



Aran Islands Energy Cooperative



Summary

The Aran Islands Energy Co-operative (CFOAT) is a community-owned energy cooperative on the Aran Islands at the mouth of Galway Bay. Through the cooperative, the residents of the three islands aim to become self-sufficient in clean, locally owned energy and to build the local economy of the islands, harnessing the benefits that arise from this. The main activities are related to energy efficiency and retrofitting of houses, renewable energy generation, the electrification of mobility, and participation in research projects.

Why is it a case of energy citizenship?

The case is exemplary as an energy-holistic energy community with strong civic engagement. The cooperative's purpose does not only concern climate issues but the survival of an independent island community and is linked to far-reaching transformative ambitions and actions.



HOLISTIC



COLLECTIVE



RURAL



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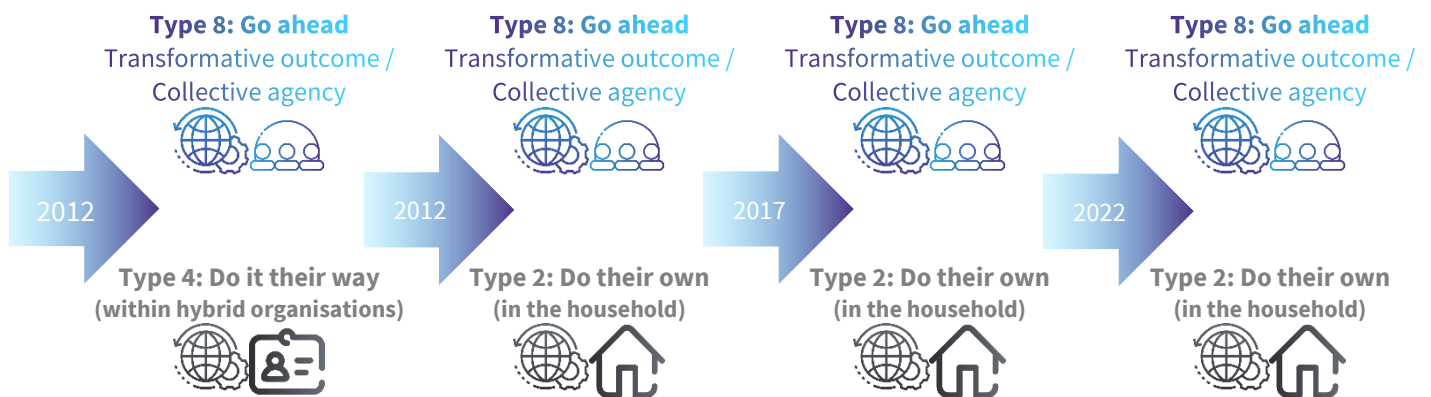
Goals



1. Stabilising and sustainably increasing the population on the three islands;
2. Maintaining the language, culture, and heritage of the three islands;
3. Being sensitive to the beauty and richness of the natural environment on the islands;
4. Increasing the comfort, energy efficiency and sustainability of homes and transport;
5. Promoting the three Aran Islands as lighthouse communities, offering inspiration, support, and examples of best practices to other communities in Ireland and throughout the world.

The story and the typology

Regarding the cooperative, which started in 2012, there has been no change in the main type of energy citizenship. Regarding the secondary ideal type, it is worth noting that it started out as organisationally embedded and then shifted its focus to households. Regarding the outcome orientation, the case has remained transformative throughout its history.



Case history summary

For the summary methodology, click [HERE!](#)



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Phase 1: Aran Island Development Cooperative, 2012

CFOAT emerged from the Aran Island Development Cooperative in 2012. In this cooperative, a group of people worked on the energy transition issue as a subcommittee, out of which they formed the CFOAT cooperative. Thus, there was an element of organisationally embedded agency at the beginning of the case, which is displayed as the secondary type in the table.

	Individual			Collective	
 Reformative	1. Do their bit (in the household)	3. Do their bit (within organizations)	5. Make their voice heard	7. Do their share	9. Do the job
 Transformative	2. Do their own (in the household)	4. Do it their way (within organizations)	6. Make their vote count	8. Go ahead	10. Make their claims

Main type: Go ahead

Transformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency

Secondary type: Do it their way (within hybrid organisations)

Transformative outcome / Organisationally embedded agency

Phase 2: Early years, 2012-2017

Especially in the first few years, the main focus of the case was on participation in the Better Energy Community scheme of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). As part of this scheme, households were supported to retrofit their houses and install heat pumps and solar panels. Therefore, a shift from the original, organisational secondary type of case towards involvement at the household level is shown in the figure (type 2).

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Main type: Go ahead

Transformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency-

Secondary type: Do their own (in the household)

Transformative outcome / Private in the household agency

Phase 3: EU-funded projects as key enabler, 2017-2021

Since the start of the case, a key factor was the ongoing leadership of a committed champion who has led and shaped the cooperative since its inception. After 2017, collaboration with academic partners in EU-funded projects became a key enabler, allowing the creation of paid positions. These positions provided not only the capacity but also ongoing commitment to the further development of the case. However, to some extent, reliance on project funding also impaired the case

as there was a need to prioritise funded project goals over organisational goals and ambitions.

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Phase 4: Recent development after the reformulation of goals, 2022 -

One recent development was the reformulation of goals in 2022. While the actual operational goals of the case, which have significant transformative elements, have not been changed, there has been a reframing of the very purpose of the cooperative. The newly formulated goals are much more focused on the well-being of the islanders, including the preservation of the culture, language and identity of the island communities. The envisaged energy transition has become a means to an end for this purpose.

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The aspects of energy citizenship

In 2019, the cooperative had around 100 members, which represents a considerable share of the 1,300 residents of the three islands. Each of the three islands is represented in the cooperative, at least through participation in board meetings. **The cooperative has the aspiration to be representative of the communities on the three islands.** It has reached out to all the communities to get broad support for its strategic objectives. This is reflected in the newly formulated goals that focus on benefits for the community.

Citizen power/control
Citizens exert effective control, and their votes have to be taken into account



Addressing climate change and reducing carbon missions is a key concern of the cooperative. **In its “Energy Master Plan”, the ambition to achieve carbon neutrality on the Aran Islands by 2022 is formulated.**

Carbon limit
Explicit recognition with mention/objective of reaching the max. carbon footprint

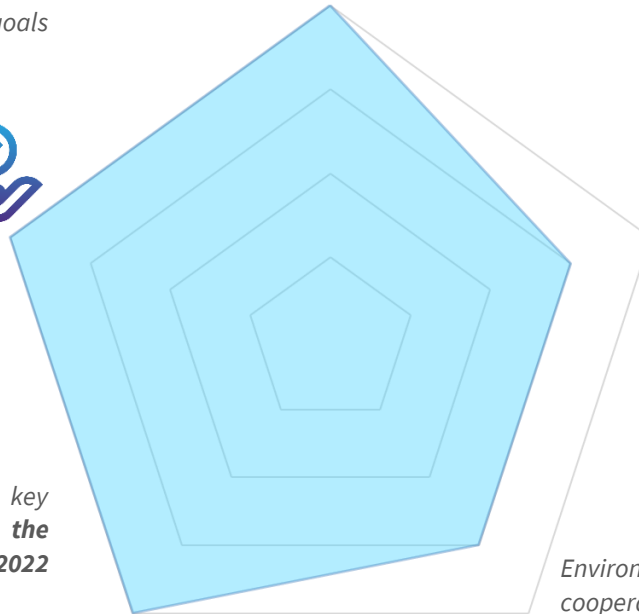


CFOAT is intended to be “the vehicle through which all the island residents can share their opinion on the clean energy transition” and “to **act as an open and island-wide platform** that consists of and is supported by actors from multiple stakeholder groups that drive the energy transition process”. It is thus a prime example of a case where citizens engage in the democratic self-governance of their environment.



Democratic energy future

A more democratic energy future is a core concern of the case, and is part of the vision



Membership in the cooperative is open to all residents of the three islands. Beyond that, **anybody is allowed to join the annual meetings as a non-voting participant, not only the members.** Centrally, the case focuses on the Aran Islands as its geographical scope. Measures are not specifically geared to fostering equity within the communities but to creating prosperity and improving the self-determination of the Aran Islands as a whole.



Equity and justice

Equal access is granted, but limited by various criteria

Environmental concerns and protection are at the heart of the cooperative, for instance, when aiming at being “sensitive to the beauty and richness of the natural environment in which we live”. **The biodiversity crisis is mentioned as a key source of motivation for the case.** Regarding operative goals, energy remains the main focus.



Environmental sustainability

Environmental sustainability is part of the process; energy remains the main focus



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Further information



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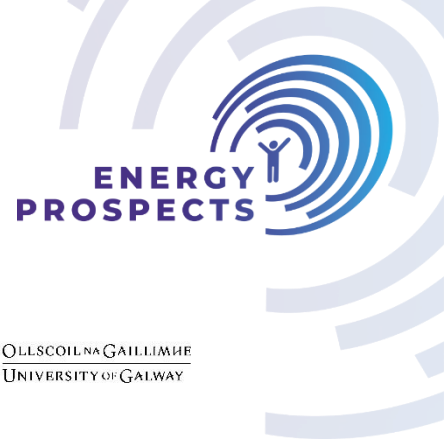


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