



cherish the irish...

Too much to say, too little time, so I have no choice but to start by asking why is it that so many Irish males are total assholes: unfaithful, dishonest, and unreliable, just as the jaded stereotype portrays them? I can immediately think of three CEO's I've had the displeasure of dealing with who fit this stereotype perfectly.

I believe the answer is that for some reason this stereotype is attractive and, just as there are some Latino males who display the worst of machismo, there is something about "the fighting Irish" that both appeals to and brings out the worst in people.

There are certainly plenty of good Irish males whom do not display their laudable characters on the flip side of a beer-soaked coaster of dishonesty, so it remains a mystery to me why this national stereotype persists. One could ask the same about the acerbic Parisians and the unctuous English upper class. WoodyAllen would know the answer but I don't.



So it is with pride that I announce a great Irish organization called [The Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability](#), or Feasta, who introduce themselves as follows:

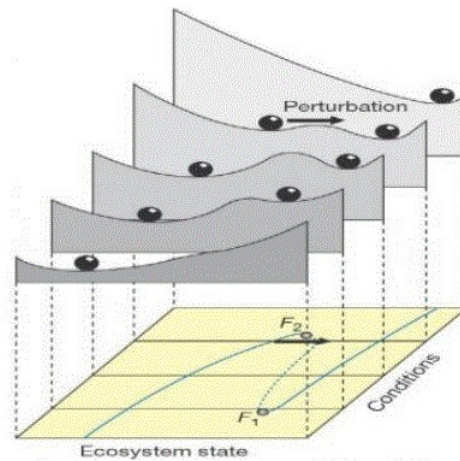
Feasta was launched in Dublin in October 1998 to explore the economic, cultural and environmental characteristics of a truly sustainable society, and to disseminate the results of this exploration to the widest relevant audience.

The position Feasta has adopted is that many of the world's problems are caused not by bad people but by dysfunctional systems and it sees its purpose as designing better systems. For example, the economic system demands continual growth if it is not to collapse into a catastrophic depression, and this leaves politicians with little alternative but to pursue short-term economic growth more-or-less regardless of the damage that that pursuit might be doing to longer-term environmental and social sustainability.

Two of their publications have caught my eye.

The first is a just released paper titled 'Trade-Off: Financial System Supply-Chain Cross-Contagion: a study in global systemic collapse,' that is summarized on ZeroHedge [here](#). You can also read the full report on FEASTA's web site [here](#).

ZeroHedge describes the paper as "Nassim Taleb meets Edward Lorenz meets Malcom Gladwell meets Arthur Tansley meets Herman Muller meets Werner Heisenberg meets Hyman Minsky meets William Butler Yeats, and the resultant group spends all night drinking absinthe and smoking opium, while engaging in illegal debauchery in the 5th sub-basement of the Moulin Rouge."



Here is how the paper starts:

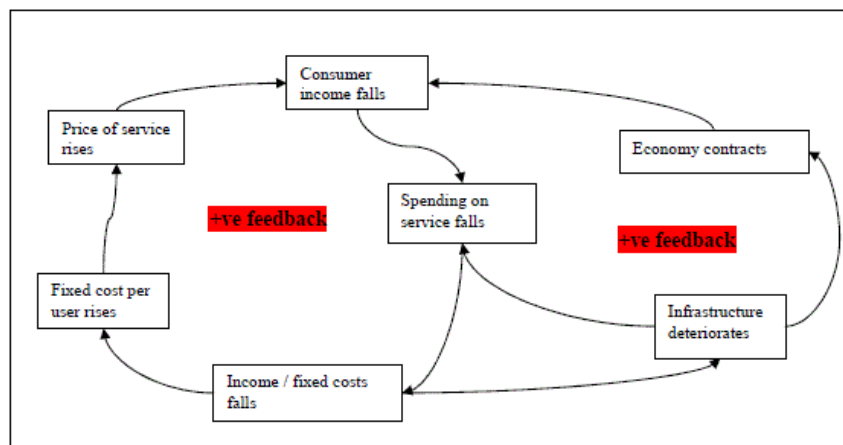
This study considers the relationship between a global systemic banking, monetary and solvency crisis and its implications for the real-time flow of goods and services in the globalised economy. It outlines how contagion in the financial system could set off semi-autonomous contagion in supply-chains globally, even where buyers and sellers are linked by solvency, sound money and bank intermediation. The cross-contagion between the financial system and trade/production networks is mutually reinforcing.

It is argued that in order to understand systemic risk in the globalised economy, account must be taken of how growing complexity (interconnectedness, interdependence and the speed of processes), the de-localisation of production and concentration within key pillars of the globalised economy have magnified global vulnerability and opened up the possibility of a rapid and large-scale collapse. 'Collapse' in this sense means the irreversible loss of socio-economic complexity which fundamentally transforms the nature of the economy. These crucial issues have not been recognised by policy-makers nor are they reflected in economic thinking or modelling.

In other words, they've got the "systems' theory bug" just like I do, and they're ringing the alarm that failing to think systemically leads to instability and irreversible economic collapse. The author, David Korowicz, even shares my background as a physicist with similar cultural interests.

Generally I find that physicists who apply physical systems models to social systems sell a lot of books and make fools of themselves, so I can't expect too much from David, but if you know how to take it (not too literally) physics models can be tremendously useful. It's all an exercise in abstract thinking.

The actual paper is downloadable as a PDF and is 75 pages long. You can get it [here](#). Around page 30 you'll read how feedback again becomes the central concept, as I keep saying. The following image is taken from the paper.



but get ready to run just the same

This brings me to FEASTA's second offering, their book titled "Fleeing Vesuvius" that is about how to survive this ominous status of affairs.

Fleeing Vesuvius is a compendium of voices advocating hands-on strategies involving everything from spending wisely to learning new skills to building community to avoiding a bunker mentality. I am with them 100%.

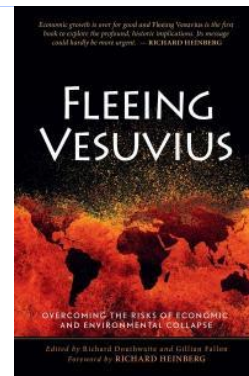
You can get the book on [Amazon](#) for \$20 or less, or read it for free on the [FEASTA web site](#).

Of the book one Amazon reviewer says:

the policies advanced here by the authors are developed in the open and will benefit all people and not just a privileged minority. The wider the audience for these ideas the greater our chances of collective survival.



You know, this is not an academic exercise. We each need to be leaders in new ways of thinking. You may not think of yourself as another Joan of Arc, but people are hungry for vision and do you see it being supplied by politicians or the media? How about Hollywood? No, we have to do it.



©2012 tenger | Shokan, NY

Powered by [Mad Mimi](#)®