Climate Gathering Reflection

As one of the Facilitators, I was in Dublin airport bus park to meet Climate Gathering participants who were catching the bus for the Climate Gathering on Inis Bó Finne island. It was September 17th and the temperature was already climbing towards 25C. A temperature that previously was rarely seen at the height of an Irish summer. I greeted people I didn't know from the UK, Kenya, Germany and Ireland. One person wasn't well and was already being cared for by new colleagues. The bus arrived with more participants who had boarded in Dublin city. Greetings and introductions were exchanged and conversations began as we headed for the ferry in Cleggan.

Departing the pier at Cleggan, we continued to meet and talk as the sea spray, strengthening wind and increasing roll of the boat gradually changed the atmosphere on the ferry. The boat docked and we headed for a welcoming cup of tea in the Inishbofin House hotel. Quick 20 second introductions from each participant helped people feel more comfortable and together. There were artists, academics, religious, political, climate negotiators and Inis Bó Finne residents among us. After enjoying dinner, all gathered in Murray's Hotel. Here the Irish historic principle of the "Fifth Province" was explained. During our time together, everyone would be regarded as an equal and personal contributions would stay within the room. Three islanders then began to tell their stories about the people, history, culture of Inis Bó Finne and about the impact that the changing climate was having on the island.

Next morning a group gathered in St Colman's church to share a muti-faith reflection. We had begun to go deeper. Onward to the Community Hall and we began by exploring "Where are we now?" Participants shared thoughts about their work and the current state of the global climate challenge. A mutually strong feeling emerged of personal grief at the continuing degradation of the natural world. I sensed it was dawning on those present that this was no ordinary conference. Participants were among new understanding colleagues from different backgrounds and disciplines. They has begun to share their innermost thoughts without fear.

The plenary broke into four working groups, namely Narrative, Togetherness, Spirituality / Ecojustice and Politics. Each strand had a mix of participants from different disciplines. Among those in our Politics group were artists, islanders, tech professionals, politicians, educators and religious from different faiths. We had people from Europe, Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas.

I facilitated the Politics group. We had three intense working sessions over two days and explored many topics. There was great frustration with the lack of Climate Action progress. Politicians were cited as a contributory problem but this was also refuted with some arguing that politicians were essential to making progress. The conflict between the resource demands of the First World and the sovereignty and resource management of countries in the rest of the world took up much time. The question of whether "Bottom-up" local action or "Top-down" national/international policy were better was debated. It was concluded that both were needed and that they required structural coordination to be effective. The absence of an ability to embed morality in legislation was noted and the question was posed could morality be embedded in AI?

Applying regulation to the world's economies and to the development of AI to ensure that Climate Action and the environment were prioritised was explored. Some blamed Capitalism for the over exploitation of the world's resources to the detriment of the global climate and the natural world. To correct this imbalance regulation is required. Data centres and their regulation, particularly in relation to their carbon usage was discussed as a complex example. This led to who would decide

and oversee such regulation? I felt this discussion went to the heart of the matter. It was pointed out that many in the US would not accept regulation imposed from abroad but that they would need to have controls established by their domestic government to achieve effective implementation. The discussion acknowledged that for climate action policies to be globally effective that they needed to be palatable to and implementable by both right and left leaning governments. This is where progress needs to be made.

Many felt that international negotiations were not leading to action and a real transition away from fossil fuels. Some expressed the view that the COP process was broken but others asked was there an alternative? The tide had gone out since the height of the “Fridays for Future” campaign but the tide would turn and we must prepare and be ready to ride that incoming tide. The Santa Marta process, now led by Tuvalu and Ireland, is one opportunity to do this.

We fed the deliberations of our politics strand back to the plenary sessions and we listened to the outputs of the other strands. Facilitators arranged for participants from different strands to discuss their outputs in smaller groups. The conversations continued during meals, while walking and cycling between venues, and during music and dancing sessions. Poems were read, songs were sung, and the sounds and sights of Inis Bó Finne permeated through all that we shared over these four days.

I waved good bye from the pier as the ferry departed. I had one more day to enjoy the island. As I walked across the rugged landscape and watched huge waves crash on to the island’s coast, I had the sense that the departing participants felt revived and renewed. Positive messages and articles were soon posted. New connections and networks had been established. Feelings and ideas had been shared at a deep level. I believe the impact of these four days on Inis Bó Finne will ripple across the globe in the months and years ahead. It was a privilege to have worked on and been a part of this Climate Gathering.



Stiofán Nutty

Member of the facilitation and organising team of the Climate Gathering, September 14th to September 17th 2026 on the island of Inis Bó Finne, Co. na Gaillimhe.