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Joe Fitzgerald

Dublin Institute of Technology, josephkfitzgerald@gmail.com

Brendan O'Rourke

Dublin Institute of Technology, brendan.orourke@dit.ie

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The Evolution of an Enduring Expertise: Understanding Irish Economists in Irish public discourse in the Great Recession

Conference paper for the 24th International Conference of Europeanists University of Glasgow, UK July 12-14, 2017..



Joseph K FITZGERALD & Brendan K. O'ROURKE, School of Marketing / Business, Society and Sustainability Research Centre , Dublin Institute of Technology, Aungier St, Dublin D02 HW71, IRELAND. Email: JosephKFitgerald@gmail.com / Brendan.ORourke@dit.ie .
www.brendanKORourke.com

Outline of Presentation

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2. Theoretical Understandings.
3. Economics' Order of Learning in Ireland
4. The Administrative Order in Ireland
5. Irish Profession's strength from the 1980s
6. Economics in a Celtic Tiger 1987-2007
7. Discussion and Conclusions

1. Introduction

Experts on the economy – specifically economists

Economics expertise's high status (Fourcade, Olgan, and Algan 2015)

Economists in Ireland.

- Large role of economists in the media

Out of 75 articles written by outside writers (non-journalists) in three top quality Irish newspapers during the period 2008-2012 concerning Irish budgets 35 (47%) are economists or working in the financial sector (Mercille, 2014, p.291).

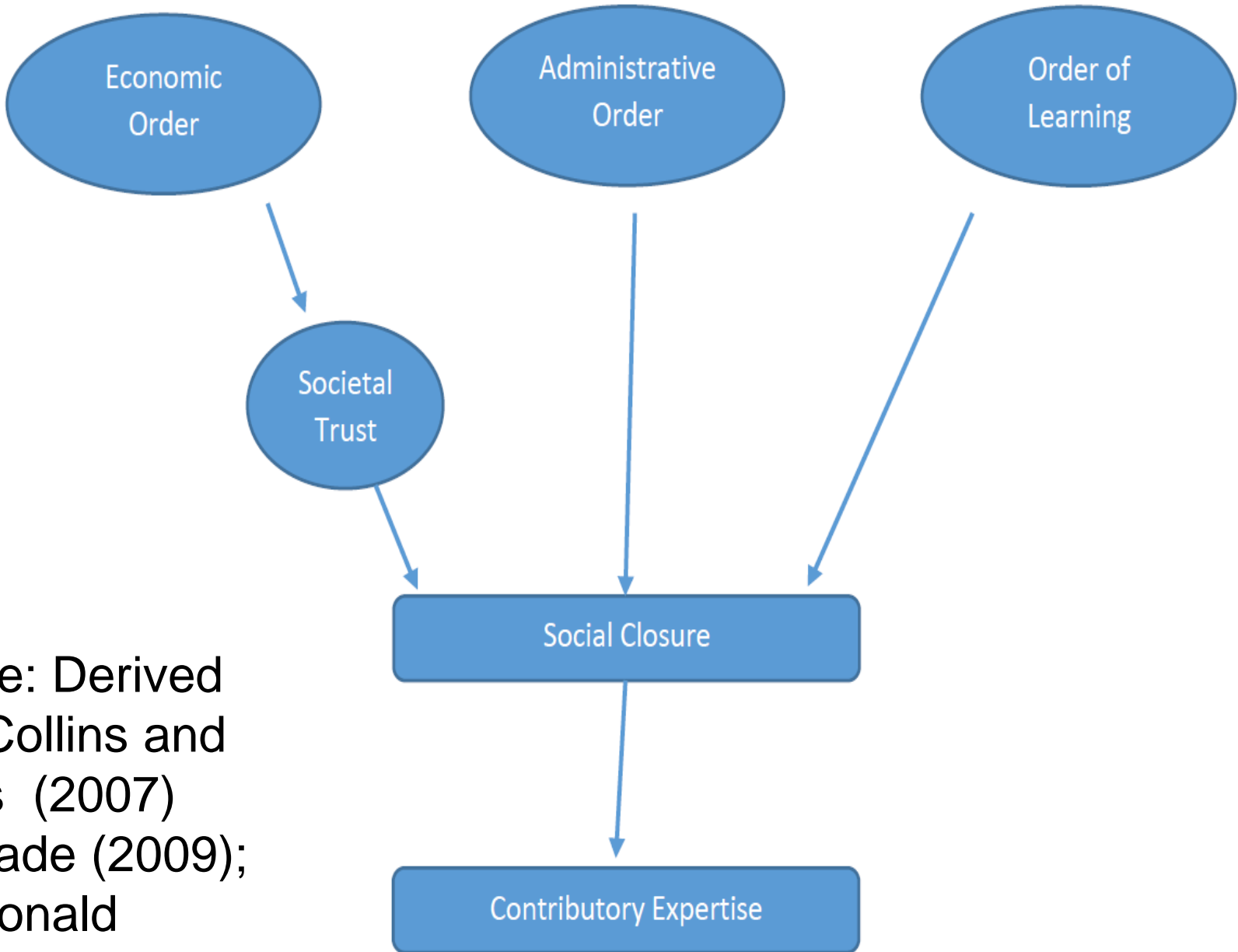
- Relatively diminished role in permanent civil service especially 1990-2010 (Christensen, 2017) but

- Post-crisis increased role in government (e.g. Central bank)

How does economics expertise seem to endure and even prosper – mostly notably as a contributory expertise to the media (Collins, Evans, and Weinel 2016; Montgomery 2008) in Ireland?

We explore this enduring expertise with mostly Fourcade's (2009) theory, some research interviews, archival research and secondary sources.

2. Theoretical Understandings



Source: Derived from Collins and Evans (2007); Fourcade (2009); MacDonald (1995)

3. Economics' Order of Learning in Ireland: The Split.

Ireland's Planter & Protestant Order of Learning in Economics as part of the UK

Oxford's chair in 1826.
Whately Chair at Trinity College
Dublin founded in 1832.

UK's Political Economy Club (1821)
Ireland's SSISI (1847)
UK's Royal Economics Society (1902)

UK's Economic Journal
(1891)

Nationalization of Economics Order of Learning in Ireland

Economics Professorships in the National university colleges, mostly importantly, in University College Dublin were established from 1900s on.

Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review, which covered social, cultural, political, and economic issues in Ireland and was founded by the Jesuits in 1912.

Irish independence in 1922 would mean that this split in Ireland's Order of Learning would complicate state administrative authorization of economics in Ireland.

4. The Administrative Order in Ireland

1922-1932

The development of the economics in Ireland had been very tied to the UK state and its planter & protestant nature.

Despite the Irish revolution of 1916-1921, the administrative order's economics (UK 'treasury model') continued into the new state in a way that retained more of the British element than most of the state machinery (Lee, 1989; O'Rourke & Hogan, 2017. Generalist UK civil service culture persisted (Christensen, 2017) but there was no Keynes equivalent.

The new Irish leaders were much closer to the National University of Ireland colleges, especially, University College Dublin, than Trinity College which had been much closer to UK government in Ireland.

Hibernation for Irish Economists' Administrative power 1930-1950

The administrative order largely ignored Irish academic economists from 1930s to 1950s as it adopted protectionist policies and more nationalist ideas on its economy.

Irish economy was miserable with massive migration and poor living standards. Some state enterprise success but protectionist industrial policy unsuccessful.

Irish economists were generally non-Keynesian free Enterprise and free trade critics of the Irish government during this period.

From early 1950s

In the early 1950s Ireland's policies begin to be more Internationally open and this was lead by a civil servant and an economist Ken Whitaker.

Whitaker renewed economics in Irish administration:

- Engaging with the profession through SSISI etc.

- Reengaging Irish academics in policy committees

- Setting the Economics & Social Research Institute

- Going abroad, to LSE for his formal economics training.

The new generation of economists would generally go abroad for the postgraduate training, sometimes to Britain but increasingly to the USA, inline with the economics Order of Learning internationally.

5. Irish Profession's strength from the 1980s

During the 1960s & 1970s, the Irish profession grew with economists being employed in government departments, banks and stockbrokers.

There was an internationalization, largely Americanisation, of the academic economists.

Private sector economists provided the resources to enable economists form themselves into a quasi professional organization: The Dublin Economic Workshop in 1977, and the Irish Economics Association in 1986.

As the Irish economy engaged in disastrous economic expansion, Irish economics advocated Austerity. Its adoption in 1987 coincided with Ireland's recovery.

6. Economics in a Celtic Tiger 1987-2007

Irish growth between 1987 and 2007 was extraordinarily high.

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The Irish economy with its alleged 'expansionary fiscal contraction' became a poster-boy for neoliberal policies, adding to the prestige of Irish economics.

Irish academic and public research economists, and some international institutions began to warn of overheating from about 2000 but were publically attacked by politicians and private sectors economists including neoliberal ones.

7. Conclusions & Comments

The development of Irish economics from UK economics meant an early, highly authorised (by the UK state) and classical liberal form of economics.

Though the UK-nature of much of state authority created problems for economics in the new state, 'treasury model' and pre-Keynesian influences remained strong in Ireland.

Until 2007 Liberal and neoliberal policy dominance coincided with economic growth & recovery (1950s, 1987-2007) whereas alternatives policy approaches (1930s-50s, 1977-1986) were associated with failure.

During the late Celtic Tiger period (from 2000) academic and public research institute economics began to warn about overheating of the economy, and were attacked for doing so by politicians including neoliberal ones.

Irish Economists seemed to grow strongest in busts & recovery but are mostly ignored by the state in booms. A business cycle to add to Shaw's (2017) life-cycle?

Irish economics emerged with an enduring and strengthened authority after the crisis:

1. Strengthened role of profession in Finance Department.
2. Increased role in Central Bank of Ireland
3. An increase in media exposure for economists.

Thank you.

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