



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

THE FACULTY OF ARTS,
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
INAUGURAL LECTURE

AGAINST THE HEADWINDS:
EVIDENCE-BASED DEVELOPMENT IN A
TURBULENT WORLD

Professor
Carol Newman

B.A. (Mod.), Ph.D., F.T.C.D (2013)
Professor of Economics

2025

MAY 20TH



Welcome

It is the tradition in Trinity College Dublin that newly appointed Professors are invited to give an inaugural lecture.

The lecture provides an opportunity to showcase their achievements in research, innovation, engagement and teaching activities before members of the University community, invited stakeholders and the general public. An inaugural lecture is a significant event in an academic staff member's career.

The Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences is proud to present the inaugural lecture of Professor Carol Newman.



About Carol Newman

Carol Newman is Professor of Economics at the Department of Economics, Trinity College Dublin. An internationally recognised expert in development economics, her research explores the microeconomic foundations of development, focusing on how constraints, such as limited access to markets, finance, or information, affect individual and firm behaviour, and how targeted policies can alleviate these barriers. Her work contributes to building a strong evidence base for development policy.

She is co-founder of the Trinity Impact Evaluation (TIME) Research Centre and has led research projects across sub-Saharan Africa and South-East Asia. Her research includes randomised controlled trials of policy interventions, as well as work on labour markets, firm dynamics, and industrial policy. She is currently a lead researcher on South Africa – Towards Inclusive Economic Development (SA-TIED), a major research programme using tax administrative data to examine the drivers of job creation and productivity growth. She has published widely in leading academic journals, books, and edited volumes, and is currently Associate Editor of the *European Economic Review*.

She joined Trinity in 2002 and has held visiting positions at the University of Copenhagen, the University of Chicago, and the University of Bologna. She is Chair of the Board of Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP), a Non-Resident Senior Research Fellow at the United Nations University - World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) and a consultant to the World Bank. She serves as an International Resource Person for the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) and since 2023 has chaired Ireland's National Economic Dialogue.



Professor

Carol Newman

B.A. (Mod.), Ph.D., F.T.C.D (2013)

Professor of Economics



Abstract

Against the headwinds: Evidence-based development in a turbulent world

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda sets out 17 Global Goals that aim to end poverty, reduce inequality, protect the planet, and promote peace and prosperity for all. As the world edges closer to the 2030 target, progress is faltering. Global poverty reduction has stalled, climate shocks are accelerating, and development budgets are shrinking. Rising geopolitical tensions are further undermining international cooperation and trust. In this turbulent context, making sound policy choices has become both more difficult and more urgent, particularly for low- and middle-income countries facing multiple, overlapping crises.

In this inaugural lecture, Professor Carol Newman demonstrates how rigorous, policy-engaged research, grounded in robust empirical evidence, serves as a critical tool for navigating these headwinds. Drawing on field experiments and firm-level analyses from sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia,

she examines how targeted interventions, coupled with evidence-based policies to improve productivity, job creation and stimulate economic growth, can contribute to inclusive and sustainable development. She presents findings from studies on firm productivity and trade integration, as well as from randomized controlled trials addressing agricultural information gaps, behavioural training for workers, and economic inclusion for refugees and vulnerable women. These cases offer insights into what works, what doesn't, and why.

Professor Newman argues not only for better-targeted policies, but for embedding a culture of evidence in the development process. In a world of rising constraints and contested priorities, sustainable development depends on the ability to test, adapt, and scale effective interventions, and on grounding policy frameworks in robust evidence.

In a world of rising constraints and contested priorities, sustainable development depends on the ability to test, adapt, and scale effective interventions.





The School of Social Sciences and Philosophy

The School of Social Sciences and Philosophy was formed in 2005 and is the third largest School in the University, comprising the Departments of Economics, Philosophy, Political Science and Sociology. With approximately 80 academic staff, the School has a well-deserved international reputation for excellence in both research and teaching.

The School is responsible for the delivery of seven undergraduate degree programmes (including BESS and PPES), eight taught postgraduate programmes, and four postgraduate research programmes across its four constituent Departments. Each of the Departments in the School is the top ranked in Ireland.

The School of Social Sciences and Philosophy has a strong tradition of internationalisation both in terms of international exchanges for its own students and the admission of non-EU students into its full-time programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

The School also has a long history of outreach and engagement with society. Research conducted by School staff on the economy, society and politics plays an important role in public policy development. The distinguishing feature of the research undertaken in the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy is the combination of important real-world questions, state of the art conceptual models and cutting-edge methods and analytical tools.

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin is Ireland's leading university, ranked No. 1 in Ireland and 87th in the world.

(QS World University Rankings 2025) (QS World University Rankings 2025)



The School of Social Sciences and Philosophy is the third largest School in the University with 80 academic staff





Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

