship rights and their associated social justice norms. It should not be an either/or choice. Both the individual and the state have essential roles to play if the European Social Model is not to fade away or just apply to the privileged. Some commentators have argued that there was too great an emphasis on the State's responsibilities at the expense of the individual. A rebalancing should not lead to a major reduction in the State's responsibilities. As part of the current global adjustment the State's role is being cut back; social protection is being reduced; safety nets are being reduced or removed. Downplaying the role of the state will simply deliver more unequal participation and lead

to further inequalities. This is a critical issue for the future of the European Social Model.

As the European Union expanded, its integration process created a constitutional disconnection between policies promoting market efficiencies and policies promoting social protection and equality. While the European social model was supposed to support both in an integrated manner, the Union in fact gave much greater priority to the market component. Rules and laws were put in place governing economic integration, liberalisation and competition law and these ensured that individual countries complied with these developments.

On the other hand far less priority was given to European social policies and countries were not bound by rules or laws that required improved performance on these issues. This weakness was recognised and the ‘open method of coordination’ was put in place in the area of social policy. This left decision-making on social policy issues to national parliaments but tried to improve these through promoting common objectives and common indicators as well as through comparative evaluations of national performance. Over a period of time it became clear that this approach was having little impact and the gap between how economic/market policy and social policy were viewed widened steadily. This is obvious when developments since 2000 are analysed.

In the year 2000 the European Union agreed a new strategy to become ‘the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.’ The European social model was to be developed through investing in people and developing an active and dynamic welfare state. This was seen as crucial by the European Council so as to secure Europe’s place in the knowledge economy and to ensure that the so-called new economy did not exacerbate social problems such as unemployment, social exclusion and poverty. This approach, known as the *Lisbon Strategy*, was substantially amended at its half-way point in 2005 and the issue of social cohesion was down-graded for the remaining five years of the strategy. By its conclusion date in 2010 the Lisbon

Strategy had clearly failed to deliver on either its economic or social goals. A new strategy was put in its place in 2010 called *Europe 2020*. While it contains targets on poverty, education, jobs and the environment, on the evidence of its initial years there is little confidence that it will get to grips with some of the major challenges that face the welfare state at this moment in history.

The financial and economic crisis of 2008 and following years has seen a huge increase in the pressures Governments across the Europe are facing on balancing their budgets. Many have urged substantial cuts in welfare provision and in social expenditure generally. The primary focus has been on moving the economy onto a sustainable path but this has been done for the most part without much reference to the European Social Model and its commitments on delivering services for people. Austerity is the order of the day and the pathways being followed by Governments are generally regressive in nature. While all citizens have been targeted to absorb part of the austerity there has been a general failure to recognise that those who are better off are in a far better situation to absorb these hits while those who are vulnerable have been forced to cut back far more than they can absorb.

Side by side with the economic crash of recent years there has been a growing awareness that there are environmental limits to what can be achieved. Many policies have been put into place that are not sustainable either environmentally or economically. There has been a rowing back on commitments which themselves were inadequate. The recently concluded Rio+20 conference produced an agreed statement that fell far short of what might be considered the minimum required to protect the environment and secure the future.

All of which suggests that 70 years after publication of the Beveridge Report a new 'settlement' is needed, a re-design or a re-imagining. What should that new 'settlement' include? The next section of this chapter sets out what we consider to be the key components of an updated European Social Model that would be appropriate for the changed world of the twenty first century.

Key components of a 21st century European Social Model

1. An appropriate, secure income distribution system

The income distribution system that is seen as ideal at present involves all adults of working age having paid employment. This is supported by a welfare system that ensures people have a basic amount of money if they are unemployed, ill or otherwise unable to access income from having a job. This system has consistently failed to eliminate poverty. It has consistently failed to generate full employment on any kind of permanent basis. It needs to be radically overhauled to address the world of the 21st century.

The present authors have argued for a long time that the tax and social welfare systems should be integrated and reformed to make them more appropriate to the changing world of the twenty-first century. We suggest that the present system be replaced by a Basic Income system. A Basic Income is an income that is unconditionally granted to every person on an individual basis, without any means test or work requirement. In a Basic Income system every person receives a weekly tax-free payment from the Exchequer, and all other personal income is taxed, usually at a single rate.

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

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

A Basic Income system would replace welfare payments. It could guarantee an income above the poverty line for everyone. It would not be means tested. There would be no “signing on” and no restrictions or conditions. In practice a basic income recognises the right of every person to a share of the resources of society.

The Basic Income system ensures that looking for a paid job and earning an income, or increasing one’s income while in employment, is always worth pursuing, because for every euro earned the person will retain a large part. It thus removes the many poverty traps and unemployment traps that may be in the present system. Furthermore, women and men get equal payments in a basic income system. Consequently the basic income system promotes gender equality.

Ensuring people’s well-being requires a secure income system. Basic Income is a system that is altogether more guaranteed, rewarding, simple and transparent than the present tax and welfare systems. It is far more employment friendly than the present system.

A new system is required to secure an adequate income for all in the twenty-first century. Basic Income is such a system.

2. Recognition of all meaningful work, not just paid employment

Paid employment throughout their lifetime will not be available for all those in the labour force anytime in the foreseeable future. Yet everyone has a right to work. The importance of work for people’s well-being is not disputed. However, the understanding of work has been narrowed in practice to paid employment. Other kinds of work which are not remunerated, such as care work, are not seen as ‘real’ work. This situation raises serious questions about the meaning and perception of work. The authors believe that meaningful work is essential for people’s well-being. The authors believe that every person has the right to meaningful work. The challenge faced by many societies today is to ensure that right is honoured for all even if paid full-time jobs do not exist for all. We believe

that it is possible to produce a situation where everyone has meaningful work even if full employment has not been achieved. It would involve the recognition of all forms of meaningful work, not just paid employment.

A major question raised by the current labour-market situation concerns *assumptions* underpinning culture and policy making in this area. One such assumption concerns paid employment which is assumed to be achievable in a relatively short time frame if only the correct policies were put in place. The reality raises serious questions concerning this assumption. There are hundreds of millions of people unemployed or underemployed across the world. Even in the most affluent countries there are many who are unemployed or under-employed. It is crucial that job-creation be promoted and that all that is possible be done to create well-paid jobs in which people do meaningful work. However, it is also crucial that societies face up to the fact that there will be many unemployed people for the foreseeable future. One possible pathway towards a solution might be to address a second assumption in the whole area of work.

This second assumption concerns the priority given to paid employment over other forms of work. Most people recognise that a person can work very hard even though they do not have a conventional job. Much of the work carried out in the community and in the voluntary sector fits under this heading. So too does much of the work done in the home. The authors' support for the introduction of a basic income system comes, in part, from a belief that all work should be recognised and supported.

There has been some progress on this issue particularly in the growing recognition of the value of voluntary work. The need to recognise voluntary work was acknowledged in the Government White Paper, *Supporting Voluntary Activity* (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2000). The national social partnership agreement *Towards 2016* also contains commitments in this area.

A report presented to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in 2005 established that the cost to the state of replacing the 475,000 volunteers working for charitable organisations would be a minimum of €205 million and could cost up to €485 million per year.

Government should more formally recognise and acknowledge all forms of work. We believe that everybody has a right to work, understood as contributing to his or her own development and/or that of the community and/or the wider society. However, we believe that policy making in this area should not be exclusively focused on job creation. Policy should recognise that access to meaningful work is an important factor in human well-being. A Basic Income system would create a platform for meaningful work. It would benefit paid employment as well as other forms of work.

3. A strong focus on strengthening participation by all

The need to strengthen participation by all has two aspects. One concerns participation in development at an economic and/or social level. This has been addressed to some extent under the preceding item i.e. the need to value all work. The second aspect concerns participation at a political level. Participation in both of these ways is important for people's well-being. Both should also be essential aspects of any future European Social Contract.

Democracy means 'rule by the people.' This implies that people participate in shaping the decisions that affect them most closely. This is a significant feature of individual and societal well-being according to Amartya Sen (Sen, 1999). This includes people having the freedom and the processes to express themselves politically and creatively. While we live in a democracy and freedom of expression is accepted in theory at least, there are problems with the current model. What we have, in practice, is a highly centralised government in which we are 'represented' by professional politicians. The more powerful a political party becomes, the more distant it seems to become from the electorate. Party policies

on a range of major issues are often difficult to discern. Backbenchers have little control over, or influence on, government ministers, opposition spokespersons or shadow cabinets. Even within the cabinet some ministers seem to be able to ignore their cabinet colleagues. This makes participation in real terms difficult.

The democratic process has certainly benefited from the participation of various sectors in other arenas such as social partnership. It would also benefit from the development of a new social contract against exclusion and a new forum for dialogue on civil society issues.⁴³ However there is also a need to move towards deliberative democracy and to develop structures where power differentials are neutralised. This would produce a situation where far more emphasis was given to the analysis of situations, to the alternatives proposed and to the implementation pathways being identified. We now reflect on two relevant issues specifically – firstly on shared social responsibility and secondly on social dialogue.

***Shared social responsibility is a key component
of the policy-making and policy-delivery process***

If a pathway is to be found to securing everyone's well-being through the welfare state or through any other means, the issue of responsibility must be addressed. If a democratic society is to function effectively then the exercise of responsibility is both a right and an obligation. Given the current situation of crisis across the world in so many contexts e.g. economic, political, cultural, environmental and social, and given the collapse of confidence in key institutions ranging from the economy to church, from banking to the legal to politics, the issue of responsibility needs to be debated.

Nation states and the world itself are facing huge challenges to rebuild confidence and to find credible responses to the challenges already identified in this chapter. To achieve this it is essential that the understanding of responsibility for the well-being of all be re-defined and broadened. It should be understood as meaning a responsibility that

⁴³ For a further discussion of these issues see Healy and Reynolds (2003: 191-197).

is shared by all, that is exercised by all in the context of their capacity and capability. It should also mean that this responsibility is shared by individuals, by institutions and by society generally, including governments. Given the inter-dependence of so much of modern life and the process of globalisation it is crucial that people and nation states recognise the global nature of many of the problems they face and recognise that addressing these effectively requires that all accept they have a shared responsibility for developing and implementing a viable alternative to the present system.

Sharing responsibility must be at the core of any credible pathway forward. We have argued already in this chapter that the economy should be at the service of people, of the present and future generations, rather than people being at the service of the economy. A viable future also requires conservation of the planet as the common home of humanity and of life in general. None of this will happen unless there is a new approach that recognises and acts on the need for an approach based on shared responsibility.

There are many rights that have been secured in the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the revised European Social Charter and the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights; likewise, with the UN Declaration on Human Rights and other similar instruments. But actually having those rights vindicated and delivered in practice requires that responsibilities to others alive today and in the future be recognised and addressed pro-actively.

In finding a way out of the current series of crises it is crucial that the unequal impact of these crises on different groups be recognised. Poor and/or vulnerable people suffered most as a result of these crises. These are the same people who bear least responsibility for the mechanisms which produced these crises. In many cases they are the people who have to pay a lot more tax to rescue these mechanisms (such as the banking system) and who see the services provided by the welfare state eroded as governments' finances are re-directed to the rescue of these same banks. In practice what this situation shows is that some people who have more

power and information are able to minimise or eliminate their own responsibility for what happens while vulnerable people who have no say and did not cause the problems are left carrying much more of the responsibility.

If there is to be a viable, desirable future where everyone's well-being is secured and promoted then it is crucial that social responsibilities be shared more fairly between governments, citizens, business, civil society, faith communities and all others involved in any manner. All actors should be involved in developing a shared vision of the future based on some shared values and developing pathways towards that vision at a wide range of levels. For this to happen, a genuinely participatory process is required. As we have outlined already we favour a deliberative process in which power differentials are neutralised.

In arguing for shared social responsibility to be at the core of a new approach, we see social responsibility going far beyond the obligation to answer for ones actions; it also includes approaching issues with a perspective that includes promoting the well-being of others including future generations. We also realise that not everyone can be involved in shaping all decisions. However, we believe shared social responsibility involves a commitment to generating a consensus concerning both the vision and the pathways and then involving people in different situations in deciding how best to move forward within these parameters. In practice this requires major reorganising at the political, economic and social levels. In recent decades the demand for autonomy and for freedom of choice produced an approach that relied to a great extent on self-regulation of individuals and markets. That model has failed. We now require an approach that links autonomy, as the ability of each individual to manage his/her own existence in accordance with a freely chosen lifestyle, to social justice in which individual preferences are balanced against the group interest and each person's fundamental rights.

Social dialogue is a key part of policy development and includes all major sectors of society on an equal basis.

One mechanism for sharing responsibility in decision-making and subsequent implementation concerns the process of social dialogue. Taoiseach, Enda Kenny has commented⁴⁴ that he saw “an important role for social dialogue in helping to broaden understanding about what needs to be done”. This statement is welcome. So too is the Taoiseach’s insistence that social dialogue “must facilitate, not strangle or frustrate, change and reform” is also welcome. However, it would be totally unacceptable for Government to introduce a process of social dialogue that would benefit the rich and exclude the rest of us. A recent proposal⁴⁵ for social dialogue made by a leading trade unionist would see social dialogue involving trade unions and employers **only**, and excluding the rest of society. This would be a recipe for ensuring that most of Ireland’s resources would be captured by the public sector and the corporate sector or, to be more precise, if past performance were to be a guide, it would mean that the major beneficiaries would be the better paid in the public sector and large corporations. Such an approach would simply lead to deepening divisions and growing inequality in Ireland.

Government needs to engage all sectors of society, not just trade unions and employers, in addressing the huge challenges Ireland currently faces. If government wishes the rest of us to take responsibility for producing a more viable future then it must involve the rest of us. Responsibility for shaping the future should be shared among all stakeholders. There are many reasons for involving all sectors in this process e.g. to ensure priority is given to well-being and the common good; to address the challenges of markets and their failures; to link rights and responsibilities; to secure the environment for future generations.

⁴⁴ Irish Times, May 19, 2012

⁴⁵ *ibid*

When groups have been involved in shaping decisions they are far more likely to take responsibility for implementing these decisions, difficult as they may be. A process of Social Dialogue is a key mechanism in maximising the resources for moving forward.

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

The search for a humane, sustainable model of development has gained momentum in recent times. After years of people believing that markets and market forces would produce a better life for everyone, major problems and unintended side effects have raised questions and doubts. There is a growing awareness that sustainability must be a constant factor in all development, whether social, economic or environmental.

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

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

It is crucial that the issues of environmental, economic and social sustainability be firmly at the core of the decision making process if the well-being of all, today and into the future, is to be realised. Principles to

underpin sustainable development were suggested in a report for the European Commission prepared by James Robertson in May 1997. Entitled *The New Economics of Sustainable Development*, the report argues that these principles would include the following:

- systematic empowerment of people (as opposed to making and keeping them dependent) as the basis for people-centred development
- systematic conservation of resources and environment as the basis for environmentally sustainable development
- evolution from a “wealth of nations” model of economic life to a “one-world” economic system
- evolution from today’s international economy to an ecologically sustainable, decentralising, multi-level one-world economic system
- restoration of political and ethical factors to a central place in economic life and thought
- respect for qualitative values, not just quantitative values
- respect for feminine values, not just masculine ones.

At first glance, these might not appear to be the concrete guidelines that policy-makers so often seek. Yet they are principles that are relevant to every area of economic life. They also apply to every level of life, ranging from personal and household to global issues. They impact on lifestyle choices and organisational goals. They are at least as relevant today as they were when first proposed in 1997. If these principles were applied to every area, level and feature of economic life they would provide a comprehensive checklist for a systematic policy review.

5. What matters must be measured

A central initiative in putting sustainability at the core of development would be the development of “satellite” or “shadow” national accounts. Our present national accounts miss fundamentals such as environmental sustainability. Their emphasis is on GNP/GDP as scorecards of wealth and progress. These measures, which came into widespread use during

World War II, more or less ignore the environment, and completely ignore unpaid work. Only money transactions are tracked. They fail to register the benefits of the welfare state. On the other hand they do count its failures. For example, when children are cared for in the home no monetary value is added to GNP/GDP. On the other hand if the child is cared for in a crèche the costs involved are added. Even more dramatic costs are added if the child has to be cared for by the state. Similarly, while environmental depletion is ignored, the environmental costs of dealing with the effects of economic growth, such as cleaning up pollution or coping with the felling of rain forests, are added to, rather than subtracted from, GNP/GDP. New scorecards are needed.

If well-being is the purpose of the welfare state then it is important that data is collected and analysed on the main indicators of well-being. The OECD has done a great deal of work on this issue in recent years and produces a regular publication on social indicators called *Society at a Glance*. The OECD global project on measuring progress and some of the challenges it faces were addressed at some length in a recent publication in this series (Morrone, 2009). The OECD states that “social indicators aim to provide information on well-being beyond that conveyed by conventional economic measures” (OECD, 2007, p.20). Such indicators matter in the assessment of well-being. Measuring what matters should be a key component of the future welfare state.

6. Complete health should be promoted

Health is a major element of well-being. People’s health is influenced by social conditions such as poverty, social exclusion, discrimination, inappropriate accommodation, a polluted environment and lack of community networks (World Health Organisation, 2004, 2011; Farrell et al., 2008). These are important determinants of most diseases, deaths and health inequalities between and within countries.

“Health inequities arise from the societal conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, referred to as social

determinants of health. These include early years' experiences, education, economic status, employment and decent work, housing and environment, and effective systems of preventing and treating ill health.... We are convinced that action on these determinants, both for vulnerable groups and the entire population, is essential to create inclusive, equitable, economically productive and healthy societies. Positioning human health and well-being as one of the key features of what constitutes a successful, inclusive and fair society in the 21st century is consistent with our commitment to human rights at national and international levels." (WHO 2011: no.6)

Promoting complete health would involve addressing issues such as life expectancy, healthy life years, access to healthcare services, chronic illness, mental illness and many related aspects of health. It would also involve addressing the fact that people with lower levels of education or low income, for example, face a higher risk to their well-being. Producing such an approach to health is challenging at the present time. A major restructuring and huge increases in public expenditure in Ireland are not seen to have delivered a better system or improved people's overall health or well-being.

The health system should take a 'whole of health' approach and consider its purpose to be the promotion of complete health, defined by the World Health Organisation as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."⁴⁶ A substantial proportion of the expenditure on health goes on medical provision. There is a need to move from a medical model to become more prevention oriented. There is still a long way to go. Far higher priority should be given to prevention, primary, community and continuing care.

⁴⁶ Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organisation as adopted by the International health Conference, New York, 19-22 June, 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 states and entered into force on 7 April, 1948. This definition has not been amended since 1948.

7. The focus of education should be broadened to ensure it produces fully rounded human beings

Education is another essential part of people's well-being. It contributes to human flourishing by enabling people to acquire knowledge and develop their capabilities. It can promote well-being of the person by helping their own development and it can promote the well-being of society by engaging the person in development at that level. It is also closely linked to people's job opportunities. Education can be an agent for social transformation. It can be a powerful force in counteracting inequality and poverty. However, it needs to be acknowledged that, in many ways, the present education system has quite the opposite effect. Recent studies in Ireland confirm the persistence of social class inequalities which are seemingly ingrained in the system. Even in the context of increased participation and economic boom, the education system continues to mediate the vicious cycle of disadvantage and social exclusion between generations.

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

As in health, there should be a holistic approach to education. The curriculum should include the opportunity to cultivate the variety of 'intelligences' people have including musical, spatial, physical, interpersonal and intrapersonal.⁴⁷ The key should be the development of an education system focused on producing fully rounded human beings who can live in solidarity with other human beings and the environment in which they live.

⁴⁷ For further development of this issue see H. Gardner (1993).

8. Adequate and appropriate accommodation should be available for all

The availability of appropriate accommodation is essential in any model of a welfare state. A secure and pleasant place in which to live is a basic requirement for human flourishing. The official objective of Irish housing policy is “to enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality, suited to its needs, in a good environment, and as far as possible, at the tenure of its choice” (Department of Environment at www.environment.ie). Despite huge growth in the numbers of housing units built annually in Ireland in the period 1988-2006 (up from 14,204 dwellings to 93,419), Ireland failed to address its social housing needs problem. The number of households on local authority waiting lists more than doubled from 27,427 in 1996 to 56,249 in 2008. This failure was exacerbated by a housing price bubble which saw house prices rise dramatically. By 2012 the waiting list had risen above 100,000 households.

During the boom years Ireland experienced an astonishing growth in property construction and house prices. Construction became a major element in and driver of the Irish economy. However, housing construction increased at a rate which was not supported by demand. It was promoted as an end in itself. The result was a housing bubble which has contributed to the current economic crisis. Poor financial and planning regulations along with tax incentives served to support this negative phenomenon (Kitchin et.al 2010).

Central to the welfare state in the coming years should be an approach that sees housing as a home rather than a market commodity (Drudy, 2005, 2006). Drudy points out that there is a fundamental philosophical question that should be addressed concerning the purpose of a housing system. Should it be a system to provide investment or capital gains for those with the necessary resources or should its critical aim be to provide a home as a right for all citizens? In his view Ireland should move away from seeing housing as a commodity to be traded on the market like any other tradable commodity; and to accept the latter opinion that views

housing as a social requirement like health services or education. This is a view with which the authors agree.

9. All cultures should be respected

Ensuring the welfare state is available to and benefits everyone is especially challenging in difficult economic times. This challenge can be even greater in a society with different cultures, different expectations and different understandings of well-being. Before the world developed affordable communication and travel systems people were divided because of their different cultures, values and beliefs. Centuries have passed and societies still have problems with the acceptance of others. In the recent past Ireland experienced substantial immigration as tens of thousands of people from abroad were needed to meet the employment needs of, and sought to benefit from, the ‘Celtic Tiger’. A well-functioning welfare state focusing on the well-being of all would structure itself so that all can contribute to the underpinning values and meaning of society and have their own culture respected and valued in the process.

10. Social capital, civil society, social well-being and active citizenship should be recognised and strengthened in the policy development process.

Many of the aspects already outlined have implications for civil society, social well-being and active citizenship. Research produced in recent years shows the profound importance of communities and relationships in determining people’s quality of life. Robert Putnam describes social capital as “features of social organisation, such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit”. He argues that the major components of social capital are trust, norms, reciprocity and networks and connections. Social capital has been shown to have positive economic effects while also impacting on people’s health and general well-being. It has also been shown that

community engagement not only improves the well-being of those who are engaging in such activity but also improves the well-being of others.

In his perceptive analysis Tom Healy reminds us that David Myers defines well-being, at its simplest, as: 'the pervasive sense that life has been and is good. It is an on-going perception that this time in one's life, or even life as a whole, is fulfilling, meaningful, and pleasant.' However, Tom Healy goes on to point out that well-being goes well beyond mental states of pleasure, happiness or satisfaction for individuals, important as these are. Social well-being concerns the match between our goals and the kind of life we experience. In other words it concerns what we value and seek and how we evaluate our lives in this light.⁴⁸ Drawing on reflections from Aristotle to latter-day philosophers like Amartya Sen we can say that well-being involves coherence between the moral ends and chosen values of an individual or society, and the objective circumstances of life as perceived by them. The welfare state has a huge role to play in delivering such an outcome.

Challenges to a 21st century European Social Model

There are a wide range of issues that need to be addressed if pathways are to be found towards an appropriate social model in the twenty first century. We wish to raise a critically important one here i.e. the issue of financing the European Social Model.

The issue of financing in an age of fiscal austerity

We have discussed already the pressures that face any manifestation of the European Social Model in the years ahead. This situation is made even more challenging in the Eurozone as the Fiscal Compact becomes the law in each country. Many have argued that the Compact in practice will have a very negative impact on the welfare state generally, on the provision of social services and on the overall level of social expenditure.

⁴⁸ For further elaboration on this see Tom Healy (2005)

The issue of financing is of critical importance. Idealism, aspiration and expectation must be matched by resources. If the social model cannot be funded in the future then it will not survive. In fact the political acceptability of any developments in the welfare state is closely linked to economic sustainability. While the world continues to be organised economically as a capitalist market economy there will be pressure to ensure that the cost of the welfare state does not fall too heavily on market enterprises so as not to impede free competition in production and trade. Despite benefiting generously from the advantages of the welfare state, the middle classes are often reluctant to support a generous level of redistribution. The cost of financing the various components of the welfare state has, for the most part, been rising. Simultaneously, the fact that people live longer has also been increasing the costs. There may well be further pressure on funding as improving living standards may lead some to feel they don't need the welfare state. At the same time there may be a growing tendency to reduce the redistribution element by providing support only for the 'deserving' poor.

These developments suggest the welfare state needs to provide a comprehensive rationale to explain and justify demands.

1. Firstly, there will be a growing demand for transparency. People will want to know precisely who is paying what for the welfare state and who is gaining what from it. This should be possible without too much difficulty given the world's improved technological capacity. However, the results will have to be reliable and verifiable. There have been some recent examples where the level of accuracy and of transparency left a great deal to be desired.
2. Secondly, there may be a demand to ensure social justice. This is not just an issue about adequacy, which of course is a critically important issue. There is also a need to ensure that the welfare state promotes the human dignity of participants and the common good as core values.
3. A third issue that has already arisen is the issue of people living longer. This would not be a problem for the welfare state as long as people extended their 'working' lives beyond the traditional retirement age.

In the 1980s a century-long process of reduction in the working age in the US was reversed. The UK saw a similar reverse emerge about 1995. More recently other OECD countries, including Ireland, have been following this trend. Another approach is the one adopted by Sweden and Germany where they reformed their pension systems and built in automatic reviews of the level of pension payments to ensure they remain in line with the increasing life expectancy. An interesting comparative statistic was produced by the UK's Pension Commission which showed that in 1950 the average male spent 17 per cent of his adult life in retirement. By 2000, it had risen to 31 per cent. The Commission argued that this could not continue to rise. They proposed that retirement be accepted as the norm for about 30 per cent of adult life and that the age when one becomes eligible for a state pension should be raised as required to meet this target.

4. A fourth aspect of the financing issue concerns its sustainability. For example, the EU countries will have to increase the percentage they spend on social welfare payments by about 4 per cent of GDP to meet the costs of current welfare payments and promises made for the future. When one extends the number of countries involved to include all OECD countries then the requirement rises to between 5 and 6 per cent. These increases are definitely feasible. Ireland is in a slightly different situation as its population is much younger and the ageing of the population experienced by most EU countries is still a few decades away. Given that Ireland's pension provision is far less generous than most EU-15 countries it should be possible to meet the rising costs with something to spare and remain a low-tax country.
 5. A fifth aspect of financing in the future concerns alternatives to raising taxes. Different approaches are emerging where people are encouraged or forced to support their own social provision. In Sweden, for example, 2.5% of workers earnings must be invested in privately-funded pensions. Private health insurance is now compulsory in the Netherlands. Compulsory health insurance is also imposed in some states in the USA and the US government is moving towards near-universal healthcare coverage. Various forms of graduate taxes have been introduced to fund third level education.
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6. A sixth area of activity in addressing the issue of financing has been and will continue to be the move to reduce or eliminate disincentives to taking up paid employment. Maximising labour-force participation is seen as the key to providing the funding required for the welfare state. So we may well see increased subsidisation for low-paid jobs and increased funding for training programmes for those who are unemployed. Some countries may move towards a workfare approach to labour market activation even though the evidence suggests that this is a high-cost route to take. Another approach might be the development of voluntary programmes where those in receipt of unemployment payments could work in the public or the community and voluntary (non-profit) sector doing real part-time jobs for the going hourly 'rate for the job'. They could work the required number of hours to receive their unemployment payment (up to a maximum of half the normal length of the working week) and then be free to take up any further employment that was available and pay tax in the normal way while maintaining their entitlements to supports such as a medical card.

Failure to address the financing issue could lead to a situation where a large proportion of a society's population was unable to provide privately for its welfare while no alternative was available to them. Historically, such a problem has led to the elimination of the existing social order and its replacement with some form of totalitarian, collectivist regime which in turn failed. The twentieth century has made great progress in recognising and supporting human rights. But rights can become an illusion unless the financing to deliver these rights is secured and sustained.

What should Ireland do now?

1. On Income:

- Move towards a Basic Income system. Initial steps in this direction could see a Basic Income being available for children and for older people. This would mean that Government would maintain the current untaxed Child Benefit system and introduce a Universal State Pension, set perhaps at the current level of the Contributory State Pension.
- Reverse the current process whereby the resource of poor and middle-income people are being transferred to the rich. This process is clear in the Budget choices made by Government as it seeks to implement the Bailout Agreement.

2. On work:

- Formally recognise and acknowledge all forms of meaningful work, not just paid employment, as being worthwhile.
- Develop a major investment programme to maximise the number of worthwhile jobs available in Ireland.
- Introduce a part-time job opportunities programme that would enable those who are long-term unemployed voluntarily to take up part-time jobs in the community and voluntary sector and in the public sector, paying the going hourly rate for the job and earning the equivalent of their welfare payment and a small top-up⁴⁹.

3. On Participation:

- Introduce arenas where all stakeholders can discuss what needs to be done on different issues *on the basis of available evidence*. In these arenas evidence alone should be considered. Power differentials should not play a part.
- Introduce a process of social dialogue that includes all major sectors of Irish society on an equal basis. This process should focus on:

⁴⁹ *Social Justice Ireland* has made a comprehensive proposal on this issue, based on an identical programme it piloted for Government in the 1990s and which was subsequently mainstreamed successfully.

- the kind of Ireland people wish to see emerge in the future;
- the level of services and infrastructure to be provided;
- how these are to be funded, and
- how they are to be delivered.

Only then can fair choices be made on how Ireland's resources are to be used.

4. On Sustainability:

- Put sustainability at the centre of all policy-making. This requires an integrated approach to policy-development and Budget decision-making.
- Develop “satellite” or “shadow” national accounts that include a more comprehensive range of data than that currently included in GDP/GNP – such as the value of unpaid work and the cost of unsustainable development .

5. On measuring what matters:

- Ensure that data is collected on the various aspects of people's well-being, much of which is already being done in CSO publications such as 'Measuring Ireland's Progress'.
- Include these data in the policy development and implementation processes.

6. On health:

- Focus on addressing the social determinants of health as the basis for policy development.
- Prioritise and resource Primary Care Teams and Social Care with a major focus on prevention.
- Ensure that structural and systematic reform of the health system reflects the key principles of the Health Strategy aimed at achieving high performance, person centred, quality of care and value for money in the health service.

7. On education:

- Develop education as a life-long support helping people to become capable and emotionally well-rounded, happy and motivated.
- Address the social class inequities ingrained in formal education system at present.
- Address Ireland's large-scale adult literacy deficits.

8. On accommodation:

- Focus on developing housing as a home rather than as a market commodity.
- Ensure all people in Ireland have appropriate accommodation and thus eliminate all housing waiting lists.
- To this end ensure the supply of social housing including voluntary/non-profit and co-op housing on the scale required.

9. On cultures:

- Promote integration and an inclusive society.
- Respect the new cultures that have recently arrived in Ireland and ensure they are valued in Irish policy development.

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

- Recognise and value the contribution currently being made to Ireland's development by the Community and Voluntary Sector.
- Develop active citizenship and social capital in a balanced way ensuring the required complementarity between the individual and society.

Conclusion

The EU and the countries within it, including Ireland, need to have a wide-ranging dialogue on the future of the European Social Model. As outlined earlier in this chapter this dialogue should include all major stakeholders and sectors of society on an equal basis.

This process should focus on:

- o the kind of EU/Ireland people wish to see emerge in the future;
- o the level of services and infrastructure to be provided;
- o how these are to be funded, and
- o how they are to be delivered.

Then and only then can fair choices be made on what Social Model people wish to follow in the twenty first century and on how resources are to be used to deliver that model.

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