Solidarity in Ireland: Rhetoric or Reality? Research Forum
Report

Wednesday 29th November
9:30 am to 1pm

Carmelite Community Centre,
Augnier St. Dublin 2

Contents

1. Introduction

Solidarity is a widely proclaimed value in political discourses in Ireland and within Europe. However, there is very limited analysis of what is meant by solidarity. Is it a rhetorical device to appeal to moral sentiments in their absence? How does it differ from charity and from reciprocity? There are many questions. Drawing on research undertaken on solidarity movements in Ireland, the Forum was organised to explore what is meant by solidarity, what undermines it in its various forms, and what facilitates it.

Through the engagement of experts in the field, it examined the operation of solidarity in practice, in terms of the housing, health and care crises, and the financial crisis. The forum was attended by community groups, NGOs and charities, policy makers, academics and interested individuals, and activists with an interest in social justice and equality. The Forum was accessible to people with disabilities and ISL interpreting was available for the Deaf.

2. Programme

[Chair: Dr John Bissett (Researcher and Community Worker, Dublin)]

- 9:30 Registration
- 10:00 Keynote: What is Solidarity? Professor Kathleen Lynch, University College Dublin
- 10:45 Models of solidarity in Ireland: Dr Manolis Kalaitzake, Postdoctoral Researcher University College Dublin/ Trinity College Dublin
- 11:10 Q and A
- 11:20 Panel discussion
- Solidarity and Health Care: Dr Sara Burke, Health policy analyst, post-doctoral research fellow, Trinity College Dublin
- Solidarity and Housing: Dr Rory Hearne, Postdoctoral Researcher, Maynooth University
- Solidarity in Practice: Ms Louise Bayliss, SPARK campaign and Equality Budgeting Organiser
- 12:20 Q and A
- 12:40 Closing comments

3. Presentations

Four presentation took place. Professor Kathleen Lynch, University College Dublin delivered the keynote address. Her presentation opened with notes on which citizen matters most and a further discussion of the neoliberal context and the market view of citizenship. Kathleen also spoke about citizens as customers and the endorsement of self-responsibilised citizenship. She then highlighting different forms of solidarity, which included calculative solidarity, charity and a normative understanding of solidarity with a focus on affective solidarity. Her presentation concluded with a discussion of what is undermining solidarity and what might facilitate it.

The second presentation was delivered by Dr. Manolis Kalaitzake, Postdoctoral Researcher University College Dublin/ Trinity College Dublin. Dr. Kalaitzake discussed different models of solidarity in Ireland. He highlighted solidarity in the post-crisis era with a specific focus on the drivers and barriers to solidarity. He touched on a variety of areas such as health, civic engagement, education, employment and housing. He placed emphasis on two different models in Ireland, which included the Irish Water Movement (a grassroots movement based on a normative and political view of solidarity) and a charity model that focused on more individualised actions, St. Vincent de Paul. He concluded by drawing attention to the wider context in which solidarity operates such as neoliberalism and EU relation among member states.

Both of these discussion were followed with a question and answer session, where audience members asked further questions about the models of solidarity and discussion the various drivers and barriers. There was also interest in the Irish models *per se* and a general discussion took place about the Irish Water movement in particular. Many of those attending believed it had played a major role in precluding even greater austerity during the crisis as it had mobilised people in almost every town in the country. It represented a kind of pre-emptive form of solidarity.

The panel discussion included three presentation. The first presentation was given by Dr Sara Burke, Health policy analyst, post-doctoral research fellow, Trinity College Dublin, and focused on solidarity and health care. Dr Burke highlighted inequality in health care system with a specific focus on the broader issues of policy orientation in Irish policy-making and how inegalitarian/non-solidaristic they are in practise. She then discussed health care in terms of solidarity for different groups and the gaps in care for people.

Dr Rory Hearne, Postdoctoral Researcher, Maynooth University, spoke next and discussed solidarity and housing. He looked at Irish housing policy and the need for more solidarity on housing. He looked at different movements in Ireland and the various housing issues. He concluded by highlighting the need for a housing movement based on the kind of solidarity shown in the Irish Water Movement protests.

The final presentation was given by Louise Bayliss, SPARK campaign and Equality Budgeting campaign, who spoke about solidarity and lone parents and discussed her on-going campaign for justice for lone parents. She specifically focused on equality budgeting and the ways different organisations had come together to advocate for equality budgeting, and how successful this has been. However, she concluded by highlighting the need for greater solidarity and the long struggle for solidarity across groups with different interests.

The panel presentations were followed by questions and answers from the floor. Debate and general discussion took place across the three themes of housing, health and care. These discussions were placed in the wider context of the keynote presentation as delegates linked the practical discussion to wider issues about solidarity and how it is undermined by neoliberal systems.

4. Civil society, Public Service and Voluntary participants

Over 80 delegates attended the forum from a wider range of groups and organisations. There were representatives from older person NGOs and charities, a representative from a social justice advocacy group, representatives from a number of Universities, representatives from community groups working on housing and anti-

poverty work, representatives from healthcare charities, students and people working in youth projects and locally based community centres. In addition, there were some attendees from government agencies with a specific remit for developing policy to address inequality.

Groups and organisations represented included the following **but not all participants listed their affiliation**

5. Active Ageing in Partnership,

6. ALONE (Older people's Organisation enabling people to live at home)

7. Age Action Ireland,

8. SIPTU (Ireland's largest Trade Union)

9. DCU (Dublin City University)

10. Trinity College Dublin,

11. NUI Galway,

12. University College Dublin,

13. Dublin Institute of Technology,

14. Maynooth University,

15. Leargas (National body that manages international and national exchange programmes in education, youth and community work, and vocational education and training)

16. The Alzheimer Society of Ireland,

17. St. Vincent de Paul,

18. National Women's Council of Ireland,

19. Irish Cancer Society,

20. St. Andrews Community Resource Centre,

21. Rialto Drugs Project,

22. SWAN Youth Project,

23. Fatima Youth Project and Community Development Project,

24. Dublin City Council representatives

25. S.P.A.R.K Lone Parents Group,

26. Citizens Information (National)Service,

27. St. Michaels Family Resource Centre,

28. Kilbarrack Community Development Project and

29. NESC (National Economic and Social Council)

Conclusion: Outputs

The keynote address was recorded and used for social media dissemination. The event was advertised widely and attended by over 80 delegates from a range of sectors. Presentation slides were circulated to delegates after the event and the discussion forum format allowed delegates to engage with speakers on the day.

Ends.