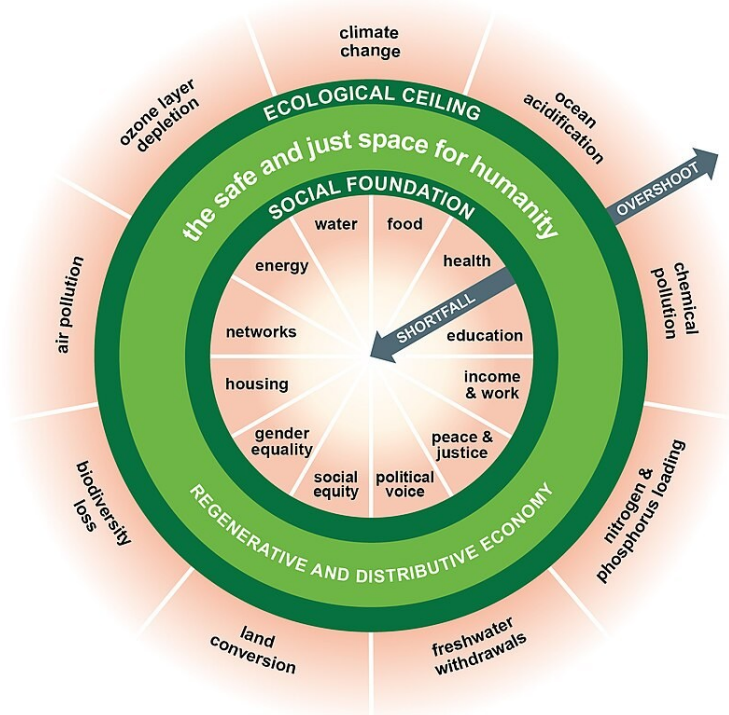


Bringing faith communities into the Doughnut



Doughnut Economics: A look at the work of the Dominican Sisters Cabra, Ireland, on sustainable economics, in the context of care for creation, social justice and Laudato Si'



Congregation of
DOMINICAN SISTERS
Cabra

The Dominican Sisters Cabra

The Congregation of Dominican Sisters Cabra works in the areas of Education, Ecology and Justice, with a presence in Ireland, South Africa, Argentina and New Orleans, USA.

The Mission of the Congregation is to *“study, share, proclaim and witness to the liberating Word of God in order that right relationships be restored between God, people and the earth where these are broken due to lack of knowledge and distortion of the truth.”*

In 2021, the Congregation voted to extend its Justice work to include exploring new sustainable economic models, among them Doughnut Economics.

The Dominican Sisters have made this commitment in order to look beyond current dominant and exploitative economic models, and in order to help people move out of destitution and prevent further environmental damage.



“... in order that right relationships be restored between God, people and the earth ...”

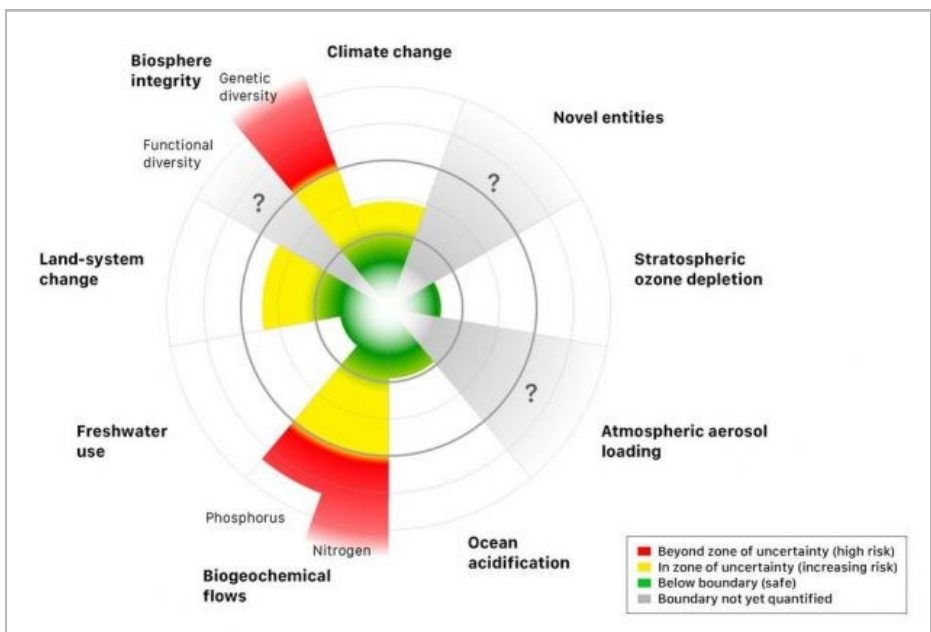
Doughnut Economics—an introduction

The theory of Doughnut Economics builds on previous models such as circular economy, sustainable development and the green economy. It is a model which seeks to balance the needs of people and the needs of the planet.

In 2012, the UK economist and then senior Oxfam GB researcher Kate Raworth sought to illustrate this balancing act, first of all drawing a large circle to show the planetary boundaries, agreed by earth scientists in 2009 as a framework that defines a "safe operating space" for humanity.



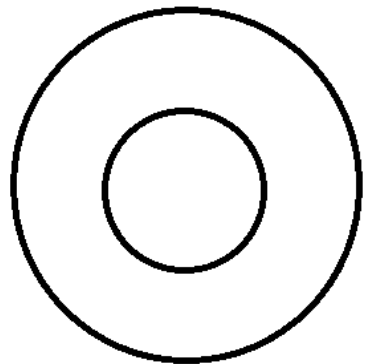
These are the 9 planetary boundaries Kate Raworth referred to:



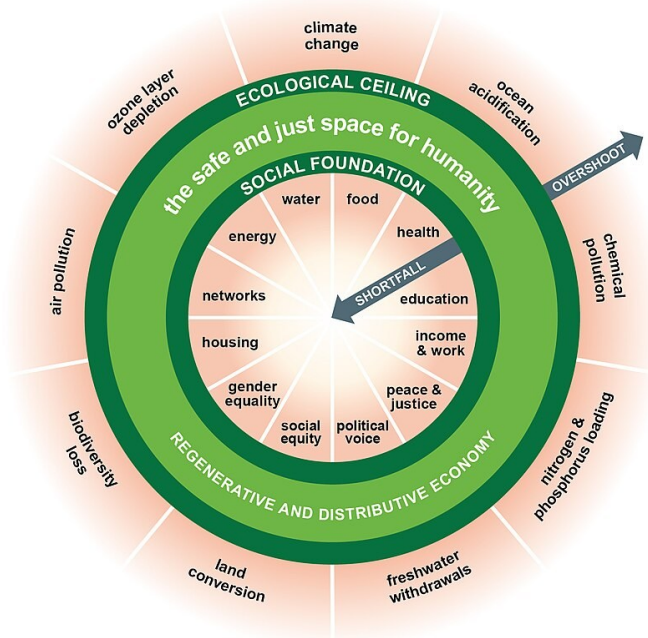
Next, Kate Raworth drew an inner circle, representing the needs of humanity. This was based on the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, agreed to by all 193 United Nations Member States in 2015:



Her drawing now had two concentric circles: the outer circle representing the needs of the planet (the planetary boundaries—the ecological ceiling) and the inner circle, the needs of people (the SDGs—the social foundation). If we could manage to balance both needs, Raworth wrote, we would find the safe and just space for humanity to thrive, within the means of the planet.



The resulting graphic, produced in 2012, was a doughnut shape, the beginning of the Doughnut Economics model, a framework for economic growth that prioritizes both social well-being and ecological sustainability. Here it is in more detail:



These ideas are expanded on in Kate Raworth’s 2017 book, *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist*, in which she sets out her vision for economic thinking that “promotes human prosperity in a flourishing web of life”.

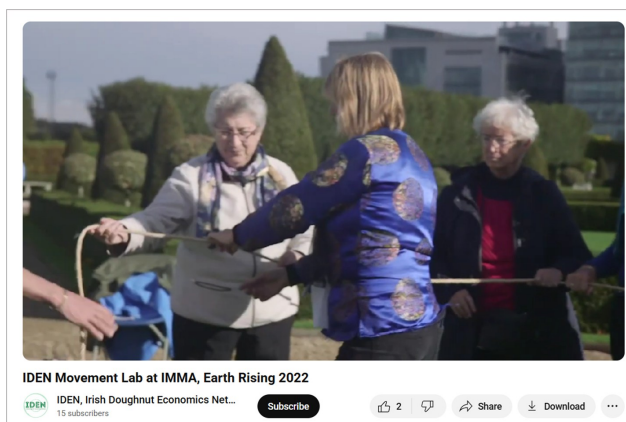
In 2019, Raworth and a small team set up the Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL), an online and offline community for collaboration, learning and sharing practical applications of Doughnut Economics worldwide. DEAL now has 18,000 individual members and over 225 organisation and network members across the globe.

Doughnut Economics in Ireland

In late 2020, in the middle of Covid lockdowns, the Irish Doughnut Economics Network, IDEN, was born. Founded by Róisín Markham, it began on Zoom, with meetings and a book club bringing together individuals from across Ireland who were interested in “looking at new ideas for 21st century economics, with the aim of meeting the needs of all people within the means of the living planet.” This included groups like the Ballydonut, a Ballydehob based member of the West Cork Doughnut Economics Network, among others.

When in-person events could take place again, IDEN organised a number of introductory workshops on Doughnut Economics, called “Step into the Doughnut”, whereby lengths of rope are used to create the inner and outer circles of the Doughnut. Participants are invited to step inside the circles and imagine a life where we overshoot the planetary boundaries, or one where we allow others to fall short of the necessities of life.

One such IDEN event took place in 2022, part of the Earth Rising art and ecology festival in the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin, and was attended by two Dominican Sisters with an interest in sustainable economics—Sr Maeve McMahon (RIP) and Sr Veronica Rafferty, pictured below.



For the Dominicans, an interest in balancing ecology and social justice was nothing new. A long-standing commitment to environmental justice is evidenced by the existence for more than thirty years of An Tairseach, the Dominican Sisters' organic farm and ecology centre in Wicklow, Ireland.



An Tairseach, whose name comes from the Irish language meaning *threshold*, is proud to be a leader in the Irish organic farming movement, with decades of experience in conservation and biodiversity enhancement.

Since 2021, the Congregation's interest in Doughnut Economics has had the aim of challenging structural injustices and protecting both planet and people. These dual aims resonate strongly with the 2015 papal encyclical *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*.

Laudato Si' and connections to Doughnut Economics

Published by Pope Francis in 2015, *Laudato Si'* is a blueprint which encourages “every person living on this planet” (LS, 3) to listen to the signs of the times, to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, to listen to the science and to the call of our faith.

On economics, *Laudato Si'* has much to say:

“Economic powers continue to justify the current global system where priority tends to be given to speculation and the pursuit of financial gain, which fail to take the context into account, let alone the effects on human dignity and the natural environment.” (LS 56)

“We fail to see the deepest roots of our present failures, which have to do with the direction, goals, meaning and social implications of technological and economic growth.” (LS 109)

“Questions related to the environment and economic development can no longer be approached only from the standpoint of differences between countries; they also call for greater attention to policies on the national and local levels.” (LS 176)

“A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress.” (LS 194)

In other words, the dominant economic model based on endless growth alone “cannot be considered progress” - a radical call for us to redefine progress. Although Kate Raworth’s book on Doughnut Economics was not published until two years after *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis did mention her work in his 2020 book, *Let Us Dream*, calling Doughnut Economics “the fresh thinking about the economy needed in light of the pandemic.”

Launched by the Vatican in 2021, the Laudato Si' Action Platform sets out seven goals to chart the way forward for the aims of Laudato Si' to be achieved. There are clear parallels between the social, economic and environmental justice priorities of the Laudato Si' Goals and the circular, sustainable and collaborative approach proposed by the Doughnut Economics model.



The Laudato Si' Goals ask individuals, families, businesses, schools and faith communities to plan for what actions they can take to care for our common home. To date, 4,900 institutions across 150 countries have signed up to the Goals.

Similarly, Doughnut Economics groups around the world are looking at their neighbourhoods and asking how people and nature can thrive in that space. A key part of this is looking at policies at national and local levels, which echoes the call of Laudato Si' (LS 176).

The Dominican Sisters and Doughnut Economics

Having made the connection with IDEN , the Irish Doughnut Economics Network, and with the establishment in late 2022 of a Congregation Justice Office, the work of the Dominican Sisters on Doughnut Economics has expanded in recent years.

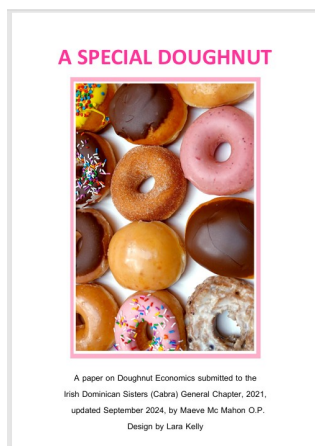
Members of the Cork-based Ballydonut group have delivered a “Step into the Doughnut” workshop in the Dominican organic farm and ecology centre An Tairseach in Wicklow for a group of international sabbatical students.

A Special Doughnut is a Dominican publication on Doughnut Economics, by Sr Maeve McMahon. It has been published online and translated into Spanish.

Dominican Sisters and staff hold regular Zoom meetings to discuss the latest developments in Doughnut Economics.

Presentations on Doughnut Economics are delivered as part of wider Justice work with secondary schools, Dominican convents and Dominican Sisters Europe (European federation).

In September 2023, the Dominican Sisters held a Doughnut Economics workshop in Dublin 7, called “Bringing the Doughnut Local”. Over 40 attendees explored what we need to do to make sure that both planet and people can thrive, and how Doughnut Economics can guide us. Those attending included business owners, local politicians, lecturers in Sustainability from Technical University Dublin, local teachers and secondary students, and representatives from local sustainability, community and sports groups.



Dublin 7 stepping into the Doughnut with the Dominican Sisters



One outcome of the September 2023 workshop was an undertaking from the two Sustainability lecturers from Technical University Dublin to bring Doughnut Economics to their student body. They have since brought the “Step into the Doughnut” workshop to more than

1,000 people, including one recent attendee who plans to translate the workshop into the Irish language.

In September 2024, the Dominican Sisters supported a visit to Dublin by Kate Raworth, which was organised by the Irish Doughnut Economics Network. Kate met members of Dublin City Council, activists and environmentalists from across Ireland, community groups and many others.



Kate Raworth, with Lara Kelly, Congregation Justice Office

In practical terms, the Dominican Sisters have tried to play their part in getting their communities into the Doughnut, to the safe and just space for humanity, by installing solar panels, buying Fair Trade products, supporting biodiversity, donating land for social housing, working with schools on environmental and social justice issues, supporting refugees and vulnerable young people, among many other activities across the Congregation.

Bringing Doughnut Economics to schools, parishes and others

In October 2025, a ‘Global Doughnut Days’ festival was held by Doughnut Economics networks, activists and enthusiasts across the globe. As part of the festival, the Dominican Sisters Cabra held “Step into the Doughnut” workshops with secondary school students from St Dominic’s College Cabra.



The same month, a parish Doughnut Economics workshop was held in South Co Dublin, supported the Medical Missionaries of Mary.



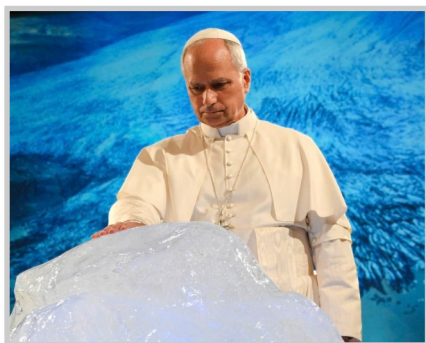
In early 2026, a “Step into the Doughnut” workshop was held with international students of the Religious Formation Ministry Programme in Dublin, and for Earth Day on 22nd April 2026 a

roundtable on Doughnut Economics took place in Queen’s University Belfast, with the Join the Dots Together network.

Bringing our work on Doughnut Economics to a European audience

The Dominican Sisters are part of DSE—Dominican Sisters Europe, a regional group belonging to Dominican Sisters International. The Congregation Justice Office in Dublin has previously given Zoom inputs to DSE on Doughnut Economics, and in June 2025 received an invitation to attend a meeting of Dominican Justice and Peace promoters from across Europe in Vienna.

Attendees came from Austria, The Netherlands, England, France, Italy, Portugal, Malta, Slovenia, and Ukraine. Together, the group was introduced to the ideas of Doughnut Economics.



In October 2025, Lara Kelly from the Congregation Justice Office went to the Raising Hope conference in Rome. The conference marked the 10th anniversary of *Laudato Si'* and was opened by Pope Leo XIV, who blessed a piece of 20,000 year old glacial ice from Greenland as a symbol of the impact of mankind on our planet.

This booklet, *Bringing faith communities into the Doughnut*, was circulated at the event, which was attended by around 1,000 participants from 80 countries. Speakers, including Pope Leo, stressed the need for personal connection and heart, when trying to reach people with the message of climate justice.



Stepping into the Doughnut and into action

When we ask people to consider their place within the Doughnut, this includes asking them to look through four distinct lenses, as outlined below:

	SOCIAL	ECOLOGICAL
LOCAL	What would it mean for the people of this city to thrive?	What would it mean for this city to thrive within its natural habitat?
GLOBAL	What would it mean for this city to respect the wellbeing of people worldwide?	What would it mean for this city to respect the health of the whole planet?

People are also asked to answer these three questions:

Question 1: Think about the outer boundary of the Doughnut - the Ecological Ceiling. Think about a place in nature that you love and hope to never lose.

Question 2: Think of the inner boundary of the Doughnut - the Social Foundation. Think about something that has made it possible for you to be here that you're grateful for, that others might not have.

Question 3: Think of the safe and just space of the Doughnut. Think of a gift you bring that could help your community get into the Doughnut.

These simple questions, from Kate Raworth's Doughnut Economics Action Lab, have the power to evoke emotion and to move people beyond a theoretical view of economics, towards action.

Work with other Congregations

The Dominican Sisters decided to bring their interest in Doughnut Economics to other Congregations, taking part in a Symposium on Justice and Peace in Dublin in May 2025 organised by AMRI—the Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland.



A “Step into the Doughnut” workshop was carried out with 30 Congregations from across Ireland. The Symposium led to other Congregations requesting “Step into the Doughnut” workshops and Zoom inputs from the Congregation Justice Office of the Dominican Sisters, work which is ongoing.

In September 2025, the Medical Missionaries of Mary invited Lara Kelly to hold a Doughnut Economics workshop with their community in Drogheda.



In answering the three workshop questions listed on the previous page, the MMM Sisters produced their own ‘Doughnut’, which can act as both a lens through which to view the work being done, and a compass to guide future work.

Work with other Congregations

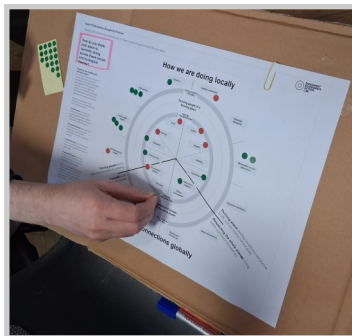
Following the 2025 AMRI Justice and Peace Symposium, the Dominican Sisters' Congregation Justice Office helped AMRI and others to organise the April 2026 conference *Advancing Justice, Peace and Care for Our Common Home*, which was attended by around 70 people from various Congregations, lay organisations and NGOs.

There was a feeling of hope and enthusiasm for all the justice and ecology work going on, as well as a sense that these efforts are needed now more than ever, in dark geo-political times.

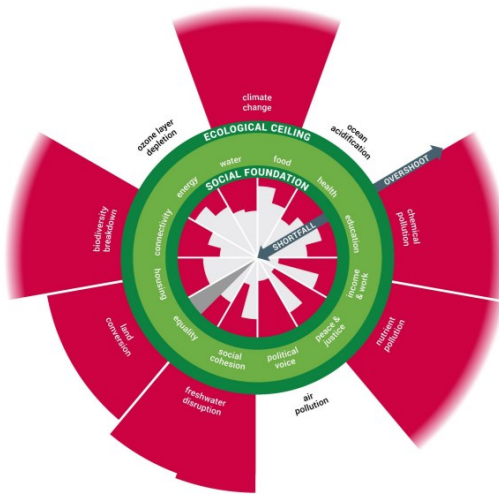


Participants stepped into the Doughnut, led by Róisín Markham of the Irish Doughnut Economics Network, and Lara Kelly. Conference speakers included Seán Farrell, Trócaire CEO, and David Donoghue, former Irish Ambassador to the UN, who spoke about the Sustainable Development Goals.

People mapped how we are doing locally in terms of getting 'into the Doughnut', and the day ended with attendees making commitments to carry forward the energy of the day by increasing their collaboration, being courageous, speaking up and acting in solidarity, to name but a few.

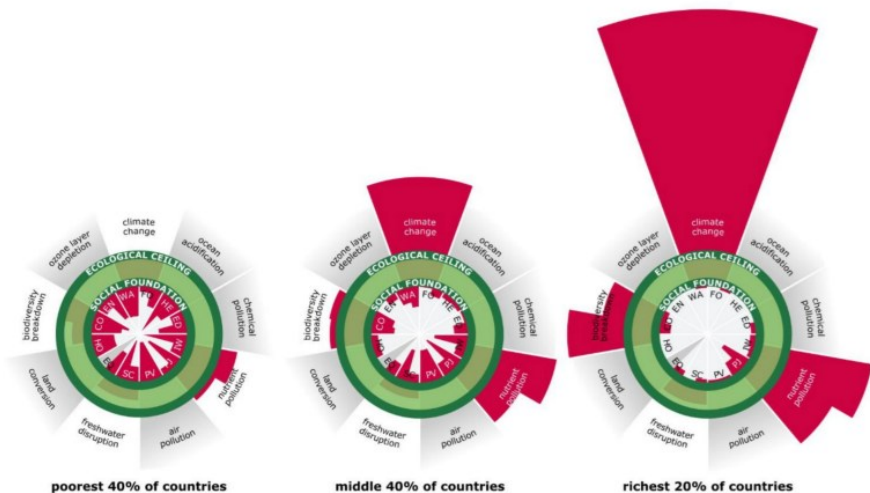


The Doughnut 3.0



In October 2025, the Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL) published what they called “Doughnut 3.0” - an updated version of Kate Raworth’s model, now with the capacity to monitor global trends in social shortfall and ecological overshoot over the 21st century.

‘Doughnut 3.0’ and related data can be seen in more detail on the DEAL website, listed on the back cover. The graphic below shows the disparity between the poorest 40% of countries, the middle 40% of countries and the richest 20% of countries, in terms of their impact on the ecological ceiling and their experience of social shortfall.



What others have to say about the work of the Dominican Sisters

Throughout history, Irish religious sisters have read the signs and embraced the changing times as they responded to the ongoing challenges facing our fragile earth. Today, many of them continue to empower the voiceless and respond to social and ecological injustice.

The Dominican Sisters Cabra are an excellent example of this, from transforming education for girls, to ecological justice and seeking new and creative ways to respond to the ‘cry of the earth’ and the ‘cry of the poor’ long before it became mainstream to do so. This foresight is evident in their recognition and response to an unsustainable economic system that impacts negatively on the most marginalised and vulnerable populations and our common home.

Their adoption and promotion of Doughnut Economics as a new way of thinking and behaving in a world plagued by rising inequalities and fragile ecological systems, is pioneering and refreshing. AMRI are happy to continue to collaborate with the Dominican Sisters in promoting Doughnut Economics as a framework to explore a new and inclusive economic system for a just and sustainable future.

Toni Pyke, PhD, Justice, Peace and Ecology Coordinator
Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI)

We were first introduced to the ‘Step into the Doughnut’ workshop methodology at an event hosted by the Dominican Sisters in Cabra in September 2023. The rope circle activity, held outdoors, had a surprisingly emotional impact on both of us. As part of the workshop’s close, we were invited to commit to a next step—and we chose to recreate the experience at TU Dublin. Since then, we’ve facilitated over 35 workshops and engaged more than 1,000 participants.

Inspired by that initial experience, we now always invite participants to commit to a positive action for a sustainable future at the completion of our workshops too. We’re deeply grateful to Lara Kelly for such a

gentle yet powerful introduction to Doughnut Economics, which has profoundly shaped our approach to sustainability education. We're delighted to support the Dominican Sisters in their efforts to introduce Doughnut Economics more widely and look forward to seeing how their engagement continues to grow.

Dr Olivia Freeman, Sustainability Education Lead and
Dr Lucia Walsh, Sustainability Education and Innovation Lead,
Technological University Dublin

The Dominican Sisters have been vital companions in bringing Doughnut Economics to life in Ireland — combining deep moral conviction with practical action that nurtures and supports communities and the broader networks alike.

As founder of the Irish Doughnut Economics Network, I have seen first-hand how the Sisters' commitment has extended far beyond their own congregations. From supporting local initiatives in Dublin and Wicklow, to welcoming global audiences and hosting key gatherings, they have helped widen the reach and deepen the impact of Doughnut Economics in Ireland. Their approach — rooted in care, kindness, and justice — has provided not only resources and organisation, but also the steady guidance and generosity of spirit that strengthens grassroots movement building. This partnership has been a gift both to IDEN and to the wider quest for a safe and just space for all within planetary boundaries.

The Sisters' work is distinguished by their willingness to explore an 21st century economic leadership— integrating Doughnut Economics into education, social justice advocacy, and community projects. They have hosted created spaces for dialogue during national and international visits, and consistently welcomed new audiences to explore system change. I am especially grateful for their hands-on support during significant moments, such as the week of Kate Raworth's visit in 2024, and for the inspired leadership of their social justice officer, Lara. Their continued work across Irish congregations increases the resilience and capacity of communities through spiritual, economic, social and nature."

Róisín Markham, Founder, Irish Doughnut Economics Network (IDEN)

*“In contemporary society and the Church, prophecy must also address environmental and sustainability issues. In previous generations, when most charismatic communities emerged, Christian and biblical prophecy was essentially translated into social terms (poverty, education, health, etc.). Nowadays, it is increasingly evident that prophecy without an explicit ecological commitment is no longer credible or imitable by our people. As Pope Francis underlined at the Economy of Francesco meeting in Assisi in September 2022, sustainability has multiple meanings — ecological, social, relational and spiritual — but the urgency of the climate crisis means that the ecological dimension is paramount. **Therefore, I am very happy to see the Dominican sisters endorsing Kate Raworth’s theory, one of the most interesting and integral paradigms of our time.**”*

Luigino Bruni, Professor of Economics at Lumsa University, Rome, Coordinator of the Economy of Communion within the Focolare Movement, and Vice President of The Economy of Francesco Foundation.



Useful links

Dominican Sisters Cabra
www.dominicansisters.com/what-we-do/justice

Doughnut Economics Action Lab—DEAL— www.doughnuteconomics.org

Kate Raworth website— www.kateraworth.com

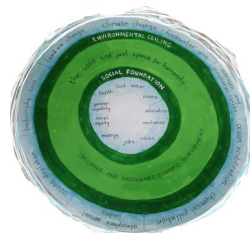
Simple actions you can take today

Sign up as an individual member to the DEAL website and find others in your city working on or interested in Doughnut Economics. Explore the many videos and tools on the DEAL website.

Read Kate Raworth’s book *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist*.

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