For over a decade, the ‘Celtic tiger’ era in the Irish state gave a different complexion to North-South relations. Older stereotypes of a backward, rural South were evidently refuted. The Irish international profile, Irish pro-activeness in European affairs, rapid immigration and social change, and Irish spending allowed a very different interrelationship of Irish politicians and officials with unionists and nationalists and different mutual perceptions by the populations.

All of this has changed. What is left? Is the change of mutual perceptions irreversible? Is the substance of North-South relations independent of economic cycles? How will the new politicisation of economic issues impact on internal Northern Ireland and North-South relations?

If the questions are ones that cannot yet be answered, posing them allows us to focus on what is lasting and what is ephemeral in the ideas of a new island economy and North-South politics.