

# Introduction

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### Social Justice in Ireland

These are particularly difficult times for Ireland. On 30 September 2008, the government of Ireland guaranteed all deposits with the six biggest banks in the country, effectively converting into sovereign debt the bad loans made by the private banks. Many of these loan defaults related to failed property developments and in winding up companies the banks were left holding property assets worth very much less than their book value. In November 2009, the largest loans (those over €5m each), representing assets with a book value of €77bn but current market value of €47bn, were transferred to a new National Asset Management Agency (NAMA), which was billed €54bn for the privilege of trying to recover this debt by selling assets as markets recovered (Kelly 2009; Taylor 2011). These guarantees rendered the Irish state insolvent resulting in its downgrading by rating agencies in August 2010 and in November 2010 the Irish government borrowed €85bn from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Central Bank at the same committing itself to reforming the Irish banking system and repaying the loan by cutting public spending. In 2012, the government paid €6.133bn as interest charges on public debt, or €1 for every €6.47 raised in taxes (Anon. 2013a, 50). Among all world states, Ireland has now the seventh highest public-debt to GDP ratio (1.27; Anon. 2013b). In the Republic, 22% of all households are jobless, in 38% of households expenditure exceeds disposable income, 24% of the population lack at least two basic necessities and as such are termed deprived, and mortgage arrears of more than 90 days which were almost zero in 2004 are now 12% for principal private dwellings (Anon. 2013c). In times like these, social justice should be an urgent consideration in all areas of social and economic policy, as Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona (2011, 7) of the United Nations said of a closely related issue: '[h]uman rights are not a policy option, dispensable during times of economic hardship. It is vital, therefore, that Ireland immediately undertakes a human rights review of all budgetary and recovery policies.'

The government has a constitutional obligation to incorporate social justice priorities within its policies for managing the economic crisis. The 1937 Constitution of the Republic of Ireland makes explicit reference to social justice. Article 43 conferred personal rights to private property but insisted that these property rights 'ought, in civil society, to be regulated by the principles of social justice' (43.2.1) and thus invited the State to make laws 'with a view to reconciling' the exercise of the rights of private property 'with the exigencies of the common good' (43.2.2). In setting out its '[d]irective principles of social policy' (Article 45), the Constitution committed the State to 'promot[ing] the welfare of the whole people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice and charity shall inform all institutions of the national life' (45.1). This was to include ensuring that 'the ownership and control of the material resources may be so distributed amongst private individuals and the various individuals and the various classes as best to subserve the common good' (45.2.ii). Free competition was to be regulated to avoid any 'concentration of the ownership or control of essential commodities in a few individuals to the common detriment' (45.2.iii). Similarly 'in what pertains to the control of credit the constant and predominant aim shall be the welfare of the people as a whole' (45.2.iv). The State was to ensure that 'private

enterprise shall be so conducted [...] as to protect the public against unjust exploitation' (45.3.2). Citizens were also to have a right 'to form associations and unions' (40.6.1.iii) and while these organisations were to be regulated 'in the public interest' (40.6.1.iii), such regulations were to 'contain no political, religious or class discrimination' (40.6.2). Social justice, then, is projected as pertaining to the common good but it is not a simple felicific calculus for the State is also enjoined 'to safeguard with especial care the economic interests of the weaker sections of the community' (45.4.1).

President Higgins speaks often about these challenges. At the National University of Ireland Galway the President was blunt. 'We live,' he said, 'in exceptionally testing times for many Europeans, including our citizens in Ireland, with many economies across the Union in recession, unsustainably high levels of unemployment, 115 million Europeans are in or at risk of poverty, and there has been a significant loss of trust in many States in our institutions and their policy response' (Higgins 2013a). He reaches back to the experience of the convulsions of war to find helpful comparisons for the trauma of the current crisis:

The Europe of today was born from the harrowing experience of two World Wars and the determination never to have to go through that again. The Europe of tomorrow is now being debated and forged in the furnace of one of the deepest financial crises in modern times. How we respond to that crisis, what and whom we choose to prioritise for our care and attention and what lessons we draw from the experience will have a crucial bearing on the future of Europe and the welfare of its citizens (Higgins 2013b).

In that speech, he went on to refer to the 'severe social consequences across Europe from the current crisis' and noted that these consequences 'are serious contradictions and obstacles to a genuinely inclusive citizenship' (Higgins 2013b). The crisis is one of ideas as well as of policy. In a speech in honour of the memory of Jonathan Swift, the President evoked the 'importance [...] of critical thought in the wake of failed orthodoxies' (Higgins 2013c). Speaking to a graduating class of lawyers, he commended to them 'critical thinking' as 'crucial for your life in the field of law, where the protection and promotion of human rights and social justice, thought the equitable application of the law' is essential (Higgins 2013d). To the Nevin Economic Research Institute, he spoke of his confidence that 'Irish thinkers have background, talent and capacity to give us the multi-disciplinary inputs to policy we need' (Higgins 2013e). This collection of essays on *Spatial Justice and the Irish Crisis* is a geographical contribution to the debate.

### Geographical Perspectives on Social Justice

Geographers have a particular set of perspectives on social justice (Soja 2010). Each of the core themes of geography can be made the focus of a justice perspective, thus we may speak of spatial justice, environmental justice and place justice. Spatial justice starts from the recognition that access to social goods can depend upon where one lives or works, the question of 'who gets what where' (Smith 1994). In Ireland, geographers have documented geographical inequalities in health (Pringle 1982) and poverty (Pringle *et al.* 1999). But geographers have also tried to understand these inequalities as having a structural basis so that they can examine the production of unequal space, particularly as a consequence of capitalism (Harvey 1973; 1982) or of legal orderings of space around racial or class apartheid (Delaney 1998; Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2011). Brawley

(2009) has described as the 'practice of spatial justice in crisis,' neoliberal strategies for managing the economic recession which disqualify the democratic forms of urban life, serving instead to place public resources at the disposal of private enterprise, and leaving tax-deprived cities to manage an evolving social catastrophe. For Ireland, there has been some research on the structural context of geographical inequality. For example, Drudy and Punch (2001, 255) wrote about the baleful consequences of a preference for spatially segregating social classes, that was argued for as a way to preserve property values. The neoliberal restructuring of space has also been studied (Kitchin *et al.* 2012).

Environmental justice scholars have attended to the many ways that the negative externalities of noxious facilities are visited upon the poor or upon people of colour (Bullard 2001; Walker and Bulkeley 2006). Some work on Ireland has incorporated gender into considerations of environmental justice (Buckingham *et al.* 2005), while Irish environmental justice issues have also been studied by Davies (2006) and Gilmartin (2009). Irish geographers have also become increasingly concerned with the justice issues relating to climate change (Davies and Kirwan 2009; Barrett 2013).

Place justice is not articulated as an explicit concept within Geography but the issues it might address are important ones (Till 2012). If we understand place as indicating the sort of attachments to particular locations that people develop through the routines of daily life, then, we might understand a right to place as indicating the topics that could be addressed as place justice. Seamon (1979) described a 'place ballet' inscribed by the structured pathways of the multitude passing in and around the spaces of the city. For some city-dwellers, rootedness is an important dimension of existential security and the disruption of this security, as in many projects of urban renewal, produces a set of social-psychological consequences that Fullilove (2004) writes of as the syndrome, rootshock. A sense of place can also be about how attachments are formed in place, even as they are expressive of sets of connections that come into, pass through, and pass out of places to hither and yon, a 'global sense of place' (Massey 1991; Haesbaert 2013). Buttimer (1980) has described her own sense of place, deriving from her Irish childhood, in ways suggestive of the existential security that Fullilove describes as rootedness. For the newly gentrified spaces of parts of Dublin's inner city, Howley (2009) has documented the failure of the new communities to develop the sort of neighbourliness and trust characteristic of some of communities that were displaced by the renewal. Punch (2001, 38) has analysed how some Dublin communities develop their own informal social and economic spaces outwith top-down government programmes and the anomie of private markets, a 'third space at grassroots level.'

Place justice also encompasses the sort of questions that geographers have taken up, from the work of Henri Lefebvre, as the 'right to city' (Lefebvre 1968; 1996; McCann 1999; Purcell 2002; Mitchell 2003; Harvey 2012). Even brief reflection reveals the radical nature of Lefebvre's ideas about urban production and appropriation: those who live in a city should be those who decide how it should be made and re-made to suit their everyday practices, and these same people should have the right take up and use for purposes of association and politics the public spaces of that city (Purcell 2003, 577). There have been a few works on Ireland that take up these issues including O'Callaghan and Linehan's (2007) work on Cork and Nagle's (2009a; 2009b) on Belfast. Academic research has yet to catch up with the insights generated as part of Occupy Belfast and

Occupy Dublin but these will be very useful for thinking about the right to the city in Ireland (Sheehan 2012; McGarrigle 2013).

### Geographies of the Crisis

Geographical studies of the Irish crisis have been published in academic journals, popular blogs and in the press. In November 2009, at the creation of NAMA, a one-day symposium on 'Ireland after NAMA,' was hosted by the National Institute of Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) at the National University of Ireland Maynooth. Following this, was launched the *Ireland after NAMA blog* (Kitchin *et al.* 2013a). The intervention has been a most happy one. The blog has had over 500 posts, nearly half a million hits, over 600 mentions in other news media and its blogging team of geographers and other social scientists have presented and analysed evidence about the geographical dynamics of the economic and social crises in Ireland (IrelandAfterNAMA Collective 2013). Much of this geographical evidence is now accessible through the All-Island Research Observatory (airo.ie). Some of this work has been presented as maps for the *Irish Times* (Freyne 2012). Contributing to these efforts to bring geographical understandings of the crisis to a wider audience, the Geographical Sciences Committee of the Royal Irish Academy organised, in April 2013, both a discourse on *Spatial justice, housing and the financial crisis*, and also a conference on *Spatial justice and the Irish crisis*. The papers from those events form the basis of the present book.

### *Financial Crisis*

The discourse from Danny Dorling, Halford Mackinder Professor of Geography at the University of Oxford, set the Irish crisis in an international context. Dorling has been a prominent international scholar of geographical patterns of inequality (Dorling 2011; 2012) and has pioneered novel ways to present spatial data so that it can be more easily read (Dorling *et al.* 2008). In his lecture, Dorling examined the housing bubble, suggesting that its puncture was easy to anticipate but difficult to manage. In particular, Dorling points to two features of the housing crisis. In the first place, the construction industry is wedded to building new houses, which means that the existing stock is not refurbished nor used to the full extent of its useful life. This is a waste of resources and produces housing estates with empty units and the problems that follow from social abandonment (on which see also the chapter by Kitchin *et al.*, below). The second feature of the housing crisis is that the high prices that stimulate new construction also mean that some people hold a good share of their personal wealth in the form of an inflated housing equity. Dorling proposes taxing house values suggesting that deflating property values in this way will transfer some wealth from a very small minority for the benefit of the many. This focus upon the anti-social privilege of the 1%, is only one of the ways that academic work has been affected by the Occupy Movement.

There has been much discussion of the extent to which individual states can manage the local repercussions of the international crisis of finance capital. For some scholars, globalisation means that states can no longer regulate their national economies to any appreciable degree (Ômae 1995). However, there have been other commentators persuaded that in regulating currency, guaranteeing property titles, and in setting the context in which labour markets operate, states still shape significantly their life chances of their residents (Therborn 1986; Hirst and Thompson 1996). Among the geographers

who have contributed most to this debate is John Agnew, a political geographer and Distinguished Professor of Geography at the University of California Los Angeles. In May 2013, on a visit to the National University of Ireland Maynooth, Agnew gave a talk on 'Territorial Politics and the Global Financial Crisis.' Agnew's focus is upon the imbrication of states with various non-state agents, such as rating agencies, in setting the deregulatory framework in which the financial crises was manufactured. The national styles of neoliberalism matter, a point made also for Ireland by Kitchin *et al.* (2013b) and by Fraser *et al.* (2013).

In the Republic of Ireland, the financial crisis has been placed almost entirely upon the tab for the domestic taxpayer. There has been no attempt to devalue the bonds held with Irish banks. In other words, institutions that loaned money to Irish banks because the interest rates, reflecting an assessment of the riskiness of the Irish economy, were somewhat higher than in core European countries such as Germany, have found that, although their bets were poor, they will still win, being repaid principal and interest in full, a very welcome result for the foreign lenders to Ireland, such as the German banks. The consequences of this for Ireland's housing market are two-fold. In the first place, a speculative property bubble, fed by easy credit, puffed by dependent newspapers (Mercille 2013), and suffered to endure the lightest of planning touches, tore up greenfield sites producing a rash of new houses, new shopping centres, and new office development far beyond anything dreamed of in Ireland's toothless National Spatial Strategy (Breathnach 2013; Meredith and van Egeraat 2013). In the second, people are left with mortgages they can no longer afford for properties that may have fallen by 40-50% from their peak values in 2007 (Murphy and Scott 2013). As finance dried up in 2008, building ceased on many estates leaving several hundred with incomplete units or infrastructure to a greater or lesser degree (Kitchin *et al.* 2013b). These are the landscapes surveyed in the chapter by Hearne, Kitchin, and O'Callaghan. In their contribution they cover not only the private sector but also the problems of the public sector, where austerity means that re-housing plans have, in some cases, stopped after the first phase, that is after demolition of existing stock but before the ex-residents can be moved out of their temporary and inadequate housing into new estates.

### *Crisis in Planning*

The problems of Ireland's planning system are many, and the corruption of politicians by developers was made all too evident by the Flood/Mahon Tribunal (Leonard and Kenny 2011). In some respects, there is a shadow planning system based on lobbying (and bribes) rather than on formal regulations (McGrath 2009; Fox-Rogers and Murphy 2013). The lack of planning during the years of the boom has bequeathed a difficult landscape to be managed by cash strapped local authorities. The multiplication of homes beyond the reach of sewerage systems has resulted in rural and peri-urban landscapes studded with over 400,000 uninspected septic tanks, to the hazard of water supplies and, as judged by the European Court of Justice, placing Ireland in breach of EU obligations (Anon. 2011). The building of estates without services or local government has produced a governance deficit for some residential developments (Mahon and Ó Cinnéide 2009). Development focused on the Dublin docklands has had few spillover effects (Moore-Cherry and Vinci 2012). Indeed, the existence of empty lots throughout much of the rest of Dublin (O'Mahony and Rigney 2013) is a rebuke to the notion that concentrating incentives to

private enterprise in one part of the city will produce benefits elsewhere. Mahon's chapter in the present book examines an issue central to the relations between justice and property: how to capture for social use some of the private benefits of urban development. Without a graduated tax on land values, local authorities have resorted to making a levy upon for the services their projects will require. However, too many developers defer paying or even go into receivership before making any payments and the courts have not recognised these levies as charges that are passed to those buying the finished buildings from the developers.

The failure of spatial planning extends also to the areas of social, ecological and economic sustainability. Climate change intensifies these challenges (Sweeney 2011; Adger *et al.* 2013). Geographers have identified social sustainability as a challenge for both rural (Buttimer 1998; Robinson 2008; McDonagh *et al.* 2009) and urban Ireland (Moore and Scott 2005). The poorly planned settlements of recent years meet few of the requirements of ecological sustainability, being dispersed and poorly served by public transport (Winston 2007). Geographers have considered how the agenda of sustainability might be incorporated into governance structures (Davies *et al.* 2010). There has been a particular focus upon the political geography of waste disposal (Buckingham *et al.* 2005; Davies *et al.* 2005; Davies 2006; Desmond 2006). In this time of crisis, the idea that a green economy might be a spur to economic growth has directed attention to ways that the innovations of green technology might be diffused more widely (Davies and Mullin 2011; Davies 2012). This idea that economic sustainability might be served by green technologies is the focus of Davies' chapter, which identifies tensions between economic and environmental priorities within the so-called cleantech sector.

### *Inequality of Opportunity*

Three features of Irish employment are relevant in trying to understand the geography of the crash: the branch plant economy, the significance of construction, and the tax regime. In 2008, 88% of Irish exports were produced by multinationals who paid €2.8bn in Corporation Tax and €19.1bn in wages, yet their sales were €109.6bn so that very little of the money made by the multinationals stayed in Ireland (McCabe 2011, 88). Another way of putting this is to say that much foreign direct investment is flexible and there are few economic or political costs associated with its termination. The reliance of the Irish employment upon construction jobs was truly extraordinary (in 2007, 12.9% directly and 5.1% indirectly; Anon. 2009, 61) and with the bursting of the property bubble there has been a 54% decline in direct employment in construction 2007-10 (Anon. 2010, 61). The other really striking feature of the Irish economy is the level of state subsidy to the private sector (estimated as €4.7bn to €6.2bn for 2011, Sweeney 2013). The conditions for the recovery will not, and should not, be able to replicate the circumstances of the boom. More fundamental changes are required.

With the recent release of place of work data from the 2011 census (CSO 2013), we might anticipate the early publication of works that will trace through into the bust, the geographical patterns of economic activity described for the start (Gleeson *et al.* 2006) and peak of the Celtic Tiger (Brennan and Breathnach 2009; Morgenroth 2009). Aspects of the picture are already clear. We know already the rapidity of job losses: 25.3% decline in agriculture 2007-10, 36.4% in industry, 5.9% in services (Drudy and Collins 2011, 348). This is the task Meredith takes up in his chapter. He documents the

completely different geographies for male and female employment and the way that the decline in work opportunities has resulted in people having to travel further to find them. Meredith considers the failure of earlier employment policies to bring industrial jobs to rural Ireland. The recent loss of manufacturing jobs in rural Ireland is more concentrated among young adults than is the case for urban Ireland. These newly intensified patterns of uneven development set the context for new rounds of immiseration and emigration.

Poverty produces social exclusion and social exclusion wastes the energy and creativity of poor people, preventing them contributing to society, indeed fostering antisocial criminality and poor parenting (Townsend 1979; Hillyard 2005). The Republic has taken a number of measures to address poverty most notably the introduction of a minimum wage in 2000 and increases in welfare payments in the first half of the 2000s, bring Ireland a little closer to European norms. However, the rise in unemployment has reduced incomes for the poorest groups beyond anything compensated for by welfare payments. The share of the (falling) national disposable income that poorest decile spent fell from 3.5% in 2008 to 3.0% in 2011, and taxes together with cuts in public sector pay meant that the share of the top decile also fell, from 24.5% to 24.0% (Callan *et al.* 2013, 16). Although Ireland is behind most European countries with regard to the share of its GDP committed as welfare payments, the IMF urges the government to cut state pensions and welfare payments. This is in fact what happened with the budgets of 2012 and 2013, with cuts to child benefit and to one-parent families. The CSO annual Survey on Income and Living Standards for 2012 will only be completed after the end of 2013 so we will not be able to monitor the inequality effects of this attack on welfare until early next year. For relatively wealthy countries such as the Republic of Ireland, increasing inequality raises the cost of law and order, reduces healthiness, and makes people generally less content with life (Wilkinson and Pickett 2011).

For Limerick, we know something of the deepening patterns of social exclusion and concomitant issues of crime and the use of illegal drugs that follow from this concentration of poverty (Hourigan 2011). In their chapter, McCafferty and Humphreys examine the various schemes for urban regeneration in Limerick. They document the concentration of poverty among children and particularly among those living in lone-parent families, precisely the family group most concentrated in the distressed parts of Limerick, as indeed are the families most heavily dependent upon social welfare payments. They also document the consequences of concentrated poverty for social capital and for neighbourhood reputation with even children registering the insecurity and undesirability of their home area. These cumulated stresses result in these children being judged less healthy by their parents than are children on average by their parents.

These relations between ill-health and poverty (Rosenberg 2013) are multiple and include the effect of fuel poverty of sickness and mortality in winter (McAvoy 2007; Shortt and Rugkåsa 2007) as well as the ill health resulting from the stress of unemployment (Hannan *et al.* 1997). For rural areas, there appears to be a positive association between deprivation and distance to GP services (Teljeur *et al.* 2010) and the modeling of access to health services has been an important part of medical geographical studies of Ireland (Kalogirou and Foley 2006). There are not very many studies of the interaction of geographical with social inequality (but, see Morrissey *et al.* 2010; 2012; Migge and Gilmartin 2011). In this context, it is important to note that self-reported health has been found to be a reliable indicator of well-being and is now widely used to

study the social and economic contexts of ill health (Tay *et al.* 2004). This is a dimension of social description now collected by the Irish census and Foley and Kavanagh have devised an index that uses this measure to describe the healthiness of people in small areas. This will allow geographers to monitor the health consequences of the recession and recovery and Foley and Kavanagh begin this research with the findings reported in their chapter. Unemployment, poverty and ill-health reinforce each other and the geography of the crisis is marked by these interactions.

### *Identities in Crisis*

When, in the 1990s, Ireland became a country of net in-migration, this ended a century and a half of net emigration (Crowley *et al.* 2012). By 2010, the trend was again reversed (Gilmartin 2012; Gilmartin 2013). During the 1990s and early 2000s, the immigration, particularly from Poland and Lithuania after their accession to the EU, had profound consequences for settled notions of Irish identity (Gilmartin and White 2008; Bushin and White 2010; Ulin *et al.* 2013). In 2004, after a referendum, the Irish constitution was changed so that people born in Ireland on non-Irish parents would not automatically acquire residency and later citizenship rights (Conlon 2010). The context of this change was a profoundly racist aversion to the possibility that there might be a multitude of pregnant African women descending on Ireland in time to give birth and then using the residency rights of their Irish child to get themselves a right to remain (Luibhéid, E. 2006; Shandy 2008). Luibhéid (2011) argues further that it was precisely in being pregnant that women of colour attracted the attention of this demarcation and, as a consequence, their explicit exclusion as illegal in Ireland. These geopolitical forms were in place during the boom and there is some suggestion that they may be intensifying as an aspect of the racialising of neoliberalism (Carr and Haynes 2013). This is an area where the territorial reality of the state continues to have profound implications (Gilmartin 2008). Gilmartin's chapter takes up this set of issues about how immigration policy defines identities through the explicit hierarchies of persons and places that they draw upon and justify.

More congenial for some, than an engagement with people of colour living in Ireland, is a more intense engagement with people of Irish descent living abroad. This Irish identity might be referred to as the emigration state (Gamlen 2008) and it gives rise to explicit policies for engaging the diaspora (Ancien *et al.* 2009). The idea of Ireland as 'emigrant nursery' (MacLaughlin 1993) produces sets of rural identities in which mobility intersects with gender in complex ways (Donkersloot 2012; Gray 2013). The diasporic inflection of Irish identities is also affected by the racialised and economic dynamics of hyphenated identities in the diaspora itself (Cochrane 2010; Ireland 2013). The Celtic Tiger posed its own challenges to the inherent nostalgia of some Irish identities within the diaspora but the Irish crash will twist those relations in new ways for this crash of speculative capitalism is thoroughly modern in a different way than had been the story of colonialism and famine. In his chapter, MacÉinri examines emigration as part of a right to mobility and asks how the Irish state can best serve the aspirations of its people, which may well include the expectation that emigration is preferable to unemployment. One recent study found 59% of a sample of undergraduates in Dublin and Cork intended to seek employment abroad, mainly in English-speaking countries (Cairns



*et al.* 2012). As such, asks MacÉinri, what education best equips them for this mobility option.

Education is a vital part of social reproduction and shapes identities, particularly with respect to negotiating racism and the place of recent immigrants within society (Kitching 2010; Hogan 2011; O'Connor and Faas 2012). In Ireland, segregated schooling has reproduced religious affiliations but also prejudiced cross-group identification (Turner *et al.* 2013). Geographers have been interested in how access to education is structured geographically (Gallagher 2012; Ledwith and Reilly 2012; 2013). If education is stratified by class, religion, or ethnicity, then, social identities will be fostered that minimize the possibility of inter-group friendships. In both Province and Republic, schooling is dominated by religious institutions. For the Republic, there are three reasons why this might change. First, religious practice is changing and becoming more personal and less institutional. Secondly, immigration has produced somewhat greater religious diversity in the Republic. Finally, the Catholic Church has lost trust, particularly with respect to child care after the clerical sex abuse scandals together with the persistent cover-ups. Yet the crisis makes any such adjustments more difficult. In the first place, providing diversity is less likely to be met by new school building at a time of austerity and thus the more difficult route has to be taken, of changing the patronage of existing schools. In the second place, the measures that are needed in order to protect children 'risk being entirely undermined because of savage budgetary cuts to services' (Garrett 2013, 63). In their chapter on religion and primary education, Kearns and Meredith examine the current process of patronage revision in primary education and identify some of its contradictory geographies.

#### Explanation and Social Justice

The studies reported in this book suggest some of the geographical dynamics of the current Irish crisis. However, we do not only wish to interpret the world but also to contribute to changing it. In this respect, it was important for Irish geographers trying to understand and respond to the current crisis that we had an opportunity of engaging with the scholarship of David Harvey during our time of reflection and writing. Thanks to the Geographical Society and Ireland and to the National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG), where the Department of Geography was celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, Harvey came to Ireland and in lecture and conversation engaged Irish geographers in a discussion of the root causes of the crisis.

David Harvey is the Distinguished Professor of Anthropology and Geography at the Graduate University of New York and is quite simply the most influential and most widely cited geographer in the English language. Over many decades he has advanced a Marxist understanding of the capitalist economy and its spatial transformations. During his visit he sat down with John Morrissey of NUIG to talk about the themes of this book. We append that interview as a fitting close to our book since it not only restates many of our central concerns but also indicates some of the work we have yet to do if we are to understand the distinctive nature of Irish capitalist society and the state forms that manage it.

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