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Responses to a Century of Housing Crisis: Problem, Politics and Policy

Paul Umfreville

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**RESPONSES TO A CENTURY OF
HOUSING CRISIS:
PROBLEM, POLITICS AND POLICY**

PAUL UMFREVILLE BSc (Hons), MSc, MPhil, MRTPI



Technological University Dublin

A Thesis Submitted to the
School of Surveying and Construction Innovation
of the
Technological University Dublin
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD) degree

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By
PAUL UMFREVILLE BSc (Hons), MSc, MPhil, MRTPI

Supervisors

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JANUARY 2024

ABSTRACT

The Irish housing system is reportedly in crisis. Homelessness, a lack of affordable housing to rent or buy, and limited security of tenure mean that the housing opportunity available to previous generations is not available to many of the current one. Problems with housing in Ireland are not, however, purely recent phenomena. Reports of inquiry and Census data have catalogued recurring housing crises and failings in housing policy over the last century, but whilst systemic shocks provided the impetus for historic housing policy transformation, inertia in the political system now appears to dampen momentum for effective change. Significant events seemingly encourage further retrenchment of housing policy, as the sector continues to move towards an increasing reliance on the private market.

It is the difference between historic and contemporary responses to housing crises that both informs and forms the basis of this research. This thesis explains why policies to address the current Irish housing crisis are seemingly different to historic responses when there are grounds to expect that they would be similar, and how these policymaking processes differ. Rather than focus on the *outcomes* of housing policy this study instead compares *processes* of policymaking and the influences on those processes.

Taking a longitudinal perspective, the research traces, analyses and compares four Irish housing policymaking processes over two eras. Data is collected through historic document review of official public and archival documents and accounts, augmented through interviews with specialists on the history of Irish housing and wider aspects of Irish history for historic cases and key decision-makers in the more recent cases. The context of crisis and major policy change is examined within wider periods of policy stability and continuity through the perspective of path dependence, a recognition that previous decisions impact on future choices. With this theoretical frame, and with process tracing as the means for conducting the research, the influences of efficiency, legitimacy and power on those policymaking processes are traced and compared.

For the original contribution, this thesis argues the importance of external validation, public opinion, political leadership and political consensus as characteristics of, or drivers and verification for, policy change. An alternative to the theoretical proposition of a policy window is also offered, highlighting a process which progresses over time: from problem to politics to policy. The recognition of this progression, and the characteristics of policymaking, could work towards overcoming the permanent state of flux between housing being a problem and a crisis. With implications for theory, practice and future research, this thesis provides a historical approach to contextualise contemporary phenomena.

Keywords: Housing, Crisis, path dependence, process tracing, Ireland

DECLARATION STATEMENT

I certify that this thesis, which I now submit for the examination for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis has been prepared according to the regulations for postgraduate study by research of Technological University (TU) Dublin and has not been submitted in whole or in part for another award in any other third level institution.

The work reported on in this thesis conforms to the principles and requirements of the TU Dublin's guidelines for ethics in research.

TU Dublin has permission to keep, lend or copy this thesis in whole or part, on condition that any such use of material of the thesis is duly acknowledged.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Griffin", is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Date: 29 January 2024

Candidate

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I would like to thank my lead supervisor, Dr Lorcan Sirr, for his guidance, encouragement, direction and suggestions throughout this research. His assistance and desire to see the work make a meaningful contribution to the housing debate has been an inspiration. Appreciation is also offered to my second supervisor, Dr Frank Harrington, for providing invaluable contribution and guidance throughout the study.

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PhD research can be a solitary experience, particularly during a pandemic when social networks are strained, so I would also like to thank the Chaplaincy of TU Dublin for their social support throughout this research, the UCD geographers, the Dublin Hammers, Harry, the Elmbridge class of ’84, the Frequent Flyers, and of course, 5GT, Jon, Steve and Mark. The social and academic network and support provided by the European Network for Housing Research and the International Public Policy Association was also invaluable - the time spent socialising and networking with likeminded new researchers and more experienced academics was instrumental in shaping and validating the research.

In 1945, a docker and veteran of Dunkirk and North Africa explained why it was important for his daughter to continue her education, ‘*because her children will benefit*’. So, many thanks and love to mum and dad for stressing the importance of learning (and of course to grandad for his foresighted wisdom – history does matter!) This is for those of Tilbury and Chadwell who did not have the same opportunity.

Finally, special appreciation is for you, Úna - your support has never wavered.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

| | |
|-----------|---|
| CiSo | Civil Society (interviewee) |
| CnG | Cumann na nGaedheal (political party) |
| CPT | Comparative Process Tracing |
| CS | (ex) Civil Servant (interviewee) |
| Dáil | Irish Parliament |
| ECB | European Central Bank |
| EU | European Union |
| FF | Fianna Fáil (political party) |
| FG | Fine Gael (political party) |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| HAP | Housing Assistance Payment |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| Ind | Independent Teachta Dála, Member of the Dáil |
| IPOA | Irish Property Owners' Association |
| Lab | Labour (political party) |
| LDA | Land Development Agency |
| NAI | National Archives of Ireland |
| NAMA | National Asset Management Agency |
| NESC | National Economic and Social Council of Ireland |
| NESF | National Economic and Social Forum |
| P | (ex) Politician (interviewee) |
| PD | Progressive Democrats (political party) |
| PFT | Policy Feedback Theory |
| RAS | Rental Accommodation Scheme |
| REIT | Real Estate Investment Trust |
| RS | Rent Supplement |
| RTB | Residential Tenancy Board |
| SA | (ex) Special Advisor (interviewee) |
| SF | Sinn Fein (political party) |
| SH | Social Historian (interviewee) |
| Tánaiste | Deputy Head of Government |
| Taoiseach | Head of Government |
| TD | Teachta Dála, Member of the Dáil |
| Troika | EU, ECB and IMF |
| UN | United Nations |

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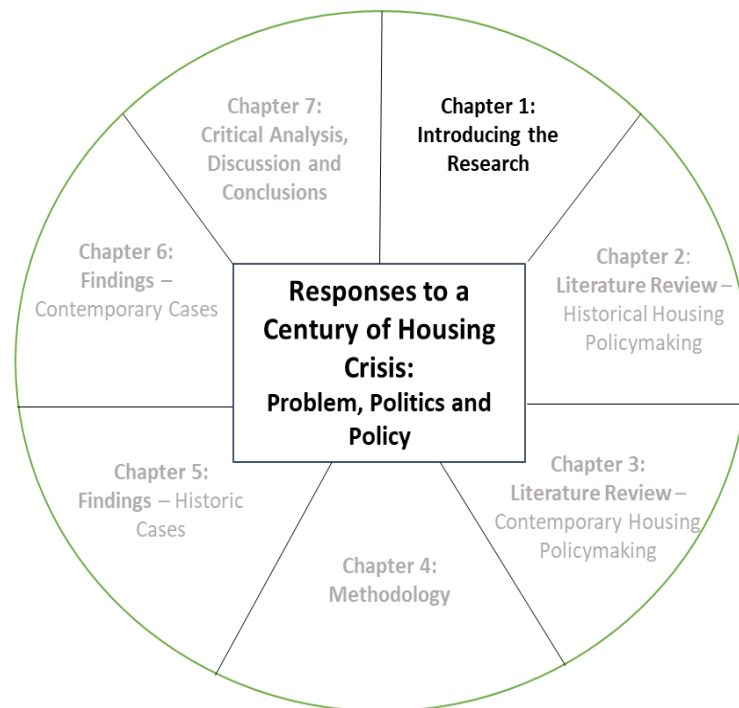
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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH



1.1 Introduction

This thesis is about the political reality of policymaking around housing. It compares four cases of significant housing policymaking over two eras, exploring the realities of what happened on the ground. Rather than focus on the *outcomes* of housing policy – a lot of good research already covers that – this study instead compares *processes* of policymaking.

The Irish housing system reportedly provides an example of dysfunctionality (Norris 2017; Byrne and Norris 2018; Corrigan et al. 2019; Hearne 2020). In its 2018 report, *Urban Development Land, Housing and Infrastructure: Fixing Ireland’s Broken System*, the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) described the Irish housing system as ‘broken’, also referring to it as: ‘speculative’, ‘volatile’ and ‘expensive’. Indeed, the government policy document, *Housing for All – A new Housing Plan for Ireland*, acknowledged a housing crisis (DHLGH 2021).

The literature establishes that this current housing crisis has its origins in the early 1990s, with the policy response to fiscal restraint, residualisation and stigmatisation being the promotion of the market (Healy and Goldrick-Kelly 2018; Lewis 2019; Norris, Byrne, and Carnegie 2019; Lima, Hearne, and Murphy 2023). The expanded role of global capital in the housing market, with a focus on maximising profit, disconnected housing from its social function, ensured that would be ‘less affordable, less available, less secure, and less habitable’ (Deva and Farha 2019, 3). Thereby, the policy response to a crisis caused by financialisation has been to encourage greater involvement of financial actors, transforming the housing crisis into a financial opportunity (Lima 2020). Meanwhile, the system continues to provide unequal outcomes. Homelessness, a lack of affordable housing to rent or buy, and limited

security of tenure mean that the housing opportunity which was available to previous generations is not available to many of the current one (Hearne 2020; 2022; Waldron 2023). At its heart, ‘housing policy remains unsettled and reflects tensions between treating housing as a commodity and a secure home’ (Dukelow and Considine 2017, 272; Lima 2023).

Housing dysfunction and crisis, although prolonged, is not purely a recent phenomenon. This has been an ongoing facet of the Irish political landscape, with reports of inquiry and Census data cataloguing recurring housing crises and failings of policy over the last century, set within broader cycles of less acknowledged housing difficulties or problems. At the time of the foundation of the State, the Housing (Ireland) Act 1919 provided for a needs assessment to be carried out, which estimated that 61,648 homes were required for the working classes. The Census of 1926 found that 25 per cent of the population lived in overcrowded conditions (CSO 1926) whilst the 1946 Census identified 320,571 houses, 48 per cent of total private dwellings, without sanitation (CSO 1946). In 1963, tenement buildings collapsed in Dublin, killing four people, and a local authority survey later identified 60,000 occupied houses as being unfit for human habitation, with 32,000 of them incapable of repair (Ferriter 2004, 590).

The crisis of poor quality and insufficient quantities of housing and curtailed policy responses that were evident at the birth of the State continued, intermittently, for the following century; as Kitchin *et al.* (2015, 2–3) noted, ‘housing in Ireland is perpetually in crisis’. Figure 1.1 (below) summarises the series of housing crises and policy responses over that time.

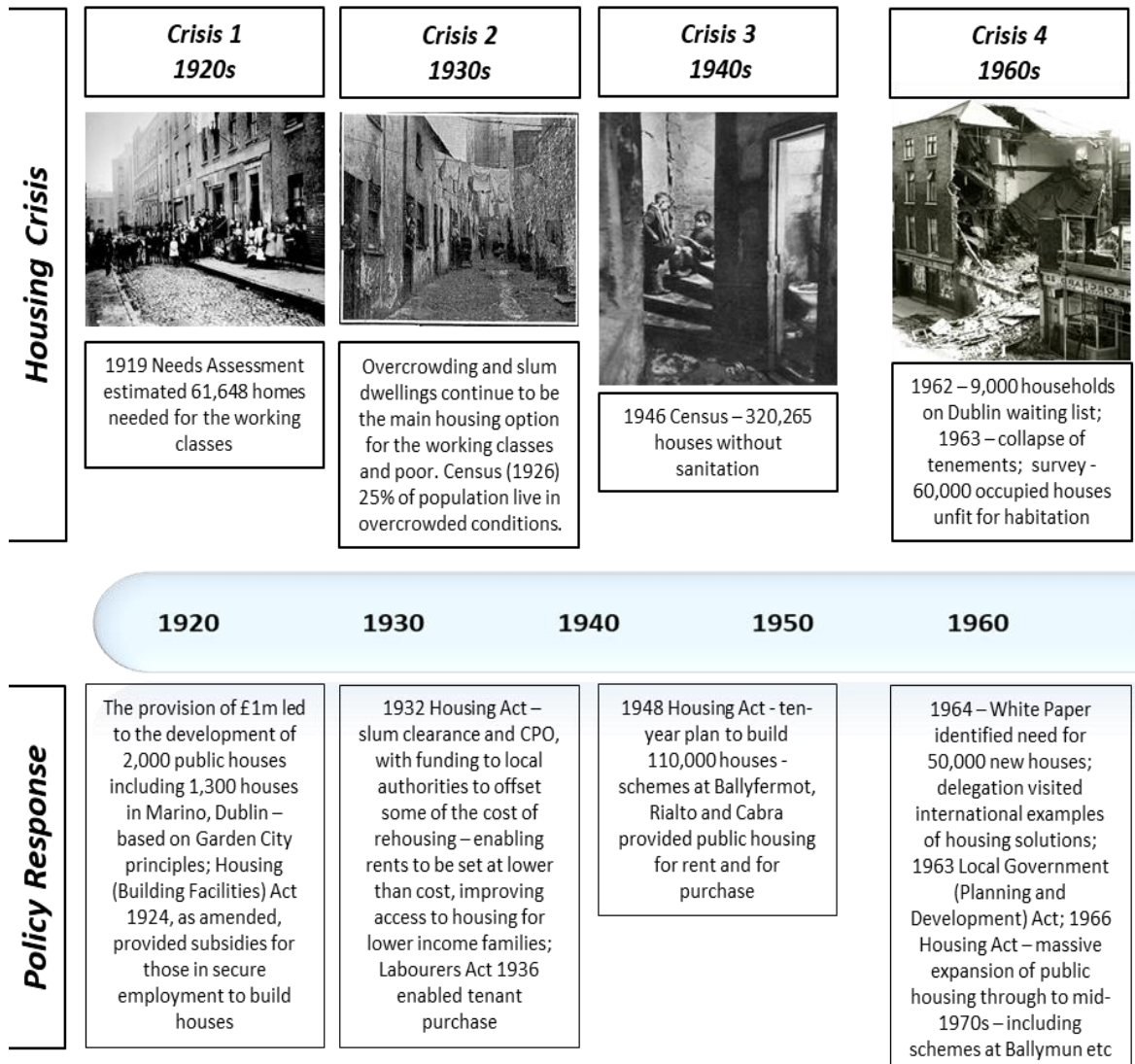


Figure 1.1: Timeline – summary of a century of housing crises and policy responses

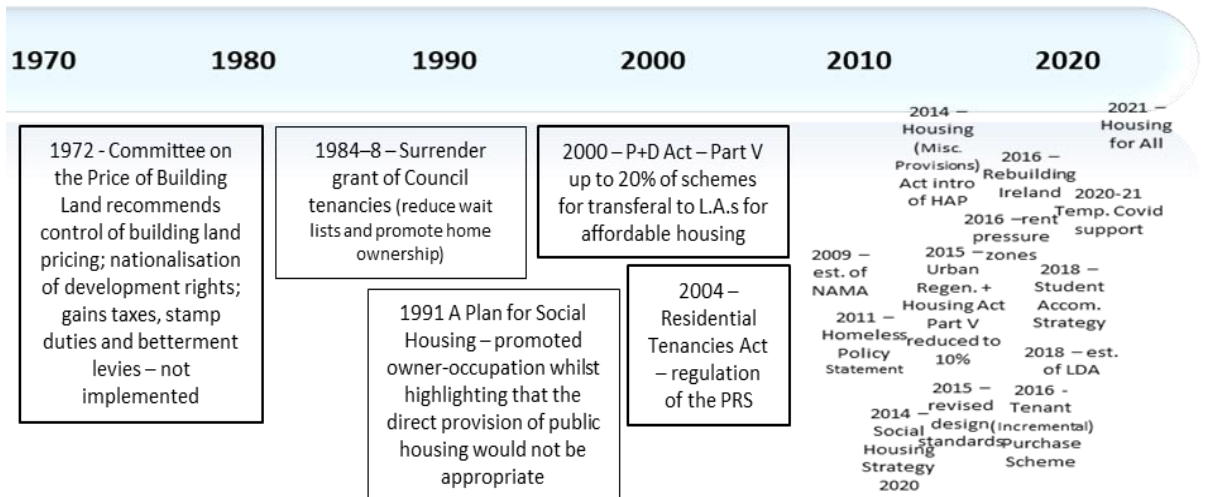
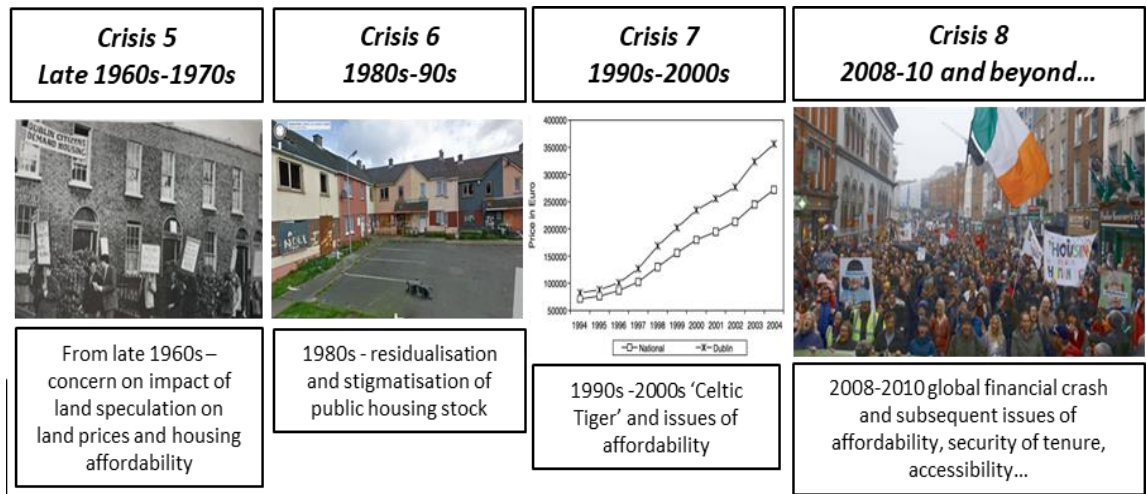


Figure 1.1 (cont.): Timeline – summary of a century of housing crises and policy responses

Theory suggests that systemic shocks provide the impetus for significant policy transformation (P. Sabatier and Weible 2007; Baumgartner, Jones, and Mortensen 2018; Jenkins-Smith et al. 2018; Cairney 2020). But whilst historic events - or shocks - resulted in policy change which sought to address housing system failings, such as overcrowding, poor standards, supply and affordability, inertia in the political system now appears to dampen momentum for effective housing policy change (Norris 2014a; 2016; Lewis 2019). Policy adjustments that focus on short-term fixes continue to address symptoms of crisis rather than causes (Dukelow 2011; G. Murphy 2018; Umfreville and Sirr 2020).

It is that difference between responses to various crises that informs this research. The struggles for land ownership, tenancy rights and a place to call home that are integral to Ireland's history are still recognisable today. So too, in many respects, is the relationship between the role of government and the provision of adequate housing, manifested through politics and the policymaking process.

This thesis explores a century of responses to housing crisis by analysing a sample of those political and policymaking processes, two from the twentieth and two from the twenty-first centuries. This chapter outlines the gap in literature which this research begins to address, introduces the aim and objectives, the research process, overarching philosophy and methods used in the study, together with the structure of the thesis. Finally the contribution to knowledge is set out.

1.2 Gap in Literature

There has been much research undertaken which recommends Irish housing policy is developed with the assistance and support of an active public sector, as Kelly (2021, 50) recognised that ‘tackling the housing crisis requires, at a minimum, comprehensive state intervention’. But the Irish housing literature outlines that recent public policy reform has focused on the short-term and around retrenchment of existing policies and centralisation of power as the policy response to crisis, effectively maintaining the status quo (Norris and Shiels 2007; Dukelow 2011; Hearne and Murphy 2018; Umfreville and Sirr 2020). This is a key point – the system is seemingly sufficiently resistant to ensure that crisis moments do not provide adequate impetus for significant policy change, even when that change is perceived by so many as being necessary. The barrier to change is theorised as the impact of past decision-making and the effect of path dependence on the policy process, a recognition that previous decisions affect change or constrain potential future choices (see for example Pierson (1993; 2004); Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2011; 2017)).

Figure 1.1 above sets out the recurring episodes of crisis and the policy responses over the last century, though the comments of Ó Broin (2019, 3), in relation to Ireland’s crisis are revealing: ‘Our housing system never worked properly. It was never in a fixed or whole state only to be broken and fragmented somewhere along the way’. The literature suggests that recent housing reform has perpetuated the crisis rather than resolved it, or has only dealt with the symptoms, despite examples of historic policy change which seemingly addressed episodes of crisis (developed in Chapter 2). The literature also discusses the problems of the current crisis and possible solutions, but less is directed towards *why* policies to address contemporary Irish housing crisis are

seemingly different to historic responses when there are grounds to expect that they would be similar, *how* policymaking processes differ, or indeed *how* historic housing policymaking processes can inform contemporary policymaking.

Kemeny (1995, 3) recognised the field of housing research as being dominated by ‘barren empiricism’ with no theoretical concepts (180), whilst Jacobs (2001, 127) identified that ‘historical research and its associated methodologies remain an area that many housing academics have not engaged with in any great depth’. Since then, more theoretically-informed research has been undertaken, and for Jacobs and Manzi (2017, 17) pursuing historical and comparative methods of analysis is ‘amongst the best ways to respond to the limitations of contemporary critiques of housing policy’. Similarly Oliver and Cairney (2019) highlighted the role historians have in helping policymakers explore historical patterns. However, Clapham (2018) identified a disconnect between housing research and policymaking and called for the study of housing policymaking processes in different contexts, while Stephens (2020) suggested ‘scholars... look beyond the middle range... downwards to consider institutional details... that explain differences’ (2020, 544). These gaps identified in academic study provide the opportunity to take a longitudinal perspective on Irish housing policymaking to analyse the differences and similarities between historic and contemporary processes of response to housing crisis. Providing a historical approach to contextualise contemporary phenomena, ‘studying politics across time... can provide some answers to questions that could not be addressed adequately with a more static conceptualisation of the political world’ (B. G. Peters 1998, 176).

Robertson *et al.* (2010) explored path dependency as a tool to explain neighbourhood identity and resistance to change in Scotland, whilst Jacobs and Manzi (2017)

undertook historical analysis to explore variations between historic and contemporary periods of housing policymaking in the United Kingdom. Similar assumptions about housing policy are also made in different contexts, as underlined by Malpass (2011), who utilised path dependence to explain housing policy change. Analysis of Nordic housing regimes, in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, utilised Comparative Process Tracing (CPT) within a wider path dependence framework (Bengtsson and Ruonavaara 2011; 2017). Process tracing provides the means for undertaking path dependence analysis, to detect mechanisms between the critical juncture ('events or points in time where a certain historical path is chosen' which might be precipitated by a disaster, or the publication of a report or Census data) and the focal points ('typically an important political decision', being the outcome of interest, either the Act of parliament or the policy response to the identified housing problem) (2011, 400–401). Here, the 'combination of historical process tracing with counterfactual comparison proved to be a fruitful method to analyse path dependence in housing politics and policy' (2010, 196). Similarly, Biesbroek and Candel (2020, 79) recognised that whilst not 'a panacea for the methodological challenges to causally explain social phenomena', Comparative Process Tracing does however 'offer valuable methodological directions in empirically demonstrating credible policy mechanisms - and conditions under which they emerge'.

Umfreville and Sirr (2020, 231) reflected on the importance of path dependence in the Irish context, that 'the effect that previous policy decisions can have on the present, highlighted by the continued trajectory towards a market approach to housing provision'. This study also builds on other relevant recent research in the Irish housing field. As examples, Norris (2014a) took a longitudinal view and utilised concepts from the historic-institutionalist literature to examine the history of public subsidies and

regulation of tenancies, and Ogbazghi (2022) used historical institutionalism and path dependence to analyse centralisation of local government reform since 1898; Heaphy and Scott (2021) examined path dependency of rural housing outcomes; O’Callaghan and McGuirk (2020) situated the impacts on affordability of financialisation processes and path dependence of neoliberalism; Murphy and Hearne (2019) used process tracing in a comparative case study around marketisation of social housing policy, whilst Fitzgerald *et al.* (2019) similarly used process tracing to identify variables that impact on the policymaking process. More widely, Dukelow (2011) took an inter-temporal approach to identify and analyse the key drivers influencing welfare policy retrenchment across two periods - between the economic crisis of the 1970s and into the 1980s, and post-crash Ireland. But there is, however, a limited literature which is focused on *why* public policymaking processes around housing have failed, and apparently continue to fail, and *why* current policy responses are seemingly so different to historic responses. Rather than focus on the *outcomes* of housing policy, there is less investigation and analysis which compares *processes* of policymaking. This is the gap in literature and the genesis of this research.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

Taking a longitudinal perspective on Irish housing policymaking, the aim of this research is to explain why policies to address contemporary Irish housing crisis are seemingly different to historic responses when there are grounds to expect that they would be similar, how these policymaking processes differ, and how they can inform policymakers’ responses to housing crisis. This broad research aim introduces five specific objectives to guide the study:

Objective 1: Set out the narrative and context for cases of policymaking as responses to housing crises.

Objective 2: Trace the processes leading to policymaking responses to housing crises.

Objective 3: Analyse the influences on processes of policymaking responses to housing crises.

Objective 4: Compare processes of policymaking responses to housing crises.

Objective 5: Identify the characteristics of policymaking and make recommendations on how policymaking responses to housing crisis can be informed by historic processes.

This research therefore traces, analyses and compares housing policymaking processes, and the influences on those processes from over the last century. Examining the context of crisis, instability and major policy change, within wider periods of policy stability and continuity, the study focuses on processes of housing policymaking rather than the outcomes of housing policy. The responses to two historic and two contemporary housing crises are traced by exploring and analysing the progression from the emergence of crisis through to the implementation of the policy response. Learning from history, this comparative research demands a theoretical framework which embraces analysis of both policy stability and periodic transformation. This is now briefly discussed.

1.4 Philosophical and Methodological Approach

Whilst several theoretical approaches could be applicable for this study and are discussed in Chapter 4, path dependence offers a frame for ‘embracing both continuity and change’ (Malpass 2011, 307). This study utilises the conceptions of Mahoney (2000) and Pierson (1993; 2004) in relation to historic policy analysis and path dependence.

Public policy might be widely defined as ‘whatever governments choose to do or not to do’ (Dye 2017, 1). Within this, ‘policy conveys the sense that activity is deliberate and purposeful rather than erratic or random’ (Colebatch 1998, 72), though, for Weible (2018b, 363), ‘the policy process is best imagined as a complex phenomenon of continuous interactions involving public policy and its context, events, actors, and outcomes’. The ‘elusive concept of public policy [is] the deliberate decisions – actions and nonactions – of government or an equivalent authority towards specific objectives’ (C. M. Weible 2018a, 2).

Policymaking does not take place at one moment in time but is the result of ‘processes that unfold over time and in time’ (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003, 12). As such, Pierson (2004, 2) emphasised that ‘placing politics in time can greatly enrich our understanding of complex social dynamics’. But whilst ‘history matters’ (*ibid.*), more important are ‘those historical sequences in which contingent events set into motion institutional patterns or event chains that have deterministic properties [allowing for the examination of] path-dependent processes of change’ (Mahoney 2000, 507).

Weible and Sabatier (2018) and Cairney (2020), *inter alia*, identified that public policy theories help us ‘understand... policymaking in the real world’ (Cairney 2020, 3).

Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2017, 48) suggested that ‘the comparison between processes demands an analysis in terms of continuity and change’, with path dependence requiring consideration of the temporality and sequencing of events. Mahoney set out that path dependent sequences are typified by causal patterns, or ‘inertia’, which might be either reactive sequences of change, ‘that involves reaction and counterreaction mechanisms... that naturally leads to another event’, or self-reinforcing sequences of continuity, ‘that reproduce a particular institutional pattern over time’ (Mahoney 2000, 511). Falleti and Mahoney (2015, 212) argued that ‘there is no substitute for process tracing when analyzing the events that make up the sequences and processes that are studied in comparative-historical research’. Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2011, 405) recognised that ‘mechanisms operate in social, political and cultural contexts, and the outcome of their operation depends quite a lot on the relevant context’, whilst Pierson (2004, 169) extended the importance of social contexts given that they ‘constrain and enable political actors, and indeed may shape those actors’ very understandings of... what they want to do’. The philosophical and methodological approach for this research is detailed in Chapter 4, Methodology.

1.5 The Research Process

An initial baseline exploratory study situated the research in the literature and identified a gap in literature from which a conceptual framework and research methodology is developed (detailed in Chapter 4). Two cases of historic housing crises were identified with which to compare cases of policymaking from the current housing crisis (an assessment of the critical junctures¹ and focal points² for comparative

¹ ‘...the concept of critical juncture refers to situations of uncertainty in which decisions of important actors are causally decisive for the selection of one path of institutional development over other possible paths’ (Capocchia 2016, 89).

² The focal point is the legislative or policy response (Bengtsson and Ruonavaara 2011)

analysis is detailed in Appendix A): The 1932 and the 1966 Housing Acts introduced support for the provision of public and private housing, with the government responding in both circumstances to concerns of poor quality and quantities of housing (Umfreville 2024). These cases are compared to two more recent, which enable examination of the policymaking processes leading to regulation of the private rental sector (from 2004) and the establishment of Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) from 2014. Both have relevance today, as they provide examples of policymaking which continue to have ongoing implementation and funding commitments. Chapter 2 (for the historic cases) and Chapter 3 (for the contemporary cases) set out the narrative and context to these policymaking responses to housing crises and relate to Objective 1 of the research.

The cases are summarised in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: The cases explored and traced in the research

| | Crisis | Critical Juncture | Focal Point |
|-------------------|---|--|---|
| 1930s Case | Overcrowding and slum dwellings continue to be the housing option for the poor. Civic surveys highlight the need for 70,000 houses nationwide (1924) as 21,000 families, or 90,000 people, living in one room dwellings (1925). Census of 1926 is published in 1929 and highlights the depth of the crisis. | Whilst the Commission on the Relief of Unemployment report (1928) offered an alternative path to policymaking, the need for change was identified with the establishment of a sub-committee of the Executive Council in October 1931 (NAI - S.6193). | Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1932 |
| 1960s Case | 9,000 people on Dublin housing waiting list (1962). Collapse of tenements, ensuing panic and fear highlights the lack of supply of good quality dwellings (1963). | Local authority survey of unfit dwelling is published (1964) which identifies the depth of the crisis and provides legitimacy for policy action (Dáil Éireann 1964). | Housing Act 1966 |

| | | | |
|------------------|---|--|---|
| 2004 Case | From the late 1990s, house price inflation was ‘highest in [the] world’ (anon., 2000) and promoted issues and concerns of affordability, whilst poor standards and limited regulation were symptomatic in the private rental sector (DELG, 2000). | The report of the Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector (July 2000) offered a path to policy change. | Residential Tenancies Act 2004 |
| 2014 Case | Global Financial Crisis led to a collapse in the number of housing completions, with a lack of supply and increasing unaffordability and with issues of security of tenure and accessibility. | Imposition of efficiency and public finance restraints required by the Troika in response to the programme for financial assistance (December 2010). | Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014 |

Using qualitative methods and techniques, consisting of historic document review and inductive process tracing, policymaking processes are identified, explored and traced, from the emergence of crisis, through to when this is recognised as being a problem and the proposed policy response. This is augmented through undertaking in-depth interviews with specialists on the history of Irish housing and wider aspects of Irish history for the historic cases, and key decision-makers in the more recent cases. The calibre and status of the highly influential interviewees (detailed in Appendix J) authenticates the research and provides a rich and valuable source of primary data. This is woven into Chapters 5 and 6 (research findings) in a pseudo-anonymised form, to protect the confidentiality of participants, and relate to Objectives 2 and 3 of the research (trace and analyse the influences on processes of policymaking responses to housing crises). Some interview data is also used in Chapters 2 and 3 (literature review) to augment understanding of the context of the case-study policymaking processes. This allows for the final critical analysis, discussion and comparison of processes within and between the historical and contemporary cases (Objectives 4 and 5 - detailed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

Examining the context of crisis, instability and major policy change, within more stable periods of policy continuity, this research explores and explains why more recent housing policymaking has not fully addressed enduring concern around housing outcomes. It builds on previous studies and explores the influences and processes which led to those policies to address contemporary housing crisis being seemingly different to historic responses. The identification of social mechanisms³ provides a means for categorising the influences on policymaking processes. To navigate the story behind each of the cases the impact of efficiency, legitimacy and power are identified and analysed, as recognised by Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2017).

Indicative examples from the literature review include:

1. *Efficiency* - the perception actors have regarding the economic benefit or costs of different housing choices that were identified or available - e.g. the row-back of policy aims in the 1920s and late 1950s, due to cost implications, from public housing for rent to homeownership; or tenant purchase schemes from the 1970s and 1980s, and financial constraints post the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-2008.
2. *Legitimacy* - the authority of existing institutions, and the acceptability of those institutions for the public and decision-makers, over alternative institutional arrangements - e.g. the belief in local authorities during the 1930s to take on compulsory purchase powers; or later to develop a national housing plan (1960s) or to manage and implement the Housing Assistance Payment scheme.
3. *Power* - the inclusion and exclusion of actors in problem recognition and decision-making, or their influence on those processes - e.g. the rise of a

³ Social mechanisms 'are *regular patterns* of actions and interactions [which] bring about outcomes' [author emphasis] (Bengtsson and Ruonavaara, 2017, p.53). For example, study of Nordic housing systems focused on three social mechanisms of efficiency, legitimacy and power (*ibid.*).

political opposition in the 1920s or the powerful-developer dynasties in the 1960s, corruption in the 1980s, and lobbying more recently, or the wider power of public opinion. For Cairney (2020, 3), ‘a focus on *power* provides the most important way to think about the relationship between how policy is and should be made’ [author emphasis].

The review of historic documents to trace the influence and impact of efficiency, legitimacy and power within a sample of historic cases enables comparison with policymaking processes from the current crisis, providing insights to political approaches and policy processes more generally. The identification of cases is set out within the Methodology chapter (Chapter 4).

1.6 Thesis Structure

The thesis provides the body of work for this research. The focus of each chapter is outlined in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Outline of research

| Chapter | Outline |
|---|---|
| 1. Introducing the Research | Introduces the context, justification and the scope of the study, identifying a gap in knowledge, outlines the research problem, and presents the central research aim and objectives, and contribution to knowledge. |
| 2. Literature Review: Historical Housing Policymaking | Reviews the literature around two historic policymaking processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1932 • Housing Act 1966 Focuses on Objective 1 of the research: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set out the narrative and context for cases of policymaking as responses to housing crises. |
| 3. Literature Review: Contemporary Housing Policymaking | Reviews the literature around two contemporary policymaking processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential Tenancies Act 2004 • Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014 Focuses on Objective 1 of the research: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set out the narrative and context for cases of policymaking as responses to housing crises. |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>4. Methodology</p> | <p>Introduces theory of housing systems and the public policymaking process, identifying a preferred approach and setting out a draft conceptual framework.</p> <p>Provides a comprehensive discussion on the research methodology, strategy, and design for this academic study, and the means of data collection, analysis, and presentation.</p> |
| <p>5. Findings – Historic Cases</p> | <p>Explores two key historic periods of housing crisis and the processes leading to policy responses. The data collected during the research is analysed and discussed in detail. Focuses on Objectives 2 and 3 of the research:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Trace the processes leading to policymaking responses to housing crises. 3. Analyse the influences on processes of policymaking responses to housing crises |
| <p>6. Findings – Contemporary Cases</p> | <p>Explores two key contemporary periods of housing crisis and the processes leading to policy responses. The data collected during the research is analysed and discussed in detail. Focuses on Objectives 2 and 3 of the research:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Trace the processes leading to policymaking responses to housing crises. 3. Analyse the influences on processes of policymaking responses to housing crises. |
| <p>7. Critical Discussion</p> | <p>Brings together the exploration of this study, builds on the conceptual framework and considers theoretical approaches. Reflects and critically discusses the broad research aim to trace, analyse and compare historic and contemporary housing policymaking processes.</p> <p>Sets out the findings and assesses how the research is innovative and advances knowledge, focuses on Objectives 4 and 5 of the research:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Compare processes of policymaking responses to housing crises. 5. Identify the characteristics of policymaking and make recommendations on how policymaking responses to housing crisis can be informed by historic processes. <p>Reviews the research process, offering reflection on that process, and provides conclusions and recommendations.</p> |

The breakdown of this thesis into seven chapters is set out in Figure 1.2.

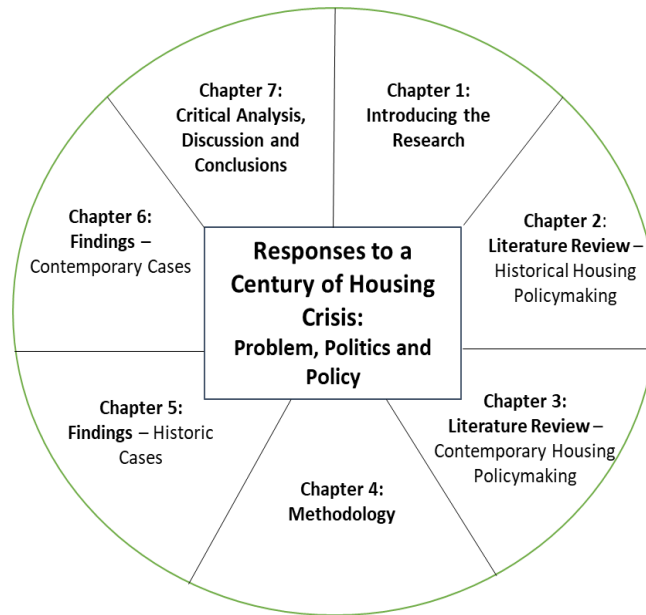


Figure 1.2: Thesis structure

Each chapter commences with a version of this figure.

1.7 Contribution to Knowledge

The literature suggests that housing crisis has been a recurring facet of the Irish political landscape, with significant events resulting in transformational policy change to address historic crisis. The literature also identifies the failings of policy reform to have a lasting impact on the outcomes of contemporary housing crisis, with some literature offering suggestions for remedies to the symptoms or providing aspirations with regards to addressing the causes.

With focus on Irish policymaking processes, the originality and innovation of this research is the exploration of *why* the process of policy reform can be innovative and effective in some circumstances but seemingly constrained in others. Taking a longitudinal perspective on Irish housing policymaking, this research compares processes of policymaking responses to housing crises (Figure 1.3) and focuses on the intersection of:

1. The use of a historical approach to contextualise contemporary phenomena.
2. The use of path dependence as a theoretical frame to analyse periods of housing crisis.
3. The tracing of social mechanisms which influenced policy responses to housing crisis.

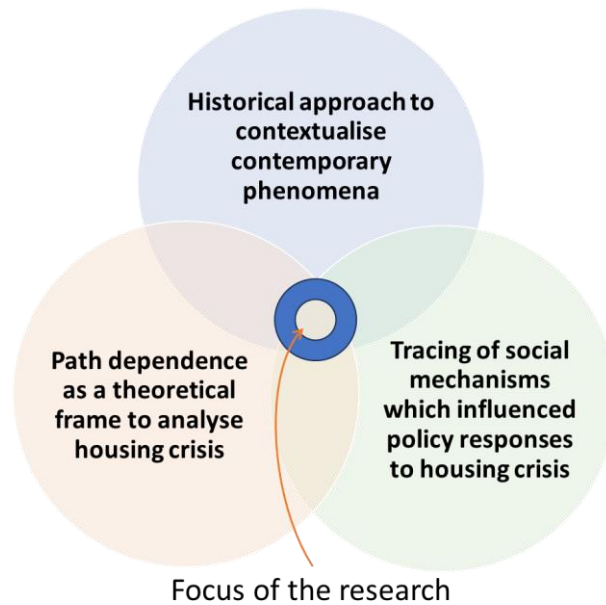


Figure 1.3: The focus of the research

The novelty here is the use of that theoretical frame in the Irish context to analyse the processes which led to policy responses to previous housing events and comparing those processes and responses to those of the current. The focus therefore is the *process* of policymaking rather than the *outcomes*.

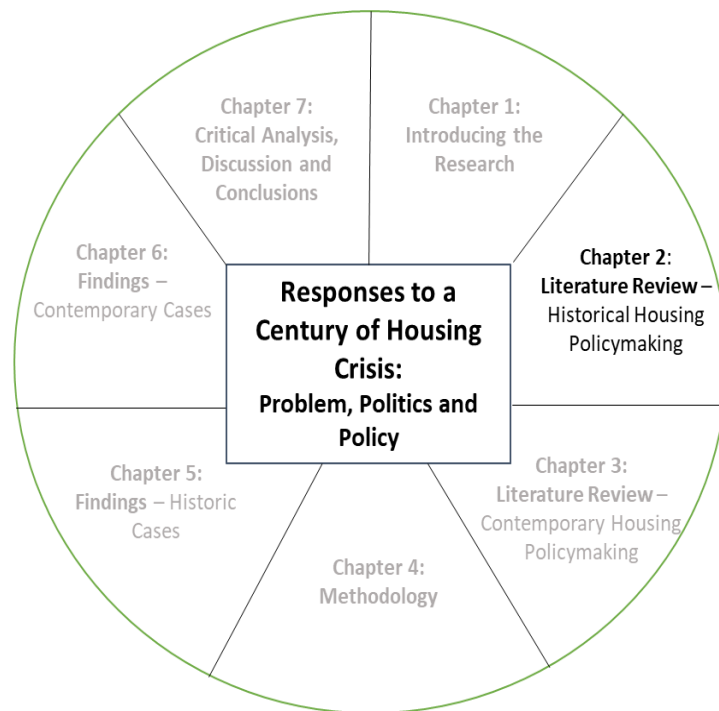
The literature review highlights the opportunity for inter-temporal comparative research. By examining historic processes of problem definition and policy formulation, the originality of the research is the exploration of why contemporary Irish housing policymaking might be typified more by a focus on symptoms, rather than policy innovation and a focus on causes of crisis. In addition, the primary research

provides a unique focus on the relationships and interactions of decision-makers during contemporary housing policymaking, and thus has implications for Irish policymaking practice, wider theory and future research. Cumulatively, the body of research advances understanding of Irish housing policymaking processes and provides an addition to the literature. The research also advances understanding of policy change as a process (from problem to politics to policy) rather than as independent streams, as set out by Kingdon (2014), Herweg *et al.* (2018) and Cairney (2020).

This study builds on the work of Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2011; 2017) who established the link between path dependence as a theoretical frame, and comparative process tracing as the means for housing policy analysis. Whilst their analysis was based on international comparisons, this research compares historic and contemporary cases. However, there is limited research which focuses on the *process* of Irish historic housing policy change, and indeed none has taken an approach to identify the processes and social mechanisms to situate learning from previous episodes of housing crisis within the current and ongoing predicament. This thesis explains why policies to address contemporary Irish housing crisis are seemingly different to historic responses when there are grounds to expect that they would be similar, how these policymaking processes differ, and how they can inform policymakers' responses to housing crisis. This research recognises the role that social mechanisms of efficiency, legitimacy and power have in influencing Irish housing policymaking, identifies the characteristics of policymaking which overcame the constraints to policymaking, and discovers the progression, from problem to politics to policy as a sequence of policymaking. The research is therefore novel, begins to address a gap in literature and makes a meaningful contribution to knowledge.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

HISTORICAL HOUSING POLICYMAKING



2.1 Introducing the Historical Cases

The purpose of this first literature review chapter is to draw on two historic cases of housing policymaking, the processes leading to the Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1932 and the Housing Act 1966. As will become clear, both are examples of reactive processes of change. The 1932 case explores influences around how an emerging political party was able to influence the agenda and to promote housing policy change, whilst the 1966 case explores influences on the incumbent party of government as it recalibrated its own policy as a response to crisis. Figure 2.1 sets out the problem definition, the policy response, and outcome for the two historic case studies.

| | Problem definition | Policy response | Policy outcome |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Historic crisis 1920s-1932 | Overcrowded slum dwellings were the housing option for the working classes and the poor - 800,000 people, 25% of the population, lived in overcrowded conditions (Census 1926) Critical Juncture: Sub-Committee of the Executive Council established October 1931 | Focal Point: 1932 Housing Act introduced slum clearance and CPO, with funding to local authorities to offset rehousing costs | Significant public provision of housing outstripping private sector provision, and enabling rents to be set at lower than cost, improving access to housing for lower income families |
| Historic crisis 1950s-1966 | 1962 – 9,000 households on Dublin Corporation waiting list; 1963 – collapse of two tenement buildings. Critical Juncture: Minister Blaney’s response to the survey of 1964 identified 60,000 occupied houses unfit for human habitation, 2 June 1964 (Dáil Eireann, 1964) | Focal Point: 1966 Housing Act, informed by the 1964 white Paper which identified the need for 50,000 new houses, rights of purchase and supportive financial structures to provide a route to homeownership | Expansion of public housing – including large-scale schemes at Ballymun and Darndale in Dublin, Moyross, Limerick etc and an increasingly high level of owner-occupancy |

Figure 2.1: Problem definition, policy response and outcomes of historic housing policymaking

The interpretative approach used for both cases follows a narrative style from which the processes of policy change, and the influences on these, can be identified and traced (Chapter 5), analysed and compared (Chapter 7), given that ‘analysis in terms of path dependence must... be strong on historical description’ (Bengtsson and Ruonavaara 2017, 49).

As context matters in historical research (Hall 2003; Malpass 2008; Falletti and Lynch 2009) the background to the historical cases are set out in this chapter. Literature also establishes the importance of agenda setting, given that it sets the path from politics to policymaking, being ‘a critical political and policy process’ (Peake 2016, 328). This is the stage of the policymaking process during which the problem or issue to be addressed is recognised or selected (Brewer and DeLeon 1983; Howlett and Ramesh 2003). This stage is developed for each case in two parts: emergence of crisis, and then problem recognition. Whereas the agenda setting stage establishes or selects the problem or issue to be addressed, the policy formulation stage provides the consideration of the alternative policy responses and proposal of solution to the identified problem. This is the stage within which policy options are developed, forwarded or discounted, and it is here that actors within the sub-system interact, develop options for the decision-makers, and comment on policy feasibility as a proposal of a solution (Howlett and Giest 2013). Figure 2.2 outlines how the narrative for each case is split into stages.



Figure 2.2: How each case is split into stages

The two historic cases based on the processes leading to the Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1932 and to the Housing Act 1966 are now set out.

2.2 The Process Leading to the Housing Act 1932

The Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1932 enabled for increased public provision of housing, with rents set at lower than cost and market rate⁴, facilitated by a new political party of power offering divergence from the status quo on a solution to crisis. The public approach to housing delivery represented a departure from state support for owner-occupation and a focus on the private sector and is important in the history of Irish housing as it ‘marked a change in the primary focus from rural housing to urban social housing [and] slum clearance’ (SH3)⁵. This period facilitates exploration of how an emerging political party was able to influence the agenda and to promote housing policy change.

2.2.1 Context to the 1932 Case

‘The Treaty of 1921 and the establishment of Saorstát Éireann [Irish Free State] marked the opening of a new epoch. For the first time since the Middle Ages, the needs and wishes of the Irish people now shape the policy of an Irish government’ (extract from *Saorstát Éireann: Irish Free State official handbook*, 1932, 1). However, the Irish Free State that emerged from the War for Independence and the following civil war was constrained, if not defined, by precarious finances (Norris 2016). The former Taoiseach Dr. Garrett Fitzgerald, in paying tribute to the formation of the first Cumann na nGaedheal (CnG) government, wrote that ‘A new and untried government in the midst of a civil war and its aftermath was not well placed to borrow but had to pay for almost everything out of current revenue’ (Beesley 2003, 5). Despite providing

⁴ Note that this was not a differential rent, which is based on income and became a requirement for all local authorities from 1966 but provided opportunity for local authorities to levy rent at below market price.

⁵ Interviewees are anonymised and a summary of participants is set out in Appendix J. Citations for Politicians (P), Civil Servants (CS), Special Advisors (SA), Civil Society representatives (CiSo) and Social Historians (SH) are set out as such.

continuity during this time of change, the ‘unstable political situation... led to a prolonged delay in the resumption of house construction, and inevitably, to a housing shortage’ (McManus 2019, 260). Post-independence Ireland was dominated by the same housing priorities as before, with ‘rural housing [continuing to take] precedence over urban provision’ (E. Ó Broin 2019, 23). The architect Patrick Abercrombie, in developing a plan for Dublin, *Dublin of the Future* (Abercrombie, Kelly, and Kelly 1922, 4) had identified the ‘extreme urgency... [to provide] Housing Schemes for the 64,000 persons who are at present living in conditions not fit for human beings’. Although almost 2,000 houses were constructed across the country between 1922 and 1924 (Fraser 1996) the scale of the task to be undertaken was illustrated by the Dublin Civic Survey (1924, 58, 67) which identified a requirement for 22,000 houses, as:

Housing in Dublin to-day is more than a “question,” and more than a “problem” – it is a tragedy! Its condition causes either a rapid or a slow death – rapid when the houses fall upon the tenants, as has happened already – slow when they remain standing dens of insanitation.

As Daly (1997, 208) established, although 2,000 houses had been provided by local authorities through to 1924, ‘Councils were forced to charge high rents on these and many preferred to sell them in order to avoid incurring long-term losses’. The President, W.T. Cosgrave (CnG) warned the Dáil in October 1924 that the provision of the required 70,000 houses nationwide with an affordable rent would cost £14 million⁶, and therefore ‘is too expensive. It cannot be maintained. I do not know that there is going to be any solution of the housing problem unless the cost be reduced’ (Dáil Éireann 1924). Despite this outlook a series of public policy responses followed.

⁶ £14 million in 1924 is estimated to be equivalent to around €875 million in 2023.

The 1924 Housing (Building Facilities) Act provided subsidies for those in secure employment for the building of houses with three to five rooms, and established ‘a long tradition of state assistance for private-sector housing’ (Daly 1997, 209), given that ‘most of these grant-aided houses were owner-occupied’ (Kenna 2011, 37). However this had led to ‘much greater building in rural districts than in towns’ (President Cosgrave, Seanad Eireann, 1925). This was modified by the 1925 Housing Act which gave preferential subsidies for local authority and public utility companies and was thereafter revised annually, but continued to provide a ‘stimulus to both private and public building... encouraging owner-occupation’ (McManus 2019, 261). With the private sector providing most of the supply, with ‘the majority of houses built under the Acts [being constructed] by owner-occupiers’, state involvement through the provision of housing subsidy was focused on those in stable employment with a secure income able to access home ownership, whilst public housing provision for those in most need was limited (McCabe 2013, 9, 16). The policy focus on the better off was highlighted by Senator Thomas Farren (Lab) who requested that once those that can afford the houses provided for in legislation had been accommodated, ‘that a serious effort will be made to house the poor people in the slums, who can never hope to be able to inhabit [these new] houses owing to the rents that will be charged’ (Seanad Éireann 1925).

The Census undertaken in 1926 was published in 1929 and identified that 46,902 families were living in single room tenement accommodation (CSO 1926) whilst 800,000 people, or more than a quarter of the population, were living in overcrowded conditions (Ferriter 2004, 319). The Minister for Local Government and Public Health, Richard Mulcahy (CnG) outlined that ‘The financial aspect of the problem is

so great that... the State cannot bear on its shoulders the burden of solving this particular problem' (Dáil Éireann 1929b).

Despite these protestations, the range of policy measures which were implemented during the decade following independence included the provision of homeowner grants for existing owners, mortgage loans for new buyers, and support for co-operative societies to develop housing (Norris 2016). For McCabe (2013, 9, 16) 'a lot of what we consider to be normal and natural about Irish housing dates from the 1920s', which resulted in state involvement in housing provision focused on the middle classes, or those in stable employment with a secure income able to access home ownership, whilst public housing provision for those in most need was limited. Figure 2.3 sets out the supply of new housing built with state aid.

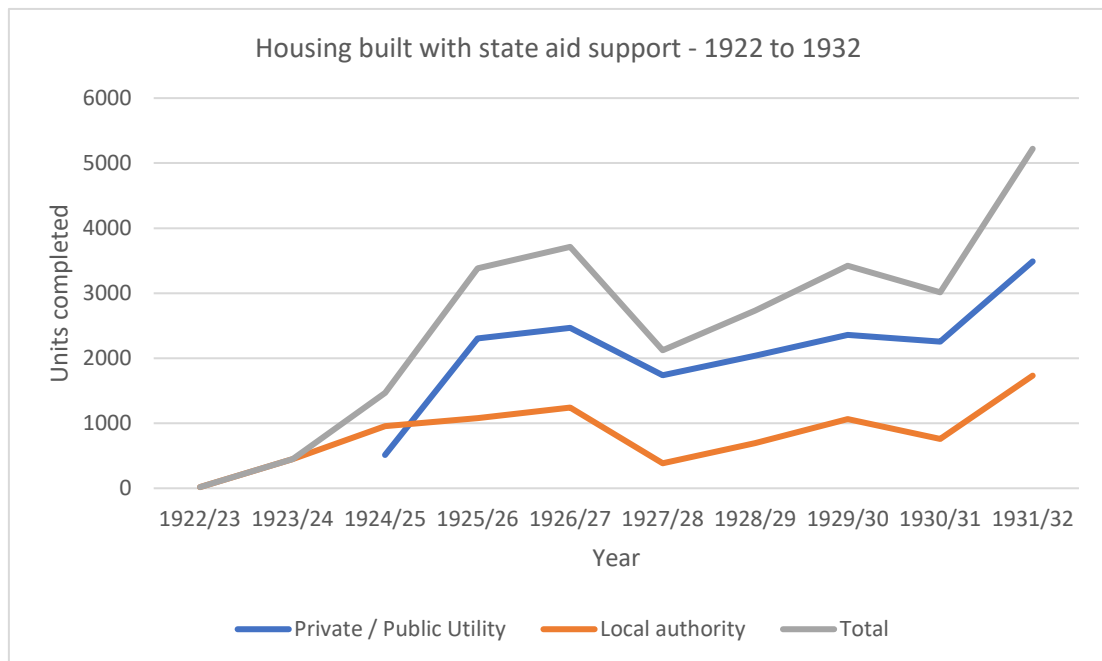


Figure 2.3: Housing built with state-aid support 1922 to 1932. [Source: Reports of the Department of Local Government and Public Health, as set out in Daly, 1997, 219]

With 16,089 houses being built from public subsidy from 1922 through to the end of 1929 (Saorstát Éireann, 1932) the 'overwhelming majority of houses constructed with

state aid between 1922 and 1932... catered for families who were in relatively comfortable circumstances’ (Daly 1997, 218). As *The Irish Times* set out in April 1930, ‘the needs of the very poor are not being catered for, as the type of house constructed under recent schemes cannot be let at a rent within their means’ (anon. 1930, 4). For Lee (1989, 124–25) ‘there was indeed a problem. It was a simple one. Housing was too dear for the poor’.

2.2.2 Emergence of Crisis

The Cumann na nGaedheal government was focused on the restoration of law and order following the civil war, together with negotiating with the British government on both a financial settlement and boundary demarcations between the two newly formed Irish states (Daly 1997; Ferriter 2004). Housing development was therefore not a priority, and this is reflected by the restricted scope of the various Housing Acts during the 1920s, which ensured that ‘the majority of houses built under the Acts was... [undertaken] by owner-occupiers’ (McCabe 2013, 16). The limited availability of finance also meant that ‘Councils were forced to charge high rents on [the houses provided by local authorities] and many preferred to sell them in order to avoid incurring long-term losses’ (Daly 1997, 208). A Dublin Housing Week conference in October 1925 heard that ‘21,000 families – 90,000 persons – live in one-room dwellings... [of which] 10 p.c. of these tenements are unfit for human habitation’, and highlighted that those living in tenements would not be able to afford the rent on the new houses (anon. Irish Independent 1925, 4). The government’s policy focus was therefore to provide support for better-off renters to become homeowners, and thus to create availability in the better private rental sector properties for those in poor accommodation to access (McCabe 2013).

Set against this was the rise of Fianna Fáil (FF) as a political alternative during the 1920s, which had emphasised the need for social welfare measures that contrasted to the laissez-faire approach of the governing party, Cumann na nGaedheal (Ferriter 2004). Formed in May 1926 after a split from Sinn Féin, in opposition to that party's abstentionist approach, the 1927 election brought the Fianna Fáil deputies into the Dáil for the first time. Newspaper reports of the new T.D.s first attendance identified that 'large numbers of Republican supporters arrived, and many of their motor cars bore large inscriptions: "banish the Oath"' (anon. Irish Independent 1927, 9) in opposition to the requirement for T.D.s to swear an oath of allegiance to the Constitution of the Irish Free State and the British monarch, King George V. With Fianna Fáil deputies promoting an anti-establishment ticket, *The Irish Times*, which was identified as a pro-treaty daily newspaper by historian Diarmaid Ferriter (2004) denounced the potential for a vote of no confidence in the Cumann na nGaedheal government whilst referencing the civil war:

Forty-three Republicans have taken the oath and their seats in the *Dáil*... sober minded citizens are watching the situation with anxiety. A definite turning point has been reached in the history of the Free State. The choice for *Dáil Eireann* is as simple as it is fateful. It is the choice between stable government and uncertainty... between peace in our time and the resurrection of controversies that were decided long ago' (anon. The Irish Times 1927, 6).

The contrasting approaches to the housing problem are highlighted by the responses to the recommendations of the Committee on the Relief of Unemployment. Established by the Executive Council in 1927 to report on the steps that might be taken for the immediate relief of unemployment, and chaired by Vincent Rice KC, a National League and Cumann na nGaedheal politician, the Committee included representatives

from the Labour and the Farmers parties, Departments of Finance and Local Government, and building engineers. It took evidence from 35 witnesses from across central and local government, utilities, and union and trades associations, including E.P. McCarron, Secretary of the Department for Local Government. The Committee's Final Report recognised the importance of public works that provide value to the State, and which also absorb large numbers of unemployed, recognising the link between 'ameliorating housing conditions [that] will also result in relieving unemployment' (NAI - TSCH/3/S5553C 1928, 13), stating that 'it is not too much to say that the public conscience is awakening in an increasing measure to the urgency and extent of the housing problem' (*ibid.*, 5). The Committee recommended 'a 10-year program of house building, with increased powers to local authorities to... compel the clearance of derelict sites' (NAI - TSCH/3/S5553C 1928). The report also recommended that the government establish a conference to develop a long-term housing programme, a measure supported by the Trade Union Congress, as its Secretary and Labour party deputy Thomas Johnson (Lab) had been 'striving to secure the undertaking of a continuous housing programme [to avoid] the loss in efficiency and output inevitably caused by intermittent employment' (Johnson 1928, 5).

President Cosgrave was initially interested in taking forward the recommendations, with a memorandum sent from McCarron to all departmental secretaries in March 1928 which indicated Cosgrave's expectation that 'examination should be passed forward with the greatest possible dispatch' (NAI - TSCH/3/S5553C 1928). However, Minister Mulcahy (CnG) was unwilling to embark on implementing the policy recommendations of the Committee until the economic part of the building problem had been solved, requiring the reduction of building costs 'down to such an extent that your ordinary normal working-class houses in an ordinary town or in the Dublin area

can be built without throwing an undue amount on the ratepayers [and until then] you cannot approach your slum problem’ (Dáil Éireann 1929a). The reticence for a policy response was based on a ‘determination to restrict borrowings and public expenditure’ (Daly 1997, 144), given that the Minister for Finance, Ernest Blythe (CnG), had set out at the Executive Council in February 1929 that ‘it was imperative that expenditure be reduced’ (anon. Irish Independent 1929a, 9). In March, 1929, the President indicated that a time would come when the housing problem could be solved, but emphasised that ‘It is the merest nonsense to say that money can solve the housing problem’ (Dáil Éireann 1929b).

In contrast, the main opposition party, Fianna Fáil promoted a policy response to the Committee’s recommendations which would increase funding for housing development. Seán T. O’Kelly (FF), a future Minister for Local Government and Public Health, highlighted to the Dáil in May 1928 that slum-dwellers were worse off than five years previous, given that the government had not ‘had the courage to face [the housing problem] in the way it will have to be faced if it is to be ended’ (Dáil Éireann 1928). O’Kelly (FF) outlined that this policy would require significant investment, the alternative to which is to ‘say to the poor slum-dwellers of Dublin that they have got to remain as they are’ (*ibid.*). O’Kelly later tabled a motion to the Fianna Fáil Ard Fheis (party conference) that ‘housing shortage in Ireland is so serious that the present system of attempting to remedy it by the giving of small building grants to Local Government bodies and individual builders is inadequate’ (anon. Irish Independent 1929b, 7). Instead, O’Kelly (FF) called for the establishment of a National Housing Board to construct ‘the 50,000 houses now required within a maximum of ten years’ (*ibid.*).

2.2.3 Problem Recognition

Although both political parties recognised that housing was a problem requiring a policy response, each had interpreted the problem differently and therefore had identified different solutions (Figure 2.4).

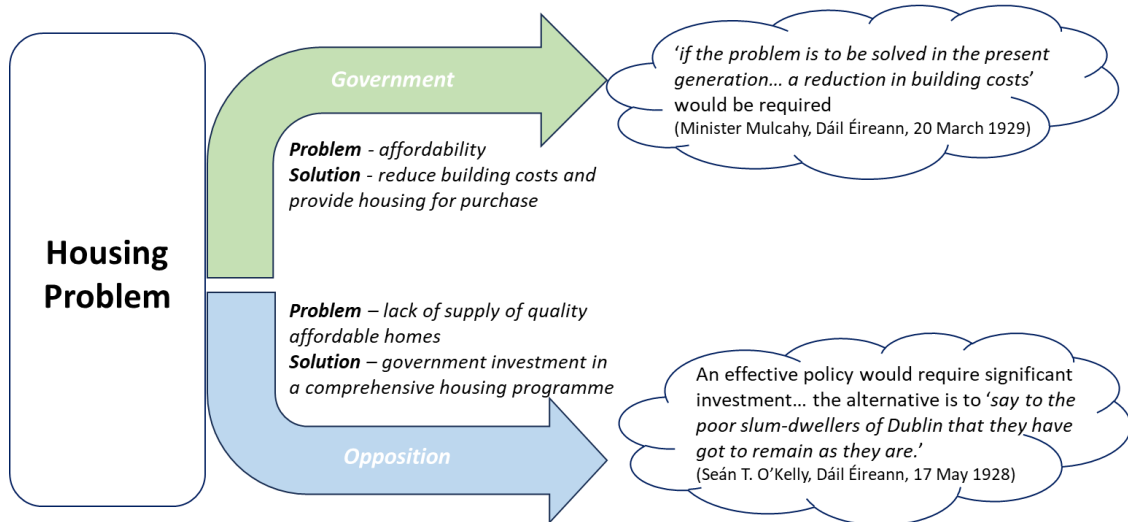


Figure 2.4: Two paths to a policy response – 1920s

The governing party, Cumann na nGaedheal, identified the problem as one of affordability. This is recognised in the Dáil speech by Minister Richard Mulcahy (CnG) in March 1929 during which he outlined that 'if the problem is to be solved in the present generation... a reduction in building costs' would be required. In line with the party's laissez-faire world-view, the solution was to encourage the private sector to build houses into which the better-off could move, freeing space in better quality rental housing (Dáil Éireann 1929a). Fianna Fáil instead recognised the problem as a lack of supply of quality housing, with the solution to increase the role of the State in provision, offering housing, welfare and land redistribution as part of a commitment to a comprehensive housing programme within nationalist objectives (Dorney 2020; Daly 1997). This nationalist rhetoric is typified by a speech to the Dáil by Eamonn Cooney (FF) which demarcated the party's ideology from that of the government's,

stating ‘in our slums dwell the real remnant of the Celtic race, the people with more spirituality and more nationality in them than would be found in the villas. They are living there under conditions which are beyond description’ (Dáil Éireann 1929a).

With ongoing concern at the limited impact of the Housing Acts 1924-1930 on the housing prospects of casual workers or the extent of slum dwellings in urban areas, the government introduced the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill in 1931. The Bill sought to provide compulsory purchase powers for local authorities and to focus assistance to the poorest in society through subsidies, whilst encouraging owners to undertake works to poor quality dwellings (Kenna 2011). The Minister, Richard Mulcahy (CnG) informed the Bill stage debate in the Dáil that:

The Government policy of accelerating the erection of houses since 1922 has in effect improved the housing conditions of the better paid workers and of the middle classes and that there has been slow consequential improvement in the conditions of the poorly paid workers or of those living in insanitary areas. The present Bill introduces a radical change in the application of State and local funds to the provision of housing. This Bill is designed mainly for the clearance of insanitary areas and the provision of houses for the poor (Dáil Éireann 1931a).

Within a *Memorandum on the Housing Bill*, the Department of Local Government and Public Health set out a target for 25,000 houses to be provided over ten years (NAI - TSCH/2/1/3 - 15 September 1931) but the opposition Labour Party view, expressed by its Leader, Thomas O’Connell (Lab), criticised the Bill for not going wider and further in developing a long-term plan, over ‘five, ten or fifteen years’ to deal with the housing problem and unemployment (Dáil Éireann 1931b). Dr. F.C. Ward of the opposition Fianna Fáil sympathised with the Bill’s direction but identified that with its focus on urban areas, more still needed to be provided for the rural areas ‘which is

a magnitude greater even than the slums’ (Dáil Éireann 1931b). Other concerns were expressed in relation to the rate of subsidy to housing developers, which was to cover a percentage of loan charges, and would be subject to a maximum payment (Daly 1997, 217) set at 40 per cent for slum clearance housing and 15 per cent for other local authority housing (Dáil Éireann 1931a). Richard Corish (Lab) and Seán Lemass (FF) both sought an increase in the scope and extent of the proposed grant, as did Edmund Carey (CnG), who suggested that ‘the subsidy proposed to be given by the Government is too small and should be increased’ (Dáil Éireann 1931a).

The Bill was passed into legislation on 17 December 1931, and became the last piece of legislation enacted by the Cumann na nGaedheal government, as the Dáil adjourned for Christmas that evening. By empowering local authorities to provide housing and to clear slums, with a focus on the most needy, the Act represented a reversal in the thrust of government housing policy (Daly 1997, 218). However, this came too late for the government to implement or to make political capital, given the limited newspaper coverage over the following days, due to the Christmas adjournment and the forthcoming general election. The election that was called for 16 February 1932 therefore provided a ‘choice between a party campaigning in defence of the status quo, and a party proposing sweeping constitutional, economic, and social changes’ (Lee 1989, 170).

The strategy for the election implemented by each party was also markedly different, as is highlighted by the election posters set out in Figure 2.5.



Figure 2.5: Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil posters for the 1932 general election [Source: McGreevy, 2020]

For Cumann na nGaedheal the party’s approach was two-fold. The first was to promote its own credentials, outlined by the Minister for Finance Ernest Blythe (CnG) as being of ‘sanity and wisdom [which] are necessary in the conduct of national affairs...[to] ensure a further period of rational and prudent government’ (anon. Irish Independent 1932a, 6). The second was to attack the opposition party, Fianna Fáil as being dangerous State-wreckers (*ibid.*). A full front-page advertisement by Cumann na nGaedheal on the Saturday prior to election day asserted that ‘you cannot afford to take a chance!’ with warnings of anarchy, communism, national discredit and a continuance of political unrest if a Fianna Fáil government was to be elected (anon. Irish Independent 1932d, 1). Thomas Finlay (CnG) outlined the Cumann na nGaedheal housing policy position to a public hustings that ‘the government has been responsible

for the building of thousands of houses’ whilst Fianna Fáil only contributed to pulling houses down (anon. *Irish Independent* 1932c, 6).

Rather than rehearse the Treaty debate of a decade previous, Fianna Fáil recognised that ‘most voters were more concerned with the bread-and-butter issues of unemployment and housing’ (Farrell 2020). The party therefore sought to counter Cumann na nGaedheal assertions, as Seán Lemass (FF) stressed that only unemployment and bad housing would produce communism, which his party was seeking to address ‘in accordance with the declaration made by Cardinal MacRory at the Catholic Truth Conference’ (anon. *Irish Independent* 1932b, 8). The Fianna Fáil election manifesto set out a programme which included the ‘The operation of a National Housing Scheme to provide dwellings for working-class tenants at rents which they can afford to pay [and] the preparation of a scheme to enable tenants of Labourer’s Cottages to become the owners of their own homes’ (de Valera 1932, 5). The party also utilised the *Irish Press* daily newspaper, established by the leader of Fianna Fáil, Éamon de Valera and published from 1931 to compete with the pro-government *Irish Independent* and the pro-treaty *Irish Times* (Ferriter 2004, 312). Headlines in advance of the election on 16 February 1932 included ‘Fianna Fail will form next government’ (anon. *Irish Press*, 13 February 1932, 1), ‘Mr. de Valera’s great meetings in Sligo and Donegal’ (anon. *Irish Press*, 15 February 1932b, 1), and ‘30,000 welcome Mr. de Valera’ (anon. *Irish Press*, 16 February 1932a, 1).

2.2.4 Proposal of Solution

Whilst the election did not prove decisive, Fianna Fáil was able to form a government with the support of the Labour party, and the 1931 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act was to provide the administrative mechanisms for the new

government's intended housing programme (Dáil Éireann 1932). The new Minister for Local Government and Public Health, Seán T. O'Kelly (FF) recognised that although the 1931 Act was aimed mainly at slum clearance, it was the level of financial provisions that inhibited local authorities from dealing effectively with the slums problem or being able to house the needy. He reasoned that 'With such financial provisions it is clear that the desired result, the eradication of the slums, could not be achieved' (Dáil Éireann 1932).

The new government's housing programme planned for the provision of 53,600 houses over ten-years to be comprised of 43,600 urban dwellings, and 10,000 rural cottages (Daly 1997, 220), which therefore adhered to previous Fianna Fáil and Labour party policy commitments (anon. Irish Independent 1929b; Dáil Éireann 1931b). The provisions of the 1931 Act were therefore extended by the Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill which was drafted to improve the financial assistance of local authorities and others in the erection and reconstruction of dwellings, and was to 'end the housing problem' (Dáil Éireann 1932). With proposals for a more generous rate of subsidy to housing developers, to cover a percentage of loan charges, and subject to a maximum, the legislation increased the rate of grant subsidy to 66.6 per cent (from 40 per cent) for slum clearance housing and to 33.3 per cent for other local authority provided housing (from 15 per cent) (Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1932). Addressing criticism at the over-generous financial terms of the subsidies, Minister Seán T. O'Kelly (FF) outlined 'To those offering such criticism I would say that in my opinion it will pay the nation well to pay the price, whatever it may be, necessary to abolish the slums and the insanitary dwellings and to do this in as short a time as possible' (Dáil Éireann 1932).

The 1931 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act and the 1932 Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act marked a change in public policy focus, from the status quo of the 1920s which supported homeownership for those in secure employment with a secure income, to a policy focus of support to the neediest in society. At this time housing became more than a political question, with political interventions in the housing market providing increased state support for housing production over the following decade (as set out in Table 2.1). Whilst the 1931 Act represented a turning point in public policy, Carey (2016, 84) outlined that the ‘almost revolutionary’ legislation of the 1932 Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act provided the financial means necessary for a new era in public housing, by removing many of the barriers to solving the housing problem.

Table 2.1: Housing built with state-aid support 1932 to 1942. [Source: Reports of the Department of Local Government and Public Health, as set out in Daly, 1997, 222 + 277]

| Year | Private / Public Utility | Local Authority | Total |
|-----------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------|
| 1932-1942 | 33,000 | 49,000 | 82,000 |

For McManus (2011, 263) ‘The 1930s brought slum clearance on a large scale. Between 1932 and 1942 over 11,000 condemned houses were demolished both privately and by local authorities across the country’. Although the Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1932 focused on provision of public housing for purchase, it also provided affordable rents for those in significant need and hardship, addressing issues of accessibility to adequate housing and of affordability (SH3). The combination of these measures, and the extension in the reach of the state in facilitating housing provision and access therefore represented a focal point, or turning point, in Irish housing policymaking. As a result of this landmark legislation, social housing

output outstripped that of private housing during the 1930s (Norris and Fahey 2011), establishing a ‘golden age’ of Irish social housing provision (Norris 2018). ‘The 1932 Act set out to address the manifest greatest needs in the housing sector, which were the houses that were really unfit for habitation, grossly overcrowded, the housing of the poorest of the poor’ (SH1).

The social mechanisms around efficiency, legitimacy and power are identifiable as influences within the historical narrative of this case. For example, precarious finances constrained and defined government policymaking (efficiency); the State, its institutions and oath of allegiance were questioned (legitimacy); and limited political opposition to the government transitioned into emergence of a political opposition (power). The process of policymaking for this case is traced and detailed in Chapter 5, Findings – Historic Cases.

2.3 The Process Leading to the Housing Act 1966

The process leading to the legislation for the 1966 Housing Act provides the case to explore the change in political thinking that took place within an incumbent political party, Fianna Fáil, which recalibrated its own policy focus by offering divergence from the status quo to provide a solution to crisis. The 1966 Act was enormously important in this regard (SH3). As opposed to the process leading to the 1932 Act, which was influenced by the emergence of a political opposition, this period facilitates the exploration of the influences on the incumbent party of government which changed its approach leading to path-shaping policy change.

2.3.1 Context to the 1966 Case

For Ireland, the 1930s and 1940s ‘resulted in a major increase in the role of the State, and this was, in principle, directed at those who were in the poorest housing conditions’ whilst the 1950s was a period of Keynesian state expenditure to create demand (Kenna 2011, 53). The successful implementation of this large-scale public and private housing programme, with an average of 10,000 dwellings built per year between 1954 and 1957, provided long-term advances in the quality and quantity of housing stock (Daly 1997). For Norris (2018, 16) ‘it saw the highest ever levels of social housing provision in relative terms (as a proportion of total housing output and per 1,000 inhabitants) and of growth in the proportion of the entire population living in this sector’.

However, as Daly (1997, 434) set-out, ‘it is impossible to exaggerate the sense of crisis which prevailed during 1956’ as wider concerns for the economy, high emigration and a balance of payments crisis ultimately led to a vote of no confidence in the government being avoided by the calling of a general election for March 1957 (Lee 1989). In the decade following 1951, ‘412,000 people emigrated from Ireland’ (Ferriter 2004, 465), although this was a perpetual problem as ‘for many years, successive governments failed to find a satisfactory remedy for emigration’ (Lynch 1994, 340).

The general election of 1957 was fought by the incumbent coalition parties (Fine Gael, formerly Cumann na nGaedheal, and Labour) on their record of government, including the significant programme of housing construction undertaken during their coalition administration, and for entrenching protectionism to deal with the balance of payments crisis. This was typified by the Labour party’s manifesto, which focused economic

development on ‘the promotion of new industries to produce commodities which are at present imported’ (Labour Party 1957). In contrast the main opposition party, Fianna Fáil, promised economic development through an end to protectionism. The Fianna Fáil secretary and future Taoiseach Seán Lemass (FF) set out that a major step forward in development will only take place by ‘linking in external firms with ample financial and technical resources and established connections in the world’s markets’ (Lemass 1957). For Daly (2016, 256) ‘by the late 1950s, the dominant political parties were “catch-all” parties’ but Fianna Fáil duly secured ‘the greatest victory in any Irish general election’ (anon. The Irish Times 1957, 1), with the party’s leader Éamon de Valera, outlining that ‘the battle with unemployment and the other economic ills from which the country is suffering has now to begin’ (*ibid.*).

With a mandate for economic development, the new government developed a *Programme for Economic Expansion* (Department of Finance 1958) for the period 1958 to 1963, which responded to recommendations within the third report of the Capital Investment Advisory Committee, published on 6 June 1958, for the capital programme to focus on productive sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, tourism and education. Drafted by the Secretary at the Department of Finance, T.K. Whitaker, this change in policy focus was outlined by the Finance Minister Dr. James Ryan (FF) as moving government expenditure towards ‘the stimulation of more production by private enterprise’ (anon. The Irish Times 1958b, 4) and thus established a ‘shift from relying on government expenditure to stimulate economic growth to a new focus on the market’ (Daly 1997, 432), though for Fitzgerald (2023, 45), rather than a shift, this was a continuation of ‘traditional Finance orthodoxy’.

This same advisory group comprised of nine external appointees (representing financial, agricultural, industrial, business and economic interests), and chaired by ex-Department of Finance civil servant John Leydon, had submitted its second report which focused on housing to the Minister for Finance on 4 November 1957, though only published 2 July 1958 (anon. *The Irish Times* 1958a, 5). Housing was chosen for examination given that funding of this sector represented one-third of the whole State capital programme (Fanning 1978, 513) with the committee questioning the ‘economic ground for the continued subsidy of private housing’ (Pfretzschner 1965, 53). A majority report found that ‘indiscriminate use of subsidies of one kind or another means that those who can pay, pay too little and those who are least able to pay may be asked to pay too much’ (Capital Investment Advisory Committee 1958), although a minority report criticised these findings (Fanning 1978). The report therefore sounded the ‘death knell of the post-war housing programme’ (Daly 1997, 435), as it recommended that housing should be shifted from the public to the private sector, with public policy to take ‘the form of encouraging the maintenance of existing stock of dwellings... and the diversion of huge capital expenditure... to more productive enterprises’ (anon. *The Irish Times* 1958a, 6).

This approach to economic development was clarified by Taoiseach de Valera (FF) informing ‘local authorities that he was keen to increase employment in construction – but in projects other than housing’ (Daly 2016, 112), given that ‘only productive not redistributive capital investment will raise the level of real incomes, and that subsidies for new privately owned housing do not create wealth or productive enterprise’ (Pfretzschner 1965, 54). This followed the wider perception of the time, articulated by Neil Blaney (FF), Minister for Local Government, to the Dáil in 1958, that ‘the housing needs on which the post-war housing programme had been based were

satisfied in full in [most] districts... we are now at a turning point in the history of Irish housing' (Dáil Éireann 1958).

Housing policy legislation in the following four years was limited. The Housing (Amendment) Act 1958 and the Housing (Loans and Grants) Act 1962 increased grants available to targeted forms of development, for new serviced homes and adaptation of existing buildings through the installation of water and sewerage services, and for specified groups, including provision for the elderly and persons with low incomes in urban areas (Kenna 2011). The minor and incremental nature of these amendments continued to support the drive for private investment within the wider government policy support for industrial and economic development beyond housing.

2.3.2 Emergence of Crisis

Although the economy grew at an average of 3.4 per cent per year over the life of the first *Programme for Economic Expansion* (Daly 2016), the impact of diverting investment away from housing was reflected by reduced provision of new public and private dwellings from 1957 (Figure 2.6). Although 'there was a lot of social housing built in the 1950s there was practically nothing built in the second half [of that decade]' (SH3).

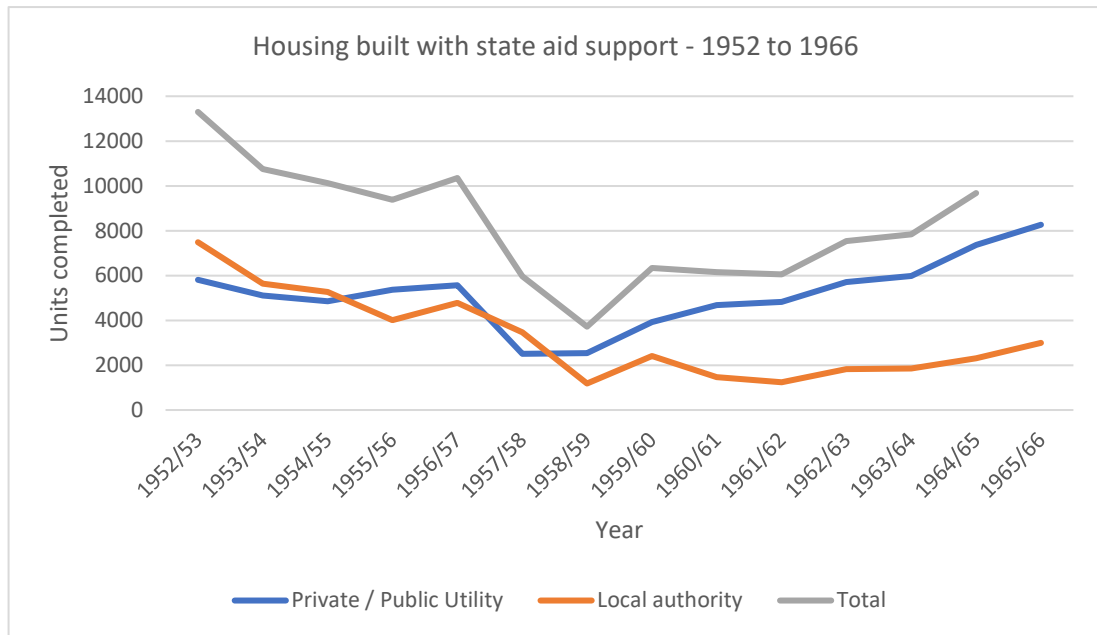


Figure 2.6: New houses built with state-aid support 1952 to 1966 [Source: Reports of the Department of Local Government and Public Health, as set out in Daly, 1997, 338, 478]

The new Taoiseach, Seán Lemass (FF), had recognised that industrial progress had caused localised issues with housing availability, particularly for key workers (anon. The Irish Times 1960, 1) and countered these difficulties by establishing a National Building Agency (NBA) in 1960 to facilitate local authority housing delivery (Kenna 2011, 45). The NBA offered a comprehensive housing service for new industries, including assisting companies with the selection and purchase of housing sites, housing design, the provision of finance and the appointment of builders (Pfretzschner 1965, 36). Alluding to an expansion of this bespoke service, Minister Neil Blaney (FF) later suggested that a further possible role might be in providing ‘rented accommodation in areas of need but which is not being supplied [by local authorities]’ (*ibid.*).

The substantial reduction of housing provision against previous years’ output was used by opposition T.D.s to criticise the government’s policy approach. This is exemplified

by Thomas O'Donnell (FG) who highlighted that the housing crisis related to both the quantity and quality of housing, and that this was not confined to Dublin:

The housing situation in Limerick is now so bad that nothing short of emergency measures can solve it. It is estimated that there are close on 2,000 families in Limerick city in need of housing... There are families... living in conditions almost too dreadful to contemplate... [this] is a social scandal in 1962 and reflects no credit on the housing policy of the Government. The present situation is due entirely to the slowing-down of house building, particularly since 1957 (Dáil Éireann 1962a).

The then leader of the opposition, James Dillon (FG) identified that 'We are now in the position that in Dublin there is an acute shortage of houses. What is the matter with the building policy of a country which leaves its people in slum rooms and condemned buildings and diverts the building industry and its resources to an unprecedented programme of luxury hotels and office buildings?' (Dáil Éireann 1962b). Governing party T.D.s were also raising support in the Dáil for increased investment in housing, albeit with a different narrative on the causes for this need, with housing crisis as the result of government industrial policy being too successful (which had encouraged the return of those who had emigrated during the previous Inter-party government's tenure). This is characterised by Patrick Burke (FF) who indicated that 'due to the industrial activity of Fianna Fáil and the number of factories established in several areas, there is a great need for more and more houses' (Dáil Éireann 1962b).

Towards the end of 1962 there was, therefore, a recognition by both government and opposition T.D.s of the need for an increased supply of housing. For Fianna Fáil deputies, the increase in supply was most needed in areas of industrial development, to be facilitated by the provision of grants to those willing and able to build their own

house. For opposition deputies, more housing was needed to replace existing overcrowding and unhealthy conditions of unfit housing (Dáil Éireann 1962a; 1962b). At this time however, Minister Blaney (FF) was awaiting the results of a housing survey being undertaken by local authorities which had been commissioned in 1960 to identify the extent of unfit housing in Ireland but was still not completed. The Minister’s exasperation is evident in his address to the Dáil on 22 November 1962:

Certain pilot survey figures have come in. We must get the real figures before we can... see where the problem is, whether or not the facilities available to the local authorities or to the public for private building are sufficient to liquidate the problem in time, or whether or not new and additional facilities may have to be devised... These figures were absolutely vital (Dáil Éireann 1962b).

Figure 2.7 outlines the two paths to a policy response.

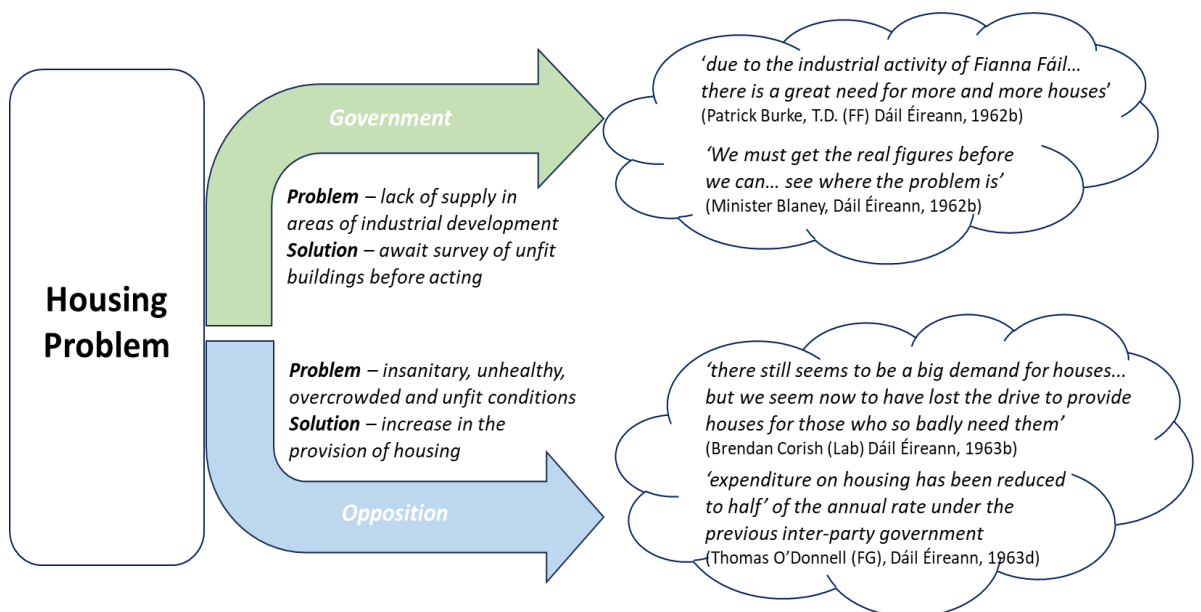


Figure 2.7: Two paths to a policy response – early 1960s

Although 1963 was to be a pivotal year for Irish housing policy, the first quarter continued with business as usual. For opposition T.D.s, such as Brendan Corish (Lab) addressing the Dáil on 6 March 1963, ‘there still seems to be a big demand for houses...

but we seem now to have lost the drive to provide houses for those who so badly need them’ (Dáil Éireann 1963b). In contrast, the government position was outlined by the Finance Minister Dr. James Ryan (FF) to the Dáil on 23 April 1963 that ‘the purpose of a budget nowadays is not merely to regulate a nation’s finances but also to promote national progress’ (Dáil Éireann 1963d).

2.3.3 Problem Recognition

The collapse of a tenement building on 2 June 1963 killed two elderly residents and injured seven. Newspaper accounts of the incident focused on the trauma of those involved at 20 Bolton Street, Dublin, and the heroics of neighbours and the emergency services. However, within the accounts an indication of the cause was provided by Mr. Smith, a tenant of the building. ‘The house next door, No. 21, was demolished by a private firm several weeks ago, after corporation officials had demolished part of No. 22. The house which collapsed yesterday had not been shored up... for the past week the whole house had been “cracking and crumbling”’ (anon. *The Irish Times* 1963b, 4). Mr. Smith had ‘expected the house to fall some day... and when the house next door [sic] was demolished three weeks ago he knew that the dividing wall was not strong enough’ (anon. *Irish Independent* 1963a, 11). A partial collapse of a building at 4 Buckingham Street on 4 June was followed by a second tragedy the following week, with the collapse of 2a, 3 and 4 Fenian Street, Dublin, on 12 June 1963 which killed two passing school children, although the residents of No. 3 had vacated the building an hour before, ‘when they heard cracking noises’ (anon. *The Irish Times* 1963a, 1). Flooding from ‘the most damaging thunderstorm to have hit Dublin in years’ (anon. *The Irish Times* 1963c, 1) the previous day had led to instabilities in other buildings,

including the partial collapse of a property in Blackhall Street, Dublin during the evening of 12 June (anon. *The Irish Times* 1963a).

Although the causes of these collapses were initially identified as being either weather-related or because of poor building maintenance procedures, together they had ‘caused panic throughout the city’s tenements’ (Carey 2016, 183) and had placed building quality onto the public agenda. The comment section of the *Irish Independent* on 19 June 1963 reported that ‘it is clear that houses unfit for habitation were, and still are, being used as permanent homes’ (anon. *Irish Independent* 1963c, 1, 6). The political response was the Dáil Adjournment Debate into Dublin’s Dangerous Buildings on 18 June 1963. Opposition T.D. Declan Costello (FG) spoke to outline that:

This is a crisis that has not arisen in the last month but has been with us for several years. It has taken four deaths to bring it to the notice of the proper authorities and it is most tragic that it required such extreme results to bring about what is very belatedly coming about, namely, a public interest in a situation in the city of Dublin which I believe to be a scandal. (Dáil Éireann 1963a)

The shock was not limited to opposition members, as Vivion de Valera (FF) highlighted that:

There is a crisis in the city of Dublin which is in part a housing crisis and in part a crisis relating to dangerous buildings, and the two are closely interconnected... I... urge upon the Minister that there is a crisis and that this crisis requires extraordinary action... (Dáil Éireann 1963a).

In summing-up the Dáil debate, Minister Blaney (FF) outlined that he was ‘appalled and stunned by what has happened’ and announced an inquiry to ‘find out why it happened and... find a way to ensure it will never happen again’ (Dáil Éireann 1963a). The inquiry was established to investigate the circumstances of the house collapses in

Bolton Street and Fenian Street, and the law relating to unfit dwellings and dangerous structures, appointing Mr. Colm Condon S.C. as Inspector from 24 June 1963 (anon. Irish Independent 1963d, 15). Such was the scale of the emergency, the Inquiry heard that up to 31 May 1963 there had been 1,812 dangerous buildings to be investigated (anon. Irish Independent 1963e, 13), but it exonerated the Council from any blame, instead highlighting the impact of severe weather on old and dilapidated buildings (Condon 1963). However, public opinion was reflected by *The Irish Times* editorial of 31 July 1963 which asserted that:

It should be a signal for a new drive to abolish the slums for ever⁷... If necessary, the Corporation should buy houses that are in the market and pay full market prices... This is better work than building any luxury hotel... but it often takes a tragedy to waken our imaginations and excite our dormant sympathies (anon. The Irish Times 1963e, 26).

Whilst the building collapses had initially focused attention on building quality, the need to house displaced families from identified dangerous buildings brought public attention to the limited supply and quantity of suitable and available housing options. At this time, housing waiting lists in Dublin had lengthened to over 9,000 families in June 1963 (Dáil Éireann 1963a), and the emergency closure of many potentially dangerous tenements during 1963 exacerbated this crisis (Daly 1997, 475). The housing of displaced families into newly built accommodation involved the prospective tenants of those same houses remaining on the housing waiting list, with one Dublin City Councillor reported as saying ‘It is just hard luck on their part. It may take a couple of years now before new houses can be got for these people’ (anon. Irish Independent 1963b, 13). Given the scale of the problem, with further inspections of

⁷ The last of Dublin’s tenements was not demolished until 2005 (Cullen 2005).

dwellings reported to be dangerous requiring the placing of 290 evacuated families into accommodation, the short-term emergency placement into army accommodation, St. Kevin's hospital and in the caravans and pre-fabricated houses was approved (anon. *The Irish Times* 1963d; 1963f). A Dublin Corporation survey undertaken during the summer of 1963 identified 367 dangerous buildings requiring evacuation, which had been home to 1,189 families (Daly 2016, 112). Evicted residents of Wolfe Tone Street and Jervis Street spent over two weeks squatting outside of their condemned houses before organising a march to Mansion House on 1 August 1963 (anon. *Irish Independent* 1963h, 12).

Speaking at the annual meeting of the National Building Agency Ltd on 4 October 1963, Minister Neil Blaney outlined plans for a comprehensive national housing policy, which would require local authorities to 'assess comprehensively both the short-term and long-term housing needs of their district, over periods of five and 20 years' (anon. *The Irish Times* 1963g, 1). However, exasperation at the ongoing housing crisis resulted in deputies addressing the Dáil over subsequent debates seeking local authority autonomy (Daniel Desmond, Labour, 23 October 1963), the establishment of an inquiry into the causes and the steps necessary to deal with the housing shortage (Declan Costello, FG, 23 October 1963), and the establishment of a joint Dublin City and County Housing Authority charged with the urgent and essential task of speedily providing a dwelling for all Dublin citizens who are in need of a home (Seán Dunne, Labour, 24 October 1963). Dismissing these proposals, Blaney (FF) asserted to the Dáil on 12 November 1963 that:

This is probably the biggest thing of all, although it was not so treated by many local authorities - ...we have had to make repeated requests since 1960 - a survey of the unfit houses in this country... Without this information it is not possible to

design a proper scheme to meet the needs... and it certainly would not be possible to justify the expenditure envisaged without proof of the need for it (Dáil Éireann 1963e).

When preliminary analysis of the local authority survey was finally available, Minister Blaney (FF) emphasised to the Dáil on 2 June 1964 the age of the housing stock, with the 1961 national census having identified that 44 per cent of stock was over 60 years old whilst 24 per cent was over 100 years old (Dáil Éireann 1964). He also outlined that ‘while 130,000 houses were newly built between 1946 and 1961, the increase in the housing stock amounted to 14,000 only’ (*ibid.*), based on obsolescence and conversion, equating to between ‘6,500 and 8,000 dwellings each year’ (*ibid.*). His analysis indicated that:

Outside the cities of Dublin and Cork there are 70,000 unfit houses in the country. Of the total, 40,000 are regarded as capable of economic repair leaving a balance of 30,000 which are totally unfit and cannot be repaired economically... The extent of the problem and the difficulties in the way of solving it, have made it clear to me that housing output must be expanded (Dáil Éireann 1964).

A consensus across political and civil society of a housing emergency, which also extended to include the causes of this crisis around an ageing and in many cases unfit and even dangerous housing stock with a limited supply of suitable and available housing options, meant that the agenda for policy action had been set. The next section focuses on the process of policy formulation as a response to this crisis.

2.3.4 Proposal of Solution

In addition to short term responses to crises, such as the provision of emergency caravan and prefabricated accommodation, one of the first longer term policy actions taken by the Minister for Local Government was to commission a delegation from Dublin Corporation to examine industrial building methods in continental cities. The visits and learning from overseas generally tied into a new approach for Ireland, as ‘the whole place was much more outward looking’ (SH1). The resulting report of the Housing Committee was agreed by the Council, with Minister Blaney (FF) reporting to the Dáil on 2 June 1964 that this would ensure ‘new building methods and techniques [to] supplement urgently the housing output which is so badly needed’ (Dáil Éireann 1964). The report emphasised the benefits of modernity and efficiency, with the tower blocks and prefabrication, fitted into the 1960s ethos of a new, modern Ireland (SH1). This would be a key aspect of the Minister’s new approach, to utilise the National Building Agency to supervise the construction of 3,000 dwellings at Ballymun on Dublin’s northern fringe using industrialised techniques, with plans unveiled in January 1965, and the first houses completed by the end of that year (anon. Irish Independent 1965, 13).

The second *Programme for Economic Expansion* had been published in August 1963, and reiterated the principles of the first Programme, including priority for productive investment and that ‘The private sector is expected to be the principal source of new productive projects’ (Booth 1966, 2). However, Part II of the second Programme was published later in July 1964 and took a less hostile approach to social capital expenditure as economic growth had enabled extra resources to be provided for social investment (Daly 1997, 470).

With the local authority survey now delivered, and with tacit approval for housing investment provided within Part II of the second Programme, Minister Blaney (FF) formulated his housing policy proposals. Set out in *Housing - Progress and Prospects* (November 1964), this White Paper suggested that with 50,000 dwellings beyond economic repair a target of 12,000 to 13,000 houses would be needed each year, the majority of which were to be privately owned. *The Irish Times* welcomed the White Paper (anon. 19 November 1964, 11) and encouraged the Minister to implement the targeted doubling of housing supply through supplementing traditional methods of construction with more system-built solutions. The newspaper suggested action to meet the expectations of public opinion which had outstripped ‘the facile optimism’ that the ‘housing problem in Ireland [had] now been solved’ (*ibid.*). During the Dáil debate on Finance on 28 April 1965, Minister Blaney (FF) said the provision of the annual target of 12,000 to 14,000 houses would be split equally between local authority and privately developed houses (Dáil Éireann 1965b), although a subsequent estimate suggested 5,000 local authority and 9,000 private dwellings, with the same 50/50 split envisaged for capital expenditure, a reduction from 85.3 per cent of investment which the White Paper estimated local authorities had contributed between 1948 and 1964 (Daly 1997, 453). This approach accorded with the wider government programme and was supported by the Taoiseach, who recognised that improvements to ‘housing conditions... in this year was something which the Government were now considering... [as] public opinion expected some improvement’ (anon. *The Irish Times* 1965, 1).

During the subsequent Housing Bill discussion in the Dáil during 1965, Minister Blaney (FF) emphasised that ‘Nobody is more conscious than I am that the only real solution to the problems of slums and overcrowding is the provision of an adequate

supply of housing at reasonable cost’ whilst ‘The occupants of many of these [proposed new] houses could be expected to provide their own accommodation with the aid of grants and loans. The remainder must look to local authorities’ and ‘The programme facing local authorities is, therefore, no small one’ (Dáil Éireann 1965d). This address reiterated that the housing crisis would be solved through a mix of government support, involving both local authority and NBA constructed dwellings, and private housing, which was to be grant aided, thus linking into that Fianna Fáil government’s ethos of supporting private industry, that was consistent with the *Programme for Economic Expansion* ‘that the private sector should be picking-up a lot of it’ (SH1).

Despite public and political support, the building industry had reservations about capacity in the sector, given full employment and order books fulfilling hotel and factory developments. This period was identified by Daly (2016, 116) as marking ‘a new relationship between politicians and property developers’. However, opposition T.D.s’ concern was focused on whether the government’s proposals went far enough, including Thomas O’Donnell (FG) and Seán Treacy (Lab), who both recommended raising the grant level subsidy to housing developers, to cover a percentage of loan charges (Dáil Éireann 1965b). To address the concerns of opposition T.Ds of the scope of the subsidy to housing developers, the final Act enabled local authorities to provide a supplementary grant, up to the value of the relevant grant (Department of Local Government 1966). The Housing Act 1966 was duly passed into legislation in July 1966.

The Housing Act 1966 reformed, rationalised and consolidated housing legislation. It set out further powers for local authorities to both compulsory purchase and provide

housing and combined rural and urban legislation enabling the right to purchase to be extended to urban tenants. The Act also required all local authorities to decouple rental charges for social tenants from the cost of housing, and instead link this to income. Known as ‘differential rent’, this was a system which had been operated in Cork since the 1930s and in Dublin since 1950, and which increased social rental affordability (Norris 2018, 14). Although there was limited contemporaneous recognition of the importance of the Act, with newspaper reports immediately focused on the constraints of a limited capital budget to implement the framework provided⁸, the passage of time has highlighted the significance of this legislation (SH1; SH3). Despite an emphasis on the realignment of public policy towards the state provision of housing, the use of policy instruments to support home ownership, which included extending the provision for tenant purchase to urban areas (Kenna 2011) from 1966 ‘significantly increased... urban home ownership’ (Norris 2016, 90) and led to a ‘privatisation of urban public housing’ (McCabe 2013, 58) with dramatic results (E. Ó Broin 2019). Homeownership increased from 59 per cent of the Irish population in 1961 to 68 per cent in 1971 (Hearne 2020, 113), and for those in urban areas this rose from 38 per cent in 1961 to 65.6 per cent in 1981 (Dukelow and Considine 2017, 284). The expansion of public housing provision in the decade following the 1966 Housing Act is set out in Figure 2.8.

⁸ As reported in *The Irish Times* relating to comments by Senator Garret Fitzgerald (FG), and Minister Neil Blayney (FF), relating to the limited availability of funding which had constrained the expansion of house building (Irish Times, 29 June 1966 , p. 15).

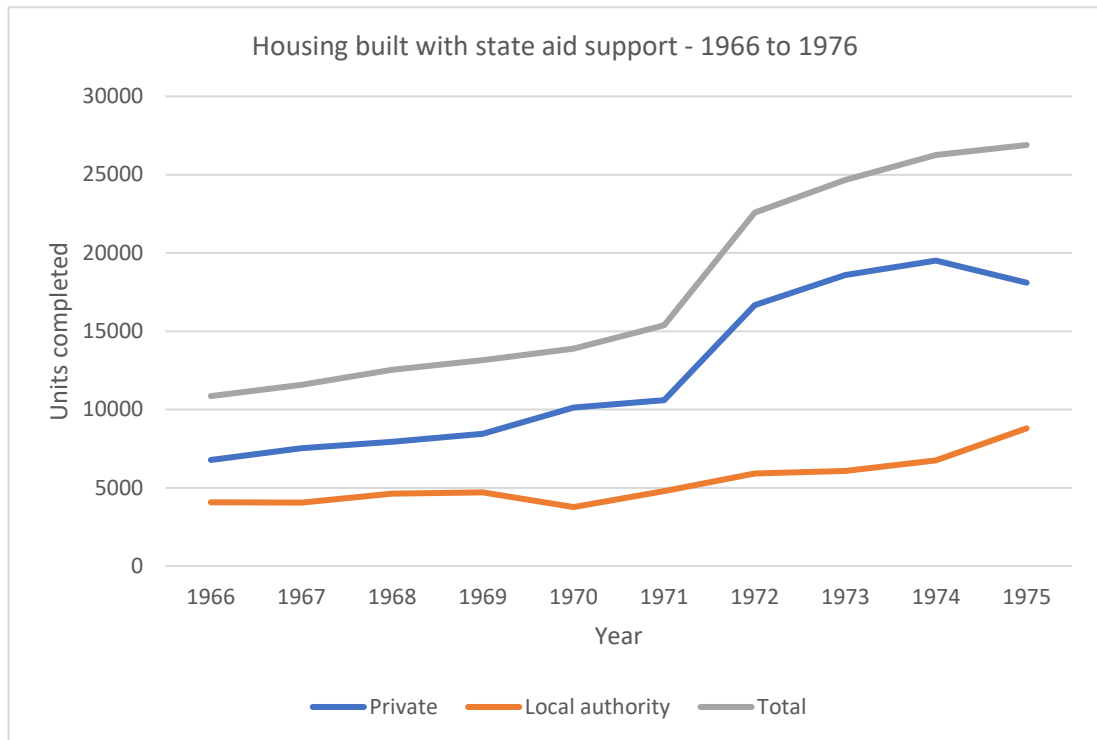


Figure 2.8: New Local Authority Housing and Private Housing built 1966-1975 [Source: Housing Agency, 2021]

The 1966 Housing Act provided for an increasingly high level of owner-occupancy through the mechanisms that were made available to support this, and represented a turning point in public policy, a policy shift, ‘with private sector production and a market in housing being primarily promoted by the State (Kenna 2011, 54). The social mechanisms around efficiency, legitimacy and power are identifiable as influences within the historical narrative of this case. For example, the government policy focus on financial efficiency, and specifically on productive capital investment, had constrained housing policymaking (efficiency); the perceived ability of existing institutional arrangements to implement a large-scale national housing scheme being questioned (legitimacy); and the role of the Capital Investment Advisory Committee in driving (or defining the limits to) housing policy (power). The process of policymaking for this case is traced and detailed in Chapter 5, Findings – Historic Cases.

2.4 Historical Housing Policymaking - Summary

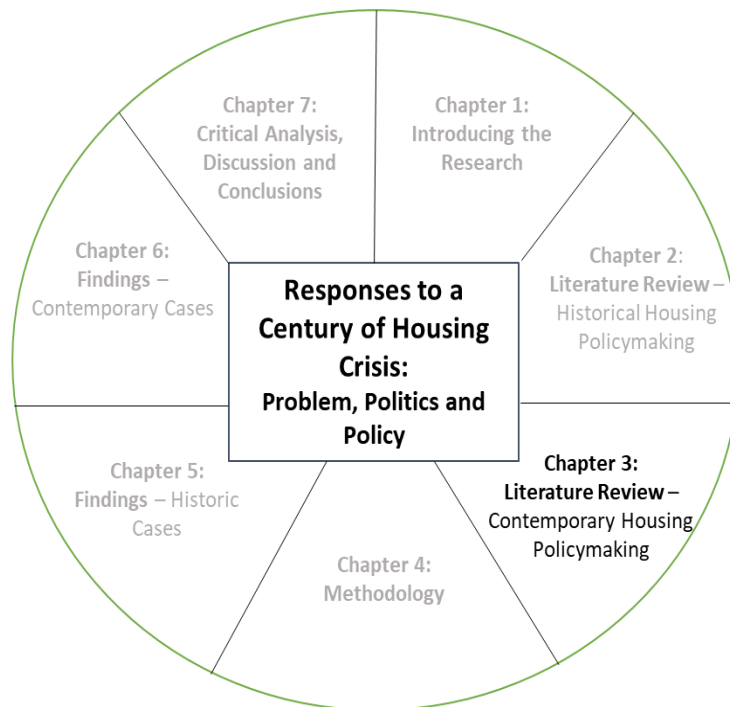
The Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1932 introduced increased public provision of housing, with rents set at lower than cost, facilitated by a new political party offering divergence from the status quo on a solution to crisis. At this time public opinion demanded political intervention in the housing market to provide further state support for housing production (SH1; SH2; SH3; SH4). The public policy approach to housing delivery represented a departure from state support for owner-occupation and facilitates exploration of how an emerging political party was able to influence the agenda and to promote change.

In contrast, the process leading to the legislation for the Housing Act 1966 enables exploration of the change in political thinking that took place within an incumbent political party, Fianna Fáil, which recalibrated its own policy focus by offering divergence from the status quo on a solution to crisis, responding to concerns of poor quality and quantity of housing. In both cases a difference in problem recognition was seemingly overcome following the publication of an external report, overcoming reasons for policy constraint and with public opinion encouraging political consensus (SH1; SH2; SH3; SH4).

The two 20th century cases highlight changes in political thinking which resulted in paradigm shifting policy responses to housing crisis. Together, these two periods of historic housing crisis, and the processes leading to the policy responses, provide suitable cases for analysis. The tracing of the policymaking processes for both cases are set out in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 3 – LITERATURE REVIEW

CONTEMPORARY HOUSING POLICYMAKING



3.1 Introducing the Contemporary Cases

The purpose of this second literature review chapter is to draw on two contemporary cases of housing policymaking, the processes leading to the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 and the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014. As will become clear, both cases are examples of self-reinforcing processes. Figure 3.1 sets out the problem definition, the policy response and outcome for the contemporary cases.

| | <i>Problem definition</i> | <i>Policy response</i> | <i>Policy outcome</i> |
|---|---|---|--|
| Contemporary crisis <i>1990s into the early 2000s</i> | 1990s -2000s 'Celtic Tiger' and issues of affordability Critical Juncture: The report of the Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector was published in July 2000. | Focal Point: 2004 Residential Tenancies Act established the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) as an independent statutory body to operate a national tenancy registration system. | The provisions of the 2004 Act, as amended, continues to provide the basis to regulation of the private rented sector. |
| Contemporary crisis <i>early 2000s into 2010s</i> | 2008-2010 global financial crash and consequent issues of affordability, security of tenure, accessibility Critical Juncture: The Economic Adjustment Programme was agreed by the Dáil on 15 December 2010. | Focal Point: 2014 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act established the Housing Assistance Payment scheme to provide financial support for eligible families to access the private rental sector. | The Housing Assistance Payment scheme provides choice for recipients to find their own solution within the private rental sector, though continues the focus on the market provision of social outcomes. |

Figure 3.1: Problem definition, policy response and outcomes of contemporary policymaking

The interpretative approach used for both cases again uses a narrative style from which the processes of policy change can be identified and traced (Chapter 6), analysed and compared (Chapter 7). As with the historic cases (Chapter 2), the context is first set out, followed by the emergence of crisis, the process of problem recognition and the proposal of a solution.

3.2 The Process Leading to the Residential Tenancies Act 2004

The first contemporary case focuses on the process leading to the introduction of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004, which provided regulation of the private rented residential sector and set out the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants. The

Act implemented the recommendations of a Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector which reported four years previously and established the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) as an independent statutory body to operate a national tenancy registration system. It introduced ‘new rights and protections for tenants’ (O’Connor 2014, 41), and provided ‘improvements to the legal protections for private renters (Finnerty and O’Connell 2014, 177). For Kenna and Sidoli del Ceno (2014, 209) the 2004 Act ‘undoubtedly transformed the area of private rented housing law in Ireland’.

The process leading to this legislation provides the case to explore the change in political thinking that took place within an incumbent political party that recalibrated its own policy focus for a solution to crisis. This policy measure came mid-way through the tenure of a Fianna Fáil government, reflecting in-party policy change as per the 1960s case, and therefore facilitates the exploration of institutional change through the tracing of path dependent sequences which led to paradigm-reinforcing policy change (set out in Chapter 6).

3.2.1 Context to the 2004 Case

Public policy around housing had promoted an asset-based welfare approach (Norris and Fahey 2011), a system of differential rates for social tenants, coupled with rights of purchase and supportive financial structures, which from the 1960s through to the 1980s, provided a route to owner-occupation, ‘a form of socialised home ownership through tenant purchase and cheap loans’ (Hearne 2020, 113). With support across the political spectrum this was considered ‘as a progressive form of wealth distribution which was quite compatible with welfare state principles’ (Norris and Fahey 2011, 463). The level of home ownership had consequently risen from 68 per cent in 1971

to 80 per cent in 1991 (Hearne 2020, 124), whilst the private rented sector reduced from 13.3 per cent to 8 per cent over the same period (DELG 2000, 6).

The 1991 policy document *A Plan for Social Housing* (DoE 1991), promoted owner-occupation and highlighted a shift away from the direct provision of housing by public authorities. With the state withdrawing from being a central actor in housing provision, the focus was on the private sector to be the main provider. This policy was augmented with the 1995 policy document *Social Housing: The Way Ahead* (DoE 1995), which acknowledged the role of alternative tenures to home ownership in providing choice and encouraged shared ownership with improved tenant purchase terms. Together these policy documents promoted higher levels of home ownership (E. Ó Broin 2019, 60), which enabled the small social housing provision to be targeted on society's most needy (Dukelow and Considine 2017, 286).

Much of the housing legislation had been focused on promoting owner occupation (outlined in Chapter 2) with only limited legislation in relation to the relatively small private rented sector (PRS). For SIRR, 'despite an increase in demand for renting, the development of an actual ideology of renting – a normalisation of policy to practice – [had been] hampered by a lack of direction and co-ordination at national level' (2014a, 11). Rent control had been removed for most private rented properties through the Rent Restrictions Act 1960, although it did continue control for low-value unfurnished dwellings that had been rented in 1941 (Norris 2014b, 22), whilst the Housing Act 1966 'required housing authorities to make bye-laws in relation to standards, facilities and maintenance of houses let for rent' (DELG 2000, 88). However, this uneven regulatory system deterred landlords and tenants from the sector (Norris 2014b), given

the limited investment opportunity (for landlords) and the incentives available (to tenants) for owner-occupation (DELG 2000, 7).

The provisions of the 1960 and 1966 Acts were repealed by the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992, which instead empowered the Minister to make regulations in relation to standards of accommodation and the registration of dwellings let for rent (DELG 2000). Subsequent provision under the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 1993 obliged landlords to ensure that rented properties complied with minimum standards, and the Housing (Registration of Rented Houses) Regulations 1996 required registration of rented dwellings to the local authority. Despite the legislation, the Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector noted that there had been ‘a high level of non-compliance by landlords ... and a very low level of enforcement activity by local authorities’ (DELG 2000, 95).

This period is also marked by tribunal inquiries into allegations of bribery, unlawful payments and corruption. For example, the Flood / Mahon Tribunal into allegations of planning corruption was established in 1997 and provided interim reports in September 2002, which drew front page headlines including ‘Minister for Corruption’ (McKenna et al. 2002, 1) and ‘Burke corruption findings put pressure on Taoiseach’ (Hennessy 2002, 1). This undermined the legitimacy of democratic processes, and Ferriter (2004, 18) noted that the deconstruction of the power held by Irish landlords at the end of the nineteenth century, both politically and socially, had been reconfigured by the end of the twentieth century. Ferriter also suggested that this had been undertaken ‘by a class of landowners and speculators who were to exercise their domination of the land... in more invidious ways’ (*ibid.*).

3.2.2 Emergence of Crisis

On the demand side, several factors contributed to increasing need for good quality housing in appropriate locations. As the economy boomed and favourable tax rates encouraged ‘multinationals to locate and invest in Ireland’, some 513,000 new jobs were created between 1986 and 2000 ‘an increase of 47 per cent’ (Ferriter 2004, 674). Consequently, the unemployment rate fell from over 12 per cent in 1995 to 3.6 per cent in 2001, ‘the second lowest of all EU countries’ (CSO 2005, 35). Economic growth encouraged increased immigration (P5), though population was also boosted by natural increase growth (Kitchin, Hearne, and O’Callaghan 2015, 3). Between 1996 and 2002, total population grew by 12.3 per cent, or 442,500 people, with net inward migration increasing ‘from 8,000 in 1996 to 41,300 in 2002’ (CSO 2005, 52, 53). Coupled with this, a shrinking average household size ‘through alterations in family structure’ (Kitchin, Hearne, and O’Callaghan 2015, 3) resulted in the number of households increasing by 255,000 or 22.2 per cent (CSO 2005, 52, 53). By the 1990s ‘you were looking at a shortage of accommodation, rising rents, the crowding out of lower income and vulnerable people in the [private rented] sector. So the gaping wounds of the private rented sector began to be a lot more obvious’ (CiSo2).

On the supply side, favourable tax breaks also facilitated a boom in housing unit completions, as Minister for Finance Charlie McCreevy (FF) introduced rural and urban renewal schemes through the 1998 Finance Act. Although the rural scheme was limited to counties Leitrim and Longford, and areas of counties Cavan, Roscommon and Sligo, the urban scheme was available to all urban areas. Both schemes allowed 50 per cent of capital expenditure to be used as tax relief in year one, whilst the remaining 50 per cent could be written off at 4 per cent per year over the following

thirteen years (Murdoch 1999, 19). Housing unit completions increased from 26,863 in 1994 to 68,819 in 2003, and these were formed principally by private dwellings which represented 88 per cent of total completions in 1994 and 91 per cent in 2003 (CSO 2005, 58). The growth in housing completions for this period is set out in Figure 3.2.

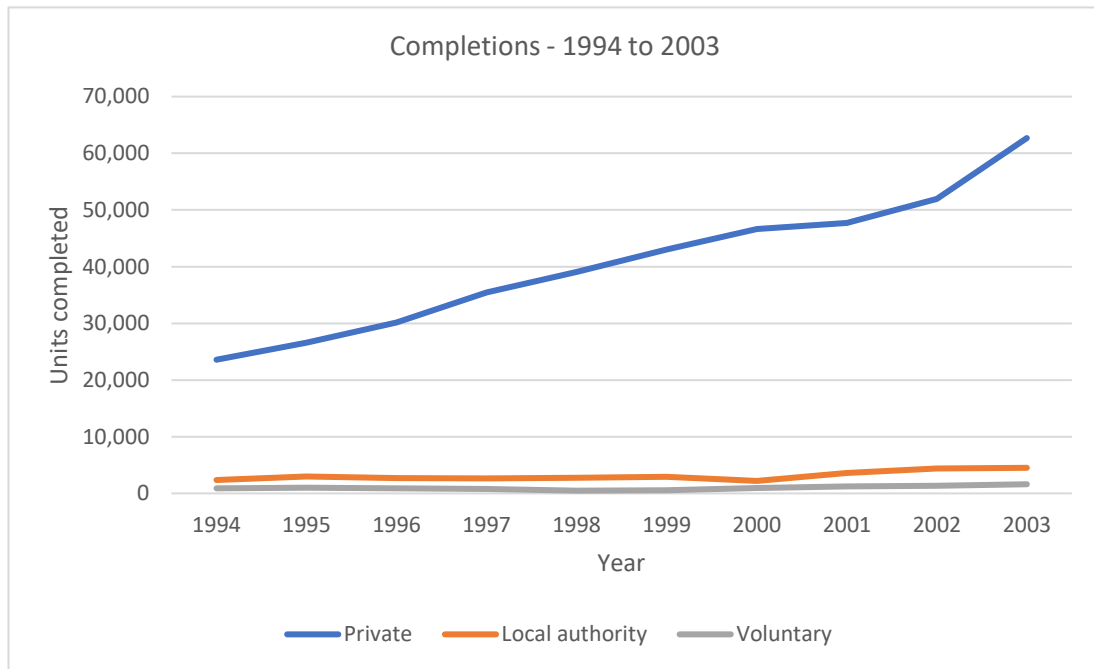


Figure 3.2: Dwelling unit completions 1994-2003 [Source: CSO, 2005, 58]

A study of Ireland's housing market by Davy Stockbrokers, reported in *The Irish Times* in November 2003, identified that nearly a third of new dwellings were used as second homes, whilst less than half of the 67,000 completed in 2003 'will be taken up by newly formed households', debunking 'the notion that demographics have been the main driver of the housing boom of the past decade' (Coyle 2003, 37). The remaining vacant properties were developed in locations without significant demand, with 22 per cent of all housing in both counties Leitrim and Longford being vacant at the time of the 2006 Census, many built as a result of the Rural Renewal Scheme focused in those areas (McCabe 2013, 55).

Despite the country's housing stock increasing by 60 per cent from 1992 through to 2007 (Kenna 2011) *The Irish Times* reported in August 2000 that Irish house price inflation was 'highest in [the] world', which after adjustments for inflation had risen '76 per cent between 1995 and 1999' (anon., 2000). Later, in 2004, the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) would report that 'the gap between demand and supply' in the housing system had provided inequality between income groups and an imbalance between the provision of private and social housing (NESC 2004, 3). This gap was paradoxical given that the significant number of houses which had been developed had not satisfied increased housing needs due to ongoing issues of affordability (Ó Broin, 2019, 69–70; P5) and housing supply not in locations of need (McCabe 2013). Housing provision by the market was, and had been, underpinned by tenure-based policies and subsidy (Drudy and Punch 2002), and this policy response to housing crisis had led to an increase in unaffordability whilst fuelling a private sector boom (Memery 2001).

3.2.3 Problem Recognition

Recognising increasing difficulties that working people were experiencing in accessing accommodation in high-cost areas, the Fianna Fáil and Progressive Democrats coalition government encouraged access to affordable housing, but within the parameters of promoting owner-occupation (Lewis 2019). The longest running scheme was the support offered towards home ownership through equity sharing ownership⁹ which encouraged the sale of local authority housing to tenants, with 50 per cent equity secured through a loan, with the remaining 50 per cent equity rented. From 1999, the Affordable Housing Scheme sought to discount the cost price by the

⁹ Initially implemented in 1991, the support was continued until 2011.

value of the land owned by a local authority, extended in 2003 by the Affordable Housing Initiative to also include land owned by other public bodies.

Further recognition of the continued problems of affordability and limited social housing provision led to the implementation of a mechanism, within developments of over four units, for the provision of affordable or social housing. Under the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, up to 20 per cent of housing scheme land or completed dwellings would be transferred to the local authority. Lewis (2019) identified the principle that if units are taken, the local authority is obliged to pay for the cost of the land at the use value prior to planning approval, plus the construction costs. This mechanism enabled for the savings to be passed onto the purchaser, reducing the cost price of the unit. Mallach (2020, 408) considered the Part V mechanism as being ‘an inclusionary’ strategy, and ‘a thoughtful effort to balance market and social considerations’ to provide affordable housing within mixed communities.

Housing output continued to grow, with 46,512 completions in 1999 and 49,812 in 2000. However, despite this increased output, price inflation was not moderated as the rising availability and utilisation of credit encouraged demand for housing that was outstripping supply in required locations (Norris 2016, 95). The government had, however, recognised the problem of increasing rents and Minister of State for Housing and Urban Renewal, Bobby Malloy (PD), established a Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector in 1999. The terms of reference were broadened from an initial investigation into security of tenure, to wider examine the landlord and tenant relationship, maintain a fair and reasonable balance between respective rights and obligations of landlords and tenants, to improve security of tenure for tenants, and to

increase investment in, and the supply of, residential accommodation for renting (DELG 2000, 1). Prior to the Commission reporting, Eamon Gilmore (Lab) outlined to the Dáil debate on housing policy on 14 June 2000 that in the three years since the general election, house prices had risen by 70 per cent, whilst ‘rents in the private rented sector [had] doubled’ (Dáil Éireann 2000). Gilmore moved a motion which proposed a range of state intervention measures, including the provision of land banks, price controls on new housing, the establishment of a National Housing Authority, regulation of the housing market, and reform of the private rented sector (*ibid.*).

At this time, a range of civil society organisations provided position statements regarding the housing crisis. The National Competitiveness Council (NCC 2000, 16) reported that:

Sustained high house price inflation has made private house purchase very difficult for many people on low-to middle incomes, leading to burgeoning local authority housing lists. The knock-on effect on the private rented sector has led to large increases in rent.

In addition to recommending the establishment of a National Housing Authority to, *inter alia*, advise the Minister on the development of housing policy, the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) identified the need for ‘An appropriate regulatory framework which would protect the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords... provide for a speedy and effective resolution mechanism and a greater degree of certainty for potential investors’ (NESF 2000, 64). In outlining that illegal evictions had doubled over the previous month, director of Threshold, Kieran Murphy, ‘called for the urgent introduction of security of tenure in the private rented sector’ (C. Murphy 2000, 9).

The government recognised that ‘perhaps there had not been a full understanding of how urban economics or housing markets in particular worked, so they commissioned the Bacon reports into the housing system’ (CiSo1). Dr. Peter Bacon, the government’s economic and policy advisor presented *The Housing Market in Ireland: An Economic Evaluation of Trends and Prospects* in June 2000 (Bacon 2000). The report recommended revisions to stamp duty to encourage first-time buyers and the introduction of an annual anti-speculation property tax at ‘2-3 per cent of the declared value’ (*ibid.*). The government immediately introduced a 9 per cent stamp duty rate for non-principal dwellings, and a 2 per cent speculation tax to calm the market, which Environment Minister Noel Dempsey (FF) outlined would ‘discourage speculation and help first-time buyers’ (Keenan 2000, 1). In response, the Irish Auctioneers and Valuers Institute criticised the new rate and tax as it would ‘cut off the supply of much needed rental accommodation at the jugular’ (*ibid.*). Addressing the Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis in 2015, Dr. Bacon explained that although his recommendations had been implemented, ‘in 2001 the measure to exclude interest deductibility was reversed. Thereafter prices re-accelerated, despite a supply response rising to 90,000 units annually, as speculative forces gathered increasing momentum’ (Oireachtas 2015).

Whilst ‘Bacon did not look at the PRS ... the point that [he] made very well was that a report from an economist was not the best way to go about it’ (CiSo1). Better would be to establish a Commission which would be able to draw ‘all the participants who had understandings [on that system] to identify a solution’ (*ibid.*). After a year taking evidence, the report of the *Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector* was published in July 2000 (DELG 2000). The Commission provided recommendations around dispute resolution and the establishment of a Private Residential Tenancies

Board (PRTB), proposals to improve security of tenure through the introduction of notice periods and limited reasons for lease termination, the provision of tax credits to target assistance to aid affordability and focus on compliance and enforcement of registration regulations (*ibid.*).

The Irish Property Owners' Association (IPOA) submitted points in opposition to the Commission's recommendations in relation to the automatic right to continue occupation of a dwelling, the wider role of the proposed PRTB beyond dispute resolution, and the requirement for the registration of tenancy details to the proposed Board. Despite these reservations, the Commission published a majority report, which the Chairman, Thomas Dunne outlined was a 'compromise between the various interests. Where members of the Commission felt they could not compromise, a majority view was taken and an alternative view stated' (DELG 2000, ii).

Newspaper coverage highlighted that the Commission had maintained a fair and reasonable balance between respective rights and obligations of landlords and tenants. *The Irish Times* highlighted that students, young people and the less well-off welcomed the proposals, however these did not go far enough as the report contained limited measures to deal with security of tenure, spiralling rents and increasing unaffordability (Brennock 2000, 5). Writing in the *Irish Independent* 28 July 2000, James Young, an economist specialising in the European property market suggested that 'voluntary arrangements between landlords and tenants would have led to fewer harmful side effects' than the proposed registration regime, and implementation of the proposals 'will do nothing to improve the situation in the housing market' (Young 2000, 12).

Despite the Commission's report being long awaited and generally welcomed on publication, and calls from housing support organisations for the urgent application of security of tenure measures given significant increases in evictions (C. Murphy 2000, 9), little action was taken to implement the report's recommendations. The election held in May 2002 provided an opportunity for political parties to outline their respective manifestos and policy programmes to address an increasing housing problem, defined in the *Irish Independent* on 7 May 2002 as a crisis of soaring rents and limited enforcement of rental laws (T. Hogan 2002, 35).

The Fianna Fáil election manifesto committed to a continued high level of home ownership though pledged legislation in response to the report of the Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector. Importantly, the manifesto promised 'the most significant ever package of reforms in rented accommodation sector... including the establishment of a new statutory Private Residential Tenancies Board [...to provide] a more professionally operated private rented sector, with greater security of tenure for tenants' (Fianna Fáil 2002, 69). Coalition partners, the Progressive Democrats committed to 'implement legislation for security of tenure as recommended by the Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector' (Progressive Democrats 2002, 76). Fine Gael pledged to introduce a 'new framework for the rented sector, with a right to a lease after 6 months tenancy, a rent tribunal to adjudicate on fair rents, and more than double tax relief on rent' (Fine Gael 2002, 29). The party also sought to establish a National Housing Agency to integrate local authority housing strategies, with a target to rapidly increase delivery of social and affordable housing (*ibid.*). The Labour manifesto condemned the failure of the Fianna Fáil and Progressive Democrats coalition government to implement the recommendations of the Commission's report, and committed to regulate the private rented sector through establishing a Housing

Court and mediation service for dispute resolution, and a licensing and inspection regime (Labour 2002, 15). The party also recognised the impact of the housing crisis on renters and pledged to establish a National Housing Authority to coordinate local authority housing strategies, and to contract the private sector to build houses (*ibid.*).

The election manifestos therefore offered political consensus on both the framing of the housing problem and the potential solution, to be delivered through the implementation of the Commission’s recommendations on the Private Rented Sector. The process from that political consensus to policy formulation is now outlined.

3.2.4 Proposal of Solution

The general election of May 2002 delivered an increased representation of Fianna Fáil deputies, though again the support of another party would be needed to form a government. Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats again worked together to form another coalition administration, with the agreed Programme for Government based on the shared election pledges and manifestos of both parties (Fianna Fáil - Progressive Democrats 2002). The Programme therefore pledged to implement ‘a full package of reforms in [the] rented accommodation sector, arising from the report of the Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector’ (*ibid.*).

With the retirement from politics of Bobby Malloy at the general election, it fell to the new Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Noel Ahern (FF), to subsequently present the Residential Tenancies Bill to the Dáil in June 2003, ‘the most comprehensive reform of the residential private rented sector in Ireland in almost 150 years [which will] enhance the contribution of the sector to meeting the housing needs of society’ (Dáil Éireann 2003a). Seán Haughey (FF) enthused that whilst overdue, the Bill would ‘revolutionise the private

rented sector and is extremely welcome’ (Dáil Éireann 2003b). Opposition T.D.s also welcomed the introduction of the Bill: Bernard Allen (FG) recognised that publication represented ‘a historic day for landlords and tenants’ (Dáil Éireann 2003a) whilst Dan Boyle (Green) outlined that ‘The Bill was examined by an independent commission, a process which the Government has largely accepted. This is a good way of forming, introducing and agreeing legislation. For that reason alone, everyone in the House should welcome it’ (*ibid.*). Eamon Gilmore (Lab) confirmed that the Labour Party would support the Bill and welcomed its provision of ‘a minimal level of protection to tenants’ (Dáil Éireann 2003c), and Seán Crowe (SF) identified that ‘While this Bill has more than its fair share of flaws, Sinn Féin welcomes it as a small sign that the Government might be seriously considering tackling the housing crisis’ (Dáil Éireann 2003b).

Whilst the Bill addressed the Commission’s recommendations, Minister Ahern (FF) recognised that the ‘recommendations did not fully meet all the demands of the competing interests in the sector [but] it strikes a fair and reasonable balance’ between the demands of those who provide rented accommodation and those who live in it (Dáil Éireann 2003a). The sentiment of compromise was also recognised by T.D.s during Dáil debates. Paul Connaughton (FG) suggested that ‘the Bill strikes a reasonable balance between the landlord and the tenant’ (Dáil Éireann 2003d), and M.J. Nolan (FF) pointed out that whilst ‘the system currently tends to favour landlords ... this Bill gives tenants a very fair deal [and] will help balance the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants’ (Dáil Éireann 2003e). Eamon Gilmore (Lab) ‘acknowledged that the conclusions of the Commission ... were themselves a compromise between the various interests which were represented’ (Dáil Éireann 2003c), whilst Billy Kelleher (FF) outlined that ‘Threshold has welcomed the Bill’s

provisions while the Irish Property Owners Association has not’ (Dáil Éireann 2003e). In relation to the delay in the publication of the Bill, given that the Commission reported in 2000, Seán Ryan (Lab) suggested that:

The landlord lobby has more influence on the establishment, particularly on Fianna Fáil, than the tenants [since] Tenants tend not to vote in large numbers – many do not even register – and, therefore, they are perceived as powerless. It is unfortunate that the people's needs are not given priority over pressure groups when legislation is being drawn up (Dáil Éireann 2003d).

General criticism of the Bill was levelled at it being introduced three years after the Commission reported, with some specific concerns around the lack of flexibility of tenancies (Eamon Gilmore (Lab), Dáil Éireann, 2003c), the probationary period (Damien English (FG), Dáil Éireann, 2003d), and the ability of landlords to deal with anti-social behaviour (Bernard Allen (FG), Dáil Éireann, 2003a). However, although seeking to address security of tenure, a criticism was the concern that the legislation would not address increasing unaffordability in the private rental sector. Seán Crowe (SF) outlined that although the Bill included many good provisions, it did not address the question of affordability (Dáil Éireann 2003b), whilst Arthur Morgan (SF) was astonished that legislation to reform the private rented sector did not ‘tackle the fundamental issue of affordability. This is symptomatic of the Government's failure to tackle the crucial issues in terms of the housing crisis’ (Dáil Éireann 2003a).

The Bill passed into legislation in July 2004. NESC, in its 2004 report *Housing in Ireland: Performance and Policy* welcomed the Residential Tenancies Act 2004, recognised its reforms as responding to the report of the Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector published in 2000, and outlined that the reforms ‘will undoubtedly improve the quality and standards in the sector, and increase its

attractiveness as a tenure’ (2004, 166). Despite the political consensus that emerged during the process leading to the 2004 Act, housing policy continued not to ‘address the development of renting as an accepted practice but focuses on regulatory issues ... ignoring aspects of supply and demand’ (Sirr 2014a, 12) whilst the provisions within the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 which related to security of tenure would be difficult for a tenant to enforce (Sirr 2014b, 274). Aileen Hayden, Chair of Threshold suggested that social housing had been substituted by long-term renting for 60,000 families, with many living in squalor, and requested the government ‘to commit to a social housing policy similar to the 1930s, when large-scale urban public housing got underway in the form of slum clearance programmes’ (Cunningham 2004, 4).

The provisions of the 2004 Act, as amended, continues to provide the basis to regulation of the private rented sector. The social mechanisms around efficiency, legitimacy and power are identifiable as influences in this case. For example, an increasing role for the private sector to provide social housing outcomes (efficiency); the regulatory regime of minimum standards and registration undermined by non-compliance and limited enforcement (legitimacy); and allegations of the abuse of power, bribery and corruption (power). The process of policymaking for this case is traced and detailed within Chapter 6, Findings – Contemporary cases.

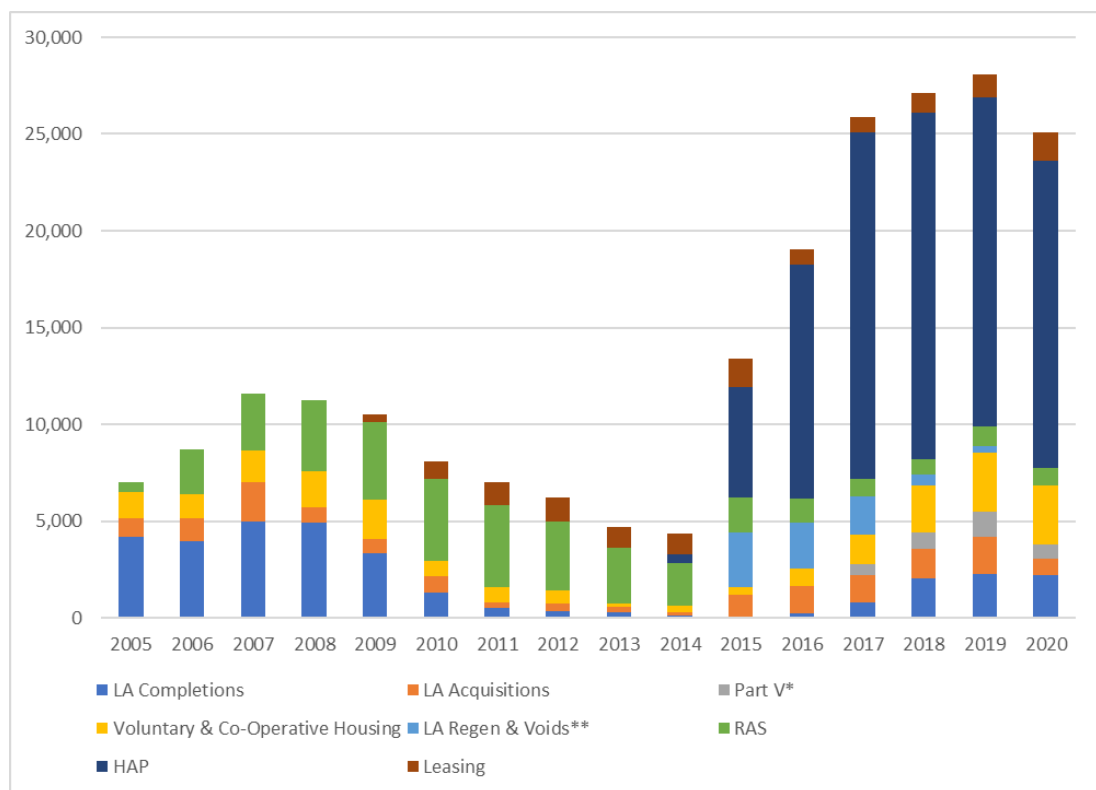
3.3 The Process Leading to the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014

The literature suggests that the global financial crash of 2008-2010 provided a significant punctuation, but the system was sufficiently resistant to dilute impetus for paradigm-changing policy transformation, as austerity, the narrative of fiscal responsibility, retrenchment and centralisation were measures that were deemed necessary to maintain the equilibrium of the status quo (Dukelow 2011; G. Murphy 2018). Housing policy reforms post-2010 continued the trajectory towards a reliance on private provision. This is typified by the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme, which replaced previous reform mechanisms, such as Rent Supplement (RS) and the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and provided direct placement into privately rented accommodation or financial support for eligible families to access the private rental sector.

Enacted through the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014, HAP continued the focus on the market provision of social outcomes (Byrne and Norris 2018; E. Ó Broin 2019), and provided financial assistance by housing authorities in respect of rent payable by qualifying social housing tenants. Although providing enhanced choice that enabled recipients to find their own solution within the private rental sector (Lewis 2019), critics highlighted that this continued the ‘privatisation of social housing’ (Kelly 2021, 42). The increasing reliance on the private sector cost the Irish state €354.6 million in 2019 for the 52,529 recipients of HAP payments, rising to €504.2 million for 61,907 recipients in 2021¹⁰ (DHLGH 2023a). In addition, the cost of the

¹⁰ The costs correspond to the Exchequer amounts spent on landlord payments in respect of those tenancies, though do not include administration costs related to the Scheme.

legacy Rental Accommodation Scheme, a social housing support for persons who are in receipt of long-term rent supplement, was €122 million in 2021 for its 17,183 recipients (DHLGH 2023b). The continued implementation of social housing provision through the private rental sector requires a continued allocation from the government’s annual budget, and this case therefore provides an example of self-reinforcing path dependence. Figure 3.3 sets out the increasing importance of HAP as a proportion of social housing delivery.



* Part V figures separate for 2017 only. For previous years they are incorporated under either LA or Voluntary and Co-operative Completions.

** LA Regeneration & Voids are included from 2015 onwards.

Figure 3.3: Social housing delivery 2005 – 2020 [Source: Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage (Social Housing Provision) (2020)]

Finnerty *et al.* (2016, 237) emphasised the negative effects of ‘the dilution of housing security and the uncertainty of household access given the volatile nature of much of this private provision’. Byrne and Norris (2018) and Ó Broin (2019) suggested that

delivery of social housing objectives through the subsidy to the private rental sector had increased demand and fuelled rental prices increases in this market. Umfreville and Sirr (2020) described this as an example of a policy seeking to address a symptom of crisis, in this case affordability, but which resulted in further crisis as rental prices increased in the private rental sector.

The period of housing crisis following the global financial crisis had some similarities to historic cases, as set out in Chapter 2, for example with issues of affordability and availability of good quality housing in the locations demanded. The process leading to the legislation for the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014 and the introduction of HAP provides the case to explore and analyse the social mechanisms which led to this as the policy response to crisis and facilitates the exploration of institutional change through the tracing of path dependent sequences which led to paradigm-reinforcing policy change.

3.3.1 Context to the 2014 Case

The liberalisation and deregulation of banking practices during the 1990s extended into the 2000s, which coupled with low interest rates and 100 per cent loan-to-value mortgages increased credit supply (C. Fitzgerald, O'Malley, and Broin 2019, 17), facilitated an expansion of household debt (Dukelow and Considine 2017, 276) and promoted 'buy-to-lets' as investment opportunities (Hearne 2020, 124). 'Ireland had shown the highest level of accumulated house price increases in the world between 1985 and 2006' with real house prices increasing by 339% during that time (Kenna 2011, 4). The housing bubble that developed was comprised of three parts: 'a property price bubble, a credit bubble, and a construction bubble' (McHale 2017, 38). Fuelled by cheap credit, facilitated by participation in the European Monetary Union, though

with that mechanism’s constraint on ‘the repertoire of policy responses available to national governments’ (Hardiman et al. 2017, 84), the resulting crisis caused a collapse in revenues, leading to the austerity policies of expenditure cuts and tax increases (McHale 2017).

The current housing crisis is ‘directly connected to the run-up’ to the financial crash (Lima 2023, 37), which had significant impacts across the world, but for Ireland, with an increasingly globalised economy, the depth of crisis and the effects of the resulting recession was considerable (Dukelow 2011). Figure 3.4 highlights the impact of the crash on the Irish economy.



Figure 3.4: Impact of the financial crash on Ireland’s economy (Source: CSO, 2017b, 2017a)

The financial crash was not, however, the cause of Irish housing dysfunction, as flaws in the housing sector had been evident prior to the crash (as detailed in the first contemporary case, with regulation of the private rental sector as the policy response).

Indeed, Memery (2001) had identified housing crisis in the Irish context in 2001, but the housing sector had a significant effect on the depth of the crash, as a result of the expansion of public spending, and private borrowing, in the first years of the twenty-first century (Lyons 2017).

The financial crash also had significant impacts on the housing sector (Lyons 2017). House prices collapsed (CSO 2013), mortgage arrears increased (Central Bank of Ireland 2019), and unfinished ‘ghost estates’ littered the countryside (O’Callaghan, Boyle, and Kitchin 2014). The effect of austerity on the housing market, from 2008, underlined the reciprocity between austerity and housing dysfunction, as ‘government spending and housing bore the brunt of Ireland’s economic contraction’ (Lyons 2017, 130).

3.3.2 Emergence of Crisis

In recognising continued issues of accessibility to affordable housing, the Fianna Fáil (FF) government had introduced the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) from 2004. This provided for local authorities to establish direct contracts with private sector landlords for the lease of properties, for a minimum of four years, and was offered to tenants with long-term housing needs under differential rates¹¹ (Hearne 2020, 171). The National Economic and Social Council welcomed the reform, but noted the importance ‘of the strategic value of maintaining an appropriate balance between the use of privately owned rental units and the construction or acquisition of permanent social dwellings’ (NESC 2004, 6). In the Dáil, opposition T.D.s expressed concern at the impact this would have on the private rental sector. Bernard Allen (FG) outlined to the Joint Committee on Environment and Local Government that ‘It will

¹¹ Differential rates of rent are based on the means tested income of the recipient.

drive the rental sector mad. It is an artificial intervention in the private sector’ (Dáil Éireann 2004a). In response, the Minister of State for Housing and Urban Renewal, Noel Ahern (FF), viewed the new RAS as ‘a structured, proactive, supply based approach to meet long-term housing need instead of depending on ad hoc rent allowance payments’ (Dáil Éireann 2004b).

As the housing boom intensified, and affordability became more of a concern, the number of RAS recipients increased from a little over 600 tenancies in 2005 to close to 7,000 in 2008 (DHLGH 2020). Rent Supplement, which had been introduced in 1997 ‘as a short-term measure’ to provide subsidies to landlords to increase supply, supported 79,960 households by 2008. This is important as it furthered the policy path for social housing provision through the private rental sector. The government responded with the housing policy statement *‘Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities’* (DEHLG 2007). The statement encouraged home ownership, but it also emphasised the role of both Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 and of the RAS in the private sector provision of social and affordable housing.

A casualty of the financial crisis was the collapse of social partnership in 2009, ‘Ireland’s distinctive form of social pacts’ (Hardiman, Regan, and Shayne 2012, 123). Since the 1980s, social partnership had been a pragmatic approach to bring trade unions and industry into governmental policymaking, and had successful policy outcomes (Litton 2012, 26). Despite giving ‘the Taoiseach and his department unprecedented influence over labour affairs’ (Hardiman, Regan, and Shayne 2012, 124), the collapse was to have far reaching impact on public policymaking. The vacuum of decision-making was filled by a strong executive, and importantly, ‘the

balance of power shifted back from the Department of the Taoiseach to the Department of Finance’ (Adshead 2012, 189).

The imposition of fiscal restraint and recalibration measures by the European Commission of the European Union (EU), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), known as the Troika, represented new actors entering the policy arena, broadening the debate and increasing the urgency for change. During the Dáil debate to approve the programme of financial assistance, opposition T.D.s highlighted a failure of public policy and the loss of Ireland’s sovereignty (Finian McGrath - Ind), which had led to the imposition of ‘an extremely demanding austerity programme’ (Eamon Gilmore – Lab), the ‘harsh conditions’ (Maureen O’Sullivan – Ind) which ‘are strangling the economy’ (Pearse Doherty – SF) (Dáil Éireann 2010a). A poll reported in *The Irish Times* (anon. 2010, 19) indicated that over half of respondents ‘welcomed the €85 billion in financial support... even as they recognised that the terms of the funding entailed a loss of sovereignty’. Seanad deputy leader Dan Boyle (Green) was reported in the *Irish Independent* as admitting that ‘people were questioning whether they could trust those leading them’ (Walsh 2010, 9). Despite these concerns, the Economic Adjustment Programme was agreed by the Dáil on 15 December 2010 and subsequently signed into effect by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund on 16 December 2010.

Elected in June 2009, the coalition Fianna Fáil and Green Party government’s response to the enveloping crisis was to reduce funding for social and affordable housing from €1.5 billion in 2008 to €485 million in 2011 (E. Ó Broin 2019, 82). Ireland’s economic contraction was exacerbated by pro-cyclical provision of social housing, which had

accelerated the boom but now also intensified the impact of economic bust as public housing output slumped at a time when it was most needed (Byrne and Norris 2018) (Figure 3.5).



Figure 3.5: Housing completions, 2006-2012 [Source: CSO, 2012; Housing Agency, 2020a]

The crash also impacted on house prices, with reductions from 2007 to 2012 by 31.68 per cent nationally and by 36.16 per cent in Dublin (DHLGH 2022). With increasing unemployment (see Figure 3.4) the percentage of principle dwelling home mortgage accounts in arrears for more than 90 days increased from 3.6 per cent in December 2009 to 12.9 per cent in September 2013, whilst 27.4 per cent of buy-to-let mortgages were in arrears in September 2013 (Central Bank of Ireland 2013). Rather than punctuating the paradigm, the financial crash and subsequent period of austerity reduced available funding, and with limited political impetus for change, entrenched Ireland’s neoliberal approach (Dukelow 2011; 2015). Given the impact that the financial crash and subsequent bailout had on Irish democracy, economic sovereignty

and trust in democratic structures, the central platform for the General Election in 2011 was for political reform (G. Murphy 2017).

3.3.3 Problem Recognition

Post-crash, the Fianna Fáil and Green party coalition government sought to drive for more structural and facilitative reform in relation to the housing field, to improve the delivery of new housing, to provide opportunities for home ownership and to address homelessness. A key part of the government's strategy was the establishment of the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) in 2009, a state-owned company formed to acquire and manage toxic real estate resources (Byrne, 2016) with a core objective to reduce the contingent €30 billion of bad debt. It was to achieve this through maximising recovery from property-backed loans, and through the delivery of majority market-priced housing and office accommodation. A subsidiary, the National Asset Loan Management Designated Activity Company guaranteed, insured and made loans, whilst the designation of a Strategic Development Zone in Dublin Docklands formed a key aspect to its aim to deliver residential units (NAMA, 2020). The government addressed concerns of affordability and accessibility to social housing provision by extending RAS through the Housing Act 2009, which formally recognised the provision of private rental accommodation as social housing support, but it removed recipients from the official housing waiting list (DEHLG 2009). The Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government John Gormley (Green) addressed the Dáil in July 2009:

We try to encourage the rental accommodation scheme and move towards it. We have less and less money to build property. We are trying to move more people to the rented sector. We can get better value for money... The RAS system is working well (Dáil Éireann 2009).

The Minister of State for Housing and Local Services, Michael Finneran (FF) was more candid, speaking at the National Social Housing Conference in September 2009:

Be in no doubt about it, there are serious constraints on the capital budgets for 2010 and beyond. We have to meet substantial housing needs from the more limited resources now available to us... we can no longer rely on the traditional acquisition and construction approach to meeting social housing needs. We must embrace every opportunity for delivering additional supply through market based mechanisms (Finneran 2009).

As the impacts of the financial crash became more serious the government's support for housing benefits was highlighted by the number of RAS recipients increasing to 16,815 in 2011 (from 600 in 2005), whilst the number of rent supplement beneficiaries increased to 96,803 in 2011 (from 60,176 in 2005) (Hearne 2020, 171–72; DHLGH 2020). Fianna Fáil recognised the housing problem between 2009 to 2011 as a symptom of the wider financial crisis, which had impacted on the viability of homeownership and of accessibility to social housing. Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan (FF) identified 'a priority of the Government [is] to ensure that as far as possible that difficulties in relation to mortgage arrears do not result in legal proceedings for home repossession' (Dáil Éireann 2010b). With 95,000 mortgages either in arrears or which had been rescheduled, and another 350,000 mortgages in negative equity, 'these numbers speak of a genuine crisis not previously seen in the Irish housing market' (E. Oliver 2011, 50).

That Fianna Fáil recognised the private sector as providing the solution to housing crisis is typified by the establishment of the Social Housing Leasing Initiative from 2009. Local authorities were enabled to undertake long-term leases of private dwellings, as reported by the Dublin City Council's Deputy Chief Executive, 'to

respond to housing needs and to ensure that there is a wide and flexible range of housing delivery options available’ (Kenny 2021). With leases typically for 20 years payable from local authority current account expenditure, and with the dwelling reverting to the landlord at the end of the lease, this initiative ‘increased reliance on private rental benefits schemes’ (Hearne 2020, 171) and was identified as ‘part of a neoliberal move to tie new social housing supply to market based mechanisms and the private rental sector’ (Kitchin, O’Callaghan, and Gleeson 2012, 12).

With the EU-ECB-IMF financial assistance programme agreed by the Dáil in November 2010, the junior coalition Green Party leader John Gormley immediately called for a general election for early 2011 (Gormley 2010). To be held in February 2011, this provided opportunity for political parties to outline their respective manifestos and policy programme to address an increasing housing problem, identified in the *Irish Independent* the day before polling, as a ‘mortgage crisis’ (E. Oliver 2011, 50). The Fianna Fáil manifesto focused on job creation, reform and national recovery, and addressed housing only in relation to the party’s achievements in government to support households in mortgage arrears (Fianna Fáil 2011). This highlighted that ‘The party is very conscious of the high value placed on home ownership in Ireland and in particular of the efforts Irish people make to secure and retain their own home’ (*ibid.*, 9).

Fine Gael identified the opportunity of utilising NAMA to ‘seize and to sell to local authorities newly built vacant houses from bankrupt developers for social housing proposes’ (Fine Gael 2011, 60). The manifesto also set out the party’s openness ‘to considering new types of investment vehicles – such as U.S. style Real Estate Investment Trusts – that can help create a new, liquid investment market in

commercial property for Irish pension funds and smaller investors’ (*ibid.*, 20). The Labour party promoted reform and regulation of the private rental sector, and sought to ‘reduce reliance on Rent Supplement in favour of the Rental Accommodation Scheme, with rents negotiated directly with landlords’ (Labour 2011, 52).

The consensus on the framing of the housing problem was within a wider setting of constrained public sector finances required by the EU-ECB-IMF programme of financial assistance, (Fine Gael 2011; Fianna Fáil 2011; Labour 2011), ‘one of the issues that the Troika raised was around Rent Supplement as a restriction on labour market activation’ (CiSo2). The proposed policy solutions within the election manifestos suggest that there was limited political appetite for major policy change, with incremental adjustments to the current status quo, with focus on private sector provision and limited capital expenditure (Fine Gael 2011; Fianna Fáil 2011; Labour 2011). There was, therefore, no impetus for an alternative policy approach, given the consensus among the major political parties on the solution to the crisis, through a drive for employment growth and the utilisation of the private sector.

With Fine Gael gaining the most seats in the general election, although not a majority, the party worked with Labour to develop a coalition administration. The resulting *Programme for Government* set out the key areas for policy development and cooperation (Fine Gael, Labour 2011). In relation to housing support, the *Programme* outlined assistance for households in housing distress, sought to adopt a ‘Housing First’ approach to address long term homelessness and aimed to ‘progressively reduce reliance on Rent Supplement, with eligible recipients moving to the Rental Accommodation Scheme’ (*ibid.*, 23). In relation to housing provision and to increase stock, the social housing purchase scheme was to be continued, though revised with

ownership of the housing asset to revert to the local authority at the end of the lease term (*ibid.*, 15).

3.3.4 Proposal of Solution

The *Programme for Government* had set the template for policymaking, which a senior politician (P1) highlighted as being ‘the bible for us at that time... which had been negotiated and agreed by the two parties’ and to which both were committed to implementing the policies set within, a view supported by special advisor (SA1). The *Programme* had outlined the extension of RAS as the means to provide social housing support in the private sector, given that ‘there was an oversupply in the private market, the values of those houses were going down and people were in mortgage arrears, [whilst] there was an undersupply in [the provision of] social housing’ (P1).

The housing policy statement of June 2011 outlined a vision for the future of the housing sector, with a more equitable treatment of housing tenure, maximisation of social housing support delivery, and the transfer of responsibility for long-term recipients of rent supplement to local authorities (DECLG 2011). Key to the policy statement was the development of new mechanisms for the delivery of permanent social housing, which ruled out the return to local authority capital funded construction programmes due to the fiscal constraints (E. Ó Broin 2019, 86).

An Economic Management Group, comprised of the Taoiseach, the Tánaiste, the finance minister and the minister for public expenditure, two from each party of the coalition administration, adapted the general proposals within the *Programme for Government* to formulate more specific schemes to address circumstances, which other Cabinet members agreed to (P1). This was to be implemented with the establishment of that new department to control public expenditure and to undertake

reform ‘to modernise, renew and transform the way in which services are delivered’ (Minister Brendan Howlin (Lab), quoted in the *Irish Independent*, Creaton, 2011). Here, a senior politician highlighted the importance and power of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform:

All ministers had to meet with him and his department before the budget, he controlled the money that’s allocated to each department, and we had to justify everything that we were looking for... we had some very tough meetings, particularly if our Secretary General came in, she would take quite a lot of attack from the minister and from his department (P1).

During this time it was not only inter-departmental interplay that impacted on policymaking; bureaucratic restraint also slowed processes. A senior politician (P1) indicated that to develop policy when faced with bureaucratic restraint ‘it helps to bring in outside expertise, because the officials in the department don’t always have the expertise, or don’t consider it to be a priority, when clearly those of us that were out doing clinics in communities, we could see that [housing affordability and accessibility] was becoming a serious issue’. However, an ex-civil servant suggested that:

In terms of consultants’ reports, I wouldn’t be a cynical civil servant without saying that there were very few reports that were commissioned that provided surprises – it was considered very important to have external validation because it provided a greater legitimacy, but the consultants were happy to be paid and to comply... I won’t go as far to say they were given the recommendations on day 1 and told to produce the report, that would be untrue and too extreme, but there was a direction of travel. But NESC reports did have an impact, and they still are influential and impact on housing policy (CS1).

In terms of the development of the Housing Assistance Programme, ‘the Department for Social Protection had been campaigning for decades to get rid of Rent Supplement and those kinds of supports, and when the IMF bailout happened, they finally had their chance’ (SH3). Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton (Lab), welcomed the later transfer of rental assistance for those with long-term housing needs from the Ministry of Social Protection to housing authorities (Dáil Éireann 2012) which took force from 1 January 2013. This was a significant transfer of responsibility, given that 92,000 were in receipt of rent supplement in July 2012, though for one senior ex-civil servant it was because of intransigence of civil servants within the Department of Social Protection:

‘We had endless discussions [about the establishment of HAP] ... the Minister [for Social Protection] at the time was properly sympathetic to this, but we couldn’t move the civil servants – they were ‘we can’t do that’ or ‘the computer systems would collapse’ (CS1).

Following transfer of the HAP scheme, and to test the provision of a more integrated system of housing supports, a pilot scheme was introduced in Limerick from April 2014 (Local Authorities Ireland 2015). The pilot enabled all housing supports to be accessed through the local authority, allowed recipients to take up full-time employment whilst keeping housing support, and therefore enabled access to accommodation in the private rented market (*ibid.*). Local councillors broadly welcomed the pilot scheme, although there were some reservations on the potential for anti-social behaviour, as Councillor David Naughton (FG) also ‘expressed concern that the scheme would allow the local authority “to get out of building houses” altogether’ (Ward 2014, 7).

Identifying that rent prices had increased in the Dublin area in the year to May 2014 by 14 per cent, Aideen Hayden, Chairperson of the housing charity Threshold, identified that support was required for those unable to afford increasing rents. Mechanisms such as Rent Supplement were not protecting families ‘losing their homes... to those who can afford to pay more’ (Hayden 2014, 27). With the building of social housing taking up to 18 months to turn around, Hayden called for a prompt introduction of the Housing Assistance Programme, as ‘the Government’s priority must be to keep people in their homes’ (*ibid.*).

The government response to limited social housing and issues of affordability in the private rental sector was set out in the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2014, debated in the Dáil during May and June 2014. The establishment of HAP provided the main feature of the legislation, with transfer of Rent Supplement claimants, and recognition of an increased use of current expenditure to fund social housing provision. In introducing the Bill to the Dáil, Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, Jan O’Sullivan (Lab), identified that it ‘will bring radical change to our framework of social housing support’ whilst ‘HAP is an opportunity to improve standards and levels of compliance, to remove employment traps, and to create a more equal and fair social housing system’ (Dáil Éireann 2014b).

Opposition T.D. Barry Cowan (FF) was concerned that the Bill did not ‘address the chronic lack of supply in housing units [but] instead it seeks to address matters that would be relevant if there was an adequate supply of social housing and a rental market that was not in crisis’ (Dáil Éireann 2014b). Catherine Murphy (SD) expressed concern that the transfer of HAP management to local authorities will have an impact

on implementation of the scheme, and of ‘the reliance on the private sector to deliver to the 90,000 people currently on the housing waiting list, with the expectation that this number will increase’ (Dáil Éireann 2014b). However, other opposition T.D.s welcomed the introduction of HAP. Dessie Ellis (SF) recognised HAP ‘as a much needed improvement on the rent supplement system’ but instead of providing a ‘stop-gap measure for private tenants in difficulty’ the government ‘does not provide housing but incentivises the private profit market to do its job in social housing’ (Dáil Éireann 2014b). Robert Troy (FF) recognised that ‘Much of what is in this Bill is very positive... [as] the high cost of rent is preventing local authorities from taking on houses’ under RAS (Dáil Éireann 2014c). Troy suggested that ‘Landlords are simply refusing to engage with local authorities on that scheme because they can get more money on the commercial market’ (*ibid.*). Similarly, Dara Calleary (FF) was ‘willing to give the new housing assistance payment, which will come from the housing authority, a chance’ (Dáil Éireann 2014c).

Importantly, whilst an increased supply of housing units was the longer-term policy preference for T.D.s, there was general support for HAP to address housing need and affordability. Seán Kyne (FG) outlined that whereas rent supplement was only meant to be a short-term housing support, HAP would provide longer-term assistance and ‘will tackle the so-called welfare trap and provide support to a person when he or she most needs it’ (Dáil Éireann 2014c). In closing the debate, Minister Jan O’Sullivan (Lab) emphasised her commitment to social housing and house building, outlining that the administration ‘will construct houses as soon as we can... off the Government balance sheet.... [and] as soon as capital is available, I will be building houses in conjunction with the local authorities’ (Dáil Éireann 2014a).

The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act passed into legislation in July 2014, and the *Social Housing Strategy 2020*, published in November 2014, provided detail on the proposals within the Act. It built on previous housing policy statements with the objectives of affordability and quality of accommodation, within the context of the ‘retrenchment in the social housing budget, which [had] seen Exchequer funding fall from over €1.7bn in 2008 to some €597m in 2014’ (DECLG 2014, vii). The strategy’s three pillars aimed to provide for 35,000 new social housing units, provide support for up to 75,000 low-income households in the private sector through HAP, and set out reforms around a new tenant purchase scheme and anti-social behaviour (DECLG 2014).

Commenting on the publication of the *Social Housing Strategy 2020*, housing charities Threshold and Simon Community both identified that immediate assistance must be provided to families with the immediate implementation of the plan (Melia 2014, 16). Comment in the *Irish Independent* in relation to the HAP proposals identified that with ‘73,000 people... already receiving some form of assistance with their monthly rents... few new properties are needed. There’s a lot to be welcomed in this’ (Melia 2014, 16).

Following enactment of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014, the pilot in Limerick was extended to six other local authority areas in 2014 and rolled out nationwide from May 2015 (Local Authorities Ireland, 2015). The Act formalised and extended longer-term trends and heralded a milestone in the reform of social housing provision. It replaced previous reform mechanisms, such as Rent Supplement and the Rental Accommodation Scheme, providing housing through direct placement into privately rented accommodation or providing financial support for eligible families to

access the private rental sector. By the end of 2021 over 119,000 tenancies were supported by RAS, HAP and the Long-Term Leasing Scheme (Finnerty and O’Connell 2021, 182).

The social mechanisms around efficiency, legitimacy and power are identifiable as influences in this case. For example, the imposition of fiscal restraints restricted the availability of public finances, and constrained policymaking (efficiency); political legitimacy of the coalition government’s handling of the financial crash is questioned with the ceding of sovereignty to supra-national organisations (legitimacy); and the loss of power of national government, with economic policies and fiscal constraint required by the Troika of the IMF, ECB, and EU (power). The process of policymaking for this case is traced and detailed in Chapter 6, Findings – Contemporary Cases.

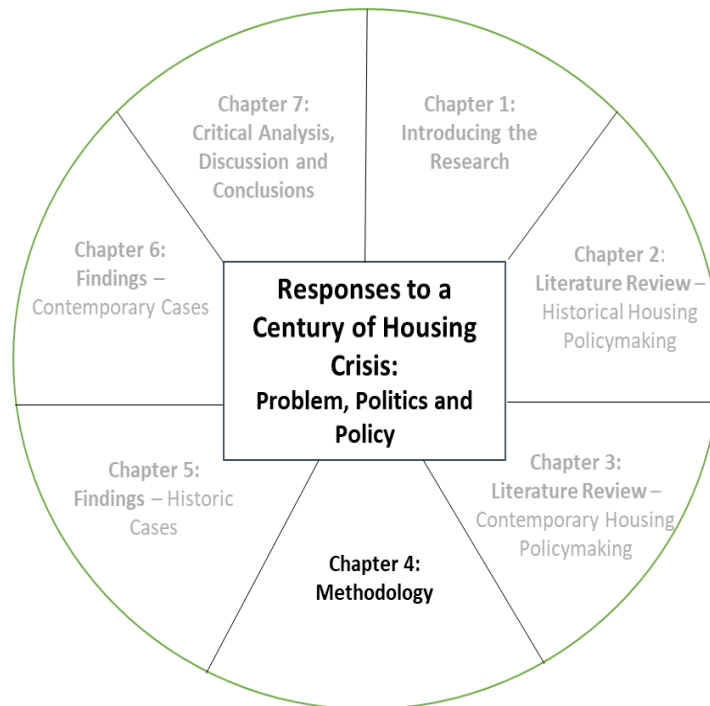
3.4 Contemporary Housing Policymaking - Summary

The contemporary Irish housing system provides the context to explore the processes of policymaking as responses to housing crisis. The Residential Tenancies Act 2004 introduced regulation of the private rented residential sector and set out the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants. Although it was responding to circumstances, it was a forward-thinking, proactive measure to bring ‘the great and the good’ (P5) together to influence policymaking. The Act established the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) as an independent statutory body to operate a national tenancy registration system. This policy measure came mid-way through the tenure of a Fianna Fáil government, reflecting in-party policy change as per the 1960s case, and similarly the publication of an external report overcame reasons for policy constraint and encouraged political consensus.

Whilst the financial crash of 2008-2010 provided a significant punctuation, the system was sufficiently resistant to dilute impetus for path-changing policy change, with HAP continuing to focus on the market provision of social outcomes (Byrne and Norris 2018; E. Ó Broin 2019). The response to crisis was defined by limits placed by the Troika, which required political management rather than leadership, and this provides differences between the two contemporary cases, developed in Chapter 6. Despite some contextual similarities to the historic cases, the introduction of HAP as a response to crisis also differed to the 1932 and 1966 responses, developed in Chapter 7. Once the HAP scheme had been implemented, any change to a different policy approach would likely be politically and financially challenging, which therefore provides a good example of self-reinforcing path dependence.

With the literature suggesting that the current crisis has its roots in the early years of this century, the two contemporary cases provide examples of policy approaches that continue to have ongoing implementation commitments, though each are from different time frames – one policy mechanism established prior to the financial crisis of 2008-2010, and one established following that event. The processes for both cases led to paradigm confirming policy responses to crisis which provide suitable cases for analysis. The tracing of the policymaking process for these cases are set out in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 4 – METHODOLOGY



4.1 Background

The literature and wider discussion across the political spectrum has judged that the Irish housing system is in crisis and has been so for more than two decades, and that public policy responses seemingly fail to tackle the causes, whilst focusing instead on symptoms of crisis. This is not, however, a purely recent phenomenon, as the literature also suggests that housing crisis has been a recurring facet of the Irish political landscape. The difference between the current ongoing crisis and of those before is that various historic events resulted in transformational policy change which sought to address those causes of previous housing crisis.

The initial phase of the study identified a gap in housing policymaking research (set out in Chapter 1). This chapter now sets out the aim and objectives of the research and discusses the philosophical lens and approach to analyse the policymaking process. Thereafter it details the research design, methodology, strategy, and methods of data collection, and explains the methods of data analysis, its management and presentation.

4.2 Research Aim and Objectives

Taking a longitudinal perspective on Irish housing policymaking, the research seeks to explain why policies to address contemporary Irish housing crisis are seemingly different to historic responses when there are grounds to expect that they would be similar, how these policymaking processes differ, and how they can inform policymakers' responses to housing crisis. This broad research aim introduces five objectives to guide the research:

Objective 1: Set out the narrative and context for cases of policymaking as responses to housing crises.

Objective 2: Trace the processes leading to policymaking responses to housing crises.

Objective 3: Analyse the influences on processes of policymaking responses to housing crises.

Objective 4: Compare processes of policymaking responses to housing crises.

Objective 5: Identify the characteristics of policymaking and make recommendations on how policymaking responses to housing crisis can be informed by historic processes.

This research therefore traces, analyses and compares a sample of processes of policymaking responses to housing crises and the influences on those processes from across the last century. It examines the context of crisis, instability, and major policy change, within wider periods of policy stability and continuity, to explore and explain why more recent housing policymaking has not fully addressed enduring concern around housing outcomes.

Malpass (2008) emphasised the importance of recognising the context of the time, and in this respect, ‘the overarching premise is that context matters’ (Hall 2003, 385). Indeed, Malpass (2011, 307) ‘encourages us to think of path dependence as a way of embracing both continuity and change’, which relates to the findings from this literature review for analysis to relate to the Irish cases of change within wider periods of continuity. With path dependence as the theoretical frame, and inductive process tracing as the means for conducting the research, this study provides a historical

approach to contextualise contemporary phenomena. By analysing how policymaking processes differ, the research evaluates how historic event responses and housing policymaking processes can inform contemporary policymaking. The detail of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks is now set out.

4.3 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The literature review set out in Chapters 2 and 3 explores housing crisis and policy responses for contrasting periods of Irish history: the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. This provides the basis for the theoretical and conceptual frameworks to the research. Social, economic and political shocks have provided the impetus for path-shaping historic housing policy change, though more recent perturbations emphasise that major punctuations are now seemingly followed by retrenchment, as the paradigm-reinforcing policy process exhibits mainly incremental policy change.

Several theories of the public policy process might be suitable for undertaking a historical comparative approach to the research (see for example Weible and Sabatier, 2018; Cairney, 2020). Table 4.1 analyses the potential of four theoretical approaches which might be used for this study.

Table 4.1: Analysis of potential theoretical approaches

| Theoretical approach | Key outline | Comment |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET)</p> | <p>The policy process ordinarily develops incrementally, over time, but occasionally a significant event leads to major change.</p> <p>An issue is ordinarily contained within its own respective sub-system, where the prevailing political system and vested interests dampen change, promoting inertia. But an event, or series of events, can promote an issue beyond its sub-system, into the public realm and onto the ‘macropolitical agenda’ (Baumgartner, Jones, and Mortensen 2018, 60).</p> | <p>With focus on significant periods of change, rather than the mechanisms and processes of continuity, PET does not recognise that ‘gradual change is a quite common mode of institutional evolution in the political world... [and that] long-run processes may be marked by incremental change within the constraints of path dependence’ (Thelen and Mahoney 2015, 24).</p> <p>With PET’s focus on moments of change, and given the narrative identified in Chapters 2 and 3, the use of PET perhaps would not provide a complete understanding of the full processes of policymaking.</p> |
| <p>Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)</p> | <p>Policymaking is ‘the result of the competition between coalitions of actors who advocate beliefs about certain policy options’ (Tosun and Workman 2018, 348).</p> <p>To facilitate understanding of common interests, and the strategies employed to affect public policy change to further those interests, actors with ‘shared beliefs and coordination strategies’ (Jenkins-Smith et al. 2018, 141) can be grouped into advocacy coalitions.</p> | <p>ACF provides a lens to consider how the formation of, and competition between, actor coalitions promote their own vision and opinion about available policy choice and is an appropriate lens to consider housing politics and policy.</p> <p>However, ACF ‘relates primarily to the belief systems that bind policy participants together’ (Cairney 2020, 92–93), and there is no support from the literature that similar coalitions impacted on all four cases of study.</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Multiple Streams Framework (MSF)</p> | <p>The policy process is comprised of three process streams, each involving a range of actors: problem, policy, and politics.</p> <p>Each stream can operate independently although they can be combined or coupled at critical times – ‘policy windows’ - by those with an interest in making policy, known as policy entrepreneurs (Herweg, Zahariadis, and Zohlnhofer 2018). Policy entrepreneurs are power brokers (Zahariadis 2007), advocating a position and seeking alignment of the streams (Herweg, Zahariadis, and Zohlnhofer 2018). They can also be essential actors in maintaining coalitions and supporting collective action (Jenkins-Smith et al. 2018; Schlager 2007), and if a policy entrepreneur is successful ‘the result is major policy change’ (P. Sabatier 2007, 9).</p> | <p>MSF is an approach already used to good effect by Irish academics, where MacCarthaigh (2017) considered the reform of Irish public service, Murphy (2017) the role of the policy entrepreneur, and Lennon and Waldron (2019) in relation to de-democratisation of the planning process.</p> <p>However, rather than reflecting that the problem, policy and politics streams develop independently but align during a ‘policy window’, given the ‘three streams must come together at the right time’ (Cairney 2020, 196), the literature review (set out in Chapters 2 and 3) instead highlights a <i>process</i> which can be traced (from problem recognition, to politics, to policy solution).</p> |
| <p>Path Dependence</p> | <p>Historical approaches to social explanation can offer ‘profound insights about the nature of the social world’ and therefore ‘the systematic examination of processes unfolding over time warrants a central position in the social sciences’ (Pierson 2004, 2).</p> <p>Mahoney (2000, 507–8) recognised that ‘the identification of path dependence... involves both tracing a given outcome back to a particular set of historical events, and showing how these events are themselves contingent occurrences that cannot be explained by on the basis of prior historical conditions’.</p> | <p>‘Many crucial social phenomena can be adequately explained only in terms of path dependence’ whilst ‘the field of historical sociology offers tools of analysis especially suited for the study of path dependence’ (Mahoney 2000, 507).</p> <p>Given that the research seeks to analyse both historic and contemporary policymaking processes, within periods of wider policy stability and continuity, path dependence provides a useful theoretical frame for the research.</p> |

Comparative historical research over the last thirty years has been innovative in social sciences, including in promoting the study of temporal processes and path dependency, and ‘strategies of causal influence [such as] historical narrative and process tracing’ (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003, 6). Mahoney set out that path dependent sequences are typified by causal patterns, or ‘inertia’, which might be either reactive sequences, ‘that involves reaction and counterreaction mechanisms... that naturally leads to another event’, or self-reinforcing sequences, ‘that reproduce a particular institutional pattern over time’ (Mahoney 2000, 511). For Falleti and Mahoney (2015, 220), self-reproducing sequences embody events that move in a particular direction, whilst for reactive processes, ‘early events in a sequence may produce a series of reactions and counteractions that do not move the process in a consistent direction’.

Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2010, 196) established the link between path dependence as a theoretical frame, and comparative process tracing as the means. Process tracing in social science is an overarching idiom for the methods and tools to study and trace causal mechanisms (Beach and Pedersen 2013). Falleti and Mahoney (2015) establish that process tracing can be deductive or inductive; deductive when testing specific causal claims, though inductive process tracing is commonly used to identify events that comprise the core sequences at the centre of processes.

New institutionalism focuses on the ‘rules, norms, and conventions that influence individual behaviour and social practices’ (Cairney 2020, 91), identifying ‘historical differences to explain why public policy is different’, rather than the classic Punctuated Equilibrium Theory description of institutions that they ‘are the organizations making the rules’ (Cairney 2020, 92). The identification of social

mechanisms offers a means for categorising the influences on policymaking processes, and the tracing of social mechanisms enables comparison with policymaking processes from the current crisis, providing insights to political approaches and policy processes more generally. Elster (1989) asserted that all social science research should be able to identify sets of social mechanisms that can explain links between cause and effect, and Falletti and Mahoney (2015, 212) argued that ‘there is no substitute for process tracing when analysing the events that make up the sequences and processes that are studied in comparative-historical research’. For them, ‘process tracing is especially valuable for establishing the features of the events that compose individual sequences (e.g., their duration, order, and pace) as well as the causal mechanisms that link them together’ (*ibid.*).

Peters (1998, 175) suggested that ‘despite the appeal of contemporary events, the student of comparative politics can augment understanding substantially by somewhat greater attention to the development of political systems over time and the occurrence of certain types of events’. Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2017, 48) suggested that ‘the comparison between processes demands an analysis in terms of continuity and change’, given that some outcomes cannot be adequately explained by general causes, requiring instead consideration of their temporality and sequencing of events.

Since Jacobs (2001, 127) identified that ‘historical research and its associated methodologies remain an area that many housing academics have not engaged with in any great depth’, and Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2010, 193) reported that ‘analysis of housing framed explicitly in terms of path dependence have so far been rare’, more historically informed housing research has been undertaken. For example, analysis of Nordic housing regimes, in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden claimed

that difference and divergence can be explained by path dependence (Bengtsson and Ruonavaara 2011). This has been effective in several research examples, and therefore, to explore that flux between equilibrium and change, the theoretical frame used within this research is that of path dependence in housing policymaking.

The research draws on Mahoney's (2000, 511) conception of reactive and self-reinforcing sequences. Two historic policymaking sequences (Chapters 2 and 5) and two contemporary cases (Chapters 3 and 6) are traced. This approach accords with that promoted by Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2017, 48; 50) which asserted that Comparative Process Tracing (CPT) is 'strongly linked to [the path dependence] type of institutional theory', which 'leaves open the possibility of endogenous institutional change and allows for degrees of path dependence'. Therefore the research identifies the social mechanisms that existed during periods of policy change leading to historic junctures, and compares how the same social mechanisms are manifested in more recent cases. Developing the theme of path dependence, an outline conceptual framework is identified (Figure 4.1 below), which provides structure to how the theoretical aspect of the research is undertaken and analysed.

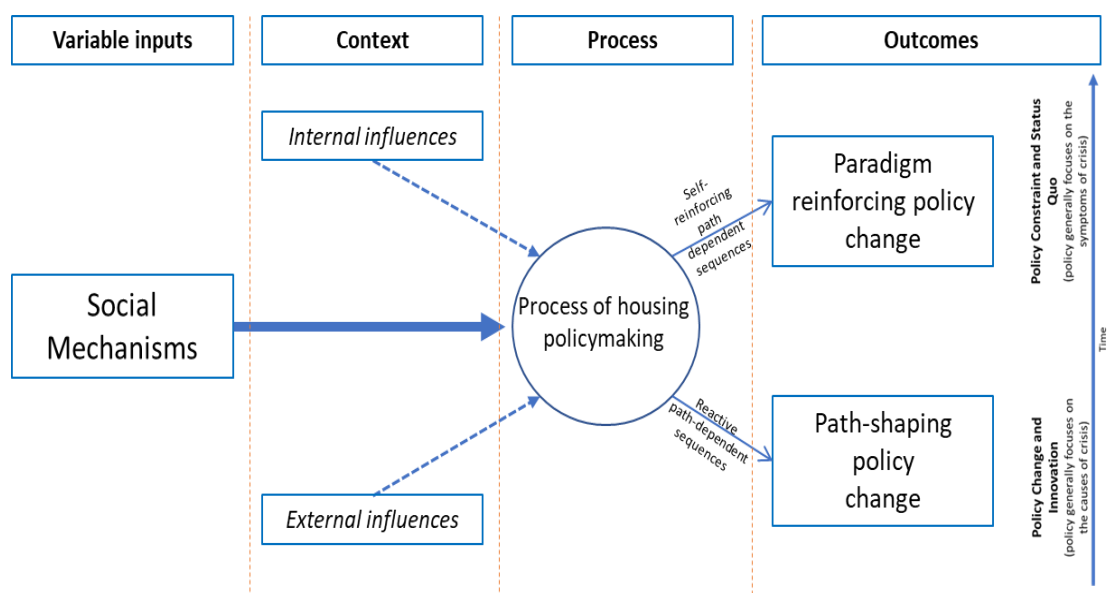


Figure 4.1: Outline conceptual framework

This theoretical overview was for Miles and Huberman (1994, 20) ‘the current version of the researcher’s map of the territory being investigated’. This explores the role of path dependence in Irish housing policymaking, recognising the potential impact of social mechanisms and context on the process of policymaking. It therefore provides the conceptual basis for analysing the processes and social mechanisms which led to policy responses to previous housing crises and the comparison of those processes and responses to those of the current crisis which, the literature suggests, might be typified more by policy constraint rather than policy innovation. With the draft conceptual framework established, the research methodology is now set out.

4.4 Research Philosophy and Approach

Creswell and Poth (2018, 15) assert that we all bring beliefs and assumptions into research, with some being ‘deeply ingrained views about the types of problems that we need to study, what research questions to ask, or how we go about gathering data’. It is the acknowledgement of these views, and how they might impact or inform our research, that is facilitated by categorisation of philosophical beliefs and assumptions into research paradigms.

A paradigm is the philosophical stance taken by a researcher, and which includes an outline of assumptions relating to ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (the nature of knowledge), axiology (values) and methodology (Creswell and Poth 2018, 325–26; Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2019). The methodological approach used in this research, the stages of the research, and the choices taken to support the creation of new knowledge are set out in Figure 4.2, utilising the ‘research onion’, developed by Saunders *et al.* (2019).

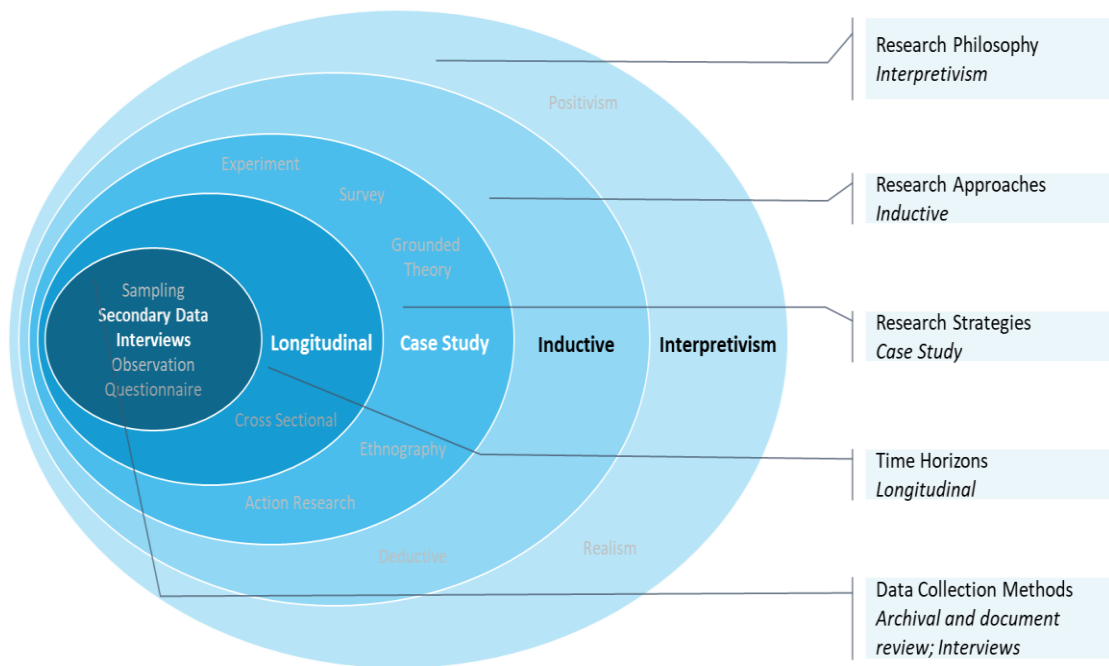


Figure 4.2: Methodological approach using the ‘Research Onion’ (Saunders et al., 2019)

The rationality for the research philosophy and approach used in this study are now set out.

4.4.1 Ontology and Epistemology

Individuals engage with their world and make sense of it based on their own historical and social perspective (Crotty 1998), as individuals construct their own understanding of reality based on interactions with their surroundings (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Indeed, Colebatch (2009, iv) recognised that ‘we have to remember that “policy” is first of all a concept – that is, an idea that people use in making sense of the world’. Therefore, understanding of that world ‘is a product of a historical process of interaction and negotiation between groups of people’ (Galbin 2014, 83). Socially constructed processes, according to Galbin (2014, 84), ‘are not intrinsic to the individual but produced by social discourse’. The policy process is debated on narratives with the potential to exert significant influence which can ‘socially

construct reality’ (Shanahan et al. 2018, 174), as individuals and groups assign different meaning to elements of the policy process. The literature review around housing policymaking accords with this position.

With the public policy process involving a wide range of actors, with multiple participant meanings, perceptions, and experiences, this research seeks a multiplicity of views, to ‘make sense of (interpret) the meanings that others have about the world’ (Creswell and Creswell 2018, 8). The exploration of policymaking processes has synergy with the subjective, or humanistic paradigm, and particularly the interpretivist paradigm (or as Denzin and Lincoln (2013), term, the constructivist-interpretive paradigm). Not everything in society is logical and can be measured or quantified empirically, and this is the key, as the causes for phenomena, and the motivations for human actions are often hidden (*ibid.*).

The research explores and observes the processes which progressed from four critical junctures, points at which paths were chosen instead of others, to the political focal points, which were the decision-making processes where the effects of those choices become visible. The context for the four cases are set out in the literature review chapters (Chapter 2 – Historic Cases; Chapter 3 – Contemporary Cases). Whilst Beach and Pedersen (2016, 12) suggested a pragmatist approach when undertaking process tracing which seeks to explain the outcome, Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2011, 396) proposed that it facilitates research which seeks to interpret and explain temporal change and historical causation. The interpretive nature of historical document review is recognised by Denscombe (2017) as involving the researcher in interpreting the data, to identify any hidden meanings.

The research is interpretivist in philosophy: the literature suggests that although power in society is a significant influence, actors within policymaking processes have choice within wider societal constraints (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Schwandt and Gates (2018, 344) recognised interpretative social scientists as viewing knowledge as being historically situated and entangled in power relationships, seeing the world as socially made. Exploring the subjectivity of the policymaking process enables the capture of those in-depth, meaningful, and contextual insights, the nuance of which would be missed if research is limited to that which is observable or measurable. Therefore, this research is based on an interpretivist ontological position, recognising that phenomena are constructed by social actors. It is also based on an interpretivist epistemology, emphasising the meaning people confer upon their own and others' actions, enabling the exploration of actor choice.

4.4.2 Inductive Versus Deductive Enquiry

Deductive research approaches commence from a proposition, hypothesis, or position which research thereafter seeks to support, or negate. In this respect, deductive or theoretical analysis is driven by the researcher or analyst (Braun and Clarke 2006). Inductive research approaches, however, synthesise a series of observations, to enable the production of a general principle. Inductive generalisation therefore extrapolates from a specific example to provide a proposition which might hold for a wider population, with findings providing representation (Williams 2016). Falleti and Mahoney (2015, 229, 230) recognised that as the researcher cannot anticipate the key events that form a sequence or process, 'inductive analysis must be used to formulate historical-sequential arguments', and this inductive approach 'is particularly useful for... assembling events into coherent and connected sequences'. For Beach and

Pedersen (2016, 182), a causal case study involves the finding of the empirical material which can then be evaluated for ‘what it can potentially be evidence of’, and this study is therefore an inductive form of enquiry. With the initial phase of this research (literature review) being inductive, the approach to the following research continues to be inductive. The process of data collection investigates experiences of key actors in the policymaking processes, or those with expert knowledge of these processes, and is also inductive with a latent focus on the underlying meaning. The detail of the research design and methods used is now set out in the following sections.

4.5 Research Design

Theoretical perspectives and conceptual positions influence the research design and strategy, which in turn allows the research to be framed within an identified paradigm, contextualising and justifying the data gathering methods (Trafford and Leshem 2008). With this being an interpretivist, inductive study the approach to data collection and the research strategy are now set out.

4.5.1 Qualitative Versus Quantitative Research Data

Guba and Lincoln (1994, 106) highlighted that ‘human behaviour, unlike that of physical objects, cannot be understood without reference to the meanings and purposes attached by human actors to their activities [and therefore] qualitative data can provide rich insight into human behaviour’ (Guba and Lincoln 1994, 106). This is supported by Creswell and Creswell (2018, 4), recognising that qualitative research is a means for ‘exploring and understanding the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem’, and Myers (2013, 23) that ‘qualitative research methods are designed to help researchers understand people [and] the social and cultural contexts

within which people live'. In a world of social interaction, cause and effect, the reasons for that effect are not always apparent, observable or quantifiable (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Given the focus of this research in analysing both contemporary and historical policymaking, but also exploring subjective perceptions, experiences and motivations of actors within policymaking processes, a qualitative approach is suitable to investigate experience and attitudes (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Creswell and Creswell 2018).

4.5.2 Research Strategy

Creswell and Poth (2018) set out five qualitative approaches relating to research focus and research problem. An assessment of each is detailed in Table 4.2 (below).

The two potential methodological approaches which best fit are Grounded Theory Research and Case Study Research. Grounded Theory focuses on a process, or action, that has steps or phases, from which the researcher seeks to develop a theory (an explanation or an understanding) of that process. Whilst the approach could have synergy with an exploration of policy processes, and particularly can offer an interpretivist or constructivist position recognising multiple realities (Charmaz, Thornberg, and Keane 2018), the literature review highlighted accord between existing theories of the public policy process, and practice (see for example the discussion around path dependence in 4.3 above). Thus, an approach examining variations in practice, providing a means for comparison, offers a more appropriate study method.

Table 4.2: Qualitative approaches with an assessment of fit for the research [after Creswell and Poth, 2018]

| Research Approach | How the Research Approach is Addressed |
|--|---|
| <p>Narrative Research</p> <p>Explore the life of an individual; tell stories of individual experiences.</p> | <p>With this research focusing on the process of policy change and a propensity for path dependence, the description of the impacts of those policies through narratives of experience has limited relevance for the research around the process of policymaking.</p> |
| <p>Phenomenological Research</p> <p>Understand the essence of the experience; describe the essence of a lived phenomenon.</p> | <p>With this research focusing on the process of policy change, the description of the impacts of those policies, whether as a lived, phenomenological experience has limited relevance for the research of processes of policymaking.</p> |
| <p>Grounded Theory Research</p> <p>Develop a theory grounded in the data from the field, ground theory in the views of participants.</p> | <p>Whilst offering an interpretivist or constructivist position recognising multiple realities (Charmaz, Thornberg, and Keane 2018), the literature review highlights accord between existing theories of the public policy process and practice, particularly around path dependence.</p> |
| <p>Ethnographic Research</p> <p>Describe and interpret a culture-sharing group; describe and interpret the shared patterns of a culture group.</p> | <p>The actors involved in one or more policymaking processes are unlikely to be located in the same place, nor interacting frequently, nor be recognised as a culture-sharing group.</p> |
| <p>Case Study Research</p> <p>Develop an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases; provide an in-depth understanding of a case or cases.</p> | <p>Yin (2012, 4) recognised that case-study research can provide ‘deep understanding... insightful appreciation... of behaviour and meaning’, which Creswell and Creswell (2018) recognise as enabling multiple cases to be compared. In particular, case studies allow for generalisations to be drawn from a specific instance to a more general setting (Yin 1993), and is therefore a good option for interpretative, inductive research.</p> |

Case Studies can be used as part of an explanatory, exploratory or descriptive approach, for the analysis of a programme, event, activity or decision process, though which also enables for multiple cases to be identified and subsequently compared (Creswell and Creswell 2018). In particular, case studies allow for generalisations to be drawn from a specific instance to a more general setting (Yin 1993). Yin (2018, 9-

11) suggested linking the preferred research method to the research question, and that ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are more likely to favour a case study approach. The wider aim and the objectives for the research fit Yin’s criteria, which include exploring *why* policies to address contemporary Irish housing crisis are so different to historic responses when there are grounds to expect that they would be similar, *how* history matters and *how* historic housing policymaking processes can inform contemporary policymaking. Based on the research strategy, a comparative policymaking process involving cases from within the Irish context is chosen (Figure 4.3).

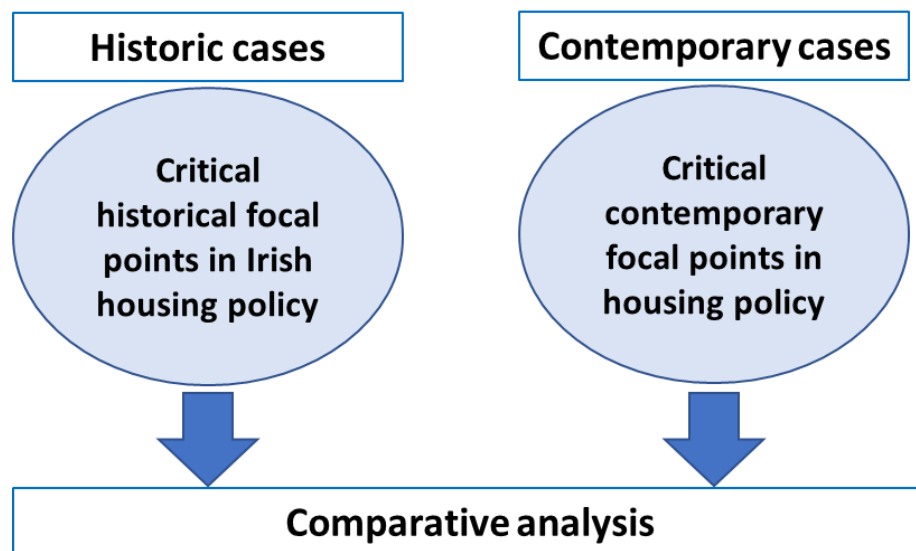


Figure 4.3: The cases in the research

The justification for the cases is now set out.

4.5.3 Justification for Cases Selection

The first element of the research explores historical processes of Irish housing policymaking. Historical perspectives provide opportunity ‘to consider the challenges that contemporary housing policy-makers confront and the constraints that impede reform’ (Jacobs and Manzi 2017, 19). Several critical junctures have led to significant housing policy change over the last century. The ongoing nature of housing crisis

during the twentieth century, as is summarised in Figure 1.1 on pages 3 and 4, outlines the problem definition at key points during that history, the policy response to those housing events and outcomes. An assessment of the potential for each of these historic junctures and focal points to provide the basis for comparative analysis with contemporary cases, to explore policy responses to crisis, is detailed in Appendix A.

Two historic responses to crisis have resonance with facilitating comparative analysis. The 1932 Housing Act introduced increased public provision of housing, with rents set at lower than cost, facilitated by a new political party of power offering divergence from the status quo on a solution to crisis. At this time housing became more than a political question, with public opinion requiring political interventions in the housing market to provide increased state support for housing production. The public approach to housing delivery represented a departure from state support for owner-occupation. This period facilitates exploration of mechanisms of change, around how an emerging political party was able to influence the agenda and to promote change.

The process leading to the legislation for the 1966 Housing Act facilitates exploration of the change in political thinking that took place within an incumbent political party, Fianna Fáil, which recalibrated its own policy focus by offering divergence from the status quo on a solution to crisis. Whilst some commentators had observed that the housing programme was largely complete by the late 1950s, the crisis during the early 1960s has resonance with the years immediately following the financial crash of 2008-2010. Analysis of this period is beneficial given that the process leading to the Housing Act involved recognition by the party of government that a change in policy direction was required to respond to concerns of poor quality and quantity of housing. Exploration of social mechanisms during this period focuses on the processes of

decision-making, and influences on decision-makers within a political party in power. With policymaking being ‘an idea that people use to make sense of the world’ (Colebatch 2009, iv) analysis here provides insight to processes of change, through tracing historic policy change as a response to housing crisis. Therefore, focus on the 1966 Act enables the exploration of institutional change and facilitates an assessment of degree of path dependence (after Bengtsson and Ruonavaara, 2017).

These two key periods of historic housing crisis are chosen, with particular focus around the periods leading to the housing legislation of 1932 and 1966. Analysis of the processes leading to these critical historic focal points in Irish housing policy supports the exploration of the influences of social mechanisms from the emergence of the crises, through problem recognition, and to policy proposals which led to policy change.

The contemporary Irish housing system provides the context to explore and compare the processes of policymaking. Here, two recent processes which led to contemporary policy change are traced. The introduction of Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) provides the case for analysis, through the exploration of the social mechanisms which led to this being the policy response to crisis. The financial crash of 2008-2010 provided a significant punctuation, but the system was sufficiently resistant to dilute impetus for policy change, with HAP continuing the focus on the market provision of social outcomes (Byrne and Norris 2018; E. Ó Broin 2019). Enacted through the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014, HAP provided financial assistance by housing authorities in respect of rent payable by certain housing tenants and continues to require a significant allocation of the government’s annual budget and will continue to do so going forward.

Despite some similarities to historic cases, the introduction of HAP as a response to crisis differed to the responses of the incoming 1932 government, and that of the 1960s. Changing to a different policy approach would likely be politically and financially challenging, and therefore this provides a good example of self-reinforcing path dependence. In addition, this is an example of a policy seeking to address a symptom of crisis, in this case affordability, but which has resulted in further crisis as rental prices have increased in the private rental sector.

A second contemporary case focuses on the introduction of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004, which as amended regulates the private rented residential sector and sets out the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants. The Act established the Private Residential Tenancies Board (later the Residential Tenancies Board - RTB) as an independent statutory body to operate a national tenancy registration system. This policy measure came mid-way through the tenure of a Fianna Fáil government, perhaps reflecting endogenous in-party policy change as per the 1960s case. With the literature suggesting that the current crisis has its roots in the early years of this century, the two contemporary cases provide examples of policy approaches which continue to have ongoing implementation commitments, though each are from different time frames – one policy mechanism established prior to the financial crisis of 2008-2010, and one established following that significant event.

This is not to suggest that the two contemporary cases are better, or worse, examples of policymaking than the historic cases, but are explored as a means of comparison. Indeed, feedback from the European Network for Housing Research annual conference in 2023 highlighted the high esteem for both contemporary policymaking schemes and praised the generosity for HAP, despite research which suggests that

HAP is a ‘significant pathway to marketisation’ and ‘does not satisfy social housing need or the right to housing’ (M. P. Murphy and Hearne 2019, 451). Both cases exhibit historical contingency, ‘the extent to which events and decisions made in the past [contribute] to the formation of institutions that influence current practices’; and path dependence, given that ‘when a commitment to an institution has been established and resources devoted to it, over time it produces ‘increasing returns’ and it becomes increasingly costly to choose a different path’ (Cairney 2020, 82).

Combined, the cases facilitate a comparative analysis between housing policymaking processes allowing for conclusions, assertions or generalisations to be drawn (Yin 1993; 2012; Stake 1995; Creswell and Creswell 2018). The use of case studies as the method for this research accords with the methodological and philosophical approach of this study, providing a novel and innovative focus for the research (Table 4.3 below).

Table 4.3: The four cases of the research

| | |
|--|---|
| Historical Cases <i>(Twentieth century)</i> | The Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1932 |
| | The Housing Act 1966 |
| Contemporary Cases <i>(Twenty-first century)</i> | The Residential Tenancies Act 2004 |
| | The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014 |

The case study approach facilitates the explanation of policy change (Yin 1993; 2012; Stake 1995; Creswell and Creswell 2018). For Stake (1995) a distinctive characteristic of case study research is the role of interpretation. The use of case study as the method

for this research therefore accords with the methodological and philosophical approach of this study, providing a novel and innovative focus for the research.

4.6 Methods of Data Collection

Creswell and Creswell (2018, 40) established that research methods relate to the means of ‘data collection, analysis, and interpretation’. Two methods of data collection are to be used, the review of historic documents and semi-structured qualitative interviewing.

4.6.1 Historic Document Review

Malpass (2008, 65) observed that despite a large body of housing research focusing on aspects of public policy, less developed in housing studies is the policymaking process, and that ‘one way of getting at the policy making process is to go back to events long enough ago for the participants to be willing to talk freely, and for the official files to be open to scrutiny’. Pursuing more historical and comparative methods of analysis is for Jacobs and Manzi (2017, 17) ‘amongst the best ways to respond to the limitations of contemporary critiques of housing policy’. For them, this approach overcomes too-narrowly focused research on administrative interventions, or that which overplays the impact of wider high-level forces such as global capital and neoliberalism whilst underplaying the importance of domestic policy reform. It is within this context that they assert that ‘historical and comparative forms of investigation are necessary if we are to better understand the ambition and scope of contemporary housing interventions’ (2017, 17).

The research explores the process of policymaking within periods of housing crisis which led to housing policy change. Using qualitative methods and techniques,

consisting predominantly of historic document review, the social mechanisms which influenced processes of policy change are identified and traced. Data sources reviewed include official public and archival documents, minutes of meetings, proceedings from Dáil committees and debates, annual reports of the department of housing and local government (or equivalent) and newspaper accounts. For Jacobs (2001, 132), ‘an examination of historical archive documents are the richest source of data for the housing policy researcher’, and can give greater insight than the content might suggest at face value, as Denscombe (2017, 246) outlined, ‘it tends to involve *interpreting* the document as well, looking for hidden meaning’ [author emphasis].

Figure 4.4 sets out the proposed data collection method to facilitate process tracing as a means of analysis. In effect, this has the ambition to detect ‘a causal mechanism between the initial conditions A and the outcome of interest B’ (Bengtsson and Ruonavaara 2017, 45), where condition A might be a disaster, a report or Census data, and condition B is the policy response. As Fitzgerald *et al.* (2019, 19) establish, ‘as there are likely to be a number of paths one can get from A to B, we need to establish what happens on the way from A to B’.

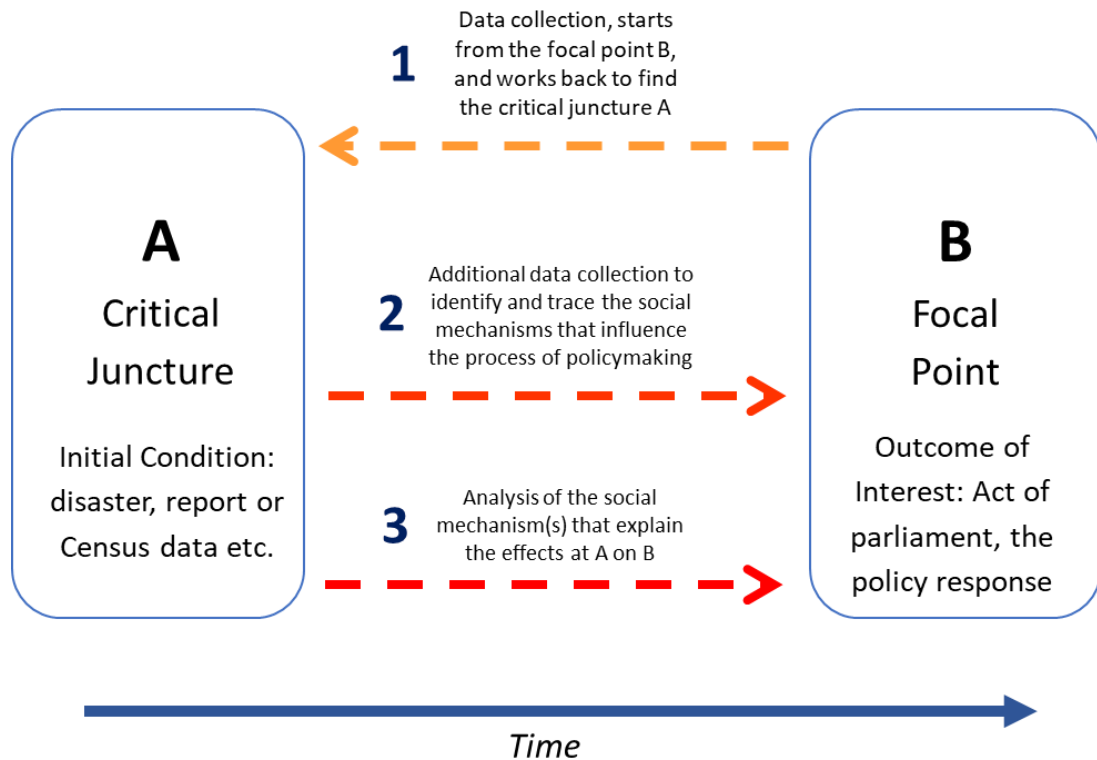


Figure 4.4: Outline of data collection and analytical methods for process tracing

This recognises that if the processes and social mechanisms which resulted in historic policy change addressing housing crisis can be traced between a historic critical juncture (point A) and political focal point (point B), then a similar process can be identified and traced and analysed in the current crisis. This provides the basis for comparative analysis between historic and contemporary cases. The methods of analysis are detailed in section 4.7.

4.6.2 Semi-structured Qualitative Interviewing

The rich data derived from the document review is augmented through in-depth interviews. Exploring the experiences and perceptions of actors in contemporary policymaking processes, and the views of specialists on the history of Irish housing

and wider aspects of Irish history, interviews gain a deeper understanding of the within-case processes and context within which policymaking is situated.

Within a case-study approach, in-depth, semi-structured or unstructured interviews can be where ‘knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee’ (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015, 4) and as a research method, can offer rich, nuanced information, not only of actions, but also the motivations and influences and the meaning as experiential evidence. As such, interviews are useful in exploring the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ as well as actor perspectives (Yin 2018). Kvale (1996) established a ‘stages’ approach to assist a researcher undertaking an effective interview investigation process, and the seven stages are discussed in relation to this research in Appendix B. This sets out the stages of thematising and designing the research process prior to interviewing, which is followed by transcribing, analysing the data and providing verification. The proposed data collection methods through interviewing utilise this stages approach.

Creswell and Creswell (2018, 185) recognised that the purpose of qualitative research is to ‘purposefully select participants... that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question’. Similarly, Stake (1995) asserted that the first principle should be to maximise what can be learned from the case study, and in this respect Myers (2013) reiterated that rather than focusing on the number of interviews undertaken, more important is ensuring that those interviewed provide representation of the various voices.

The literature highlights that the key decision-making actors in the public policy process are the triumvirate of proximate policymakers, the ministers, senior civil servants, and special advisors, who together have had a significant role in contributing

to, and influencing policymaking (Chubb 1992; Connaughton 2012; Dye 2017). Therefore the research explores the interface between these key decision-makers, and the relationships and influences within that interface, focusing on the process of policymaking around the two contemporary cases. The context for the 2004 case also identified the important role that civil society had, and therefore interviews for this case and the 2014 case include representatives of this sector. For the historic cases, given that none of the decision-making actors are alive, renowned experts in social history augment and supplement the data emerging from the document review. Whilst not directly comparable to the experiences and perceptions of decision-makers, this does add to the historical narrative and context for both cases. The ‘type’ of interview participant is set out in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Interviews – participant type and number

| Participant type | Detail | Number of interview participants |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Politicians (P) | Ex-Ministers and ex-Ministers of State for Local Government, Heritage and Environment (or equivalent) | 5 |
| Civil Servants (CS) | Department of Local Government, Heritage and Environment (or equivalent) at Principal and Assistant Secretary levels of seniority | 2 |
| Special Advisors (SA) | Special ‘policy’ advisors appointed under the provisions of the Public Service Management Act 1997 | 2 |
| Civil Society (CiSo) | Commission or Board members of agencies involved in contemporary cases of policymaking | 3 |
| Social Historians (SH) | Specialists on the history of Irish housing and wider aspects of Irish history | 4 |
| | | 16 |

This is a necessarily small sample size, though cumulatively this provides an effective group of highly influential participants from within housing decision-making processes. Of the twenty-one identified interviews (comprised of twenty potential participants¹²), sixteen interviews were undertaken, providing a strong spread of participants across the cases and by participant type (detailed in Appendix J). In total, 15 hours and 45 minutes of interviews and 76,800 words were transcribed, providing a rich source of primary data.

4.7 Data Analysis and Presentation

The identification of social mechanisms provides a means for categorising the influences on policymaking processes. Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2017) identified efficiency, legitimacy and power for examination in their process tracing in a comparative case study utilising policy documents and in-depth interview data. Norris (2017) similarly set out power, legitimacy and efficiency as drivers for the rise and fall of the property-based welfare state in Ireland, providing a historical perspective on the relationship between home ownership and the welfare state. Biesbroek and Candel (2020) identified scientific lobbying, protecting turf, and making one's mark as key policy mechanisms, whilst Murphy and Hearne (2019) utilised the three I's framework of institutions, interests, ideas of Shearer *et al.* (2016) as a conceptual basis to their use of process tracing in a comparative case study around marketisation of social housing policy and public employment services, utilising policy documents and in-depth interview data, recognising that 'the timing of the policy reform episode seems crucial' (*ibid.*, 460). Their study focused on the process from policy formulation through to implementation (2019). Fitzgerald *et al.* (2019) similarly identified

¹² A social historian participant also fulfilled a civil society role in one of the contemporary cases.

ideology, institutions and interests as variables that interact to influence decision-making.

The different categories of the variables used between studies highlights that the identification of social mechanisms and the nature of actor's goals cannot be assumed *a priori* but are open to empirical investigation and interpretation of a specific chain of events *ex post* within the context of the study (Bengtsson and Ruonavaara 2011, 404). However, to navigate the story behind each of the cases the impact of efficiency, legitimacy and power, as identified by Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2017) and Norris (2017) are analysed, though given the inductive approach of this study, these influences were reflected upon as the data emerged from the process tracing.

Both Biesbroek and Candel (2020) and Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2011) utilised counterfactual reasoning and analysis. For Mahoney (2000, 513), counterfactual analysis involves speculation as to what would have occurred had a then-available option been chosen instead during a critical juncture. Whereas Bengtsson and Ruonavaara, in their empirical study of Nordic housing policy (2010; 2011), treated other national housing systems as counterfactuals, this research uses historic Irish housing policymaking cases as counterfactuals to explore and compare contemporary continuity against historic policy change. This provides the data for comparative analysis between the historic and contemporary cases, developed in Chapter 7. The goal of data analysis within an interpretative inquiry is to simplify the collected information without losing its complexity, to simplify the 'variability of human activity' (Morehouse 2012, 85). CPT is suited to investigate empirical-historical puzzles, where 'similarities or differences of outcomes (or processes) between cases that are surprising from the point of view of some theoretical or empirical background

assumption’ (Bengtsson and Ruonavaara 2017, 46). In this respect, CPT seeks to explain why ‘the factual outcome was produced instead of a counterfactual outcome that from some plausible perspective would have been expected’ (2017, 46).

The presentation of the historical and the contemporary research is set out in Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis, exploring key junctures of housing crisis and the processes leading to housing policy change. The presentation of these chapters focuses on two research objectives:

Objective 2: Trace the processes leading to policymaking responses to housing crises.

Objective 3: Analyse the influences on processes of policymaking responses to housing crises.

The methodology and initial findings leading to the development of the historical cases in Chapter 5 was presented as a paper to the European Network for Housing Research conference in June 2023.

The final chapter (Chapter 7) brings together the exploration of this study, builds on the conceptual framework, considers theoretical approaches, analyses the findings and assesses how the proposed research is innovative and advances knowledge. This develops the comparison between the cases, focusing on two further objectives of the research:

Objective 4: Compare processes of policymaking responses to housing crises.

Objective 5: Identify the characteristics of policymaking and make recommendations on how policymaking responses to housing crisis can be informed by historic processes.

Chapter 7 also provides reflection and critical discussion around the broad aim of the research, presenting a comprehensive conceptual model relevant to developing current theory applicable to the housing policymaking in Ireland, and reviews the research process, offering reflection on that process, and providing conclusions and recommendations.

4.8 Conclusions and Next Steps

The themes emerging from the literature review provide for a research aim and objectives to be developed, establishing the basis for case study research into contrasting policymaking processes. The methodology chosen for this research is developed to fit the requirements of the study. The strategy and design of the research accords with Creswell and Poth (2018), after Stake (1995) and Yin (2014), relating to the five elements of case study research. The data collection accords with the stages approach to assist a researcher in undertaking an effective interview investigation process (Kvale, 1996, 2015), and data analysis based on comparative process tracing of Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2011; 2017).

The case study approach provides opportunity for comparative analysis, whilst the qualitative interviews encourage the exploration of the subjectivity of the policymaking process, enabling the capture of those in-depth, meaningful, contextual and experiential insights. With an interpretivist ontological position, recognising that phenomena are constructed by social actors, and an epistemology based on interpretivism, emphasising the meaning people confer upon their own and others' actions, the research explores the social mechanisms which existed during periods of housing policymaking. In summary, the methodological approach to the research is set out in Table 4.5.

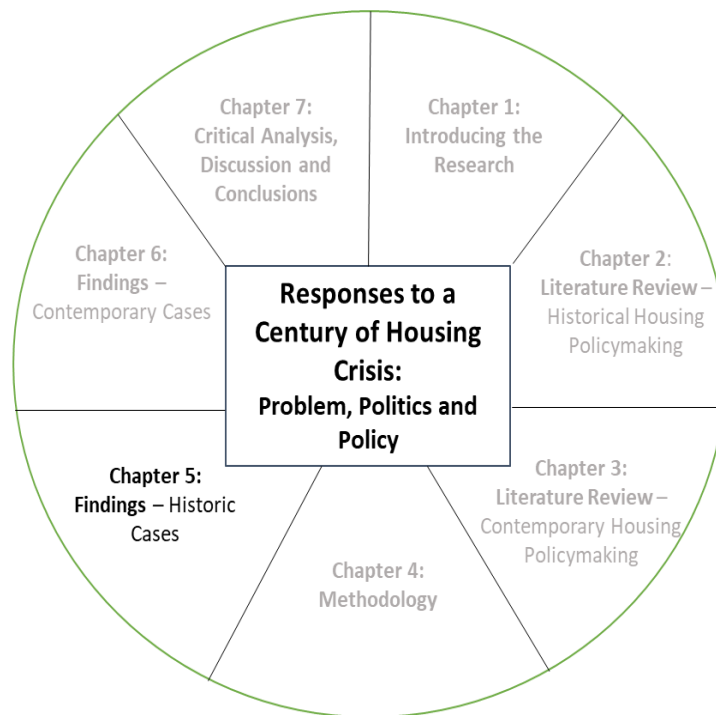
Table 4.5: Summary of the methodological approach

| Responding to a Century of Housing Crisis: Problem, Politics and Policy | | |
|--|--|---|
| Philosophical stance: | | |
| Ontology | Interpretivist | Document review involves the interpretation of meaning within the data. Identification of the processes and social mechanisms that lead to policy change. Social phenomena are constructed by social actors; the product of case-study interviews will provide information with which to seek to address questions around the drivers of the policy process, the means for effecting change, the outcomes etc. |
| Epistemology | Interpretivism | Process tracing of social mechanisms from a focal point backwards to the critical juncture. Emphasise the meaningful nature of people's participation in social life, and the meaning people confer upon their own and others' actions; the research will involve interviewing actors in the policy process to understand actions, experiences and influences. |
| Axiology | Reflection of the role and opinions of the researcher | To consider, recognise, understand and evaluate impact on the collection and analysis of research; the study is value laden. |
| Purpose | Exploratory / Explanatory | To seek understanding; seeking explanation of a housing policy decisions through exploring the processes of policymaking responses to housing crisis. |
| Methods | Qualitative (this might be termed as being 'qualitative-exploratory' (see Stebbins, 2001, 6)) | To gain insights into... attitudes, behaviours, value systems, concerns, motivations, experiences and aspirations – through tracing the processes of policymaking. |
| Methodological Approach and Logic | Inductive (note: Stebbins (2001) suggests that exploratory research, whilst generally inductive, may have deductive elements of theory testing and confirmation) | Inductive research creates theory; the process moves from the research question to observation and description to analysis and finally theory. |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Data collection strategy | Case Study Research - through analysis of suitable ‘cases’ of policy processes. | Case Study is an in-depth analysis of a case (programme, event, activity or process); four cases are developed (historic and contemporary) to facilitate an effective comparative analysis. |
| Data sources | Primary data collection, archive and documentary review augmented by interviews | To include examination of documents and records, augmented by in-depth, semi-structured interviews. |
| Population, sample size, sampling | Focus on the triumvirate of decision-makers (contemporary cases) and social historians identified through the literature review (historic cases). | A relatively small number, focused on the decision-making actors involved in the two contemporary policy processes. Focus on the triumvirate of proxy-policymakers – the politicians, civil servants, and special advisors in each policy process. The sample is directed, but typically small. Similarly, a small sample of housing historians are interviewed to consider the impact of identified social mechanisms on the process of policymaking. |
| Time horizons | Inter-temporal, though with some cross-sectional | Inter-temporal in relation to the Irish housing system, with exploration of policymaking over time, set out in four case studies. |
| Analysis | Qualitative: Process tracing | Document review and process tracing will provide detail for investigation through interviews and subsequent comparative analysis. |

The findings from the research are now set out in Chapter 5 (Historic Cases) and Chapter 6 (Contemporary Cases).

CHAPTER 5 – FINDINGS – HISTORIC CASES



5.1 Housing Policymaking in the Twentieth Century

The narrative in each of the four cases, set out in Chapters 2 and 3, highlights the importance of three key influences on policy change: efficiency, legitimacy and power. The processes of policymaking are traced - the two historic cases from the twentieth century are set out in this chapter, and two more recent cases from the twenty-first century are set out in Chapter 6.

Chapter 2 explored the context of housing policymaking which led to the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1932 and the Housing Act 1966. In both cases, the process from emergence of crisis to problem recognition and to the proposal of a policy solution was identified. In the 1932 case a new political party offered divergence from the status quo on a solution to crisis. The 1966 case saw the recalibration of thinking that took place within an incumbent political party of government. In both cases the legislation sought to address concerns about poor quality and limited supply. The document review that formed the basis of the context to the cases (set out in Chapter 2) is augmented here by the in-depth interviews with specialists on the history of Irish housing and wider aspects of Irish history. Their responses are interwoven into the text and pseudo-anonymised (identified as ‘SH’). This chapter provides the analysis of those responses, and the social mechanisms of efficiency, legitimacy and power are identified, discussed and analysed. The process of policymaking is traced for both historic cases. This chapter therefore focuses on two of the research objectives:

Objective 2: Trace processes leading to policymaking responses to housing crises.

Objective 3: Analyse the influences on processes of policymaking responses to housing crises.

5.2 Tracing the Process of Policymaking – 1932 Case

This section highlights and analyses the influence of social mechanisms in the process leading to the legislation for the Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1932. Historic document review is augmented by interviews with specialists on the history of Irish housing and wider aspects of Irish history identified in the literature review. The interviewees were asked for their comment, interpretation and analysis of the context and social mechanisms for the period leading to the enactment of the legislation. The social mechanisms and the process for policymaking are now set out.

5.2.1 Efficiency – the 1932 Case

Efficiency was at the heart of the Cumann na nGaedheal government policy agenda, given the precarious finances that were available for the fledgling Free State, and the worldwide economic situation as economies recovered after the Great War (SH2; SH3; SH4). This was also within a wider context of the State's economic stance of the 1920s and 1930s being for 'national self-sufficiency' (Aalen, Whelan, and Stout 1997, 97). The impact of the Wall Street crash of 1929 further limited the availability of finances (Daly 1997). Despite the Housing Acts of the 1920s providing subsidy for housing development, concern was expressed in the Dáil over several years that the level of subsidy available was insufficient to encourage large-scale development or to ensure that housing was affordable (SH2; SH4).

However, ideology also impacted on policymaking, given that Cumann na nGaedheal 'were genuinely wedded to a small state, or a smaller state, and a lot of their incentives were ... for the private sector, for private builders, for owner occupiers' (SH1). This was based on a:

levelling-up principle, which was well-versed from the 19th century - if you get these people who are in not so good housing, into good housing such as Marino, the people who are in very bad housing can then move in to the second-grade housing which these people had moved out from (*ibid.*).

The government was ‘very anxious to convey an impression to the international community of fiscal prudence’ (SH3) and their ‘faith in the private sector and a commitment to private solutions to social problems [meant that] there wasn’t much spending on housing, but the spending they did was on subsidisation of middle-class housing’ (SH3). The limited impact of the grant funding to local authorities, such as the million pound scheme, which ‘sounds wonderful, and I think it was a terrific headline’, is also undermined by local authorities trying to recycle that funding by the sale of houses to ‘have a little bit more money coming in [to be used to] build a few more, so a lot of those houses were sold off rather than being retained as part of the housing stock’ (SH2). The outcome was the provision of ‘high-quality housing... they [were] looking after the aristocracy of the working classes’ (SH2).

The government’s economic focus was typified by the response to the report of the Committee on the Relief of Unemployment, established in 1927 to consider and report as to the steps that might be taken for the immediate relief of unemployment. Whilst the terms of reference accepted the primacy of resourcing agriculture and industry, the final report also recognised that continued unemployment was itself an economic loss, and recommended public works which included the provision of a ten year programme of house building and the clearance of derelict sites (NAI - TSCH/3/S5553C 1928). The government’s preference to delay implementation of the recommendations and to develop a policy response only when finances improved was a continuation of President Cosgrave’s previous attitude to the costs of providing a solution to the

housing problem being too expensive (Dáil Éireann 1924). Indeed, more so than improving finances, the focus of the Cumann na nGaedheal government was ‘particularly cost-reduction, which was the big thing. They really wanted to wait until they got wages and prices back to some imaginary past – [circa] 1914’ (SH1).

This position was maintained through to late 1928, highlighted by the response given to a Memorandum from the Minister for Local Government, which set out that the provisions made for the payment of grants of £600,000 under the Housing Acts of 1925 and 1926 for 1928-29 had been fully allocated since May 1928 (NAI - S.5748 - 4 October 1928). Justifying a request for extending funding, given that there were already applications in respect of 2,100 houses, the Memorandum included ‘I am to add that the proposals contained in this Minute have been approved by the Department of Finance’. However, despite such assurances, the Executive Council’s response established that ‘The Minister will make it clear that (a) the Act is merely a transition measure (b) that the present rate of State assistance cannot be continued’ (*ibid.*).

However, ‘by the 1930s, Cumann na nGaedheal had come to the conclusion that the private sector wasn’t going to provide at the level they had assumed’ (SH3). A series of discussions with regards to housing provision, during September and October 1931, highlight the changing emphasis of the Cumann na nGaedheal government’s position. The President outlined the limited impact that housing policy had on the working classes, stating in Executive Council papers that ‘few of those houses built have been utilised for the housing of persons displaced from “slum areas”’ (NAI - TSCH/2/1/3 - 15 September 1931). Minister Mulcahy followed with a Memorandum circulated in advance of a meeting of the Executive Council, dated 17 September 1931, which discussed the proposal for a Housing Bill (NAI - S.6193 - 21 September 1931)

recognising the importance of the housing issue in advance of the forthcoming general election, and suggested that action was required. A sub-committee of the Executive Council was quickly convened (NAI - S.6193 - 30 October 1931), comprised of President Cosgrave, the Minister for Finance, and the Minister for Local Government. It met on 31 October 1931, and the discussions of which enabled the Executive Council on 3 November 1931 to agree to the Housing Bill to be approved for introduction into the Dáil (NAI - S.6193 - 3 November 1931). This not only emphasises the change in thinking within the heart of government, but also that policy action can be rapid if required, particularly when an election is looming.

The emerging political consensus on the need for action is highlighted by the Dáil debate, in November 1931, during which Deputies from all political parties expressed concern at the limited rate of proposed grant subsidy (Dáil Éireann 1931a). Despite the government's recognition that funding could be made available to focus assistance to the poorest in society, as set out in the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act of 1931, this proved to be too late to acquire substantial political capital. As Fathartaigh (2019) set out, the beginning of the end for Cumann na nGaedheal was the promotion to the electorate of fiscal prudence and austerity, especially as this was set against a populist social welfare programme advocated by Fianna Fáil (SH4).

The new incoming Fianna Fáil government, from 1932, was able to overcome the financial constraints of the previous administration without a huge burden on the taxpayer (SH3), and extend the rates of subsidy for the implementation of the 1932 Act (SH4) through:

withholding ... land annuities to Britain. They halved the charges for farmers but still collected the other half, which gave them quite a bit of money which could be used for other purposes. This has not been fully appreciated. They also

increased taxation, cut salaries of the highest paid civil servants, but public expenditure does go up quite a bit, and taxation went up, so they were consciously spending more public money (SH1).

However, there were civil service concerns about the financial profligacy of the Fianna Fáil government, with Assistant Secretary in the Department of Finance, Arthur Codling, claiming that ‘the rates of subsidy [set out in the 1932 Act] had not been sanctioned by Finance in the first place’ (Connell 2016, 172). However, in terms of policy implementation, the incoming government of 1932 was a minority Fianna Fáil government, in coalition with Labour, whose members:

were mostly from outside Dublin, and most had been voted into office by rural small-town labourers, so Labour has a huge push as well to house labouring people, because those are their voters. So, [both parties were] really pushing to concentrate money on the most needy and poorest’ (SH1).

5.2.2 Legitimacy – the 1932 Case

Questions over the legitimacy of the institutions of government were inherent at the establishment of the state, given the then recent fractious civil war, and these questions of legitimacy continued over the period of the case. The two main political parties had been civil-war adversaries and their different ideologies framed political discourse. Indeed, for future Taoiseach Bertie Ahern (FF), it was the attitude to the oath of allegiance which differentiated the political parties, and provided the basis for Fianna Fáil to question the legitimacy of the Dáil (Ahern 2023). Fianna Fáil also sought to question the legitimacy of the Cumann na nGaedheal government as being representative of the people, which is highlighted by both the election poster in Figure 2.5, ‘Government by the rich and for the rich’, and the speech given by Eamonn Cooney (FF) in November 1929 which promoted the ‘them and us’ narrative (Dáil

Éireann 1929a). This tapped into recognition that the Cumann na nGaedheal government had been willing to support housing schemes for some, ‘but they weren’t willing to do it for the urban working classes’ (SH3). There was a recognition that ‘the people that backed that government, [that had] backed them over the Treaty, were those who had more of a stake in society. So, [the Cumann na nGaedheal] electorate would have been those who would benefit from the pro- owner-occupier housing programme’ (SH1).

To counter this, Cumann na nGaedheal promoted its credentials as the legitimate party of government by focusing on its achievements since 1922 on law and order, stability and the ‘sanity and wisdom [which] are necessary in the conduct of national affairs...[to] ensure a further period of rational and prudent government’ (Minister Ernest Blythe (CnG), 1932a, 6). With focus on *rationality, sanity, prudence* and *stability*, the government was ‘trying to calm things down after this whole revolutionary period, they want the state to be seen as reliable, behaving, and fit to be part of the international community’ (SH2). Legitimacy in the narrative of fiscal prudence was reflected in the government’s approach to housing policy ‘the State cannot bear on its shoulders the burden of solving this particular problem’ (Minister Richard Mulcahy, Dáil Eireann, 1929a), implying that to suggest otherwise may not be rational or prudent. However, the support that was offered was based on the ‘policy of subsidising housing... and encouraging home ownership [as part of] a bigger agenda of citizenship and getting people to buy into the new Free State’ (SH2). There was a symbolic significance and ‘a sense that housing policy was being used to serve different purposes than the mere housing of the working classes’ with Cumann na nGaedheal ‘underlining its legitimacy at a time when that legitimacy was highly contested’ (Connell 2016, 304).

The Cumann na nGaedheal narrative also sought to demonise Fianna Fáil, and exploit fears about their legitimacy as a political party within a democracy. To counter this, Fianna Fáil used the *Irish Press* to normalise perception of it as a political party, to highlight the popularity of de Valera as a leader, to prepare the population for Fianna Fáil victory in the polls and to allay fears of communism and anarchy (see for example the notice published in the *Irish Independent* on 11 February 1932, which set out that ‘we have no leaning towards Communism and no belief in Communistic doctrines’ (de Valera 1932)). The narrative of legitimacy also respected the importance of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Despite ‘the Church [being] very much against [Fianna Fáil], and the number of bishops that came out and spoke against Fianna Fáil was very high’ (SH1), the day before the 1932 election, the *Irish Press* reported de Valera’s confidence in the coming victory, but also quoted an unnamed priest as ‘declaring that the only question now was the size of that victory’ (anon. Irish Press 1932b). Rather than an organisation that would wreck the country, the vision of social progress for all had been augmented by participation in democratic structures since 1927, which ‘lent it a new legitimacy as a constitutional political party’ (Farrell 2017, 237). Fianna Fáil’s aim for social progress included, as key strands, the alleviation of housing need and the fixing of the housing problem (SH1; SH2).

The legitimacy of local authorities to deliver the housing programme was also questioned and suggestions were offered for alternative arrangements. The inaugural Free-State (Cumann na nGaedheal) government ‘had a low opinion of local authorities, and led by [President] Cosgrave, abolished the Dublin Corporation¹³ on

¹³ The Dublin Corporation was abolished in 1923 and its functions taken-over by Commissioners, to be restored in 1930, although with reduced powers.

the basis that it was corrupt, inefficient, splurging money’, but ‘other local authorities were [also] dissolved, Cork... Ennis, Clonmel, a whole slew of them’ (SH1).

So, this is a government that gives low grade legitimacy to local authorities, it sees them as profligate, not to be trusted with money. Given that if you were going to do a big local authority scheme ... you would have to trust the Dublin Corporation, or Cork City Council, or you had to trust the local authority, they had very little trust in local authorities. Very little. (*ibid.*).

‘There was an understanding ... that the scale of [the required house building programme] will need more of a national approach, ... that it couldn’t all be left at the local level’ (SH1). This included proposals by the future Minister for Local Government, Seán T. O’Kelly (FF) for a National Housing Board, given that the arrangements for grant funding to local government bodies and individual builders was considered inadequate (anon. Irish Independent 1929b). However, and perhaps surprisingly, the government response supported the existing institutional arrangements, as Minister Richard Mulcahy (CnG) insisted that local authorities were better placed than ‘any Housing Board’ (Dáil Éireann 1931b). Despite the concerns of the legitimacy of existing institutional arrangements, and the perceived ability of local authorities to undertake a national programme of house building, Fianna Fáil did not immediately establish a Housing Board when it was elected to government in 1932 (SH4). Instead, local authorities were given the role of undertaking significant public housing construction in the legislation (Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1932). Local authorities also made structural changes to reflect their enhanced role, for example the Dublin Corporation established a Housing Department to take forward its own five-year plan to develop 2,000 dwellings a year (Carey 2016, 84). Neither were there any issues of legitimacy between the incoming Fianna Fáil

government and the civil service, indeed ‘there was no purge... [of] the civil service. There had been some continuity of the civil service from the British as well, so you don’t get civil servants purged here which is one of the best aspects of the whole change’ (SH1).

The recognition by the Cumann na nGaedheal government of the need to change the policy approach is reflected in the 1931 legislation. However, despite this change, the government was not able to accrue substantial political capital leading into the general election of 1932. For one social historian, the government’s promotion of austerity had compromised its legitimacy:

How you solve any question depends on what you perceive the problem to be, and the problem that was perceived by the Cumann na nGaedheal government was not the problem that a lot of the public probably saw. The voter is king, and the voter got fed-up’ (SH2).

5.2.3 Power – the 1932 Case

This first part of this case highlights the power of institutions and actors in serving to reduce policy options, by defining what is legitimate and what is affordable (Clapham 2019, 28). With limited political opposition, and a seemingly voiceless public, the government was able to define the policy approach to housing crisis within a wider concern for public finances, neutralising any impetus for change and thereby promoting the status quo. The population spoke through their actions, as from 1925 ‘over 30,000 left the Free State annually’ as emigration was accepted as an inevitability (Ferriter 2004, 330).

The transition of Fianna Fáil from Dáil abstentionists to a party of government within five years, however, challenged these power dynamics. This was framed not just as a

political contestation of power, but also one of ideology, with the housing problem a key issue to court public opinion (SH2; SH3). A key strategy for promoting Fianna Fáil as a respectable prospect for government was through subordinating to the Catholic Church, which had been ‘determined to impose its control on the new Free State and to make authoritative its voice heard on a range of social, political and religious topics’ (Ferriter 2004, 331). The party sought to alleviate public fear on election day by ‘pledging to govern in the spirit of the declaration made by Cardinal McRory at the Catholic Truth Conference’ (anon. Irish Press 1932d, 5). The significance of this pledge is perhaps limited and ‘it does raise questions about the power of the catholic church’ given that despite ‘many more priests... out campaigning on the [Cumann na nGaedhael] side, in fact shamelessly in many cases... in County Clare where Fianna Fáil really cleaned up, most of the priests were opposed’ (SH1). But it does highlight Fianna Fáil’s use of narrative to overcome concerns of their legitimacy.

The rise of Fianna Fáil as an alternative political choice meant that by 1931 there was a recognition by the Cumann na nGaedheal government that something had to be done (SH1), given that they were ‘being hounded in the Dáil [including by] some members of their party who would have been aware of the realities of what it was like in the cities... or in smaller towns - housing conditions were terrible’ (SH1). There was a realisation that:

it’s not one big bang event, it’s all these different elements coming into play... the civic survey of Dublin, learning from overseas... and there is a stepping back and [a recognition that] conditions are absolutely shocking... we still have a huge problem, and it is not just in the big cities, we have not addressed the big problem of the slums (SH2).

Although these factors were ‘pushing them, there wasn’t any momentum from [Minister] Mulcahy’ (SH1). Indeed, there was not a systematic push for housing improvements, given that Mulcahy (CnG) ‘was socially very, very conservative’ (SH1). Rather than demonstrating any increase in power that Mulcahy (CnG) had within the Executive Council, the impetus for change in policy direction for the government during 1930 and 1931 which led to the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1931 was from President Cosgrave, as he was:

ironically the person who had the best understanding of [housing crises]... because he was a veteran member of Dublin Corporation before 1916, on the reforming wing of Sinn Fein, so he was aware of the realities of housing in Dublin and the person most sympathetic on it (SH1).

The recognition for a change in policy direction within Cumann na nGaedheal and the pathway towards a political consensus is set out in Figure 5.1.

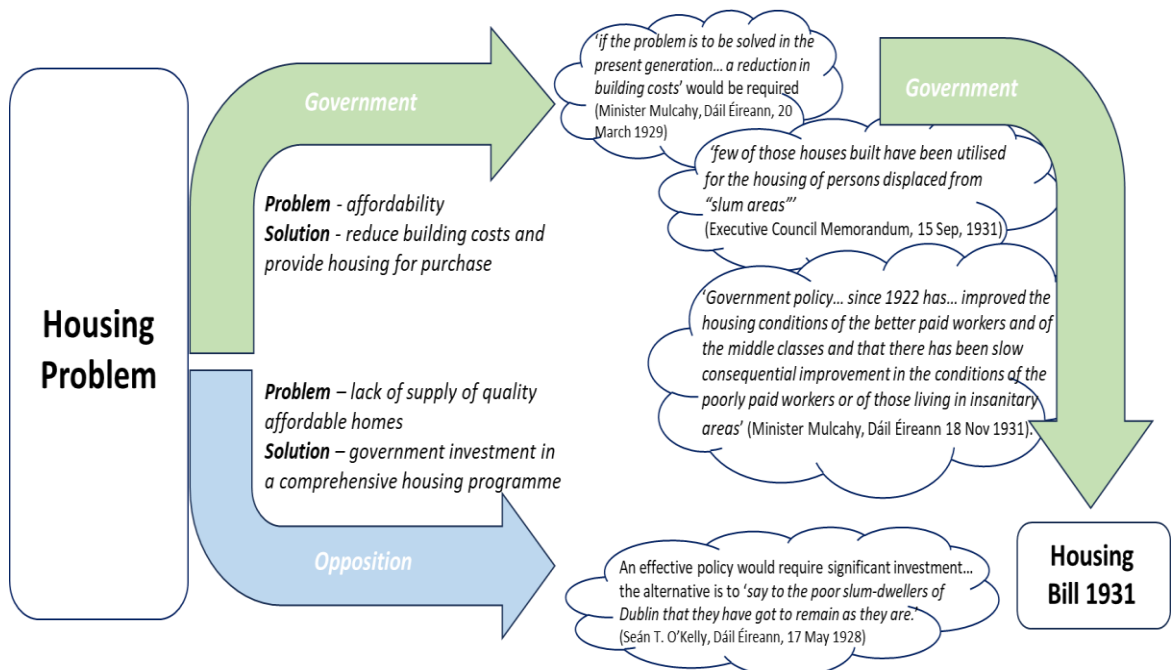


Figure 5.1: Pathway towards a consensus on policy action – 1932 case

The 1931 Act represented a reversal in the thrust of government housing policy but came too late for the Cumann na nGaedheal government to make political capital prior to the forthcoming general election. The Labour Party also sought to make political gain with which, as government partners with Fianna Fáil for one year from February 1932, it was able to achieve its own main aim for housing, i.e. the development of a long-term plan of building which would also deal with unemployment (SH1).

The 1932 Act represented a push-back against the Finance Department, as ‘they didn’t have the same clout that they had in the previous [Cumann na nGaedheal] government’ (SH1). Indeed, rather than being a key position within the Fianna Fáil Executive Council, it was ‘generally recognised that second place in that government would have been taken by Sean Lemass [Minister for] Industry and Commerce, rather than [the Minister for] Finance - Finance was generally reckoned to be downgraded because there was this commitment to spending’ (*ibid.*). This is reflected by Minister for Finance MacEntee ‘not [being] happy... he felt he was losing battles’ which is given substance in the MacEntee papers held at University College Dublin, which include the drafts of several resignation letters that he wrote as Minister to President de Valera, ‘although it isn’t clear if he ever sent any of them’ (SH1). Contrary to this, Minister for Local Government, Seán T. O’Kelly (FF), ‘was socially fairly conservative, a strong believer in private charity, but ... he would have been a supporter of housing programmes’ (SH1). It was O’Kelly that provided the drive for developing and later implementing the housing programme, carrying a ‘fiery cross’ across the country, ‘spending money and giving money to local authorities’ for housing development (SH4). An example of O’Kelly’s zeal is highlighted in his remarks whilst opening the Wolfe Tone Square housing scheme in Bray in 1936, reiterating the support he had from de Valera, but also recognising the concern and criticism of the perceived

profligacy in relation to housing budgets that were levelled at his own Department by the Department of Finance (Connell 2016, 173). Indeed, ‘there is no doubt that Finance were furious about how Seán T. O’Kelly operated’ (SH4). Edward P. McCarron, O’Kelly’s secretary in the Department for Local Government, is reported to have told his Finance Department colleagues, Arthur Codling and James McElligott, ‘look, there’s nothing I can do, he carries this fiery cross across the country spending money and giving money to local authorities, throwing up his hands in exasperation almost’ (SH4). De Valera had sympathy for O’Kelly’s determination to deliver the housing programme, given that he had moved into ‘a County Council labourers cottage’ when younger and ‘would probably remember how much this move transformed the quality’ of his life (SH1). However, this is disputed as ‘I don’t think [de Valera] had the remotest interest in social policy at all’ and instead it was Seán T. O’Kelly that provided the leadership and drive (SH4).

5.2.4 Process Tracing – the 1932 Case

The influence of the social mechanisms for this case are summarised in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Summary of the social mechanisms identifiable in the 1932 historic case

| Social mechanism | Context and the emergence of crisis | Problem recognition | Proposal of solution |
|--|---|--|---|
| <p>Efficiency</p> <p>The perception actors had regarding the economic benefit or costs of housing choices that were identified and /or available.</p> | <p>Precarious finances constrained government policymaking, with focus on financial efficiency limiting housing policy development.</p> | <p>The different interpretations that political parties took on the role of finance as part of the solution to the housing problem</p> | <p>The two positions offered to the electorate in the 1932 election of fiscal prudence and austerity (CnG) against a social welfare programme (FF).</p> |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Legitimacy</p> <p>The authority of existing institutions, and the acceptability of those institutions for the public and decision-makers, over alternative institutional arrangements.</p> | <p>The State, its institutions and Oath of allegiance were questioned, as was the State’s role in housing provision, and local authorities’ ability to provide adequate housing supply.</p> <p>Proposals for a housing board to be financed and controlled by the government.</p> | <p>The legitimacy of FF as a political party within a democracy was questioned.</p> <p>The promotion of FF as a legitimate party for government was promoted through subordinating to the Catholic Church.</p> | <p>Legitimacy of FF, and its social agenda was confirmed by the public in the February 1932 general election.</p> <p>Concerns about the ability of local authorities to undertake a national programme of house building continued, with further proposals for a National Housing Board.</p> |
| <p>Power</p> <p>The inclusion and exclusion of actors in the agenda setting and decision-making stages of the policymaking process, or their influence on those processes.</p> | <p>Limited political opposition transitioned into emergence of a political opposition.</p> <p>The relative power of the President and the Minister for Finance within government, as austerity drove (or defined the boundaries of) housing policy.</p> | <p>The rise of FF as a political alternative which also offered a policy alternative to the status quo.</p> <p>The role of public opinion in promoting policy change.</p> | <p>Shift in the power dynamics in the CnG government which facilitated the seeking of a solution to the housing problem.</p> <p>Public opinion exhibited through the ballot box with Fianna Fáil elected to government.</p> |

The literature review highlighted that there is often little consensus on what should be addressed, when, and how, and it is the prioritisation of policy issues that creates winners and losers, as ‘agendas reflect the priorities of some groups and not of others’ (Zahariadis 2016, 3). The early stages of this case highlights that the lack of an agenda for housing policy change, together with pressure on public finances, promoted the status quo. This is reflected with the series of Housing Acts during the 1920s, which incrementally amended the form of policy rather than its effect and had limited impact on the housing problem.

Whilst problem recognition is invariably a top-down process, with political actors enjoying a large element of control over that element of the process, the policy agenda is comprised of those topics, or problems, which members of the government, and those with close links, are giving thought to addressing (Kingdon 2014, 31); in this case the Cumann na nGaedheal government's refusal to consider addressing the problem until such time that finances had improved resulted in the issue being omitted from the political agenda. This limited policy approach, with no overarching goal, was reinforced by the lack of an effective political opposition, given the abstentionist approach taken by Sinn Féin and then Fianna Fáil until 1927. The prevailing political system therefore dampened momentum for housing policy change and promoted inertia during the early and mid-1920s.

The process leading from the emergence of crisis, through problem recognition to the proposal of a solution, and the pressures and the momentum for policy change is traced in Figure 5.2 (below).

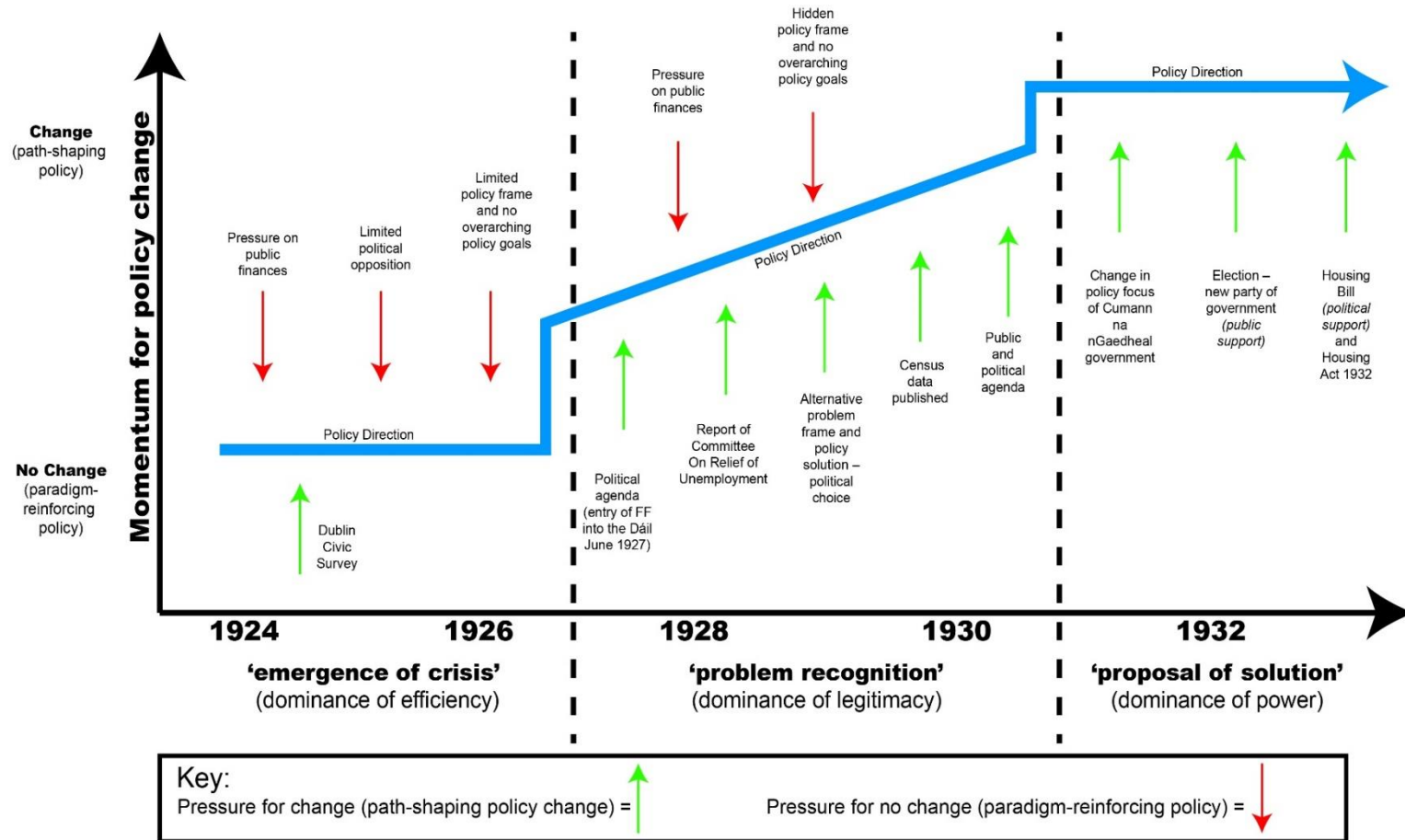


Figure 5.2: Tracing the influences and momentum for change on 1920s and early 1930s housing policy

Problem recognition within this case is evident in the period between the elections of June 1927 and February 1932. True *et al.* (2007, 157) stressed the difficulty that unfavoured groups or those with new policy ideas, in this context Fianna Fáil, have in influencing problem recognition and ‘breaking through the established system of policymaking’. The first stage of breakthrough was in June 1927 following the election and attendance at the Dáil of Fianna Fáil deputies, which provided a visible and audible opposition. Thereafter, as responses to the Report of the Committee on Unemployment, two distinct policy options emerged. The Cumann na nGaedheal analysis identified the problem as one of affordability, with the solution being a reduction in building costs, potentially with reduced grant funding, and encouragement of private sector development of housing for purchase. The Fianna Fáil analysis identified the problem as one of limited supply of quality housing, with the solution to increase the role of the State in that provision.

Susskind (2006) established that stakeholders and decision-makers are in a constant state of seeking to influence each other’s thoughts and actions, and the outcome of this, the formulation of policy, can be achieved through hard bargaining with ‘threats, bluff and political mobilisation’ (Susskind 2006, 269). The entrance of Fianna Fáil into the political arena proved significant in offering an alternative problem frame and policy solution to the housing crisis, but this required the promotion of the party’s legitimacy as an alternative political choice. The Party advocated this on two fronts. The first, in contrast to the Cumann na nGaedheal government’s housing policy, was to offer a vision of housing at an affordable rent to the neediest, which tapped into public concern about housing conditions, whilst encouraging the aspiration of tenants to become the owners of their own homes (de Valera 1932, 6). By questioning the status quo and the limited policy proposals from the government to address the

problem, the legitimacy of the administration was challenged and undermined. The second way that the Party advocated its own legitimacy was by addressing public perception. Here, the Party used the media to present a narrative of a progressive, socially-focused political party which conformed to recent Catholic Church cardinal declarations (anon. Irish Independent 1932b, 8). The result of the approaches to promote the party's own legitimacy was for housing to be placed on both the public and the political agenda.

Susskind (2006) also established that a second means of formulating policy is through presenting a convincing case, evidence or argument which persuades other parties to recognise the efficacy of the approach. For Litton (2012), this represents the willingness of one party to adjust their position in order to achieve an outcome beneficial to both. Elements are evident during the problem recognition stage of this case, as Cumann na nGaedheal was persuaded to change its position, which led to the 1931 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act and facilitated the subsequent 1932 legislation. The potential for political change demanded a public policy response which was different to the status quo, and this provided pressure for political action and path-shaping policy change. Whilst the policy formulation stage provided the proposed solution to the crisis, it was through Cumann na nGaedheal changing its own policy focus and seeking to drive the problem recognition and policy proposals which led to consensus on the problem, the causes and the solution to crisis. However, the legacy of this process was the legitimacy it therefore gave to Fianna Fáil, underpinning its 'role as the party of the working classes in Ireland' (SH3).

5.3 Tracing the Process of Policymaking – 1966 Case

This section identifies and analyses the social mechanisms around efficiency, legitimacy and power in the process leading to the legislation for the Housing Act 1966. Historic document review is augmented by interviews with specialists on the history of Irish housing and wider aspects of Irish history identified in the literature review. The interviewees were asked for their comment, interpretation and analysis of the context and social mechanisms for the period leading to the enactment of the legislation. The social mechanisms and the process for policymaking are now set out.

5.3.1 Efficiency – the 1966 Case

The economic slowdown and wider balance of payments crisis from 1956 resulted in squeezed finances into the early 1960s, with political focus on financial efficiencies and productive capital, at the expense of social investments, as set out in the first *Programme for Economic Expansion* (1958). The economic benefit or costs of alternatives determined policy choices and restricted policy options, and thus led to a significant reduction in both public and private house building, given that ‘one of the big thinkers behind [the move towards fiscal prudence] was T.K. Whitaker [Secretary at the Department of Finance]’ (SH3).

The link between housing output and public investment was raised during Dáil debates. Opposition T.D.s pointedly identified that ‘expenditure on housing has been reduced to half’ of the annual rate under the previous inter-party government (Thomas O’Donnell (FG), Dáil Éireann, 1963d) and ‘Finances for housing have been restricted... I would like a definite undertaking from the Taoiseach that there will be no restrictions on credit for housing purposes and that the existing restrictions will be

removed’ (William Norton (Lab), Dáil Éireann, 1965c). The government’s position continued to be focused on justifying costs, with Minister Neil Blaney (FF) stating that ‘it certainly would not be possible to justify the expenditure envisaged without proof of the need for it’ (Dáil Éireann 1963e). At this time, ‘the secretary [of the Department of Local Government], John Garvin, didn’t seem to push that hard either [for housing investment as] he had come out of Finance and may have retained the ethos of finance. He was pushing planning, but not the housing budget’ (SH1). The second *Programme for Economic Expansion* from 1963 sought to continue this policy focus, whilst the inflationary impact of an incomes boom in 1964 and subsequent balance of payments crisis resulted in further credit restrictions and industrial action (Daly 2016). However, given the public concern at the immediacy of the housing crisis after the tenement collapses in June 1963, the government’s focus on financial efficiency and productive capital was subsequently loosened: Part II to the second Programme was published later in July 1964. This widened the definition of productive investment and therefore took a more facilitative approach to social investment (SH1). Whilst the need for fiscal responsibility had not been removed, the analysis of the awaited local authority survey on unfit housing provided the supporting proof needed for Minister Blaney (FF) to make the case for relaxation of the restraint for social investment.

5.3.2 Legitimacy – the 1966 Case

Legitimacy, in the context of the process leading to the 1966 Housing Act, relates to the authority of existing institutions, and the acceptability of those institutions for the public and decision-makers, over alternative institutional arrangements. However, underlining this ‘was a feeling at the time that we were essentially a failed state’ (SH3).

Suggestions were made during Dáil debates that local authorities were not able to increase housing development, with that concern still being raised through into 1964. Indeed, Minister Blaney (FF) had outlined the potential to extend the NBA's remit to include some existing local authority house building functions (Dáil Éireann 1964). Examples of Dáil debates and addresses which questioned the legitimacy of existing institutional arrangements include governing party Fianna Fáil deputies, such as Patrick Burke (FF), who recognised the rift between local authorities and the Department of Local Government stating that 'while... local authorities are doing their best, I feel that to... expedite building of houses a co-ordinating committee should be established by... local authorities and the Department of Local Government' (Dáil Éireann 1962a) and Vivion de Valera (FF), who suggested that 'the local authority, the Dublin Corporation, has not been in a position to deal with the question of dangerous tenements at the speed that now appears to have been necessary' (Dáil Éireann 1963a).

Opposition deputies also questioned the existing institutional arrangements. Mark Clinton (FG), in November 1962, highlighted that Minister Blaney had accused local authorities of inaction in the past, promoting division between levels of government. He asked the Minister '...how members of the county council can secure greater progress because at every housing meeting there is no member of the authority who is not critical of the lack of progress' (Dáil Éireann 1962b). 'So, there was an understanding coming through at the time in general, that the scale of things will need more of a national approach. There was an understanding that it couldn't all be left at the local level' (SH1).

By 1963, this position had changed. The Inquiry into unfit dwellings and dangerous structures involving the collapse of buildings in Bolton and Fenian Streets (Condon 1963) exonerated the Dublin Corporation from all blame (anon. Irish Independent 1963g, 10), whilst the new Planning and Development Act 1963 stressed the importance of local authorities in operating the nascent planning system by obliging each to prepare a development plan for their area. This enhanced role for local government was followed by a recognition from 1964 that local authorities might be able to develop housing, albeit with NBA assistance where required or deemed necessary. However, the interplay between local authorities and the Department, and the limited autonomy that local authorities had in taking forward housing schemes was still questioned: ‘But the real tension was with local authorities because they saw the NBA taking away from their powerbase (SH1). This is typified by Mark Clinton (FG) addressing the Dáil in July 1965: ‘if anything has held up the building of local authority houses in recent years, it has been the reluctance on the part of the Minister to relinquish departmental control of house building’ (Dáil Éireann 1965d).

5.3.3 Power – the 1966 Case

The inclusion and exclusion of actors in problem recognition and solution proposals, and their influence on those processes, can be internal power struggles within government or the influence brought to bear on decision-makers. Clapham (2019, 28) recognised that the power of institutions and actors can serve to reduce policy options, by defining what is legitimate or not, and what is affordable or unaffordable. The emphasis on productive versus non-productive investment is identified as a shift in power dynamics, in the mid-1950s, as the Capital Investment Advisory Committee, particularly through its second report (1958), proved definitive in driving housing

policy despite reporting to the Minister for Finance. At that time ‘[the Department of] Finance gets command and control ... and get back into the driving seat ... they are trying to pull in everything under them, and you get productive investment as being narrowly defined’ (SH1). This is further emphasised by the two *Programmes for Economic Expansion* (1958, 1963-1964) which set the policy direction for the government, and which demonstrated the relative power that the Minister for Finance had within the wider government (SH3). However, as the crisis of 1963 unfolded, there was recognition of there being no alternative, given that there was a collective ‘realisation that housing mattered in terms of the economy’ (SH1). This tied into the ‘stories of people coming back from England and not being able to find anywhere to live... complaints about not being able to attract workers to places such as Killarney because of limited housing... [and] understanding that an efficient industrial policy of growth required housing as part of the essential infrastructure’ (SH1).

The recognition for a change in policy direction within the Fianna Fáil party and the pathway towards a political consensus is set out in Figure 5.3.

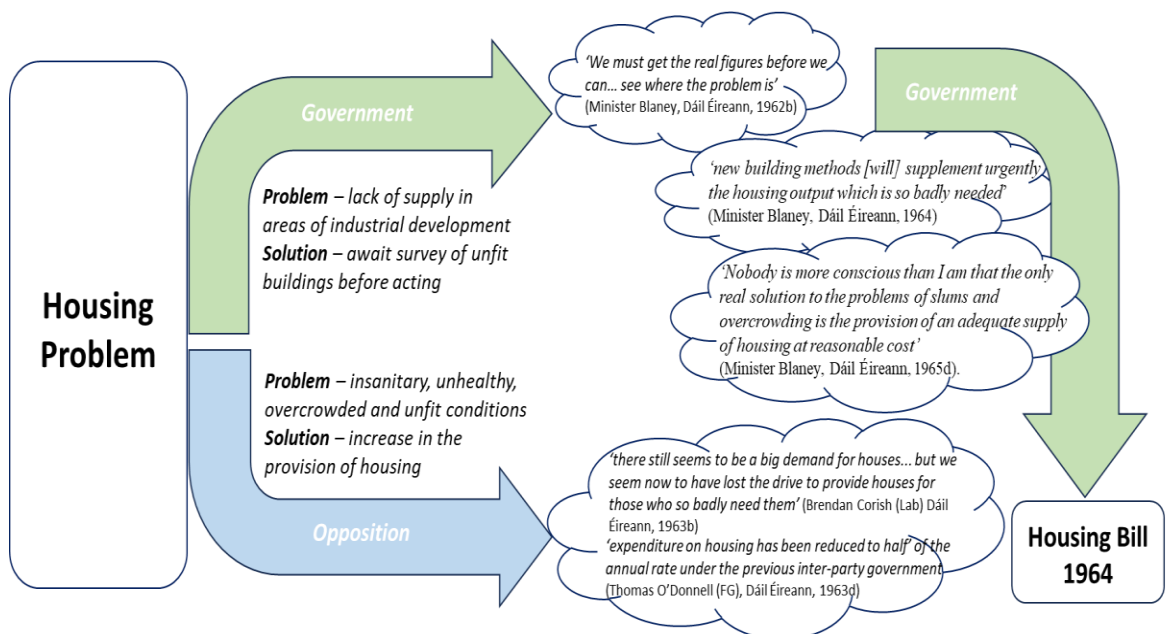


Figure 5.3: Pathway towards a consensus on policy action – 1966 case

MacCarthaigh (2020) set out that in Ireland the centre of government has been represented by the departments of the Taoiseach and Finance, which traditionally had the power to support or quash policy development presented by a third, sponsoring department. This premise holds true for the case through to 1963, but the easing of the second Programme from 1964 with a more flexible approach to social investment, particularly housing, does however raise questions regarding the relative power of ministers of third departments, such as the Department of Local Government which had responsibility for housing. The wide-ranging impact of the housing crisis and the importance of housing for the Cabinet is highlighted in Cabinet papers (NAI - S.17537 - 29 October 1963) relating to a housing scheme submitted by the Minister for Local Government. Whilst Blaney's Memorandum of 24 October 1963 has been lost to the National Archives, Cabinet consideration authorised the arrangement 'for the preparation of a general scheme of a Bill based on the principles set out ... in the Memorandum', together with a White paper, and that the Minister may 'make such reference to the proposed legislation as necessary'. Whilst Minister Blaney initially 'didn't deliver that well' in the first years of his tenure, after the tenements collapse he was able to 'push housing up the priority list' (SH1). This emphasises the increasing importance of housing as a problem for the government, and of the role within Cabinet of the Minister for Local Government in providing a workable solution to the crisis. This also reflects Minister Blaney's style of leadership, identified as using 'his national prominence as a platform for the espousal of strong nationalist positions, sometimes at odds with the expressed position of the prime minister' (Sacks 1976, 98). This case also highlights tensions that existed between the government departments, 'in particular [between] the finance ministry and local authorities', as 'the history of the decline of the social housing sector is a story of increased centralisation and control

over local authorities’ (SH3). Criticism was levelled at the ability of local authorities to deal with the question of dangerous tenements (for example Vivion de Valera (FF) to the Dáil, 18 June 1963) or to provide an adequate supply, with the suggestion by Minister Neil Blaney (FF) of the opportunity to expand the NBA’s remit in providing ‘rented accommodation in areas of need but which is not being supplied’ (Pfretzschner 1965, 36). Counter to this narrative, T.D.s who were also local authority members sought local authority autonomy (for example Daniel Desmond, Labour, 23 October 1963), and complained of the divided responsibility for the building of local authority houses between the Department and the housing authorities ‘as the members of a local authority have limited power’ (Mark Clinton, FG, 8 July 1965). The case does highlight that liaison arrangements improved between the Department and the local authorities after the building collapses, as Patrick Crotty (FG) explained to the Dáil on 3 June 1964, ‘There were consultations between the local authority housing officials in Dublin and the officials of the Department. Until the houses fell down there was no consultation.’ Others, however, blamed the Minister rather than local government or the civil service: Patrick Hogan (FG) stated, on 25 April 1965, that ‘a final technique adopted liberally by the present Minister [was to] blame the local authority [but they] are not to blame... Nor do I believe for one moment that the blame lies on the shoulders of the officials in the Custom House.’

An important influence in this case was public opinion, particularly after the buildings collapsed in June 1963. Declan Costello (FG), addressing the Dáil on 18 June 1963, identified that it had taken a disaster and the loss of life for this to be placed on the political agenda, ‘which I believe to be a scandal’ (Dáil Éireann 1963a). That public opinion had placed housing firmly on the political agenda was highlighted by Brendan Corish (Lab) asking other Dáil deputies ‘who is not approached about housing more

than about any other single subject?’ (Dáil Éireann 1965a). Finally, the influence that powerful ‘developer dynasties’ had in later years on Irish housing policymaking were manifested during the 1960s following the huge State subsidy to the construction industry (Kenna 2011, 54). There is a question, however, as to the extent of the influence the construction industry had via lobbying of political actors leading to the development of the 1966 Act. Politics at this time was ‘getting slicker [with] more money being spent on election campaigns, and it was generally reckoned that builders were very much behind the Fianna Fáil party’ and so it ‘is there by the 1960s and is more manifest than as more is being built, but it isn’t that new, it is hinted at in the 1930s’ (SH1). As director of elections for Fianna Fáil, Blaney:

would have worked very closely with [funders]. He would have been seen as one of the new breed of politicians, he was friendly with Charlie Haughey for example. If you were director of elections, you are doing a lot of the raising of the money... [and] he certainly knew how to play all those groups. He was very adept at it (*ibid.*).

5.3.4 Process Tracing – the 1966 Case

The influence of the social mechanisms for this case are summarised in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Summary of the social mechanisms identifiable in the 1966 historic case

| Social mechanism | Context and the emergence of crisis | Problem recognition | Proposal of solution |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Efficiency</p> <p>The perception actors had regarding the economic benefit or costs of different housing choices that were identified and /or available.</p> | <p>The government policy focus on financial efficiency, and specifically on productive capital investment, constrained housing policymaking.</p> | <p>Interpretations of the causes of crises – a successful industrial policy or undersupply of quality dwellings.</p> <p>Change from concentration on productive capital towards a facilitative approach to social investment, and housing provision.</p> | <p>The change in emphasis within the Government’s second Programme for Economic Expansion which took a less hostile approach to social capital expenditure and enabled extra resources for social investment.</p> |
| <p>Legitimacy</p> <p>The authority of existing institutions, and the acceptability of those institutions for the public and decision-makers, over alternative institutional arrangements.</p> | <p>The legitimacy of existing institutional arrangements was questioned, around local authorities’ ability to increase housing development.</p> <p>NBA established in 1960 to facilitate local authority housing delivery.</p> | <p>Initial reproachment of local authorities as not being able to provide increased levels of housing provision, and the expanding role of the NBA.</p> <p>Survey of unfit dwellings provided legitimacy for action.</p> | <p>Learning from overseas provided legitimacy for a policy solution to the housing crisis, including the role local authorities had in that solution.</p> |
| <p>Power</p> <p>The inclusion and exclusion of actors in the agenda setting and decision-making process, or their influence on those processes.</p> | <p>The relative power of the Taoiseach and the Finance Minister given the impact of the Programme for Economic Expansion (1958), further emphasised by the role of the Capital Investment Advisory Committee (1956) in driving (or defining the limits to) housing policy.</p> | <p>The impact of public opinion in driving the crisis response, highlighted by the Minister overcoming Department of Finance reservations on social investment, together with the interplay between different levels and agencies of government.</p> | <p>The shift in the power dynamics in the Fianna Fáil government which facilitated the seeking of a solution to the housing problem.</p> <p>The interplay between local authorities and the Department, including the limited autonomy that local authorities had in taking forward housing schemes.</p> |

Although there was much interest in the housing situation in the period leading up to early 1963, it was characterised by opposition parties seeking to make political capital whilst significant sections of the community continued to live in unfit, sub-standard, dangerous or otherwise poor accommodation. Pressure on the public finances supported the political choice to focus on economic rather than social investments, providing a limited policy frame and no overarching policy goals for housing. This was supported by the political narrative around the post-war housing problem having been solved (Dáil Éireann 1958), which with the benefit of knowledge was simplistically optimistic at best, or truly negligent at worst. Additionally, the legitimacy of institutions had been questioned, with concern expressed at the ability of existing institutions to facilitate change had it so been required. This is illustrated by the reproachment of local authorities by Minister Blaney and others, and the establishment and expanding role of the NBA as an alternative institution for housing provision.

The period of the emergence of crisis was therefore typified by momentum for paradigm reinforcing policy, exemplified by the legislation of 1958 and 1962 which focused on limited amendments to existing mechanisms, promoting continuity and the status quo. The process leading from the emergence of crisis, through problem recognition and the proposal of a solution, and the pressures and the momentum for policy change is traced and set out in Figure 5.4 (below).

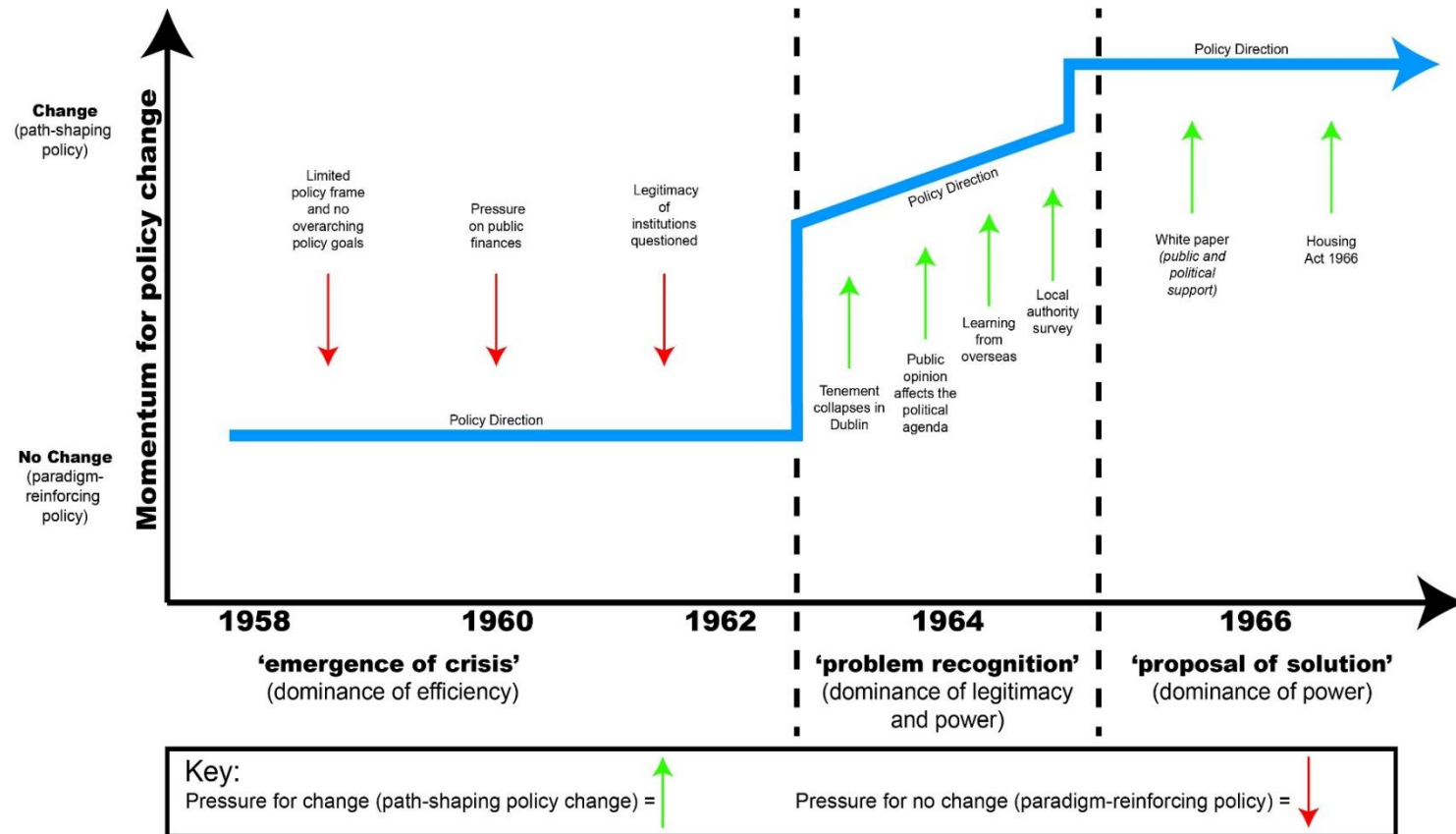


Figure 5.4: Tracing the influences and momentum for change on late 1950s and early 1960s housing policy

Problem recognition within this policy process began in June 1963 and continued through to June 1964, with both the quantity and the quality of available housing recognised as the cause of the problem which required a policy solution, taking ‘something shocking to get something to happen - they had to start to think differently’ (SH2). The four fundamental elements of problem recognition (agenda setting) identified by Zahariadis (2016) can be recognised around perception, potency, proximity and power. As the true scale of the emergency became apparent, with the collapse of several tenements, the identification of further dangerous structures and the difficulties in housing displaced families, public opinion, empathy and the perception of the importance of the issue heightened, and was elevated through media reporting (for example, front page headlines ‘Girls killed as Houses Topple’ (anon. The Irish Times 1963a) and ‘Two die in house collapse’ (anon. The Irish Times 1963b)). With the building collapses that involved fatalities occurring within a short time period, the intensity of the problem and the severity of the consequences increased the perception of the potency of the situation. With 367 buildings identified as dangerous within Dublin, the proximity of the threat and impact on individual and community perception of safety influenced the national mood, again facilitated by the media (for example ‘Live on in dangerous buildings’ (anon. Irish Independent 1963f, 15)). With regards to power, this case highlights the authority that the Taoiseach and the Minister for Finance had in constraining housing policy. However, as learnings from overseas provided options for the method to address the crisis, and the local authority survey provided the data required to emphasise the true scale of the problem and the means for Minister Blaney to overcome financial objections, the case for change could then be argued. The nuanced change of emphasis between Parts I and II

of the second *Programme for Economic Expansion* outlines the impact of Minister Blaney's interventions (SH1).

This period of problem recognition was typified by increasing public and political feedback, as the emergency and sense of crisis deepened, with increased momentum and support for path-shaping policy change. Public opinion around the emergency of collapsing buildings demanded a policy response which was different to the status quo. It provided pressure for political action and path-shaping policy change. Policy formulation provided the solution to the underlying causes of the crisis. The White Paper established public and media support for the policy proposals, whilst the Housing Bill garnered political support for social investment in housing, which led to consensus on the problem, the causes and the solution to crisis.

5.4 Historic Cases Discussion

Both historic cases accord with the policy process literature around crises being path-shaping moments of change (Hay 2013) and 'signifiers of change which denotes a critical, decisive moment, or turning point' (Roitman 2013, 10). During such times, problems are brought to the attention of policymakers through events such as crisis and disaster (Kingdon 2014). The path-shaping moments for these cases were the publication of the Census in 1929 and the local authority survey of 1964, both of which highlighted the scale of each crisis and underlined the need for a policy response – that something had to be done (SH1; SH2).

In relation to the pathways to major policy change identified by Sabatier and Weible (2007, 208) the 1930s case represents an external shock, as a new political party disrupted the status quo. The 1960s case is an example of an internal shock, as an

incumbent government recognised the need for policy change, although with an element of policy-orientated learning, as new building methods and approaches informed policy development.

Boltanski (2011, 134–35) proposed that crisis moments have four roles: exonerating the dominant class (who had previously protected the populace from reality); promoting the necessity to present new interventions; providing the ways and means to act, and therefore promoting the perception of leadership of the dominant class. Accordingly, Boltanski asserted, dominant groups can exploit crisis to promote their own legitimacy:

- *1966 case* - This theoretical proposition holds true for the 1960s case, as Fianna Fáil blamed Fine Gael and other Inter-Party government participants for the financial problems of 1956 (from which, they asserted, the economic problems of late 1950s and early 1960s stemmed). They used this narrative to exonerate themselves from blame, to provide the ways and means to act and to promote the perception of their own leadership credentials, despite the tenement collapses highlighting the real state of Irish housing, requiring a government policy U-turn. Rather than housing needs being met in full (Dáil Éireann 1958) this crisis emphasised housing as having a perpetual, underlying problem, with periods of intermittent crisis.
- *1932 case* - This case, however, provides an opposite explanation to Boltanski's crisis moments (2011) as Fianna Fáil, in opposition, used arguments about the dominant class to reframe the problem and which provided the necessity to present new interventions, including new ways and means to act. Their emergence as an effective political opposition provided the basis to lay criticism at the lack of government leadership, so presenting and

promoting a case for political change. Rather than exonerating the dominant class, the 1930s case highlights that the dominant class did not exploit change and were reproached for this inertia at the 1932 general election - perhaps no poor policy goes unpunished?

Paul t'Hart *et al.* identified that with a perceived need for effective reaction to crisis, the public policy response is typically highly centralised, with 'ad hoc adaptation of the bureaucratic structure and culture' (1993, 14). The three elements of crisis identified by t'Hart *et al.* (1993) of severe threat, high uncertainty, and time pressure are also recognisable in the 1960s case, though are less recognisable in the 1930s case:

- *1966 case* - The government's initial reaction to collapsing tenements and public outrage was to extend the role of the (centrally managed) NBA to develop housing solutions, although local authorities were ultimately entrusted to implement the housing programme, as per the situation following the 1932 Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act.
- *1932 case* - The three elements of crisis are less recognisable in this case. The Cumann na nGaedheal government did not acknowledge the time pressure for resolving the housing problem, nor did it recognise the severe threat of the emerging opposition political party. Rather than adapting bureaucratic structure and culture, the government failed to react to the problem and postponed the policy response. When the Cumann na nGaedheal government did respond, with the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1931, this was perceived as being too late (given the Cumann na nGaedheal election defeat shortly after the legislation was enacted) – 'the voter is king, and the voter got fed-up' (SH2).

The literature also highlights that crises establish framing contests, within which political actors attempt to make capital (Boin, t'Hart, and McConnell 2009). Within such contests, it is often not the event or the effects that determine the impact on political capital and public policy, but 'their public perception and interpretation' (*ibid.* 83). With crisis as an opportunity, the response becomes both a political game, normally between government and opposition, and a policy game, between change and continuation of the status quo (88). It is within these contests that the media provides 'a prime arena in which incumbents and critics, status-quo players and change advocates have to perform to obtain or preserve political clout' (95).

- *1932 case* - The efficacy of the proposition by Boin *et al.* (2009) is highlighted, given that Cumann na nGaedheal eventually made a reversal in the direction of government housing policy, though without making political capital - a case of too little, too late. In contrast, Fianna Fáil utilised the media, particularly the *Irish Press*, captured the public mood and extended the perception of the need for change.
- *1966 case* – The efficacy of the proposition by Boin *et al.* (2009) is less recognisable in the 1960s case, as whilst the media provided a prime arena, it was public perception and opinion that framed the housing crisis and influenced political actors.

Theory suggests that a 'policy window' will open when there is an alignment between the independent problem, policy and politics streams (Kingdon 2014; Herweg, Zahariadis, and Zohlnhofer 2018). Cairney (2020, 196–97) suggested that during such an alignment 'it must be acted upon quickly before attention shifts elsewhere, partly by demonstrating that a feasible solution already exists'. However, instead of an

alignment of streams and a limited time-frame within which policy is developed, the tracing of the two processes of historic policymaking suggests that a process leads from problem to politics to policy.

The conformity to theoretical propositions of crisis responses for cases are set out in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Conformity of the historic cases to theoretical propositions

| Theoretical frame | Case 1 – 1930s case | Case 2 – 1960s case |
|--|--|---|
| Sabatier and Weible (2007) - there are four paths to major policy change: policy-orientated learning; external shocks; internal shocks; a hurting stalemate. | External shock (leading to new entrants to the sub-system which led to internal change). | Internal shock. |
| Boltanski (2011) – crisis moments have four roles: exonerating the dominant class; promoting perception of leadership; promoting new interventions; providing the ways and means to act. | Does not conform to the theoretical proposition. The political opposition criticised the lack of leadership to reframe the problem and promote a case for political change. | Conforms to the theoretical proposition. |
| Hart et al. (1993) – three elements of crisis are severe threat, high uncertainty and time pressure. | Does not conform to the theoretical proposition. The government did not acknowledge the time pressure for resolving the housing problem, nor did it recognise the severe threat of the emerging opposition political party. | Conforms to the theoretical proposition. |
| Zahariadis (2016) – the four fundamental elements of problem recognition setting are perception, potency, proximity and power. | Recognisable. | All elements of problem recognition are recognisable as the case progresses. |
| Boin et al. (2009) - crises establish framing contests within which political actors attempt to make capital to influence public perception - within these contests the media provides a prime arena. | Conforms to the theoretical proposition. | Does not conform to the theoretical proposition. Whilst the media provided a prime arena, it was public perception and opinion that framed the housing crisis and influenced political actors. |
| Susskind (2006) – stakeholders and decision-makers are in a constant state of seeking to influence each other's thoughts and actions. | Conforms to the theoretical proposition. | Conforms to the theoretical proposition. |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2017) - identification of social mechanisms facilitate understanding of the driving forces behind institutional change, and the obstacles against such change.</p> | <p>Conforms to the theoretical proposition. Social mechanisms of efficiency, legitimacy and power are identifiable as influences on the process of policymaking.</p> | <p>Conforms to the theoretical proposition. Social mechanisms of efficiency, legitimacy and power are identifiable as influences on the process of policymaking.</p> |
| <p>Kingdon (2014) – a ‘policy window’ will open when there is an alignment between the independent problem, policy, and politics streams.</p> | <p>Does not conform to the theoretical proposition. Instead of a time-limited alignment of streams, the case emphasises the policymaking process progresses from problem to politics to policy.</p> | <p>Does not conform to the theoretical proposition. Instead of a time-limited alignment of streams, the case emphasises the policymaking process progresses from problem to politics to policy.</p> |

Despite differences between the cases, the social mechanisms of efficiency, legitimacy and power each had an impact on the processes leading to both the 1932 and the 1966 Housing Acts, as responses to each respective housing crisis. A brief comparison is set out in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Comparison of social mechanisms between the two historic cases

| <p>Social mechanism</p> | <p>Similarities between cases</p> | <p>Differences between cases</p> |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| <p>Efficiency</p> | <p>Precarious finances constrained government policymaking, with focus on financial efficiency limiting housing policy development. Recognition that housing development was part of the solution to wider economic development concerns. Outcome of the policy process was the state providing subsidy to the private sector to facilitate house building – with focus on increased supply.</p> | <p>1930s case identified the different interpretations that political parties took on the role of finance in being part of the solution to the housing problem. 1960s case identified a change over time that enabled extra resources for social investment.</p> |
| <p>Legitimacy</p> | <p>Legitimacy of existing institutional arrangements were questioned – including the role of local authorities in undertaking a national programme of housing development. The importance of external data provided the validity and legitimacy for policy change – the Committee on Unemployment recommendations in the 1932 case, and the local authority survey in the 1966 case.</p> | <p>The calls for a National Housing Board in the 1930s case were replaced by calls for an extension of the established National Building Agency in the 1960s case. Legitimacy of the opposition as a democratic political party questioned in the 1930s case was not replicated in the 1960s case.</p> |

| | | |
|--------------|--|---|
| Power | <p>Public opinion as a driver for policy change.</p> <p>Convergence towards political consensus – with a focus on expanded supply of private and public housing.</p> <p>The relative power that the President / Taoiseach and the Minister for Finance had within cabinet and in driving housing policy.</p> <p>The shift in the power dynamics in different governments which facilitated the seeking of a solution to the housing problem.</p> | No identified differences between historic cases. |
|--------------|--|---|

In both cases, efficiency was the dominant social mechanism during the emergence of the problem, though mechanisms of legitimacy and power dominated the problem recognition and proposal of a solution stages. The recognition of housing development as being part of the productive economy, rather than a social expense, resulted from the loosening of efficiency requirements in both cases: In the 1920s, constraint was based on waiting for costs to reduce, but Fianna Fáil recognised this as a key to employment generation; in the 1950s, housing development was again seen as social (and therefore non-productive) expenditure, but the government view changed in Part 2 of the *Second Programme*. A social historian observed that ‘throughout the early decades of the state, and right until the 1960s, public house building played a really strong role as an economic stimulus measure, in stimulating employment, particularly at times of high unemployment’ (SH3). The rationale for this approach, apart from creating employment, was for keeping these building firms viable, ‘so they get enough public contracts to keep them going and they could build private housing in between’ (*ibid.*).

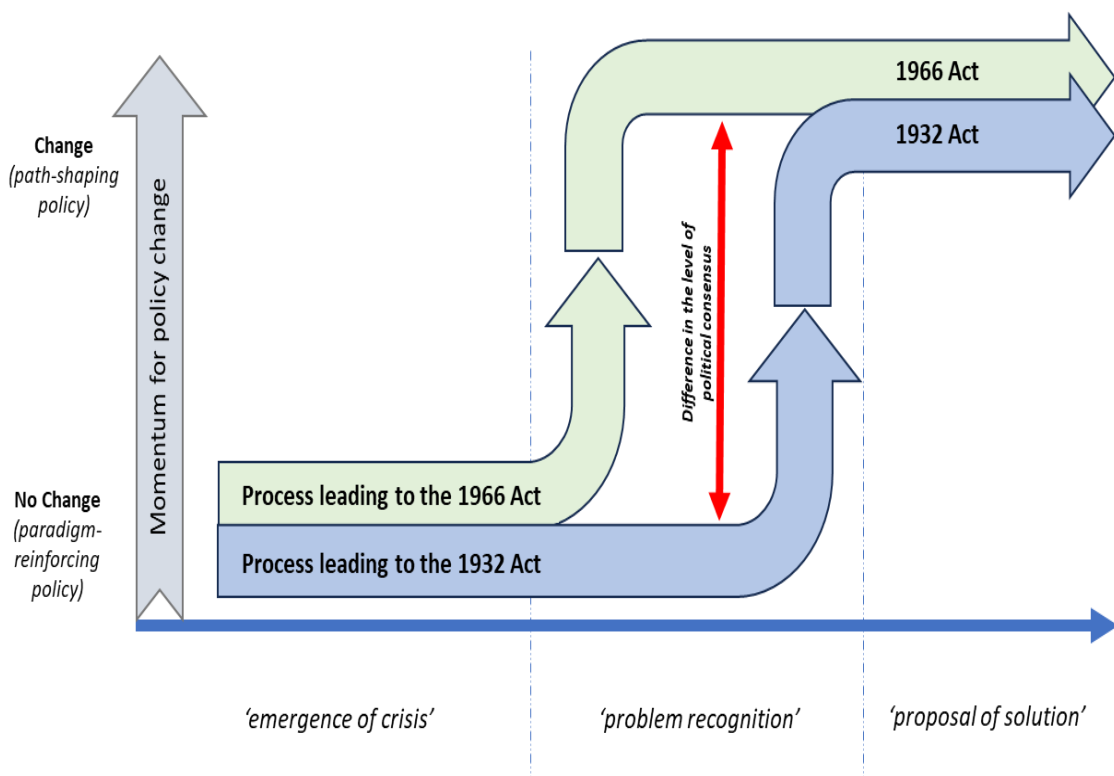
Table 5.5 (below) sets out the dominant social mechanism during each stage of the historic policymaking processes.

Table 5.5: Dominant social mechanisms within the stages of the two historic cases

| | 1932 Case | 1966 Case |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Emergence of crisis | Efficiency | Efficiency |
| Problem recognition | Legitimacy | Legitimacy (and Power) |
| Proposal of a solution | Power | Power |

The *Saorstát Éireann: Irish Free State official handbook* set out that the needs and wishes of the Irish people shape the policy of government (1932, 1). The two historic cases emphasise the importance of public opinion as a means of relaying those needs and wishes by demanding changes to public policy, but public opinion appears to shape policy only if it fits within wider government fiscal criteria. Despite this, public opinion is an important characteristic of housing policymaking.

Figure 5.5 sets out the momentum for policy change within the two historic cases.

**Figure 5.5:** The momentum for change for the two historic cases

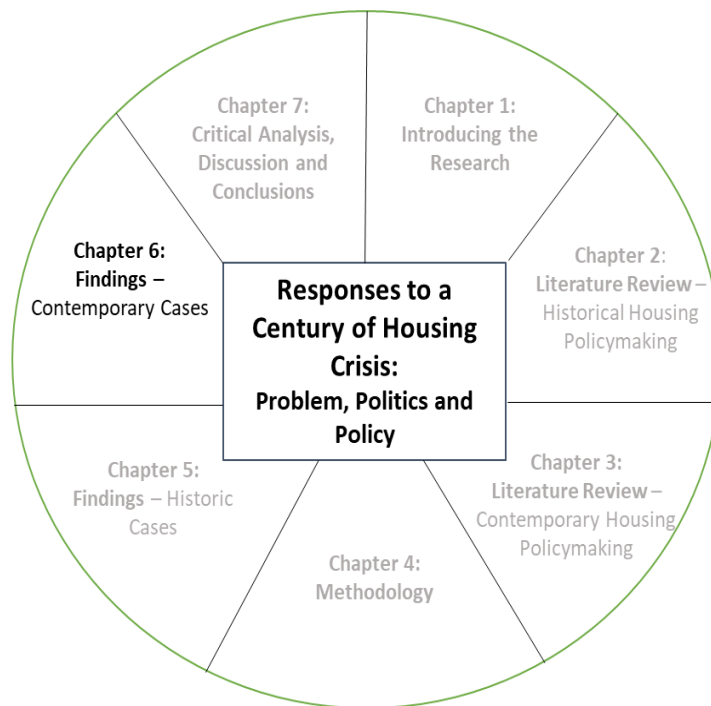
The momentum for both historic cases followed a similar trajectory, however the gap between the 1932 and 1966 processes during the problem recognition stage reflects the differences in levels of consensus on the cause of the problem and the policy solution:

- *1932 case* - Both main political parties had recognised that housing was a problem requiring a policy response, but each had interpreted the problem differently, and therefore each had identified different solutions. This acted as a counterbalance, restraining the momentum for path-shaping policy. However, when the Cumann na nGaedheal government recognised the threat from the main opposition party, Fianna Fáil, and began the process to legislate for the 1931 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, concerns of efficiency were overcome and a consensus on the problem and solution was reached.
- *1966 case* - The process leading to the 1966 Act reflected a consensus for policy change following the surge in public opinion for such change after the Dublin tenement collapses in 1963. Political consensus is therefore an important characteristic of policymaking.

This chapter has outlined the exploration of two processes of historic housing policymaking through document review and augmented by interviews with social historians. The social mechanisms around efficiency, legitimacy and power are recognisable within both cases, and process tracing facilitated analysis of the events that made up the sequences and processes of policymaking. Similarities in processes of housing policymaking are identified, which included overcoming financial constraints, the acquisition of data to provide legitimacy or validation for policy action, and the role of public opinion, political leadership and the convergence towards political consensus in facilitating the progression of policymaking.

The identification of the social mechanisms and the tracing of these processes enabled comparison between both historical cases but also enables comparison with the contemporary cases (Chapter 7). The next chapter sets out the findings in relation to the two contemporary cases, again through document review and process tracing, augmented by in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key decision-making actors in the policymaking process. The final chapter comparatively analyses the historic and contemporary cases, with assertions and generalisations drawn on policy change and the role of identified variables on that change drawn. The differences between the cases and identified examples from theory are thereafter developed and analysed in Chapter 7: Critical Analysis, Discussion and Conclusions.

CHAPTER 6 – FINDINGS – CONTEMPORARY CASES



6.1 Housing Policymaking in the Twenty-First Century

Chapter 3 explored the context of housing policymaking which led to the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 and the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014. In both cases the process leading from emergence of crisis to problem recognition and to the proposal of a policy solution was identified.

The document review that formed the basis of the context to the cases (set out in Chapter 3) is augmented here by the in-depth interviews with decision-makers from those processes. Their responses are interwoven into the text and pseudo-anonymised. This chapter provides the analysis of those responses. The social mechanisms of efficiency, legitimacy and power are identified, discussed and analysed, and the process of policymaking traced for both cases. This chapter therefore focuses on two of the research objectives:

Objective 2: Trace the processes leading to policymaking responses to housing crises.

Objective 3: Analyse the influences on processes of policymaking responses to housing crises.

6.2 Tracing the Process of Policymaking – the 2004 Case

This section identifies and analyses the social mechanisms around efficiency, legitimacy and power in the process leading to the legislation for the Residential Tenancies Act 2004. The review of documents is augmented by interviews with identified decision-makers. The interviewees were asked for their comment, interpretation and analysis of the context and social mechanisms for the period leading

to the enactment of the legislation. The social mechanisms and the process for policymaking are now set out.

6.2.1 Efficiency – the 2004 Case

Brenner and Theodore (2005, 102) asserted that neoliberalism encourages ‘the active mobilisation of state power’ to facilitate and ensure the dominance and legitimacy of the market. Therefore, rather than seeking to overcome state control, neoliberalism utilises the state to facilitate the conditions to perpetuate the market (Tasan-Kok 2012). For Ireland, the period of the 1990s into the new Millennium was a time of transition for the housing sector, from being characterised as a homeownership, social-welfare system to one which had a greater role for the private rental sector (Dukelow and Considine 2017; MacLaran and Kelly 2014; Sirr 2014a). Ireland’s more dynamic employment system was encouraging short-to-medium term migration patterns (P5), where new residents ‘may not wish to stay for their career ... may not get into public housing and may not want to buy a house’ and so would reside here for a few years in the PRS (CiSo1). There was:

... a sense that the PRS would be, in the future, more than it was in the past, and as an aid to the economic development of the country it was necessary to grow this sector to accommodate the new cohort of people that were going to stay for longer than a year or two or three’ (*ibid.*).

There was, therefore, ‘an efficiency mechanism at work there, in the sense that the private rented sector was rapidly becoming a form of social housing’ (CiSo2). The market focus in housing provision was supported using financial instruments to stimulate demand for private sector housing provision, whilst ‘the relationship between the building societies and the state was enormously close, they weren’t really

regulated as became evident when we had the banking crash, but they had a very close relationship with the government and were enormously politically powerful’ (CiSo3). However, an outcome was ‘the sharp contraction of local authority construction in the late 1980s and early 1990s [which was] a significant factor in increasing problems of affordability and access’ (NESC 2004, 76). Whilst ‘it was hugely important that the economy had risen and was successful’ from the late 1990s and into the early 2000s (P2), the problem with affordability meant that ‘the focus really was trying to bring down house prices, or at least stabilise them’ (*ibid.*). The policy response was framed within the terms of reference of the Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector, with a focus on security of tenure, landlord and tenant relationship, and investment into the sector, rather than concerns about housing affordability (CiSo1). The proposed regulation of the sector contradicted the prevailing deregulated approach, bringing criticism from lobby organisations around the impact on investment in, and the efficiency of, the private residential sector. The political response, though, was that ‘anything that government proposes, the government is always wrong, and vested interests are never seen as vested interests’ (P2).

Whilst the legislation sought to address increasing problems within a rising market for renters around security of tenure, it did not address wider issues of affordability (P5). Arthur Morgan (SF) set out in the June 2003 Dáil debate on the Residential Tenancies Bill:

People in private rented accommodation will have gasped in disbelief that legislation brought forward to reform the private rented sector does not tackle the fundamental issue of affordability. This is symptomatic of the Government's failure to tackle the crucial issues in terms of the housing crisis (Dáil Éireann 2003a).

However, ‘it was understood I think at the time... and... there was a lot of lobbying from NGOs - Threshold for example - that accommodation in the PRS was very poor and something needed to be done about it’ (CiSo1). For a civil servant, the policy response tied into the ethos of ‘Fianna Fáil [which] in its heyday was very good at bread and roses – this sounds a little bit cynical – but they always threw enough crumbs to the masses, it’s not a social view, it’s an economic view, keep the masses happy’ (CS2).

Despite the Celtic Tiger boom during the period of this case, a politician stated that ‘I don’t think anybody ever thinks that the public service system is efficient, or as efficient as it should be’ (P2). In this context, ‘housing would not be a favourite topic, or high on the spending agenda for officials in the Department of Finance, they were and still are as far as I can make out ... very tight with the purse strings. If they could avoid giving extra money at all they would try and do that’ (P2).

6.2.2 Legitimacy – the 2004 Case

The regulatory regime in place from the mid-1990s required conformity to minimum standards and the registration of tenancy details, but the legitimacy of that regime was undermined by non-compliance and limited enforcement (DELG 2000, 95) coupled with a loss of faith in the social housing sector among senior civil servants (SH3). Joe Costello (Lab) expressed concern during Dáil debates at ‘the failure of local authorities to register landlords’, placing the blame on local authorities: ‘They simply did not exercise their duty regarding the implementation of the law’ (Dáil Éireann 2003b), as ‘they had shown zero interest’ (CiSo2).

With increasing concerns at rising house prices and unaffordability, the Minister of State Bobby Malloy (PD) commissioned an economist, Dr. Bacon, to report on the

operation of the owner-occupied sector, and Malloy took a similar approach to utilise external experience and influence to examine the private rental sector (CiSo1; CiSol2; P2; P5). The Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector recognised that court proceedings which found against Ennis Urban District Council in two cases versus ‘a number of landlords (members of the IPOA) for failure to pay the annual registration fee [and in a later case for landlords] who had failed to register their rented houses’ was likely to have affected the level of compliance (DELG 2000, 94–95). The Commission outlined that the failure ‘to secure the conviction of a landlord for non-compliance ... may have resulted in a reluctance’ for local authorities to undertake enforcement action (*ibid.*).

The diminished legitimacy of the local authority-led regulatory regime occurred at the time of wider concern at democratic processes being undermined by tribunal hearings and allegations of corruption. It is also set within the context of a reduced legitimacy of democratic processes, given the allegations of abuse of power, bribery and corruption and the ineffective implementation of legislative procedures. Furthermore, as ‘the provision of housing, the conditions applying in the housing market [and] the conditions applying to renters’ became part of the agenda of social partnership as it developed throughout the late 1990s and into the 2000s there were concerns that this had operated as ‘a cosy cartel’, where the ‘cut and thrust of debate had become a more comfortable thing of “you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours”’ (CS2). ‘It is easy to forget how important [social partnership] was in those years ... government Departments would have taken a view that if it is not in the social programme, it is not there’ (CiSo2). Therefore, ‘the level of challenge was no longer there, and there was a degree of collusion, so power and legitimacy got all mixed up and confused in an environment of recrimination and blame’ (CS2).

Whilst ‘social partnership was extraordinarily successful’ (P5) and ‘it was better to bring [the different actors or partner organisations] in around the table, have the discussions’ (P2):

There would have been resentment that people other than ministers were getting credit for coming up with the policies ... Some ministers, at different times, felt that social partners had too much power, too much say, but I think that would have been tempered by the fact that it completely changed the context of industrial relations (*ibid.*).

This wider concern of legitimacy resulted in suggestions from opposition T.D.s for alternative institutional arrangements, including for the establishment of a National Housing Authority as part of wider housing market regulation and reform (Dáil Éireann 2000). Indeed, the Fianna Fáil manifesto sought new arrangements to facilitate a professionally operated PRS (Fianna Fáil 2002). The Commission also recognised the limited legitimacy of the existing arrangements, particularly given that tenants of sub-standard accommodation might be reluctant to complain to the local authority ‘arising from a fear of retaliatory action’ by landlords (DELG 2000, 91), whilst the route for conflict resolution ‘could be very expensive if they had to go to court’ (CiSo1). The emerging and sustained political consensus on policy proposals and the proposal for the establishment of a new national statutory body, the PRTB, within a new regulatory regime would provide legitimacy and overcome the criticism of the previous, failed, local authority-led regime, whilst offering dispute resolution rather than court action (CiSo1, P5).

‘Sometimes something happens, and its time has come, and I think the time for looking at the private rented sector had come, and people were generally accepting that a commission was the right way to do it’ (CiSo2). That the recommendations of the

Commission were agreed in full highlights the legitimacy of that body and the process which it undertook, given that ‘they were seen to have done a very thorough job in the report’ (P2):

if you can get consensus from a group that is not controlled by a minister, or not controlled by the government, if it is seen to be broad-based and involves all of the key stakeholders from all sides, including the political sides, it’s the ideal (P5).

Indeed, the Commission was generally accepted by all parties either side of the political divide (CiSo2; P5). It invited ‘people to make submissions, it published these, it responded to them, it presented its reasoning, and the reasoning of the participants to the public, there for all to see’ and ‘that allowed all the people to make the arguments that they wanted to make and saw the logic of the outcomes (CiSo1).

6.2.3 Power – the 2004 Case

As set out above (see 6.2.1 Efficiency), the period from the early 1990s was defined by a policy approach that promoted and facilitated the primacy of the market, with a reduced role of the state in housing provision (P4). As set out by a senior politician:

the major points of tension that could have existed in that government was in relation to taxation policy rather than anything else. It just didn’t arise because the Minister for Finance at the time ... was of the same thinking in relation to tax and economic policy as the PDs were, so there wasn’t any great tension generally in the government (P2).

However, in relation to housing policy, ‘between 1980 and 2004, with the exception of the rent tribunal which was just for the rent control tenants, we were basically a market, and nothing else... there was no security of tenure, no controls over rents at

all other than [as dictated by] the market’ (CS1). The ‘reality is that security of tenure was by far the biggest issue. Tenants had no rights ... [they] were incredibly vulnerable, there was nothing to protect [them], nothing’ (CiSo2).

The importance of public opinion was highlighted as being critical: ‘you have to have public opinion behind you, and yes, it was a very big part of the job’ seeking to influence it (CiSo2). For a politician, ‘housing is a sensitive subject in Ireland ... so ... one of the most positive things about the role of public opinion was that it gave me an enormous amount of power and leverage’ (P2). This influence on decision-makers ‘can be huge’ (P5), but this is a two-way process, as ‘if the public are informed then certainly it works in your favour, it forms a consensus’ (*ibid.*). With growing concerns about affordability and limited security of tenure in the private rented sector, the incumbent government recognised the need for legislation to mitigate the symptoms of housing crisis within a continued focus on the primacy of the market. From the early 2000s ‘NESC became very involved ... in the social and economic study of housing provision and supply’ which provided a ‘framework for very detailed research at a level of granularity that would not have been possible for a department on its own, and with the level of engagement with social partners’ (CS2). The 1960s case (Chapter 5) provided an example of an internal shock, as a government recognised the need for policy change, and in many respects this case is similar. An influence in this case is the receipt of the Commission’s report, supported by the legitimacy of that body and the emerging consensus amongst political parties for an increasing role of the state to regulate the PRS as a solution to housing crisis (Fianna Fáil 2002; Fine Gael 2002; Labour 2002; Progressive Democrats 2002). A Commissioner highlighted the way that dissent from the majority view was overcome, which:

was to say “*ok, we will make a report to government, we will record that the majority of the Commission agreed to the proposals, but we will also allow you, in the report, to put in a dissent, and to argue for that dissent at the back of the report*”. If you look at the propositions, the weakness of their arguments came out in those dissents (CiSo1).

Whilst the two historic cases highlighted the power of institutions and actors to reduce policy options, by defining what was legitimate and what was affordable, the process leading to the introduction of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 is marked instead by the political consensus to implement the Commission’s recommendations (CiSo1; CiSo2; P2; P5; Dáil Éireann, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). This consensus, together with a recognition of the fair even-handedness of the Commission, negated lobbying by IPOA. As understated by John Curran (FF) in welcoming the legislation in the Dáil ‘I am sure the Irish Property Owners Association, a lobby group with a vested interest, has contacted most Deputies. I disagree with one or two of its points’ (Dáil Éireann 2003f). That was not the only disagreement, as the ‘IPOA were defending the indefensible, they wanted the status quo to remain, and that wasn’t going to happen because the government didn’t want that either’ (CiSo2). The significance of political consensus for the process of policymaking was set out by a commissioner:

[This was] Very important. When the Commission report was published, the spokespersons for the political parties took the arguments, understood that something had to be done to the PRS, [and] this proposed a way forward... certainly for Fine Gael, the main opposition party at the time – I met ... their spokesperson for housing, and he basically said, “*we buy this, there is nothing in this that we have an issue with, and we’ll implement it.*” That meant that there was political consensus on a way forward (CiSo1).

In response to the criticism that the legislation had been introduced three years after the Commission reported (Dáil Éireann 2003c; 2003a), the interviewees highlighted the legal and legislative intricacy involved in undertaking such a task (CiSo1, CiSo2, P2, P5). This was illustrated by the assertion that the drafting ‘posed the lawyers with a great deal of difficulties, so it took the Attorney General a very long time to compose the legislation, which is so complex’ (CiSo1), especially as the establishment of the PRTB ‘was a very interesting departure from the norm in Ireland’ (CiSo2). Neither was there any reticence from civil servants, as they ‘were very committed and very dedicated, but not very innovative when it came to policies to tackle the current issues’ (P2). The politician outlined that civil servants ‘were handed the policy rather than developing the policies themselves ... so there is always a little bit of resentment about that’ though clarified that ‘once the policy was laid out, once the minister ... was driving an agenda, they really rolled up their sleeves and tried to make sure that the policy worked’. In this instance ‘a minister has to be strong in saying, sorry this is a priority’ (*ibid.*). However, ‘politicians come and go, whilst Departments go on forever, and are a very important part of the jigsaw’ (CiSo2), being the ‘permanent government’ (P2; P5), but although a lot of power lies within the Department, political leadership is important and ‘I credit the Minister of State Bobby Malloy a lot for taking on board [the need for change to the PRS] as something that he decided he was going to see through’ (P2).

6.2.4 Process Tracing – the 2004 Case

The influence of the social mechanisms for this case are summarised in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Summary of the social mechanisms identifiable in the 2004 case

| Social mechanism | Context and the emergence of crisis | Problem recognition | Proposal of solution |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p>Efficiency</p> <p>The perception actors had regarding the economic benefit or costs of different housing choices that were identified and /or available.</p> | <p>The use of financial instruments to stimulate demand for private sector housing provision, including tax breaks and reduced capital gains requirements, and loosened mortgage lending criteria.</p> <p>Increasing liberalisation and deregulation of banking practices and role of private sector to provide social housing outcomes.</p> | <p>Although broadened from the initial remit, the problem was framed within a setting of security of tenure, the need for balance between landlord and tenant rights, and PRS investment in the private rental sector.</p> <p>Focus on improving the quality of supply.</p> <p>Concerns raised by lobby groups on the impact of regulation, investment and the efficiency of the PRS.</p> | <p>Concern that regulation does not tackle the fundamental issue of affordability – addresses a symptom of increasing rental prices which is the lack of security of tenure.</p> <p>Focus of support on improving the quality of housing supply.</p> |
| <p>Legitimacy</p> <p>The authority of existing institutions, and the acceptability of those institutions for the public and decision-makers, over alternative institutional arrangements.</p> | <p>Legitimacy of regulatory regime of minimum standards and registration undermined by non-compliance and limited enforcement.</p> <p>Legitimacy of the democratic processes undermined by tribunal hearings and allegations of corruption.</p> | <p>Calls for the establishment of a National Housing Authority, within wider reform of the private rented sector and the regulation of the housing market.</p> <p>Emergence of political consensus on policy proposals.</p> | <p>Local authorities criticised for not implementing previous powers for landlord registration, requiring the introduction of a new national statutory body.</p> <p>Continued political consensus on policy proposals.</p> |
| <p>Power</p> <p>The inclusion and exclusion of actors in the policymaking process, or their influence on those processes.</p> | <p>Primacy of the market, with a reduced role for the state.</p> <p>Allegations of the abuse of power, bribery and corruption.</p> | <p>Emerging consensus amongst political parties for an increasing role of the state to regulate and reform the housing market and PRS – to improve the quality of supply of housing as a solution to crisis.</p> | <p>Lobbying of Irish Property Owners Association, and the perception of the impact of lobbying.</p> <p>Recommendation for a new Private Residential Tenancy Board.</p> <p>Transfer of responsibility for sector regulation from local authorities to the new Board.</p> |

As the ‘Celtic Tiger’ progressed into the new Millennium, the transition of the Irish economy and housing system had led to an increased supply in the private sector, but also increased demand in the private rented sector (P4; P5). For policymakers, ‘it began to become evident ... that home ownership and owner-occupation was actually diminishing, and rental as a tenure was increasing’ (CS2). This transition was facilitated by a policy focus which supported the market, through the liberalisation and deregulation of banking practices, together with changes in the population’s tenure requirements and the affordability of housing. Whilst the housing economy provided a significant supply of new dwellings, with historic high levels of construction, a proportion was built in locations with limited demand beyond the second-home market (McCabe 2013). Despite a historically high supply of new dwellings, prices in the private rented sector continued to increase whilst availability reduced (Ó Broin, 2019; P5). Although providing pressure for policy change, the momentum for paradigm shaping policy was constrained by the continued emphasis on the market for housing provision. The process leading from continuity, through agenda setting and policy formulation, and the pressures and the momentum for policy change is traced and set out in Figure 6.1 (below).

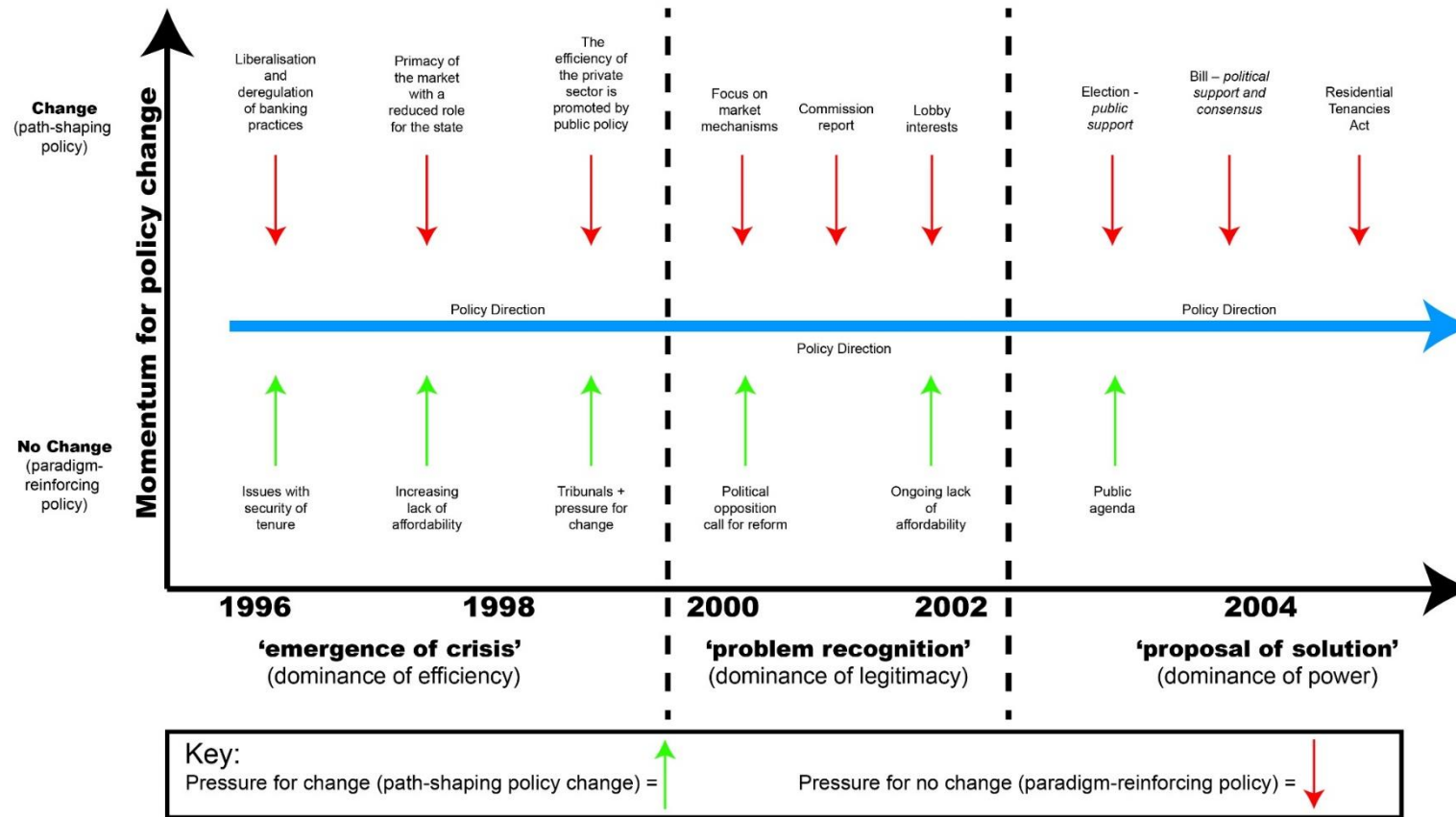


Figure 6.1: Tracing the influences and momentum for change on late 1990s and early 2000s housing policy

Problem recognition within this case begins with the establishment of the Commission from June 1999, and the framing of its broadened terms of reference, focusing on security of tenure, landlord and tenant rights, and investment into the sector. Although the Commission considered issues of affordability, and recognised ‘an urgent need to address the affordability issue’ there was unanimous agreement ‘that it would not be appropriate to recommend the introduction of a comprehensive form of rent control’ (DELG 2000, 117, 119). Prior to the publication of the Commission’s report in July 2000, civil society organisations outlined their positions regarding regulation of the private rented sector which accorded with the thrust of the Commission’s recommendations. Following publication, the subsequent political consensus and general civil society support (although not from all lobby groups, such as IPOA) ensured that whichever political parties were elected in the 2002 election, the recommendations would be considered for implementation. The length of time taken from the Commission reporting in 2000 to the final legislation in 2004 was not due to effective lobbying or prevarication, but rather due to the complexity of landlord and tenant law, which ‘posed the lawyers with a great deal of difficulties, so it took the Attorney General a very long time to compose the legislation’ (CiSo1).

Although this case was identified as a potential example of internal institutional change, given the change of policy direction within the Fianna Fáil and Progressive Democrat coalition government, it was the establishment and reporting of the independent Commission which provided the catalyst for change. ‘At the time [the establishment of the Commission, the agreement of its recommendations and the enacting of the legislation] represented a stratospheric leap forward for Ireland. We almost overnight moved from being the least regulated country in Europe to being one of the most regulated’ (CiSo2). Whilst ground-breaking in the Irish context, the

legislation contained within the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 continued the transition of the housing system from one which is characterised by a homeownership, social-welfare approach, to one which has a greater role for the private rental sector (MacLaran and Kelly, 2014; Dukelow and Considine, 2017). With reform focused on symptoms of crisis rather than causes, the process within this case is an example of a path dependent sequence which led to paradigm-reinforcing or status quo enforcing policy change. However, this case highlights similarities in processes of housing policymaking to the historic cases, which included the receipt of a report and the role of public opinion which provided legitimacy and validation for policy action, the convergence towards political consensus and the political leadership of a senior politician to progress that policy change.

6.3 Tracing the Process of Policymaking – the 2014 Case

The previous sections identify three key areas of shifting influences, pressures and momentum for changing policy focus for the 2004 case. This section analyses those same social mechanisms around efficiency, legitimacy and power in the process leading to the legislation for the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014. The review of documents is augmented by interviews with identified decision-makers. The interviewees were asked for their comment, interpretation and analysis of the context and social mechanisms for the period leading to the enactment of the legislation. The social mechanisms and the process for policymaking are now set out.

6.3.1 Efficiency – the 2014 Case

Major policy change, or punctuations, are categorised by John and Bevan (2012) into high and low saliency events. That the global financial crisis from 2008-2010 was a

high saliency event for Ireland is not contested, with the literature suggesting that the upheaval during 2008 and subsequent recession represented a significant shock. A politician highlighted that ‘things were extremely bad. So, the only [issue] was how do we look at every policy area and ensure that we can keep this ship afloat?’ (P3). Similarly, ‘[efficiency] that was everything. The balance sheet issue was crucial to everything that we did. So, of [the three social mechanisms] there is no question that efficiency was the overwhelming driver’ (SA2). This shock translated into austerity and financial constraint which dominated the process of housing policymaking, including the delivery of social housing through more flexible funding models, with a policy shift ‘away from offers based on capital-funded direct build by local authorities and [Approved Housing Bodies] towards offers based on renting and leasing properties sourced from the private market’ (Finnerty and O’Connell 2021, 182). ‘The reality was that the expenditure was going up and the number of people on housing waiting lists was going up, and therefore there was an efficiency consideration, no question’ (CiSo2). ‘We had to become more inventive in how to continue social housing provision [through] transferring what had been capital into current expenditure [given that there was] no capacity for capital investment in new housing, and [so] we were looking for creative ways’ (CS2) ‘to stabilise the funding coming into the housing ministry, that may seem a technical, minor issue, but actually it was quite major in pushing policy’ (CiSo3).

The *Social Housing Strategy 2020* (DECLG 2014, 19–20) was explicit as it recognised a ‘transition to funding models that are... not overly reliant on Exchequer capital funding’, and set out off-balance-sheet mechanisms, including through the use of the NAMA special purpose vehicle NARPS (National Assets Residential Property Services). This is supported by an ex-civil servant, who asserted that ‘both RAS and

HAP and leasing in general were part of a very conscious policy intent to become less dependent on capital funding, which was inevitably pro-cyclical’ (CS1). However, the recollections of a second civil servant was that:

Nobody ever expected that HAP was going to be a long-term measure, it was a sort of short-term bridging means of ensuring that people continued to have a roof over their head, and a means of trying to provide from current expenditure when we couldn’t make any capital investment (CS2).

Indeed, ‘it became a de facto replacement or substitute for real social housing, [it was] never meant to be [and] it facilitated local authorities downing tools and not engaging in local authority housing provision (P4). But this is contested by a special advisor, who asserted that ‘it was always intended to be a part of the social housing landscape, certainly in my mind, and in the minds of policymakers’ (SA2) and a civil society representative who agreed that ‘I never thought HAP would be a short-term measure’ (CiSo2).

The housing problem was framed within a wider setting of constrained public sector finances required by the Troika’s programme of financial assistance, which resulted in a continued tightening of capital budgets. ‘It was a series of cutbacks in a whole series of areas, with no real manoeuvrability as such, there’s no question about that’ (P3). Despite homelessness becoming manifest during the tenure of the Fine Gael and Labour coalition government, the constraint on financial spending was a significant barrier to policy innovation, as the Minister ‘had to fight for my budget on homelessness’ during that time (P1). For a special advisor, ‘resources [were] a barrier to innovation’ which drove a local authority culture lacking in dynamism, with new ideas typically met with what it would cost rather than what it might achieve or how it might be implemented (SA1). Some opposition T.D.s also focused on the cost

implications of policy proposals, rather than potential outcomes, typified by Robert Troy (FF) addressing the Dáil, who hoped that HAP would provide efficiencies (Dáil Éireann 2014c). However, despite the evident cost savings ‘the main driver was a combination of opportunity, [as the PRS] is where we will find extra supply’ (CS1).

A senior politician (P1) outlined the difference between the hopes for the new government from 2011 which had been moderated by the reality of financial constraints and budget cuts following the bank bailout and financial downturn:

My priority would have been to provide public, social, and affordable housing, but that clearly was very limited because of the economic situation. So, my biggest fear was the things that I wanted to do we quite possibly wouldn’t be able to do, because of the financial restrictions at the time. I suppose policymaking is always going to be tempered by the available resources.

That politician had wanted to focus on the building of social housing but ‘I had to deal with the reality, so with policymaking you have to deal with the circumstances that you are in - in other circumstances these would not be a priority for you at all’ (P1), whilst another highlighted that ‘what I wanted to achieve was radically curtailed by the non-availability of the necessary finance’ (P4). But the *Programme for Government* priorities had already been decided in advance of the parties forming the administration, which for a special advisor ‘is an incredibly important document for anybody that wants to get anything done’ (SA2). This had included ‘an action plan for jobs, as there was really high unemployment when we came into government and the biggest priority was to get that down so that there would be more tax coming into the economy’ (P1). Financial constraint continued to be the dominant criteria for policymaking, as the case transitioned from the problem recognition to the proposal of a solution. Indeed:

The reason HAP was introduced was primarily [for] efficiency, in terms of administration and problem solving. There were a range of challenges in RAS which worked fine, but it was taking an inordinate amount of time to locate and persuade landlords [whilst] HAP presented a quicker route because the tenant was going to do the work (CS1).

The need for efficiency was therefore the overarching driver for policymaking during this period, but this also links to the social mechanisms of power and legitimacy (CS2; CiSo2; CiSo3).

6.3.2 Legitimacy – the 2014 Case

The financial crash had implications for the legitimacy of institutions and processes of government, which ‘certainly undermined the faith in government to manage the country effectively’ (CiSo3). ‘There was a real sense of having lost that economic sovereignty, not being in control of our own destiny’, and in terms of legitimacy ‘authority and confidence in existing institutions was obviously at a very low ebb, because of what had happened’ resulting from the crash and subsequent bailout (SA2). The political legitimacy of the Fianna Fáil and Green coalition administration’s handling of the financial crash was ‘invalidated’ (Dáil Éireann 2010a), resulting in the perception of sovereignty ceded to supra-national organisations and thereafter to the reality of electoral defeat (SA2). For housing, the Troika were concerned about the impact of Rent Supplement as a restriction on labour market activation, which a condition of the bailout agreement between Ireland and the Troika sought to address (CiSo2; CiSo3; P4) and ‘the design of HAP was partially inspired as a measure [to give investors confidence] that there would be a stream of subsidy coming from the state’ (CiSo3). For a civil servant, 2010 into 2011 was ‘an *annus horribilis* for a

government department, until the election in 2011’ given that the negotiations with the Troika:

Happened while the rump of Fianna Fáil government was still in place, so it was agreed by a government which no longer had any shred of legitimacy nationally or internationally, and it had to be implemented by an incoming government which had no hand, act or part in this (CS2).

Traditional approaches to meet social housing needs were also undermined by constrained capital budgets (Dáil Éireann 2009). As part of ‘political decision-making there is always the popularity aspect of what you are trying to achieve’ but whilst ‘even the toughest budgets were progressive... we voted for a harsh budget... knowing that it was a political suicide note’ (P3). A senior politician in the incoming Fine Gael and Labour coalition administration also recognised that the tough decisions of government would impact on political popularity, as ‘we knew immediately after [entering government] that at our next conference we were going to have placards and protests’ (P1). But they also recognised that there is a responsibility for politicians to keep to their principles to maintain their own legitimacy, rather than taking the popular policy option:

And that is difficult in terms of democratic systems where you must get elected by the people. Maybe ministers in general, and political leaders as well, need to get better at learning how to take bad decisions without losing the public. But if I knew the answer to that I would still be in government (*ibid.*).

A special advisor also identified public opinion as normally being a main influence on policymaking, although the policymaking process is often far too slow to react to public concern. Here the ‘wider system was very slow to recognise how serious the housing situation was’ (SA1). But ‘Public opinion wasn’t a big issue behind HAP at

all’ (SA2). The breakdown of social partnership as a means of developing social pacts had provided the Department of Finance with more power (Adshead, 2012; P3; CS1). A special advisor (SA1) asserted, however, that the housing problem is much bigger than just being an issue for the housing department, requiring support from the Department of Finance and the Department of the Taoiseach. The advisor elaborated ‘at that time the idea that you might have to reform rent legislation was crazy to people in the Department of Finance, they thought it a mad idea’ (*ibid.*).

Despite these concerns at the legitimacy of institutions and processes of government, there was political and civil society consensus on policy proposals to continue with focus on private sector provision (Fine Gael 2011; Fianna Fáil 2011; Labour 2011; Melia 2014). In recognising ongoing issues of accessibility to affordable housing, the previous Fianna Fáil and Green coalition government had introduced RAS from 2004 and revised it in 2009 with the formal recognition of private rental accommodation provision as social housing support. The subsequent Fine Gael and Labour coalition government’s HAP scheme was an incremental adjustment to that previous government’s policy. This not only offered legitimacy to the previous government’s approach, but also encouraged political support, increasing the legitimacy of this as a policy solution to housing crisis. But this ‘political consensus was, I would say, around different people [hearing] different things’ (SA2) given that for some ‘it is an activation measure’ for others ‘getting rid of rent supplement and improving choice would have been a thing’. However, for others it was the ‘deduction at source [that was] seen as a big plus, you weren’t going to have ne’er-do-wells going off with their rent supplement cheques, it was going to go straight to where it was supposed to be going’. Finally, it was ‘far more efficient’. So, political consensus yes, but for different reasons’ (SA2).

In the historical cases and the first contemporary case the legitimacy of local authorities had been questioned before being recognised as the means to deliver the policy reform. In this case, however, local authorities were promoted as the local administrator and leader of the new housing assistance programme (DECLG 2014, 51). The legitimacy of the overarching policy approach was questioned during the interviews, given that ‘a social housing policy, based on the private sector provision of accommodation by individual landlords is seriously flawed’ (CiSo1).

6.3.3 Power – the 2014 Case

The inclusion and exclusion of actors in agenda setting and decision-making, and their influence on those processes, can be internal power struggles within government, or the influence brought to bear on decision-makers. Prior to September 2008, influences on policymaking included ‘representatives from the [Construction Federation of Ireland who were] constantly in the lobby in the Custom House. I did alert people to this, as to... what are they doing, because they were certainly not in to see me, so I assumed they were in to see various civil servants’ (P3). However, the financial crash brought new actors into the policy arena, broadening the debate and increasing the urgency for change. As the introduction of new actors in the 1930s case led to policy innovation and transformative change, new actors here instead reinforced policy restraint (P3; P4; CiSo3). For an ex-civil servant it ‘had a massive impact ... and housing was the first thing that was cut – it was the easiest and quickest to cut in terms of any pressure to reduce public spending (CS1).

The relative power of the EU, ECB and IMF, and the impact that had on policymaking is exhibited by the consensus amongst political parties on the solution to housing crisis within the confines of financial constraint set by those supra-national organisations.

The impact is highlighted by a civil servant: ‘It completely dominated our lives [as] this was an economic instrument to get us back into economic solvency, but it was quite low in having any social conscience about the people who were the biggest casualties’ (CS2). For one politician, the relative power of the Troika ‘was very significant, it dominated everything, the rug was pulled out from beneath, things were dictated from elsewhere, you’ve no choice really but to go along with that, so it dictate[d] the sort of policies [that could be implemented]’ (P3). For another, ‘we were not in control of our own financial situation (P4), but:

the most hurtful part was having your future in terms of expenditure corralled in boxes – that’s all they would lend and in order to do something that you wanted to achieve, you had to make an unpalatable decision the other side, against all of your ethos... it was a horrible time (*ibid.*).

The shift in the balance of power from national to supra-national institutions is highlighted by the interaction between Governor of the European Central Bank and the Irish Minister of Finance in relation to ‘burning the bondholders’ or making investors in imprudent banking practices share the pain of the bail-out (Hughes 2011):

We had the Minister of Finance geared up for [burning the bondholders] and he was going to make an announcement, but [Jean-Claude] Trichet, the governor of ECB, phoned him and said “*you can do what you like, you are an independent sovereign government, but if that happens an economic bomb will go off in Dublin*” meaning that the markets will collapse, so we had to reshape that... we wanted to do it but couldn’t because we were constrained. We had to bite our tongue and had to resign from a central core objective (P4).

Although independent and sovereign, ministers recognised that ‘we had lost our independence, financial and otherwise, and were just left with the harp as an insignia

of the country’ (P4). The impact of this appropriation of power is highlighted in relation to HAP, ‘the genesis was there then – a job activation measure’ (P4) which ‘was announced for the first time in the IMF agreement, it was never mentioned before in policy’ (CiSo3):

Throughout the 1980s and 90s there were all these reviews of Rent Supplements done by the department of social protection which are very detailed, then they would make changes to policy, so it was all very explicit and up front. With HAP it wasn’t, it just seemed to appear out of nowhere (*ibid.*).

With the financial crisis leading to an obvious transfer of power from national to international institutions, the process of policymaking was also affected by other power-dynamic factors. These include the interrelationships between government and stakeholder organisations and within the institution of government.

The introduction of social partnership was a response to the economic crisis of the 1980s, to which Adshead (2011) questioned why its dissolution was the response to the financial crisis of 2008? Adshead reasoned that it was ‘the total absence of consensus between the Social Partners over the causes of the crisis, its consequences and its remedy’ (*ibid.*, 90). Whilst this might be true of the financial crisis, there was consensus on the financial constraints for housing policymaking and the solution to the affordability and accessibility crisis. A politician commented that ‘social partnership was fine until September 2008, when the crash happened, because there was sufficient money in the country’ (P3). An ex-civil servant suggested that it was already beginning to get tired; ‘it might have continued but politicians were getting fed up with it, they had less and less say [and] had to deal with ... interest groups who were having a bigger say in the formation of policy’ (CS1), so the official was not surprised that ‘the crash saw it off’ (*ibid.*), but the requirement for efficiencies meant

that the government had ‘to make very significant cuts... had to raise taxes... none of which was compatible with social partnership’ (P3). However, given the importance of the role undertaken by the Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector a decade earlier, a member of that Commission questioned the lack of participation or consultation of participants to that Commission on the potential impacts of promoting a public policy (HAP) which is based on the investment decisions of small investors within a volatile market (CiSo1). Despite the demise of social partnership, external reports continued to be powerful drivers of policy, of which ‘NESC ... was enormously influential’ (SA2).

One politician highlighted the difficulty that a minority coalition party had in determining policy, particularly when ideologically opposed, with ‘concern that we would be very much restrained by the fact that we had to work with the other bigger party’ (P1). Whilst there were disagreements on some priorities, the lead minister ‘was actually very good, [they were] very generous, [and] did not try to take over my responsibility’ (P1). Despite the serious financial predicament that the Fine Gael and Labour coalition administration inherited, the *Programme for Government* provided an agreement on outline policy proposals and the basis for a good working relationship.

The literature suggested that the Taoiseach and the finance minister had the power to support or quash policy development presented by a third, sponsoring department, and were therefore the real decision-makers, which MacCarthaigh (2020) extended to include the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. A special advisor identified that when the minister wanted a full cabinet decision, this would require the tacit assent of the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste, to ensure that the coalition party leaders are

comfortable with this whilst ‘the Taoiseach’s and the Tánaiste’s advisors [acted] as the gatekeepers of the cabinet agenda’ (SA1). Rather than the three ministers leading policy development, as set out by MacCarthaigh (2020), this case suggests that within the coalition government from 2011, a quadrumvirate existed. The ‘Economic Management Group’ comprised the Taoiseach (FG), the Tánaiste (Lab), the Minister for Finance (FG) and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Lab), interpreted the *Programme for Government*. However, the real power in relation to policymaking was the new Minister of Public Expenditure and Reform (P1; P4). Whilst the newly established ministry took responsibility for a range of functions from the Minister of Finance, the transfer of welfare payments and rental assistance from social protection provided significant control to the new department over housing policy (CS1; CiSo3). Whether the power of the Department of Finance was diminished by the establishment of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, one civil servant recalled that ‘No, it didn’t diminish the power, it doubled the power’ (CS2), and ‘so in terms of the spending staying so low for so long, I would attribute that decision to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform’ (CiSo3).

In relation to internal power relationships between ministers, civil servants and advisors, one politician highlighted that there was animosity in some situations and in some committees and ‘there were individuals that I would feel that just didn’t respond and just wanted to push their own agenda’ but generally the key civil servants ‘in housing were actually quite cooperative and sought to deliver on the agenda’ (P1). However, another politician recognised that ‘there are many examples of what a good civil servant can do. If you are lucky enough to have someone there who is dynamic and who is interested in the subject, things can get done’ (P3). Meanwhile one civil servant recognised that the reputation of the civil service had been tarnished during

the period of the bailout, as ‘we were the civil service who had not stood up... to take our independent role, or objective role, and speak truth to power’ (CS2).

A senior politician (P1) highlighted the difficulty encountered when seeking to encourage civil servants to explore new policy issues, given that ‘they are used to doing things in a certain way [and therefore it can] be hard to get them to focus on something that is urgent and needed’. A special advisor (SA1) was emphatic about the influence of the civil servants in policymaking:

If a Minister wants x, and the civil servants don’t want to do x, it is not that the Minister can do nothing, but it is [the civil servants] that will be implementing any policy, so that’s where the power of persuasion and power of urgency and buying into a vision is actually crucial, because that is where, at the time, we did experience some institutional inertia, but everyone focuses on the politics of it, and the politics of it is not where the challenge is.

Whilst key civil servants were recognised as being cooperative and sought to deliver on the agenda, innovation was generally constrained, with civil servants ‘who either didn’t have the capacity to be innovative, or never wanted to be innovative [and it] was sometimes very hard to get them to move on a policy’ (P1). This was a view supported by a special advisor (SA1), who recognised the civil service as the barrier to innovation with a risk-averse culture, whilst ‘the innovation typically will come from the Minister [and] from the advisors [given that] civil servants would not be renowned for their innovation, they tend to be process managers’.

This view was contested by an ex-civil servant, as ‘there was never a massive political push in favour of [HAP] – this was driven by administrative policymakers’ (CS1), whilst ‘there was a group of individuals [in the Department of the Environment,

Community and Local Government] who were enormously influential on the [housing] sector, among the senior civil servants. In my view, they in large-part shaped [policy] rather than politicians ... [they were] enormously influential’ (CiSo3). The power dynamics within government are further highlighted by a civil servant, who outlined that the Secretary Generals traditionally met weekly, although ‘It took quite a long time for government to agree [to the formalising of this meeting] because they never liked to think that [they] might have the notion that [they] were the permanent government’ (CS2).

6.3.4 Process Tracing – the 2014 Case

The influence of the social mechanisms for this case are summarised in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Summary of the social mechanisms identifiable in the 2014 case

| Social mechanism | Context and the emergence of crisis | Problem recognition | Proposal of solution |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Efficiency</p> <p>The perception actors had regarding the economic benefit or costs of different housing choices that were identified and /or available.</p> | <p>Financial crisis, Troika bailout, the imposition of fiscal restraints and recalibration measures restricted availability of public finances and constrained policymaking which focused on financial efficiency.</p> | <p>Continued tightening of capital budgets.</p> <p>The housing problem was framed within a wider setting of constrained public sector finances required by the programme of financial assistance.</p> | <p>Continued public expenditure restraint.</p> <p>Focus of support on demand for housing.</p> |
| <p>Legitimacy</p> <p>The authority of existing institutions, and the acceptability of those institutions for the public and decision-makers, over alternative institutional arrangements.</p> | <p>Political legitimacy of the government’s handling of the financial crash is questioned with ceding of sovereignty to supra-national organisations.</p> <p>The breakdown of social partnership as a means of developing social pacts to include trade unions and industry into governmental policymaking.</p> | <p>Legitimacy of traditional approaches to meet social housing needs undermined by constrained capital budgets.</p> <p>Legitimacy of FF government is questioned, leading to electoral defeat.</p> <p>Consensus among political parties for a continued focus on private sector provision.</p> | <p>Continued political and civil society consensus on policy proposals.</p> <p>Promotion of local authorities as the administrators of the new housing assistance programme.</p> |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p>Power</p> <p>The inclusion and exclusion of actors in the policymaking process, or their influence on those processes.</p> | <p>Loss of power of national government, with economic policies and fiscal constraint required by IMF, ECB, and EU.</p> <p>Collapse in social partnership affects a shift in power from the Taoiseach to the Minister for Finance.</p> | <p>EU-ECB-IMF programme of financial assistance constrains to policymaking for political parties.</p> <p>Consensus amongst political parties on the solution to housing crisis – to improve support offer to access the PRS.</p> | <p>Department of Public Expenditure and Reform established.</p> <p>Transfer of responsibility for rental assistance from social protection to new ministry.</p> <p>Relationships within a coalition government, and between politicians and civil servants.</p> |
|--|--|--|---|

The overheating of the Irish economy and the end of the ‘Celtic Tiger’ was marked by the global financial crisis, which had repercussions for the Irish financial and housing systems. This punctuating event highlighted the hierarchical importance of, and reciprocity between, two separate though interlinked concerns of government – the provision of an effective housing system, and fiscal responsibility as part of the stewardship of the economy. The effect of austerity on the housing market, from 2008, underlined the reciprocity between austerity and housing dysfunction, as ‘government spending and housing bore the brunt of Ireland’s economic contraction’ (Lyons 2017, 130). Byrne and Norris (2018) identified the role that the global financial crisis had on promoting dysfunctionality in the Irish context, whilst Hearne (2020, 16) suggested that the path towards further financialisation and marketisation was towards ‘housing dystopia’.

The process leading from the emergence of crisis, through problem recognition to the proposal of a solution, and the pressures and the momentum for policy change is traced and set out in Figure 6.2.

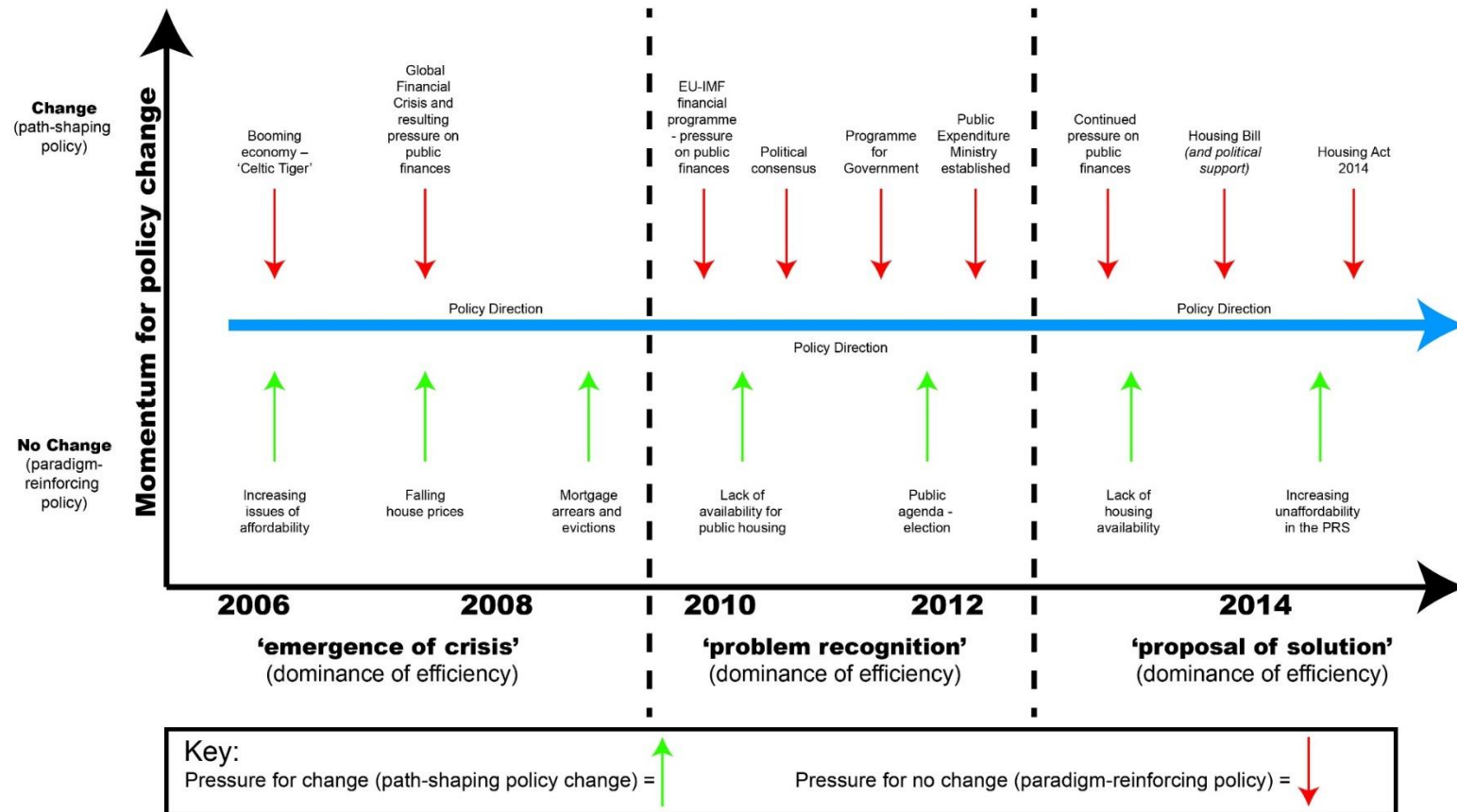


Figure 6.2: Tracing the influences and momentum for change on post-financial crisis housing policy

Agenda setting was defined by the requirements of the EU-ECB-IMF programme of financial assistance which constrained public expenditure and set the parameters for policymaking (P3). Within the context of the imposition of stringent financial constraints, the positive feedback was for reform to focus on efficiency, value for money and cost savings (Quinlivan 2017). Despite worsening homelessness, affordability and accessibility to housing, the political consensus was for extended market provision of social housing as the solution to housing crisis. Fianna Fáil established and promoted NAMA to provide housing, whilst recognising the role of RAS and RS to provide social outcomes. Fine Gael also identified the role of NAMA, though was open to new types of investment vehicles. The Labour Party promoted reform and regulation of the private rental sector and recognised the opportunity to utilise RAS. With this consensus, the general election of 2011 did not change the overall path of policymaking, as the momentum for paradigm reinforcing policy continued the status quo with the revision of RAS and later through the transition to HAP.

Factors such as the terms provided with the EU, ECB and IMF financial programme, provided the parameters for public reform (CS1; CS2; SA1; SA2; P1; P3; P4; CiSo3). The financial crisis therefore proved to be a catalyst for a number of reforms being implemented across the spectrum of public sector activity, focused on output legitimacy, around efficiency and cost effectiveness (Quinlivan 2017). Key here was the establishment of the new Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Minister of which controlled departmental allocation and sought justification for all expenditure (P1; P4; CS2; SA2; CiSo3).

The literature suggests that the global financial crash of 2008-2010 provided a significant punctuation, but the system was sufficiently resistant to dilute impetus for paradigm-changing policy transformation. However, the tracing of this policymaking process highlights that instead the perturbation was so all-encompassing that it destroyed the existing hegemonic legitimacy and power of the national political system, replacing it with a path which exacerbated the importance of efficiency and the move from capital to revenue as exhibited by the incremental adjustment from RS to RAS to HAP (CS1; P4).

6.4 Contemporary Cases Discussion

The historical cases identified the impact of influences on policymaking. The contemporary cases exhibit similar influences:

- *2004 case* - A key facet of this case was the exploration of the change in political thinking that took place within an incumbent political party, reflecting in-party policy change as per the 1960s case. Although the policy response was different, with path dependent sequences which led to paradigm-reinforcing (status quo confirming) policy change, the catalyst for change was an external report, the Commission report on the private rented residential sector.
- *2014 case* - Whilst this case highlights the impact of supra-national institutional influence, following the perturbation and aftermath of the financial crash (P1; P3; P4; CS1; CS2; SA2; CiSo2; CiSo3), it was the influence of a new and powerful Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform which framed housing policy through the establishment and requirement for adherence to stringent capital budget constraints (CS2; SA2; CiSo3; P4).

Neither contemporary case accords with the policy process literature around crises being path-shaping moments of change (Hay 2013) and ‘signifiers of change which denotes a critical, decisive moment, or turning point’ (Roitman 2013, 10). The cases instead represent periods of public policy adjustment which resulted in paradigm-reinforcing or status quo confirming policy change:

- *2004 case* - The Residential Tenancies Act 2004 provided much needed protection to those in the private rented sector (P2; CiSo 1; CiSo2; Dáil Éireann, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2003d, 2003e), but it regulated rather than reformed that sector, continuing the policy focus on the private sector for housing provision whilst mitigating the symptoms of crisis, particularly concerns around security of tenure, through regulation.
- *2014 case* - Despite the significant impact that the financial crisis had on Ireland, the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014 reformed social housing provision through developing the previous reform mechanisms that it replaced, such as Rent Supplement and the Rental Accommodation Scheme, whilst continuing the policy focus on the market provision of social outcomes. The interplay between the social mechanisms, and the pre-eminence of efficiency as a driver, or constraint, to policymaking is evident in the 2014 case. Rather than policymaking representing moments of change, both cases are typified by path dependent sequences which led to paradigm-reinforcing policy change.

The theoretical proposition offered by Boltanski (2011) on the roles of crisis moments holds true for both cases:

- *2004 case* - In the process leading to the 2004 legislation, the establishment of the Commission promoted the perception of leadership whilst agreement to implement its recommendations highlighted that it was willing to promote new interventions and to provide the ways and means to act. Addressing concerns about security of tenure within the private rented sector also exonerated the dominant class through addressing symptom of crisis, whilst continuing to support the policy approach for focus on home ownership and private provision of social outcomes.
- *2014 case* - In the process leading to the 2014 legislation, Fine Gael and Labour blamed the previous Fianna Fáil and Green coalition government for the depth of the financial crisis, and the severity of the impacts, and used this narrative to exonerate themselves from blame, promote their own leadership credentials and provide the necessity to act, although the policy intervention was a redesign and extension of previous responses.

Three elements of crisis are identified by t'Hart *et al.* (1993) as being of severe threat, high uncertainty and time pressure:

- *2014 case* - Each are recognisable as housing completions dropped to below 10,000 per annum and 92,000 were in receipt of rent supplement by July 2012. However, whilst t'Hart *et al.* identified that with a perceived need for effective reaction to crisis, the public policy response typically becomes highly centralised, with 'ad hoc adaptation of the bureaucratic structure and culture' (1993, 14). The government's reaction was to extend the role of local authorities in the management and implementation of the HAP scheme, albeit to centralised criteria.

- *2004 case* - The three elements of crisis are not, however, recognisable in this case. There was limited threat and uncertainty, although time pressure was a concern, given that the Commission report was published in 2000. Despite consensus on taking forward the recommendations, it was not until 2003 that the Bill was drafted and began the parliamentary process, albeit due to the complexity of the required legislation. However, the establishment of a new Board, which involved the transfer of power from local authorities, does accord with the public policy response typically becoming highly centralised (t' Hart, Rosenthal, and Kouzmin 1993).

The four fundamental elements of agenda setting identified by Zahariadis (2016) can be recognised in both cases as being around perception, potency, proximity and power:

- *2004 case* - As the percentage of households accessing the PRS grew during the 1990s and early 2000s, the perception of the importance of security of tenure increased, whilst rising rents and prevalence of debt also increased the intensity of difference between the security and affordability of home ownership and private rental. With a growing number of families on housing waiting lists, and an expanding PRS sector, the proximity of concerns about security of tenure and affordability were heightened, whilst the political consensus on the problem and the solution provided the basis for policymaking.
- *2014 case* - As the crisis developed, with the collapse in house prices, increasing mortgage arrears, negative equity and unaffordability, public opinion and the perception of the importance of the issue heightened, elevated through media reporting (for example, the *Irish Independent* highlighting that there is a 'mortgage crisis' (E. Oliver 2011)). With 95,000 mortgages either in

arrears or which had been rescheduled, and another 350,000 mortgages in negative equity, the intensity of the problem, and the severity of the consequences increased the perception of the potency of the situation. With regards to power, the policy process leading to the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014 highlights the authority that certain actors had in policymaking, particularly the Taoiseach, Tánaiste, the Minister for Finance, and particularly the new Minister of Public Expenditure and Reform.

In relation to the pathways to major policy change identified by Sabatier and Weible (2007, 208) the 2004 case is an example of an internal shock, as the incumbent government recognised the need for policy change, albeit requiring the catalyst of the Commission’s report to galvanise political consensus and action (P2; CiSo1; CiSo2). The 2014 case represents an external shock, as the impacts of the financial crash and the demands of the ‘Troika’ constrained policymaking (P4; CS1; CS2; SA2; CiSo2; CiSo3), which was then developed through the internal machinations of government (CS1; CS2; SA2; CiSo3). Whilst the first historic (1930s) case highlighted that crises establish framing contests, which are opportunities to ‘mobilise others around a particular point of view’ (Kaplan 2008, 730) within which political actors attempt to make capital (Boin, t’Hart, and McConnell 2009), both contemporary cases (2004 and 2014) emphasise the political and civil society consensus on policy proposals to continue with focus on private sector provision.

As identified in Chapter 5, theory suggests that a ‘policy window’ will open when there is an alignment between the independent problem, policy and politics streams (Kingdon 2014; Herweg, Zahariadis, and Zohlnhofer 2018) within a limited time-frame (Cairney 2020). The tracing of the processes of contemporary policymaking

suggests, again, that instead of an alignment of streams and a limited time-frame within which policy is developed, a process led from one stage to another – from problem to politics to policy.

The conformity to theoretical propositions of crisis responses for the cases are set out in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Conformity of the contemporary cases to theoretical propositions

| Theoretical frame | Case 3 – 2004 | Case 4 – 2014 |
|--|--|---|
| Boltanski (2011) – crisis moments have four roles: exonerating the dominant class; promoting perception of leadership; promoting new interventions; providing the ways and means to act. | Conforms to the theoretical proposition. | Conforms to the theoretical proposition. |
| t’Hart et al. (1993) – three elements of crisis are severe threat, high uncertainty and time pressure. | Does not completely conform to the theoretical proposition for crisis, though there was time pressure. The policy response for centralised bureaucratic structures does tie into propositions of t’ Hart et al. | Conforms to the theoretical proposition – the three elements of crisis are identifiable. However, rather than an ad hoc adaptation of the bureaucratic structure, the management and implementation of the policy response was provided by local authorities (to centralised criteria). |
| Zahariadis (2016) – the four fundamental elements of problem recognition are perception, potency, proximity and power. | All elements of problem recognition are recognisable as the case progresses. | All elements of problem recognition are recognisable as the case progresses. |
| Sabatier and Weible (2007) - there are four paths to major policy change: policy-orientated learning; external shocks; internal shocks; a hurting stalemate. | Internal shock. | External shock. |
| Boin et al. (2009) - crises establish framing contests within which political actors attempt to make capital to influence public perception - within these contests the media provides a prime arena. | Does not conform to the theoretical proposition. Political and civil society housing organisations consensus on the solution to crisis. | Does not conform to the theoretical proposition. Political and civil society housing organisations consensus on the solution to crisis. |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2017) - identification of social mechanisms facilitate understanding of the driving forces behind institutional change, and the obstacles to such change. | Conforms to the theoretical proposition. Social mechanisms of efficiency, legitimacy and power are identifiable. | Conforms to the theoretical proposition. Social mechanisms of efficiency, legitimacy and power are identifiable. |
| Kingdon (2014) – a ‘policy window’ will open when there is an alignment between the independent problem, policy, and politics streams. | Does not conform to the theoretical proposition. Policymaking is a process, from problem to politics to policy, rather than a specific, time-limited opportunity or period. | Does not conform to the theoretical proposition. Policymaking is a process, from problem to politics to policy, rather than a specific, time-limited opportunity or period. |

A brief comparison between the contemporary cases is set out in Table 6.4. Despite differences between the cases, the social mechanisms of efficiency, legitimacy and power each impacted the processes leading to both the 2004 and 2014 legislation as responses to the symptoms of each respective housing crisis. However, a noticeable difference relates to the linking of all three social mechanisms early in the 2014 case, which emphasises the importance of the loss of political legitimacy and power early in that case.

Table 6.4: Comparison of social mechanisms between the two contemporary cases

| Social mechanism | Similarities between contemporary cases | Differences between contemporary cases |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Efficiency | Efficiency is a common theme for both cases. In the 2004 case this was within a wider setting of a focus on the market. The impact of efficiencies is particularly significant in the 2014 case following the financial crash, as the overarching aim for efficiencies in public spending constrained housing policy options. | The focus of support in the 2004 case was on improving the quality of housing supply, in part to facilitate economic development. The focus of support in the 2014 case was on accessibility to the PRS as an alternative social housing supply, increasing demand in that sector, as a requirement for financial assistance from supra-national organisations. |

| | | |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Legitimacy | <p>Legitimacy of institutional arrangements were questioned – including the role of local authorities in-managing regulation of the PRS (2004 case) and provision of housing supports (2014 case).</p> <p>External data provided legitimacy and validity for policy change in the 2004 case through the recommendations of the Commission. Similarly, NESC provided legitimacy to policy action in the 2014 case, albeit later in the policy process.</p> | <p>The loss of national political legitimacy and power early in the 2014 case was a driver for the policymaking process. Conversely, the 2004 case mirrored the processes traced in the historic cases, with external validation provided by the Commission and political leadership provided by the Minister of State.</p> |
| Power | <p>Convergence towards political consensus.</p> <p>An increasing role for the state in the housing market.</p> <p>Limited role of public opinion influencing policymaking in both contemporary cases.</p> | <p>The boundaries for policymaking in the 2014 case were set by external actors (EU, ECB, IMF), which reflected the loss of political legitimacy and power.</p> <p>The role of the Minister for State in the 2004 case in driving forward housing policy.</p> <p>The role of political actors in the 2014 case with the relative power that the Taoiseach, Tánaiste, and ministers for Public Expenditure and Reform and Finance had within government.</p> <p>The 2004 case seeks to improve the quality of housing supply. The 2014 case seeks to support accessibility to the PRS through supporting demand.</p> |

In both cases, efficiency was the dominant social mechanism during the emergence of the problem, however, this continued to be dominant in the later stages of the 2014 case, as the requirements of the Troika’s financial support took precedent. Indeed, the imposition of financial constraints by the Troika, together with the demise of social partnership and the increasing power of the Minister of Finance and the Finance Department and later with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform increased the impact of efficiency on this policymaking process, minimising political leadership and resulting in limited policy change. ‘In terms of the spending staying so low for so

long, I would attribute that decision to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform' (CiSo3).

Table 6.5 sets out the dominant social mechanism during each stage of the contemporary policymaking processes.

Table 6.5: Dominant social mechanisms within the stages of the two contemporary cases

| | 2004 Case | 2014 Case |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| Emergence of crisis | Efficiency | Efficiency |
| Problem recognition | Legitimacy | Efficiency <i>(diminished political legitimacy and power)</i> |
| Proposal of a solution | Power | Efficiency <i>(diminished political legitimacy and power)</i> |

Figure 6.3 sets out the momentum for policy change within the two contemporary cases, which followed a similar trajectory, for paradigm reinforcing policy.

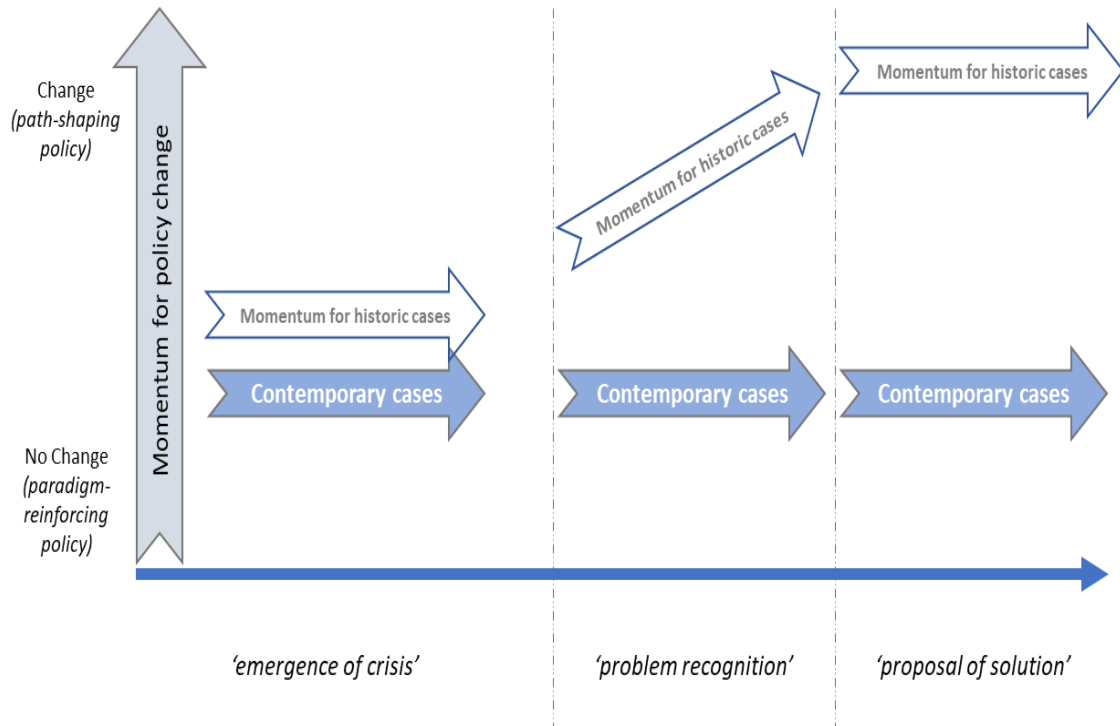
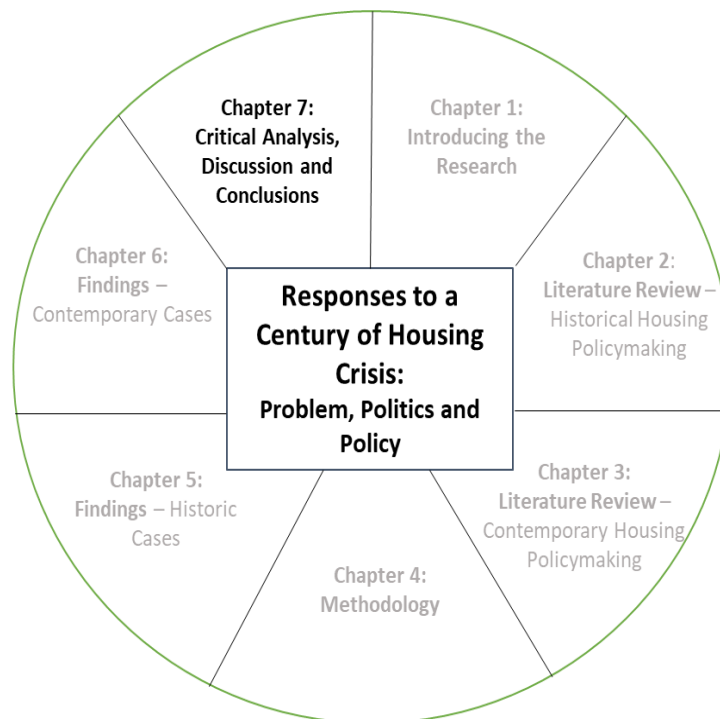


Figure 6.3: The momentum for change for the two contemporary cases

The tracing of the social mechanisms within these processes has enabled comparison between both the contemporary cases, but also enables comparison with the historic cases set out in Chapter 5. Figure 6.3 also outlines the general momentum for policy change relating to the historic cases. The next chapter (Chapter 7, Critical Analysis, Discussion and Conclusions) explores and includes analysis on the similarities and differences between the historic and the contemporary cases and identified examples from theory.

CHAPTER 7 – CRITICAL ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

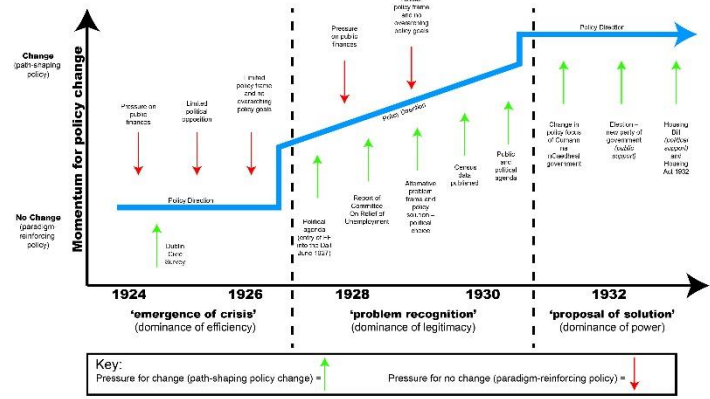


7.1 Introduction

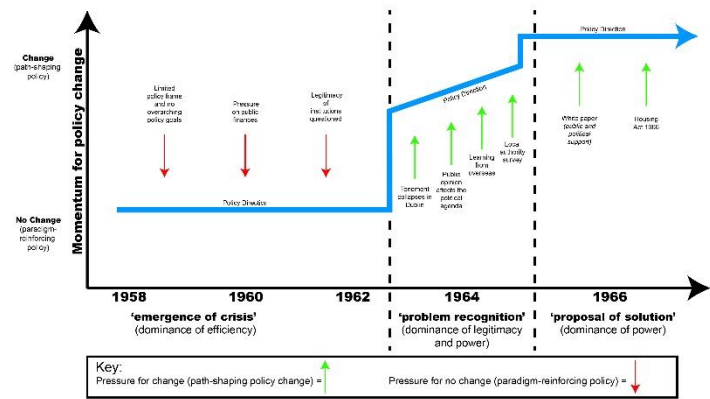
This thesis explores four processes of housing policymaking. The research has reviewed archived documents, and this is augmented by in-depth interviews with decision-makers and specialists on the history of Irish housing and wider aspects of Irish history. The events within the sequences of policymaking processes were traced and this enables comparison of efficiency, legitimacy and power as influences on those policymaking processes.

The tracing of the processes and the momentum for policy change for the four cases is set out in Figure 7.1 (below).

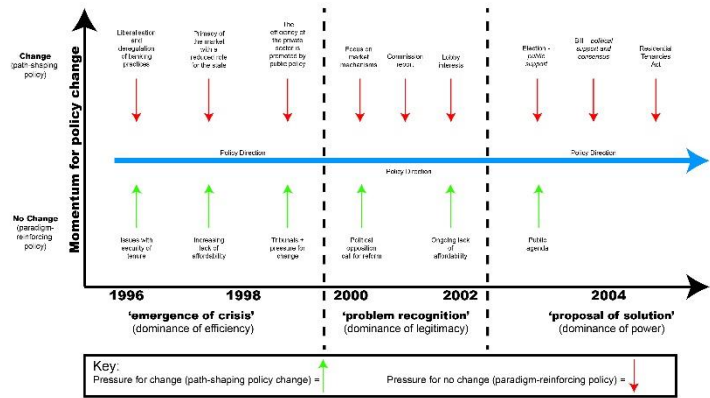
1932 case:



1966 case:



2004 case:



2014 case:

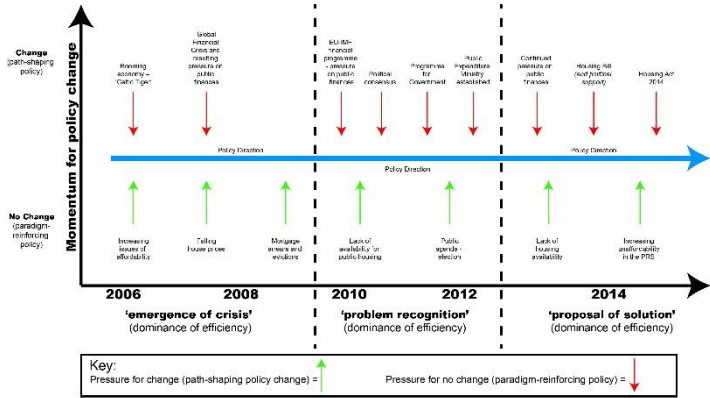


Figure 7.1: Tracing of the processes and the momentum for change for the four cases

This chapter brings together the exploration of this study, comparatively analyses the cases of policymaking, discusses the limitations to the research, builds on the conceptual framework and reviews theoretical approaches. It focuses on two research objectives:

Objective 4: Compare processes of policymaking responses to housing crises.

Objective 5: Identify the characteristics of policymaking and make recommendations on how policymaking responses to housing crisis can be informed by historic processes.

The chapter concludes with a discussion on the implications of this research for theory, practice and future research, and conclusions are drawn.

7.2 Comparison Between Cases of Housing Policymaking

The research identified similar characteristics in processes of housing policymaking. These included overcoming financial constraints, the acquisition of data to provide legitimacy and validity to policy action, and the role of public opinion, political leadership and the convergence towards political consensus in facilitating the progression of policy. The research also revealed differences between cases, and with theoretical propositions, finding an alternative to the policy window with processes of policymaking that instead progressed from problem to politics to policy.

Key questions posed at the beginning of this thesis are around *why* policies to address contemporary housing crisis are so different to historic responses when there are grounds to expect them to be similar, *how* policymaking processes differ, and *how* historic housing policymaking processes can inform contemporary policymaking.

With the three social mechanisms of efficiency, legitimacy and power being identifiable as influences within each of the four cases (Table 7.1 below), path dependence, or more definitively the temporal sequencing within a path dependence process, provides an explanation for differences.

Table 7.1: Examples of the social mechanisms within the cases

| Case | Examples of the social mechanisms within the cases |
|------|--|
| 1932 | <p><i>Efficiency</i> - precarious finances constrained and defined government policymaking.</p> <p><i>Legitimacy</i> - the State, its institutions and oath of allegiance were questioned; questions around the legitimacy of the political opposition were overcome.</p> <p><i>Power</i> - the limited political opposition to the government transitioned into emergence of a political opposition; political consensus on the policy solution to the problem.</p> |
| 1966 | <p><i>Efficiency</i> - government policy focus on financial efficiency, and specifically on productive capital investment, constrained housing policymaking.</p> <p><i>Legitimacy</i> - the legitimacy of existing institutional arrangements were questioned, and there was an emerging legitimacy for an alternative policy approach to the status quo with the availability of the local authority survey data.</p> <p><i>Power</i> - the Capital Investment Advisory Committee had an important role in driving (or defining the limits to) housing policy, supplemented later by a recognition for a need for change.</p> |
| 2004 | <p><i>Efficiency</i> - there was an increasing role for the private sector to provide social housing outcomes, despite the economic boom of the Celtic Tiger.</p> <p><i>Legitimacy</i> - the regulatory regime of minimum standards and registration were undermined by non-compliance and limited enforcement, set against the legitimacy of the Commission and its process of policy recommendations.</p> <p><i>Power</i> - allegations of the wider abuse of power, bribery and corruption; the Commission provided the basis for political consensus on the solution to the problem; political leadership.</p> |
| 2014 | <p><i>Efficiency</i> - the imposition of fiscal restraints restricted the availability of public finances, and constrained policymaking throughout this case.</p> <p><i>Legitimacy</i> - political legitimacy of the government's handling of the financial crash was questioned with ceding of sovereignty to supra-national organisations.</p> <p><i>Power</i> - the loss of power of national government, with economic policies and fiscal constraint required by the IMF, ECB, and EU impacted on the availability of policy alternatives.</p> |

Mahoney (2000) asserted path dependence as being causal processes that are susceptible to temporal sequence. Here, Pierson noted that ‘earlier parts of a sequence

matter much more than later parts, an event that happens “too late” may have no effect, although it might have been of great consequence if the timing had been different’ (Pierson 2000, 263). Confirming the importance of sequencing, Thelen and Mahoney (2015, 20) recognised that ‘early events in a path dependent sequence exert a stronger causal impact on outcomes than later ones do’. This proposition has importance for comparison between the cases, and Table 7.2 sets out the dominant social mechanisms within each stage for the four cases.

Table 7.2: Dominant social mechanisms within the stages of the cases

| | 1932 Case | 1966 Case | 2004 Case | 2014 Case |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| Emergence of crisis | Efficiency <i>(strong constraint to policymaking)</i> | Efficiency <i>(strong constraint to policymaking)</i> | Efficiency <i>(weak constraint to policymaking)</i> | Efficiency <i>(strong constraint to policymaking)</i> |
| Problem recognition | Legitimacy <i>(validity of policy action provided through external report)</i> | Legitimacy / Power <i>(impact of public opinion; validity of policy action provided through external report)</i> | Legitimacy <i>(validity of policy action provided through external report)</i> | Efficiency <i>(strong constraint to policymaking – with diminished political legitimacy and power)</i> |
| Proposal of a solution | Power <i>(political leadership, political consensus and public opinion)</i> | Power <i>(political leadership and political consensus)</i> | Power <i>(political leadership and political consensus)</i> | Efficiency <i>(strong constraint to policymaking – with policy solution within the efficiency constraints provided by the Troika)</i> |

The dominant social mechanism for each of the cases during the emergence of crisis is efficiency, with limited capital for housing investment in each of the cases:

- *1932 case* - The impact of the civil war, the war of independence and the great depression together with political choices following independence limited housing expenditure during the 1920s and into the 1930s (SH1; SH3; SH4).
- *1966 case* - The balance of payments crisis meant that it was ‘impossible to exaggerate the sense of crisis which prevailed during 1956’ (Daly 1997, 434) with the subsequent political focus on financial efficiencies and productive capital and a moratorium on social investments including housing (SH1; SH3).
- *2004 case* – There was a continued need for public sector efficiencies despite the boom-years of the Celtic Tiger (P2; CiSo2).
- *2014 case* - The global financial crash of 2008 had a significant impact on the Irish economy (Dukelow, 2011; Murphy, 2018; P1; P3; P4; CS1; CS2; CiSo2; CiSo3; SA1; SA2).

In each of the cases, efficiency defined policymaking during the emergence of crisis.

In later stages, legitimacy and then power became important mechanisms within three of the cases, which provided the means to overcome the constraint of efficiency:

- *1932 case* - It was the legitimacy of Fianna Fáil as an emerging political opposition that offered an alternative framing and solution to the housing problem (SH1; SH4). Their proposed policy response to the recommendations of the Committee on the Relief of Unemployment was given added weight by Fianna Fáil’s own increasing legitimacy as a political alternative, whilst the power of public opinion emphasised the increasing threat of electoral defeat for Cumann na nGaedheal.

- *1966 case* - The scale of the housing problem was uncovered with reporting of the local authority survey into unfit dwellings, which promoted legitimacy for government action to develop an alternative policy approach (SH1). The need for policy action was driven by public outrage at the scale and immediacy of the crisis (SH1; SH3).
- *2004 case* - Although the drive for efficiency was perhaps weaker than in the other cases, the legitimacy of the Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector provided the context for political consensus on the solution to the problem (CiSo1; CiSo2; CS1; CS2; P2).

The 2014 case differed as efficiency through fiscal constraint and recalibration was intertwined with the loss of political legitimacy and power. The destruction of the hegemonic political system early in this process ensured that national institutions became subservient to the legitimacy and power of supranational organisations (CS1; CS2; SA2; P1; P3; P4; CiSo2; CiSo3). Here, the Troika exhibited significant influence on processes of policymaking, defining the limits of that policymaking with an overarching focus on efficiency, implemented by the newly established Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (CS1; CS2; P1; P3; P4; SA1). Unlike the comparative cases, the constraint of efficiency on policymaking was not overcome and, instead, the constraint of efficiency exacerbated path dependent policymaking momentum through the incremental evolution of RS to RAS to HAP. The research suggests that the financial crash and the loss of legitimacy and obligations for efficiency early in the 2014 case influenced this process differently to the other cases. The assertion can be made therefore that the imposition of demands for efficiency by the Troika disrupted normal policymaking responses to an identified problem, reinforcing the importance of efficiency concerns in defining policymaking.

The recognition of the role that social housing had as an economic stimulus measure in the historic cases (SH1; SH3; SH4) is displayed in the 2004 case, with a recognition that the private rental sector could facilitate economic expansion (CiSo1) and be used to stabilise house price increases (P2). However, a similar outcome was not observed in the 2014 case; indeed the social housing budget was reduced in the wake of the financial crisis (CiSo3). The research therefore corroborates the assertion by Pierson (2000; 2004) and Thelen and Mahoney (2015) that history and the timing of events matter, given the collapse of legitimacy and power early in the process and, as a result, the response to crisis from 2010 onwards differed to previous housing crisis responses.

The above provides an explanation as to *why* the 2014 policymaking process differed and therefore why the policy to address contemporary housing crisis was so different to historic responses. This section of the thesis now turns to explaining *how* it differed. For each of the cases, efficiency had been the dominant social mechanism during the emergence of crisis, and the pressure for public sector efficiencies had defined and constrained policymaking. The research has highlighted four characteristics that provided sufficient impetus to overcome this limitation: the provision of an external report which provided verification or validation for policy action; public opinion; political leadership and political consensus (Table 7.3).

Table 7.3: Characteristics of the policymaking process

| Case | External Validation | Public Opinion | Leadership | Political Consensus |
|------------------|---|---|---|---|
| 1932 Case | Committee on the Relief of Unemployment recommended ‘a 10-year program of house building... prevent overcrowding, and to compel the clearance of derelict sites’ (NAI - TSCH/3/S5553C 1928). | Legitimacy of Fianna Fáil as a viable opposition tapped into public concern and developed public opinion through the offer of housing, welfare and land redistribution as part of a comprehensive housing programme (Daly, 1997; Dorney, 2020). | President Cosgrave recognised the need for policy action to overcome democratic challenge – but acted too late. Minister O’Kelly promoted a comprehensive housing programme as part of a nationalist objective. | A political consensus emerged from 1931 with recognition of ongoing concern of the housing prospects for casual workers and the extent of slum dwellings in urban areas and introduced the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill in 1931. |
| 1966 Case | Commissioned in 1960, the summary of the local authority survey of unfit dwellings was presented to the Minister in 1964 and provided urgency and legitimacy for policy action. | Building collapses caused panic throughout Dublin’s tenements, which resulted in public opinion that demanded political action. | Minister Blaney drove the policy agenda following the uncovering of the scale of the housing crisis. | A consensus emerged across political and civil society from 1964 of a housing emergency, and this set the agenda for policy action involving increased state intervention. |
| 2004 Case | The second ‘Bacon’ report (1999) recommended the establishment of a Commission to explore the private rented sector. The Report of the Commission on the Private Rented Sector (2000) recommended the establishment of a process to offer PRS security of tenure. | The importance of public opinion was cited as providing power and leverage for decision-makers to drive policy change (CiSo2; P2). | The Minister of State, Bobby Malloy (PD) is recognised as providing political leadership in establishing the Commission and for driving forward the implementation of the recommendations leading to the legislation. | Political consensus emerged from 2000 with the publication of the Commission’s report, with the agreement of the main political parties in taking-forward the recommendations in full. |

| | | | | |
|------------------|---|--|--|---|
| 2014 Case | Although the 2014 NESC report on social and affordable housing (NESC 2014) was influential (SA2), it was published as HAP was being rolled-out and therefore rather than driving policy, it highlighted wider issues of mitigation to be addressed. External validation was replaced by an imposed regime of efficiency and financial constraint. | Public opinion played a limited role in policymaking, as ‘Public opinion wasn’t a big issue behind HAP at all’ (SA2). Public opinion had to be set-aside (P1; P3). | Political leadership was constrained by the imposition of efficiency and public finance restraints required by the Troika in response to the programme for financial assistance. | Despite worsening homelessness, affordability and accessibility to housing, political consensus emerged at the election of 2011 for extended market provision of social housing as the solution to housing crisis, recognising the opportunity to utilise RAS to provide social outcomes. |
|------------------|---|--|--|---|

The characteristics of policymaking are now detailed.

7.2.1 External Validation

Fitzgerald *et al.* (2019, 5) asserted that an implied element of public policy is that it is authoritative and legitimate. External reports provided validation in three of the cases, although the interviews also underlined the significance of external validation in two further linked policymaking processes (the importance of the 2004 NESC report (NESC 2004) for informing the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 which extended the Rental Accommodation Scheme (CS1; CS2), and the 2014 NESC report (NESC 2014) in developing responses to affordability issues in the PRS following the implementation of HAP from 2014 (SA2)). NESC had been cited as an example of a legitimate and respected organisation which had significantly influenced Irish housing policy (CS1; CS2; SA2; P3). The validation provided by an external report is recognised in three cases:

- *1932 case* - The report of the Committee on the Relief of Unemployment recommended ‘a 10-year program of house building, with increased powers to local authorities to... compel the clearance of derelict sites’ and that the government establish a conference to develop a long-term housing programme (NAI - TSCH/3/S5553C, 1928). This, together with the publication of the 1926 Census, in 1929, provided the external validation and impetus for change in policy direction (SH1).
- *1966 case* - The local authority survey of unfit buildings provided the data required to emphasise the true scale of the problem and the means for Minister Blaney to overcome financial objections, and therefore the case for change could then be argued (SH1).
- *2004 case* - The Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector provided legitimacy for policy action through its constitution, organisation, management and administration (P2; CiSo1; CiSo2) as it was an inclusive and consultative process (P2) that ‘allowed all the people to make the arguments that they wanted to make [whilst they] saw the logic of the outcomes’ (CiSo1). The recommendations were legitimate, and policy action based on these valid (P2; CiSo1; CiSo2).

The 2014 case differed to the comparison cases. Whilst the Troika influenced the constraints and limits of policymaking, this was not recognised as external validation, but rather an imposition (P1; P3; P4; CS1; CS2; SA2; CiSo2; Dáil Éireann, 2010a). This was heralded in the *Irish Independent* as ‘the most expensive and bitter pill in our history’ (Keenan 2010), although one interviewee suggested that the policy adjustment was ‘in large part written by the Department of Finance and was their wish list of stuff they wish they could have gotten away with decades before’ (CiSo3). Dáil debates

highlighted a failure of public policy and the loss of Ireland’s sovereignty (Finian McGrath - Ind), which had led to the imposition of ‘an extremely demanding austerity programme’ (Eamon Gilmore – Lab), the ‘harsh conditions’ (Maureen O’Sullivan – Ind) of which ‘are strangling the economy’ (Pearse Doherty – SF) (Dáil Éireann 2010a). This was corroborated by the interviews as ‘we were forced into that circumstance, looking for something other than capital and capital funding’ (CS1) and ‘we had to negotiate on our knees more or less ... there was no sense of an equal negotiation’ (CS2). Whilst external validation is identified as an important part of policymaking in three cases, for the 2014 case validation was instead replaced by an imposed regime of efficiency and financial constraint (P1; P3; P4; CS1; CS2; SA2; CiSo2). Some attempt was made in 2011, through convening a housing practitioners conference, to ‘set out a framework for a sequence of legislative policy initiatives’ but the focus was on the short to medium term, within the parameters of the Troika’s bailout terms (P4).

Whilst the seeking of external validation can have a slowing impact on the process of policymaking – after all the Commission on the Private Rental Sector took five years from inception to legislation – it does provide the opportunity to take a more deliberative and longer-term view. This provides for a more *proactive* approach to housing policymaking and decision-making, rather than a focus on the fast or *reactive* policy responses that typify recent housing policymaking and decision-taking, and which have tended to concentrate on symptoms of crisis rather than causes.

7.2.2 Public Opinion

The research highlighted the importance of public opinion in shaping public policy. Chomsky (2007) emphasised that a democratic deficit can, and often does, exist

between public opinion and public policy. Such a gap is well recognised in housing policy, exemplified by Wetzstein (2017) in relation to affordability discourses, strategies and outcomes. Whilst True *et al.* (2007) identified the role of public opinion in the agenda setting process in promoting change or the status quo, Knill and Tosun (2008) identified public opinion as a constraint to policy change. Public opinion is, however, identified as a driver for policy change in three of the four cases: A general perception that ‘something had to be done’ was recognised by interviewees relating to the 1932, 1966 and 2004 cases as political avoidance, denial of the problem and dismissal of the issue became options that were increasingly untenable (P2; P5; SH1; SH2; CiSo1; CiSo2):

- *1930s case* - Public opinion accounted for the outcome of the 1932 general election, with the electorate voting for ‘sweeping constitutional, economic and social changes’ (Lee 1989, 170).
- *1966 case* - The sense of panic in the Dublin tenements and the wider public opinion for policy action was reflected in *The Irish Times* editorial that ‘It should be a signal to abolish the slums for ever’ (anon. *The Irish Times* 1963e, 26).
- *2004 case* - The importance of public opinion was cited by interviewees as providing power and leverage for decision-makers to drive policy change (P2; P5; CiSo2).

However, the importance of public opinion shaping policy change was not evident in the 2014 case. Indeed, such was the crisis, the power of the Troika and the dominance of efficiency as a constraint, public opinion had to be set-aside by decision-makers (P1; P3; P4), as politicians recognised that the action required to meet the terms of the Troika’s ‘bailout’ would lead to electoral defeat (P1; P4). This differs to wider

perceptions of political action that results from a ‘need to survive an election [which] means that the electorally unpopular decisions will not be made’ (C. Fitzgerald, O’Malley, and Broin 2019, 16), such was the severity of the wider crisis.

7.2.3 Political Leadership

Whilst management is the overseeing of a response or action within a defined set of parameters, leadership defines the parameters within which the management of the response can be undertaken. Sabatier (2007, 203) recognised the role of skilful leadership in creating an alternative vision for policy change and recognised that role in bringing actual change, whilst Béland and Howlett (2016) identified the influences of decision-makers through their leadership on policymaking processes and this relates to discussions around policy entrepreneurship (see for example, Kingdon 2014; Herweg *et al.* 2018; Zahariadis 2007; and Cairney 2020). Each of the 1932, 1966 and 2004 cases exhibited attributes of political leadership, with Presidents Cosgrave and de Valera, and Ministers T. O’Kelly, Blaney and Malloy attributed for occasionally or systematically driving housing policymaking:

- *1932 case* - For Cosgrave, despite his apparent understanding of, and empathy towards housing crisis his reticence to address this through effective policy action meant that his (reactive rather than proactive) conversion came too late to accrue political capital - this was a response to the democratic challenge of Fianna Fáil rather than a drive to improve social conditions. For de Valera, early recognition in the 1932 case of the role that state support for housing construction was part of a narrative of promoting social progress within a wider nationalist objective in part brought power (Daly, 1997; Dorney, 2020; SH1; SH3). But, this position was led, driven and implemented by Seán T. O’Kelly

(SH4), as he took his ‘fiery cross’ (Connell 2016) and zeal for implementing the housing programme across the country (SH4).

- *1966 case* - However, de Valera’s support for housing investment was not replicated in the early part of the 1966 case, when he outlined his intent to increase employment in construction, but in projects other than housing (Daly 2016). In this case, after some hesitation, Minister Blaney eventually drove the policy agenda in the light of the scale of the housing crisis, uncovered by the local authority survey of unfit buildings and supported by public opinion and outrage as displaced families were housed in barracks and other temporary accommodation (SH1; SH3; SH4). Whilst this can be recognised as a case of data informed decision-making, it also ties into Blaney’s leadership style, as he elucidated when he addressed a Fianna Fáil party meeting in County Sligo, ‘It is, after all, inherent in the basic philosophy of a democratic system that if people are fully informed of the choices that are open to them, they will come to the right decisions’ (Sacks 1976, 206). Blaney converted from a position of denial (after he outlined to the Dáil in 1958 that the post-war housing problem had been solved) to one which promoted policy intervention, when external validation provided the legitimacy, and public opinion demanded policy action.
- *2004 case* - Minister Malloy was identified as providing the political leadership (CiSo1; CiSo2; P2) by devolving power and responsibility to an assembly of ‘the great and the good’ (P5) to recommend policy approaches to an increasing housing problem, establishing the Commission into the Private Rented Sector and progressing the recommendations towards the final legislation (P2; CiSo1; CiSo2).

The 2014 case, however, is representative of a process of political management, within defined boundaries or limits, rather than a process of political leadership which defined the boundaries for political action. For Murphy and Hearne (2019, 461) HAP is implemented with an ‘absence of leadership’. This research concurs, and instead of political leadership which responded to the crisis and led the policy response, political management followed the demands imposed by the Troika, which emphasised the strong influence that these international organisations had on Irish policymaking generally and housing policymaking specifically (P1; P4; CS1; CS2). Political leadership was not only constrained at the national level, but centralisation and the carving out of budgets meant that local authorities, which traditionally had been the level of the state which had facilitated house building, also ‘lost their drive and initiative... [they] lost the will. If you asked me to sum it up, that’s it. They have lost the will, they’ve lost the initiative, lost the drive to provide local authority housing’ (P4).

7.2.4 Political Consensus

Given the often-fractious nature of discourse around housing crisis, it is perhaps surprising to learn that political consensus is identified as a characteristic of housing policymaking in response to crisis. Whilst Knill and Tosun (2008) highlighted that the Westminster model of government is majoritarian rather than consensual, Sabatier and Weible (2007, 191) recognised the role of consensus, particularly in Westminster styles of governance, where a non-consensual approach might wreck any proposal. Schlager (2007, 307) in reviewing and comparing theories and frameworks identified the role of institutional consensus which is needed for policy change. Political

consensus was an important element in the processes of policymaking and a precursor for policy action in each of the cases.

- *1932 case* - Although both main political parties recognised that the housing problem required a policy response, each had interpreted the problem differently, and therefore identified different solutions. The governing party, Cumann na nGaedheal, identified the problem as one of affordability. Fianna Fáil instead saw the problem as a lack of supply of quality housing, with their solution being to increase the role of the State in provision as part of a commitment to a comprehensive housing programme (Daly 1997). However, we see convergence towards political consensus, leading to the development of the 1931 Act, as the Cumann na nGaedheal government recognised that their policy position had to change to mirror and counteract the approach of Fianna Fáil, their biggest electoral threat.
- *1966 case* - We also see a merging towards consensus in the 1960s case, again with a change in government approach considering an external report and the anger of public opinion, albeit sometime after the opposition parties had identified the need for this policy action, but the final legislation was again in line with what opposition parties had advocated, for some time.
- *2004 case* - The main political party election manifestos confirmed that each had committed to implement the recommendations of the Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector prior to the election in 2002 (Fine Gael 2002; Fianna Fáil 2002; Labour 2002).
- *2014 case* - The consensus on the framing of the housing problem was within a wider setting of constrained public sector finances required by the EU-ECB-IMF programme of financial assistance. The proposed policy solutions within

the 2011 election manifestos suggest that there was limited political appetite for major policy change, with incremental adjustments to the current status quo, and continued focus on private sector provision and limited capital expenditure (Fianna Fáil, 2011; Fine Gael, 2011; Labour, 2011).

Susskind (2006) recognised that stakeholders and decision-makers are in a constant state of seeking to influence each other's thoughts and actions. Whilst the outcome of this, the formulation of policy, can be achieved through hard bargaining with 'threats, bluff and political mobilisation', as identified in the early stages of the 1932 case, a more even power distribution produces a consensual approach to achieve mutual gains through agreement (Susskind 2006, 269). This was the outcome for each of the four cases and is important, as policy developed through consensus and agreement will be more durable, fair, and evenly linked to public expectation than that which is achieved through persuasion or hard-bargaining (Susskind 2006, 293). The interviews also highlighted that political parties worked well in coalition governments (P1; P2; P3; P4) and that social partnership had facilitated a beneficial cooperative relationship to national economic and social management (P2; P3; P5; CS2; CiSo2).

In the current Irish housing context, Umfreville (2021c) asserted that there is an assumption that consensus existed on what that problem is, being that the housing system is in crisis, but that the policy response is out of step. However, whilst consensus existed that there is a problem of housing provision in Ireland, and to an extent that consensus continued for recognising some symptoms, there was perhaps not a similar consensus on the causes (p.108). The divergence and variation between the recognition of the symptoms and causes of the Irish housing problem is highlighted in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4: Problem recognition and policy response - divergence of problem to policy

[Source: Umfreville, 2021b]

| Cohort | Problem | Symptom | Cause | Policy response |
|--|----------------|---|---|--|
| Economy Those who view housing (primarily) as a commodity: including (some) politicians, real estate investment trusts, global finance... etc. | Housing crisis | Limited availability of new housing; financial viability of development schemes; problems of accessing the property ladder, particularly for first time buyers. | Restrictive planning and development processes and regulation; limited land availability; barriers to land assembly; onerous social housing requirements; barriers to home ownership. | Reduce barriers to private sector provision; reduce regulation; reduce financial disincentives; facilitate financial viability of schemes; speed up the planning and development process; provide fiscal incentives for ownership. |
| Society Those who view housing (primarily) as a home: including (most) public, academics, policy analysts, media... etc | Housing crisis | Limited availability of affordable housing; poor quality housing; insecure tenancies; homelessness; inequality of outcomes. | Privatisation; financialisation; commodification; individualisation; marketisation; reducing public intervention in the housing market. | Increase social housing provision; decommodify housing; provide a right to housing; improve standards; tighten regulations; rebalance the market. |

Whilst convergence towards political consensus on the problem, the solution and the will to act are identifiable in each of the four cases, the 2014 case does not exhibit the same attributes in relation to validation through external reports, nor of public opinion. Indeed, the interviews suggest that there was no need for external validation (CS1) nor did public opinion play a significant role in this policymaking process (SA2; P1; P3; P4). This develops the assertion by Umfreville (2021c, 108) that consensus existed on problem definition following the global financial crisis, a recognition that the housing system was in crisis, but that consensus related to the symptoms rather than the causes of that crisis (108). This establishes *how* the 2014 case differs to previous housing policymaking processes.

Rather than a characteristic of policymaking, a potential characteristic of successful housing policy implementation is identified from the research, around decentralisation or the devolution of responsibilities from central to local government. It is therefore included here as an addendum.

7.2.5 Local Implementation

A common theme across all the cases is the relationship between local authorities and government departments, and within that the legitimacy of local authorities to implement national housing policy. Identified as a ‘story of centralisation’ (SH3), this has sub-plots around mistrust, bluff and threats:

- *1932 case* - During the 1920s, Cumann na nGaedheal ‘had very little trust for local authorities’, it was a government that gave ‘low grade legitimacy to local authorities’, abolished some and installed Commissioners in others (SH1). In opposition, Fianna Fáil entertained the idea of establishing a centrally controlled and financed body to construct ‘the 50,000 houses now required within a maximum of ten years’ (anon. Irish Independent 1929b, 7). However, the implementation of the 1932 Act was ultimately entrusted to local authorities and with increased powers.
- *1966 case* - The economic and balance of payments crisis during the mid-1950s meant that local authorities ‘were essentially bankrupt, so the centralisation of control meant that local politicians couldn’t respond to voters needs by increasing social housing or mortgage lending. The more control that the department had, the more they sweated down the numbers’ (SH3). Whilst Minister Blaney (FF) established a National Building Agency (NBA) in 1960 to facilitate local authority housing delivery (Kenna 2011, 45) it was perhaps

his exasperation at the slow return of the local authority survey of unfit buildings that prompted him to suggest that the role of the national body might be expanded to provide ‘rented accommodation in areas of need but which is not being supplied [by local authorities]’ (Pfretzschner 1965, 36), a threat to use the NBA to reduce the local authority powerbase (SH1). As with the 1932 legislation, however, the implementation of the 1966 Act was again entrusted to local authorities with the additional discretion of providing a supplementary grant, up to the value of the relevant grant (Department of Local Government 1966).

- *2004 case* - Reluctance for local authorities to undertake enforcement action within the local authority-led regulatory regime to provide supports to renting families during the 1990s diminished that regime’s legitimacy (DELG 2000, 94–95). The Commission inquiry and the establishment of the national residential tenancy registration scheme transferred and centralised power. At this time opposition political parties were also proposing the establishment of a National Housing Authority (Eamon Gilmore (Lab) Dáil Éireann, 2000), or a National Housing Agency to integrate local authority housing strategies, with a target to rapidly increase delivery of social and affordable housing (Fine Gael 2002, 29). The financial crisis led to a ‘bonfire of the quangos’ which included the closing down of the National Building Authority to achieve savings (S. Phelan 2015) but even before the crisis, local authorities ‘wouldn’t use the NBA – they didn’t like the service they were getting, there were quite a few tensions’ (CS1).
- *2014 case* - Public reform following the financial crisis focused on the short-term and centred around retrenchment of existing policies and centralisation of

power as the policy response to crisis (Dukelow 2011; G. Murphy 2018; Umfreville and Sirr 2020). Whilst the implementation of HAP transferred operational responsibility from the Department of Welfare to local authorities, there was a centralisation aspect as local authorities implemented defined criteria. There was also a wider agencification as ‘Approved Housing Bodies have now become the vehicle for the provision of local authority housing’ (P4), whilst the reinvention of other bodies ‘like the Housing Agency... originally [established] as a support for local authorities... very quickly became an alternative policy input... [and] used as an executive wing of the Department whenever they have a scheme [that] they are not sure how to run they can tell the [Housing Agency] to run it’ (CS1).

The key difference is that the policymaking cases of the twentieth century resulted in local authorities leading and implementing whilst the twenty-first century cases highlight further centralisation and a more managerial role. This centralised concentration of power ‘contributes to difficulties of making policy at local level’ (D. Ó Broin and Corrigan 2021, 6), and within this context, Phelan (2021, 159) recognised that without a significant transfer of power from the centre, strategic policy committees specifically and indeed local authorities more generally ‘will struggle to be truly active participants in local policy development’. Despite longstanding zeal for local government reform, Ogbazghi (2022, 346) argued that ‘While critical of existing arrangements, politicians [have] found it impossible to accomplish change.’

Rather than finding significant differences between eras, between 20th century and 21st century process, the 2014 case appears to be an outlier. The policymaking characteristics of external validation, public opinion and political leadership differ in

the 2014 HAP case from the other cases, outlining *how* policymaking differed: external imposition rather than verification or validation; public opinion as a negligible influence; and political management in place of political leadership. The result was reactive decision-taking which moved social housing provision from capital budgets whilst the impacts continue to dominate political discussion (and housing budgets given the locked-in cost) a decade later.

7.3 Reflections on the Conceptual Framework

The research sought to identify the influence of social mechanisms during periods of policy change and to compare how these were manifested in more recent cases. An outline conceptual framework was drafted and set-out in Chapter 4 (Figure 4.1, below).

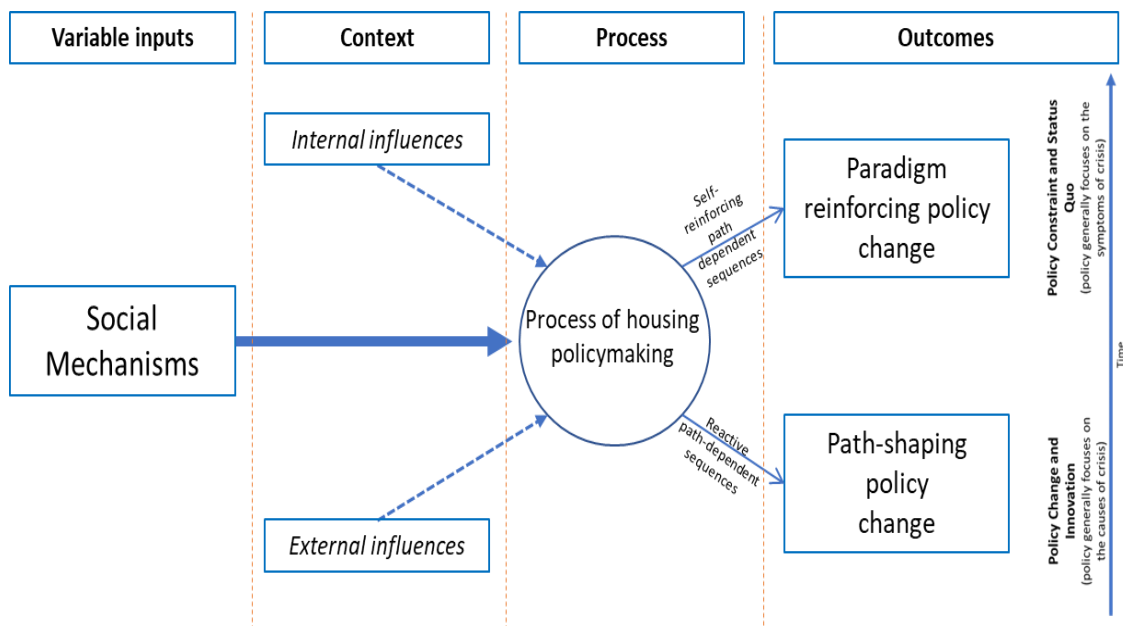


Figure 4.1: Outline conceptual framework

The research traced the processes of policymaking responses to four cases and highlighted the influence that efficiency, legitimacy and power had on those processes.

Three assertions can be made from the research which support elements of this conceptual framework:

- *The interlinked social mechanisms of efficiency, legitimacy and power are influences on policymaking processes.*

The identification of social mechanisms provides a means for categorising the influences on policymaking processes. The research supports the contention of Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2017) that these three mechanisms enable the focus of study on actors, but also facilitates understanding of ‘the basis of institutionalization, the nature of the driving forces behind institutional change, and the obstacles against such change’ (2017, 55).

- *Characteristics of policymaking that have influence on policymaking processes can be identified.*

Of particular importance in these cases were validation, public opinion, political leadership and political consensus. These were important to overcome path dependent sequences of paradigm-reinforcing (status quo confirming) policy constraint, whilst the ceding of political legitimacy and power was an important element which promoted a self-reinforcing (status quo confirming), path dependent sequence in the 2014 case. However, other influences had much less impact on the process of policymaking; the interaction between the triumvirate of senior politicians, civil servants and special advisors raised some interesting issues around power, but it cannot be asserted with any degree of confidence from this research that this relationship dynamic constrained policymaking to any great extent.

- *Using path dependence as a theoretical frame and process tracing as the means to undertake comparison is invaluable for providing insights to*

policymaking processes. The research found a progression that differed to the theoretical proposition of the policy window within the multiple streams framework literature (Kingdon 2014; Cairney 2020). From the emergence of crisis, through to when this was recognised as being a problem and to the proposed policy response, policymaking in each of the four cases progressed from problem to politics to policy. A more static ‘moment in time’ approach would not have recognised that progression.

Based on the literature review, the conceptual framework suggested that historic events of housing policy change can be identified as reactive sequences, and contemporary housing policy is a result of self-reinforcing sequencing. Similarly, historic reactive path dependent sequences might result in policy change which focused on the causes of crisis, whilst contemporary self-reinforcing path dependent sequences might result in a policy focus on the symptoms of crisis. Whilst the two historic cases resulted in path-shaping policy change, and the two contemporary cases resulted in paradigm-reinforcing policy change, the scope of this research means that an assertion cannot be made to support that conceptual proposition of change over time from a policy focus on causes of crisis to a focus on symptoms. However, the research does support the contention that history does matter and the sequence in which events occur is important for the outcome.

Considering the research and issues arising, the conceptual framework is now revised and set out as Figure 7.2.

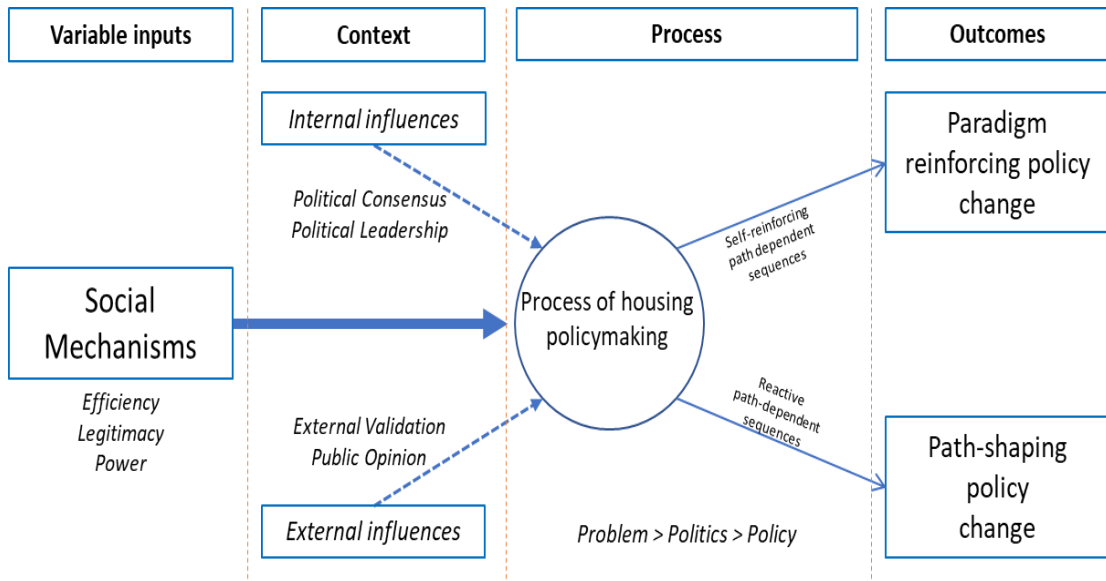


Figure 7.2: Revised conceptual framework

Objectives of this research have been to trace (Objective 2), analyse influences (Objective 3) and compare (Objective 4) processes of policymaking. The research identified that the same progression and processes of policymaking existed in each of the four cases, and found that the social mechanisms of efficiency, legitimacy and power were influences on these processes. Given that this is so for each of the cases it would be reasonable to expect that the same process and social mechanisms would also be integral to any new policymaking process. This research therefore has implications for practice.

The research highlighted the importance of external validation, public opinion, political leadership and political consensus for overcoming policy constraint, and these characteristics are key to understanding how historic housing policymaking processes can inform contemporary policymaking. These characteristics are also key

to understanding why policies to address contemporary Irish housing crisis might differ to historic responses.

7.4 Consideration of Research Limitations

The complexity of the topic necessarily meant that research had to focus on key aspects, with the risk that concentration on one part of the problem could result in the loss of holistic oversight, which is crucial in analysing policy processes and the nature of housing crisis. Whilst the scope of the research is limited it focused on the exploration of four policymaking processes, analysed the mechanisms of policy change, and the influences, motivations and experiences of those decision-makers involved in those recent processes. The identified methodological limitations, ethical considerations and mitigations for this approach are summarised in Appendix K.

A consideration at the outset of the research was the concern that identified interviewees would potentially not wish to be involved, given the contentious nature of the housing debate, and arising from recent research (see for example work by Waldron and Lennon 2019). Mitigation involved using contacts within TU Dublin's School of Surveying and Construction Innovation to facilitate introductions, with correspondence that emphasised the aim of the interviews being to explore the *process* of policymaking, rather than to critique the *outcomes* of housing policy. The wider document review provided the substantive data for the research, and therefore the interviews enhanced the data collection rather than being the focus of it. Whilst a relatively small number of potential interviewees were identified and invited to participate, the sample was directed to provide effective augmentation to the document review. The response and level of agreement for participation, across all cases, enhanced the legitimacy and validation of the wider research findings.

Several ethical issues arose during the research design, which related to informed consent and confidentiality, particularly as the specific interview sample meant that participants might be identifiable. The research process complied with the required institutional ethical processes with approval from TU Dublin's Research Ethics and Integrity Committee (Appendix G). A Participant Information Sheet was supplied which provided background to the research, outlined issues relating to confidentiality, anonymity and risks, and detailed how the information provided was to be recorded, stored, and protected (Appendix H). Informed consent was sought from each participant during the data collection phases of the research. The consent form (Appendix I) set out the voluntary nature of the participants' involvement, the ability to withdraw, and the proposed use of the data arising, whilst a transcription of the interview was provided to each participant for their review and approval. Pseudo-anonymisation ensured that participants were able to speak candidly about their thoughts, perceptions and experiences. The use of data from the interviews is included in Chapters 5 and 6 (research findings) in a pseudo-anonymised form, to protect the confidentiality of participants. Some interview data has been added to Chapters 2 and 3 (literature review), to augment understanding of the context of the case-study policymaking processes.

The calibre and status of the highly influential interviewees (detailed in Appendix J) authenticates the research and provides a rich and valuable source of primary data. Despite the limitations of the research, identified and discussed in Appendix K, given the precautions and mitigations identified, the research and the data arising from the document review and interviews is robust, and the process of research is replicable. It is therefore appropriate to use the research as a basis to develop generalisations and

assertions. The next section discusses the implications of this research relating to theory, practice and the identification of future research.

7.5 Contribution and Implications: Theory, Practice and Future Research

There is limited research which focuses on the *process* of Irish historic housing policy change, and indeed none has taken an approach to identify the processes and social mechanisms to situate learning from previous episodes of housing crisis within the current and ongoing predicament. This thesis explains why policies to address contemporary Irish housing crisis are seemingly different to historic responses when there are grounds to expect that they would be similar, how policymaking processes differ, and how they can inform policymakers' responses to housing crisis.

Having spent close to three decades in public service, a key goal from the privilege of undertaking this PhD research is that the outputs have an influence and an impact, not only on the practice of public policymaking but also on theoretical debate and future study. An objective of this research has been to identify the characteristics of policymaking and make recommendations on how responses to housing crisis can be informed by historic housing policymaking processes (Objective 5). With the patterns reported in this thesis being robust and replicable, the contribution and implications for theory, practice and future research are now set out.

7.5.1 Contribution and Implications for Theory

Mahoney (2000, 508) established that the study of 'path dependence is always a theory-laden process', and Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2017, 45) recognised comparative process tracing as combining 'elements of theory, chronology, and

comparison’. Given that this research has path dependence as a theoretical frame with process tracing as the means to undertake comparison, it is perhaps not surprising that the outcomes of this study contribute to, and have implications for, the theory of public policy.

Three key linked issues arise from this research:

- *The effectiveness of path dependence as a theoretical frame to analyse policy change.*

The first is the effectiveness of path dependence as a theoretical frame to analyse the emergence and evolution of crises, through the identification of social mechanisms to categorise the influences on policymaking, and to assist with tracing the process of policymaking. In this respect, path dependence as a frame is invaluable, highlights that history does matter (Mahoney 2000) and ‘placing politics in time can greatly enrich our understanding of complex social dynamics’ (Pierson 2004, 2). Here, policymaking is recognised as a process, although the dynamic nature of changing context over time ensures that the once effective policy response as a solution to housing crisis becomes the status quo and therefore loses its own legitimacy for future crisis episodes, necessitating further policy intervention. This explains Irish housing provision as being an ongoing and underlying problem characterised by intermittent crisis, despite transformative policy interventions. A more static ‘moment in time’ theoretical frame would not have recognised the evolution of crisis and the emergence of the policy response.

- *The possibility of endogenous institutional change.*

The second issue arising from the research relates to the deterministic causality of event sequences. Mahoney (2000, 535) argued ‘that path dependence occurs when a contingent historical event triggers a subsequent sequence’. Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2017, 50) interpreted this as a ‘*strong definition*’ [author emphasis], relating only to those exogenous factors, ‘external shocks and changes in environment’, that might cause such change. However, in their own comparative process tracing research, Bengtsson and Ruonavaara diverge from this, instead recognising a ‘*weak definition*’ [author emphasis] that ‘leaves open the possibility of endogenous institutional change’ (*ibid.*). For Cairney (2020, 127) drivers to change behaviour and outcomes are ‘endogenous (internal), when actors (1) follow and shape the rules of each institution and (2) learn when they “try out different strategies”; and exogenous (external), when... other levels of government change the resources of local actors’. The findings from exploration of Irish housing policymaking processes similarly diverges from the proposition of exogenous factors being the only catalyst for path-shaping policy change. Whilst exogenous factors had a role, or provided impetus, it was endogenous factors, those internal, in-party changes recognised in the 1932, 1966 and 2004 cases that eventually provided the catalyst for policy change. Although the 1932 is an external shock (i.e. beyond the sub-system) it corresponds to a ‘weak’ definition as the ‘external actors’ joined the sub-system which thereafter led to internal change. The 1932, 1966 and 2004 policymaking processes correspond to Bengtsson and Ruonavaara’s ‘weak’ definition with emphasis on endogenous institutional change, whilst the 2014 process corresponds to a ‘strong’ definition.’

- *The theoretical understanding of policy change as a contingent process.*

The third issue arising from this research relates to the theoretical understanding of policy change as a contingent process rather than an alignment of independent streams as set out by Kingdon (1984, 2014), Zahariadis (2007) and Herweg et al. (2018). Zohlnhöfer *et al.* (2022, 27–28) established a hypothesis test for the study of policy processes within the agenda setting phase using the Multiple Streams Framework. In this, agenda change is more likely when a policy window opens, that is when the streams are ready for coupling (alignment), and when a policy entrepreneur promotes the agenda change. During alignment, Cairney (2020, 196–97) suggested that ‘it must be acted upon quickly before attention shifts elsewhere, partly by demonstrating that a feasible solution already exists’. However, this assumes that the political system and mechanisms of government are dynamic enough to react quickly to an identified problem, or that the system has been proactive in identifying and developing a suitable policy action. As highlighted by this study, particularly by the 1932, 1966 and 2014 HAP cases, quick reactions to crisis events were not forthcoming, nor were proactive policy proposals presented or available.

Instead of reflecting that the problem, policy and politics streams develop independently but align during a ‘policy window’, given the ‘three streams must come together at the right time’ (Cairney 2020, 196), this research instead highlights a process which can be traced over time. From the emergence of crisis, through to when this is recognised as being a problem, with political discussion and potential consensus, through to the proposed policy response (not necessarily a feasible solution

that already existed), public policymaking is identified as a process which would appear to progress, over time, from problem to politics to policy.

A component of the Multiple Streams Framework is the role of the ‘policy entrepreneur’, those ‘advocates who are willing to invest their resources... to promote a position in return for anticipated future gain in the form of material, purposive, or solidary benefits’ (Kingdon 2014, 179). The role of a political leader in providing policy entrepreneurship to facilitate policy change is identifiable from three cases, as set out in 7.2.3. The research therefore outlines the importance of political leadership in the process of policymaking and supports the acknowledgement by Zohlnhöfer and Rub (2017) of the role of political entrepreneurs in that process.

The research also identified consensus towards policymaking which addressed public concern and opinion, however there is recognition that the final 2014 case exhibited other external mechanisms of influence. Rather than the system being sufficiently resistant to dilute impetus for paradigm-changing policy transformation post-crash, the tracing of this process highlighted that instead, the perturbation was so all-encompassing that it destroyed the existing hegemonic legitimacy and power of the national political system, replacing it with external influences of the Troika, and a path which exacerbated the importance of efficiency. This affected the subsequent process of policymaking.

These findings have implications for theory, though rather than contesting theoretical propositions, such as the Multiple Streams Framework, these add to theoretical debate, and establish opportunities for practice and for further research. These are now discussed.

7.5.2 Contribution and Implications for Practice

The thesis opened with an explanation that this is about the political reality of policymaking. It is easy to castigate politicians with the popular refrain that they never learn. We can blame *the system* for inertia, which might be based on civil service intransigence and established ways of working, or ministers' capriciousness and need to make an impact before the next election. Long-term goals versus short-term timelines, continuity or change, or a divisive polarisation of the arguments continue to frame debate, whilst the public inquiries from the early 2000s still cast a long shadow in the public's mind about integrity, objectivity and honesty in politics (SA2). However, each of the interviewees presented as being genuine in their concern about the impacts of housing crisis and each had tried to make a difference within their respective roles to the best of their ability, this within the constraints of a seemingly broken system, with limited funding and with external pressures. No suggestions of undue lobbying or of pressure groups acting in coalition to influence policy to serve their own interests or ends were made. Nor was civil service intransigence or political capriciousness uncovered. Even 'outsiders', the civil society representatives, did not identify such coalitions or any collusion, though there was wariness within the relationship dynamics between triumvirate decision-makers. The system has been intermittent in its effectiveness for over a century though, punctuated by more serious episodes of crisis, and therefore the refrain that '*something must change*', was voiced and highlighted within each of the cases (P2; P5; SH1; SH2; CiSo1; CiSo2).

There is much that can be learned from this study. It has identified the importance of external validation, public opinion, political leadership and political consensus for providing impetus to overcome policy constraint. It has also recognised the importance

of local or devolved implementation of national schemes. The development of each of these characteristics could have implications for practice.

Given the recognition that the housing problem will not be ‘solved entirely in the political system, but there is a responsibility on the political media to be honest with the public, to try to explain what they are doing, and bring the public with them’ (P1), particularly as ‘we have no public sense of success’ in housing policymaking (SA1), external validation and public opinion continue to be important influences on policymaking. Whilst the end of the social partnership era led to a ‘downsized’ role for civil society organisations in policy analysis (Murphy and Hogan, 2020, 153; CiSo2), which represented a loss of network of civil society organisations (M. P. Murphy and O’Connor 2021), new opportunities have been ‘characterised by new parliamentary and public forms of policy making’ (M. P. Murphy and O’Connor 2021, 208) facilitated by NESC, and importantly which included a focus on housing (O’Donnell 2021, 185). Similarly, Irish innovations to facilitate public consultation, participation, and deliberation has made the country ‘a world leader in deliberative democracy’, placing ‘citizens at the heart of constitutional change and political reform’ (Harris 2021, 259). The effectiveness and impact that deliberative democracy had through processes such as national stakeholder forums, for example the citizens’ assemblies on Constitutional right to life and matters of wider governance (2016-2018) and on gender equality (from 2020), highlighted that progressive policy which encourages and facilitates public involvement and participation, and which incorporates public opinion, can be developed and can be successful. Whilst deliberative approaches can lead to a fuller engagement with individuals, and perhaps address issues with ‘who the public is’ with regards to more structured sectoral group

participation, public engagement needs to be structured and built into the design of policymaking processes (D. Ó Broin and Corrigan 2021, 3, 6).

Each of these approaches offer opportunities for practice, to provide external validation to accommodate public opinion within the policymaking process. Therefore, this could include the further engagement of NESC, or the establishment of a citizens' assembly to examine and report on the housing system in its totality – the social housing sector, the private rental market, and the homeownership market (CS1, CiSo1, CiSo2) - providing an opportunity to ensure the inclusion of public opinion in agreeing the focus and limits of the causes of the problem and any proposed policy solution. The government's recognition of the problem resulted in the establishment of the Housing Commission in 2022 to examine issues such as tenure, standards, sustainability and quality-of-life issues in the provision of housing, including the efficient functioning of the markets, and to bring forward proposals on a referendum on housing, as set out in *Housing for All* (DHLGH 2021). This, however, requires political leadership to encourage and work towards political consensus on the ways and means to secure external validation, and a commitment to contest a future general election on respective plans to implement the recommendations of any (yet to be drafted) NESC, Commission or citizens' assembly report. This would be consistent with previous episodes of policymaking as response to housing crisis, and requires bold political leadership which advocates a longer-term, proactive and holistic approach to policymaking that utilises the problem - politics - policy process identified in this study.

Recommendation 1 – Problem

NESC to revisit, update and build upon its 2018 report *Urban Development Land, Housing and Infrastructure: Fixing Ireland’s Broken System (2018)* and report on the three elements of the housing system – the social housing sector, the private rented market and the home ownership market – to identify the problems and challenges facing each element and the potential opportunities, policy solutions or options for improvement that exist.

Justification – For fifty years NESC has played a defining role in public policymaking in Ireland through its deliberative processes, advising the Taoiseach on strategic policy issues, and it continues to be a respected organisation for decision-makers. The 2004 and 2014 NESC reports were cited in this research as influences on housing policymaking, and therefore a similar focus on the three independent though interrelated elements of the Irish housing system would provide a general and non-political understanding not only of the problems and challenges facing each element, but also of the potential opportunities, policy solutions or options that exist for policymakers. The 2018 NESC report focused on housing supply and infrastructure funding, and this can be usefully revisited and updated. There is, however, a need to step back and to reframe the question of ‘*what is the problem?*’ to enable for the provision of a different answer. Perhaps the consensus on the problem is not as unanimous as it seems, and it is the lack of consensus that is partly the reason for the perceived lack of effective policy action highlighted in public discourse and housing literature.

Recommendation 2 – Politics

Political parties to set out within their election manifestos (in advance of the general election in March 2025) their agreement:

- i. To consider and respond in full to the recommendations arising from the NESC report (or series of reports) and Housing Commission recommendations.**
- ii. To establish a Citizens’ Assembly, to widen participation in decision-making processes, to reflect on the challenges, potential opportunities, policy solutions and options that are available to government as responses to housing crisis.**
- iii. To develop legislation in response to the recommendations of the Citizens’ Assembly.**

Justification – Politics is about making choices from a range of different available options. It is therefore an integral part of the policymaking process. This study has highlighted how effective policy can be developed when there is consensus on an approach for policy action, and when political parties recognise policymaking as a process of *decision-making* - from problem to politics to policy - rather than a moment-in-time action of *decision-taking*. A referendum on housing in Ireland would widen involvement in *decision-taking*, but the constraint of binary questioning could be overcome by a proactive and participative approach to *decision-making*. This might serve to take the rhetoric out of the housing debate. Political leadership here involves the widening of participation in that decision-making process, with the delegation to, and the encouragement

of, the wider community to inform the debate, to provide the verification and validation required to support the difficult choices needed to be made for effective political action.

Recommendation 3 - Policy

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (or equivalent) to establish a Citizens’ Assembly on housing, to reflect on the challenges, potential opportunities, policy solutions or options identified by NESC and the Housing Commission, to make recommendations to the Dáil.

Justification – Recent Irish innovations to facilitate public consultation, participation and deliberation (D. Ó Broin and Corrigan 2021) has made it ‘a world leader in deliberative democracy’ (Harris 2021). This thesis has highlighted that the housing problem is wider than the remit of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, therefore its solution will inevitably require the involvement of a wider cross-section of society. The polarisation of the housing debate and focus on economic rather than social outcomes has constrained public policymaking in this area, which has tended to focus on the symptoms rather than the causes. The demise of social partnership may have lost that pragmatic approach to government policymaking (P2; P3; P5; SA2; CiSo2), or overcome institutionalised poor decision-making (C. Fitzgerald, O’Malley, and Broin 2019, 17), but new opportunities to widen participation now offer a fuller engagement with individuals and prospects for the provision of a systematic and strategic approach for engagement. The involvement of

NESC and the Housing Commission provides the opportunity to harness external knowledge and experience, and a wider deliberative approach will enable for participative examination of the issues in public, providing the verification and validation required to support a proactive and longer-term approach to policy action.

Umfreville (2021c, 114) discussed public policy response to housing crisis, and the challenge for future policymakers:

There have been many calls for Irish housing policy to take a different direction. Each might be taken forward with the assistance and support of an active public sector. However, until such time that a significant shock results in paradigm change (and the literature emphasises that shocks in the last 40 years have not changed the pathway, but rather entrenched it) importance might be given to the means of facilitating policy innovation, learning from systems or examples of housing provision which work, and ensuring that the current pathway is equitable for all. This, therefore, is the challenge to the wide range of actors and stakeholders in the Irish housing system. The social impacts of housing crisis need to be addressed, and the best place to start is with a national discussion and agreement on the underlying causes of the problem, not just the symptoms.

Together, these recommendations respond to the findings of this research and are based on the process of policymaking rather than the outcomes, recognising the importance of characteristics including external validation, public opinion, political leadership and political consensus as drivers or verification for effective policy change.

7.5.3 Future Research

This research has uncovered the need and opportunity for far more investigation than can be included within this thesis. Yin (2018) recognised the unmanageable effort in case study research which emphasised the limitation of a sole researcher; however this provides for the identification of further study which is beyond the means and remit of this research:

- *To undertake process tracing for other significant historic housing focusing events.* An assessment of historic junctures for comparative analysis, set out in Appendix A, also identified the 1940s and 1980s as significant junctures. Therefore the processes leading to the policy responses of the Housing Act 1948 and the NESC influenced 1991 *A Plan for Social Housing* would be useful comparative cases for analysis. Research could examine whether the *problem - politics - policy* sequence is recognisable; whether the efficiency, legitimacy and power social mechanisms were similarly influential, and whether external validation, public opinion, political leadership and political consensus provided the impetus and means to overcome policy constraint.
- *To assess whether the problem - politics - policy sequence is recognisable in other policymaking contexts, in different Irish fields of study or in other international settings.* Similarly, further research might utilise process tracing to examine policymaking during events identified as a ‘policy window’ to assess whether the problem, policy and politics streams had developed independently but aligned ‘at the right time’ (Cairney 2020, 196), and that a feasible solution already exist[ed]’ (2020, 196–97) rather than a process that progressed from problem to politics to policy. There is also opportunity to

explore whether there has been a systemic change of housing policy focus over time from the causes of crisis to the symptoms.

Historical housing crises, problem recognition, politics and policy responses were explored in this research. However, history shows that policymakers perhaps struggle to learn from the past and repeat the same arguments and potential solutions. Meanwhile, an optimal housing policy might well never be possible, given that the elusive concept of 'success' means so many different things to so many different people in the broad spectrum of housing interest. But 'success' in housing has never been defined (SA1). The recurring nature of housing crisis suggests that an optimal policy response has yet to be implemented, but analysing the processes which led to more successful periods of provision might offer insight into how a successful housing policy might be developed, what it would achieve, and whom it would benefit.

This research starts to address this. It explores responses to recurring incidence of housing crisis, and comparatively analyses the differences and similarities between historic and contemporary policymaking responses, adding to discussions on what the process that leads to an optimal housing policy and housing success might look like. Therefore, a possible goal for further research might be to identify and analyse the perceptions of stakeholders on what housing policy optimality means to them, what a multi-faceted policy must contain or address, and how such a policy might be developed.

7.6 Conclusions

Bourne (1981, 12) established that housing system is ‘a typically vague but convenient shorthand expression to encompass the full range of inter-relationships between all of the actors (individual and corporate), housing units and institutions involved in the production, consumption and regulation of housing’. It is this myriad of interactions and interests that accumulate to form what Stephens (2020) identified as ‘institutional detail’, which he suggested ‘scholars... look [at] beyond the middle range... downwards to consider institutional details... that explain differences’ (2020, 544). Jacobs (2001, 127) identified that ‘historical research and its associated methodologies remain an area that many housing academics have not engaged with in any great depth’, and Oliver and Cairney (2019) highlighted the role historians have in helping policymakers explore historical patterns, whilst David Clapham (2018) identified a disconnect between housing research and policymaking, and called for the study of housing policymaking processes in different contexts. These identified gaps in academic study provided reasons for this exploration. It has been the difference between historic and contemporary responses to housing crisis that both informed and formed the basis of this research. However, rather than focus on comparing policy responses to housing crisis and their outcomes, this study has instead compared *processes* of housing policymaking. The research objectives and a summary of how these were addressed within this thesis are set out in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5: Summary of how the research objectives are met within this thesis

| Objective | Research summary |
|--|--|
| <p>Objective 1: Set out the narrative and context for cases of policymaking as responses to housing crises.</p> | <p>Historical research is necessarily heavy on narrative, given that ‘analysis in terms of path dependence must... be strong on historical description’ (Bengtsson and Ruonavaara 2017, 49). Chapter 2 sets out the context to the historic cases, and chapter 3 the contemporary cases.</p> <p>Each case was a response to housing crisis, with document review providing the detail to split each process into stages – emergence of crisis, problem recognition, and proposal of a solution.</p> |
| <p>Objective 2: Trace the processes leading to policymaking responses to housing crises.</p> | <p>The research identifies the social mechanisms of efficiency, legitimacy and power as influences on housing policymaking processes. Interviews with specialists on the history of Irish housing and wider aspects of Irish history for historic cases and key decision-makers in the more recent case augments the process tracing.</p> <p>Using the context for each of the four cases as a basis, set out in chapters 2 and 3, the policymaking processes for the cases are traced, set out in chapters 5 and 6.</p> |
| <p>Objective 3: Analyse the influences on processes of policymaking responses to housing crises.</p> | <p>The influence of each of the social mechanisms, the timing of that influence on the policymaking processes, and conformity of the findings to theoretical propositions is analysed and set out in chapters 5 and 6.</p> |
| <p>Objective 4: Compare processes of policymaking responses to housing crises.</p> | <p>Chapter 5 provides initial comparison between the historic cases, whilst chapter 6 provides initial comparison between the contemporary cases.</p> <p>The research identified similar characteristics of housing policymaking across the cases, and these are compared in detail within chapter 7. This chapter analyses and compares the data collected during the research and the influences on the four policymaking processes.</p> |
| <p>Objective 5: Identify the characteristics of policymaking and make recommendations on how policymaking responses to housing crisis can be informed by historic processes.</p> | <p>The research identifies characteristics of Irish housing policymaking - external validation, public opinion, political leadership and political consensus for providing impetus to overcome policy constraint. The thesis identifies implications of the research findings for theory, practice and for further research. These implications are set out in chapter 7.</p> <p>The development of each of these characteristics could have implications for policymakers’ responses to housing crisis and are encapsulated within three recommendations. Together, these respond to the findings of this research and are based on the process of policymaking rather than the outcomes, recognising the importance of these characteristics as drivers or verification for effective policy change.</p> |

The research addresses broad research questions around why policies to address contemporary Irish housing crisis differ to historic responses when there are grounds to expect that they would be similar, how these policymaking processes differ, and how they can inform policymakers' responses to housing crisis. It has found much similarity between the four cases, and it is the interaction between the three social mechanisms of efficiency, legitimacy and power that highlighted the similarities but also emphasised those differences. Whilst the drive for efficiency was the dominant influence or pressure in the early stages for each of the cases, issues of legitimacy and power dominated the problem recognition and proposal of a solution stages in three cases. This highlighted the role that external validation, public opinion, political leadership and political consensus provided as the means to overcome policy constraint.

The current crisis again appears to be gripped by political inertia, with policymaking again seemingly constrained by concerns about finances and (economic) cost rather than the social cost of inaction. For Peters and Pierre (2006, 7) it was 'the institutionalization of public policy [that] creates a "path dependency" which makes competing policy options unattractive because of high political or economic costs'. The establishment of the policy commitment, and the allocation of resources, 'over time ... produces increasing returns and it becomes increasingly costly to choose a different path' (Cairney 2020, 82). With a combined annual cost of Housing Assistance Payments and the Rental Accommodation Scheme at over €626 million, (DHLGH 2023a; 2023b) the continued implementation of social housing provision through the private rental sector requires significant allocation of the government's annual budget. This therefore provides an example of self-reinforcing path dependence - it has crowded out alternative policy options.

The use of the private rented sector for social provision has also impacted on availability and affordability in that sector. Through being immersed in housing crisis and speaking to recent decision-makers, there is a sense that the next housing emergency is just around the corner; that the current crisis can only worsen in a spiral of decline unless *something* changes soon. How wrong was the declaration that the post-war housing crisis was ‘solved’ in 1958, a confidence based not on supply of quality housing meeting demand and expectation, but more by the reality of mass emigration. But if this current crisis is not adequately addressed, emigration might again be the only solution for generation rent - the spectre of mass emigration might again play its part in the Irish story.

This thesis is about the political reality of policymaking. The research explored the processes which led to policy responses to previous housing events and compared those processes and responses to those of the current crisis. Taking a longitudinal perspective on Irish housing policymaking, the novelty of the research has been the use of path dependence as a theoretical frame with comparative process tracing to analyse crises, providing a historical approach to contextualise contemporary phenomena. Identifying the characteristics of policymaking processes which overcame the path dependent constraint of efficiency, this thesis finds an alternative to the theoretical proposition of a policy window, with processes that instead progress from problem to politics to policy. It also proposes recommendations for current policymakers. These measures will not solve this crisis on their own but add a new dimension to the conversation about *how* this might be finally achieved.

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APPENDIX A – Assessment of historic junctures for comparative analysis

Historic junctures and opportunities for process tracing and comparison with cases of contemporary housing crisis.

| Juncture | Focal point | Key features | Opportunities for comparison with contemporary crisis |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>1920s</p> <p>1919 Needs Assessment estimated 61,648 homes needed for the working classes.</p> | <p>1919 Housing (Ireland) Act compelled local authorities to build with direct subsidies - augmented by the 1922 One Million Pound Fund for the development of 2,000 public houses.</p> | <p>New government, set in the context of poor housing quality.</p> <p>The change of policy established the principle of state construction of housing and led to the promotion by the state of owner-occupation as the tenure of choice.</p> | <p>Whilst the quality of housing in Dublin is not the issue now as it was in the 1920s (although there are concerns over quality, standards and overcrowding now), the policy response to poor quality housing for the working classes was a focus on homeownership (with supports available for those with secure income and employment through purchase). This focus on the private sector to provide majority of supply, and a focus on provision for middle-classes with secure employment also has resonance with the current policy approach.</p> <p>Additionally, a new State, parliament, government might be akin to the prospect for a new government promoting housing as a national objective, perhaps reflecting on the emergence of Sinn Fein currently, offering political divergence from the status quo. The promotion of owner-occupation as the tenure of choice mirrors contemporary policy approaches, but as such, this process may not provide the opportunity for comparative analysis for the research. However, the social mechanisms which led to the establishment of the principle of state construction of housing, through the allocation of the £1 million scheme, could aid analysis of later policy processes.</p> |
| <p>1920s-30s</p> <p>1926 Census - 46,902 families were living in single room tenement accommodation; change in policy direction of Cumann na nGaedheal government in 1931.</p> | <p>1932 Housing Act, based on the 1931 Housing Act, introduced slum clearance and CPO, with funding to local authorities to offset rehousing costs.</p> | <p>Change of government, set in the context of poor housing quality, with Fianna Fáil replacing Cumannna nGaedhael, offering housing, welfare and land redistribution as nationalist objectives.</p> <p>The increased provision of public housing, for both purchase and for rent, led to the outstripping of private sector supply during the 1930s, whilst legislation during this decade enabled rents to be set at lower than cost, improving access to housing for lower income families.</p> | <p>The policy approach during the 1930s marked a significant change from that of the 1920s, which was for public support for homeownership (i.e. for those in secure employment and income). The 1932 Act focused on provision of public housing for purchase, though also for rental for those in need and in hardship, addressing issues of accessibility to housing and affordability. The combination of these measures, and the extension in the reach of the state in facilitating housing provision and access therefore appears to represent a significant juncture in Irish housing policymaking.</p> <p>The approach to policymaking pre-1931/32 mirrors to an extent the current situation (i.e. some social provision, but with a focus on home ownership support and provision by the private sector). In this respect, the current situation perhaps mirrors the ‘Establishment or introduction period’ (i.e. ‘Housing becomes a political question, there are some political interventions in the housing market, but no significant state support for housing production’ (Bengtsson and Ruonavaara 2011)).</p> <p>Therefore, focus on process from problem identification, to politics to the policy of the Housing Act 1932 for comparison with the contemporary crisis could be beneficial, especially if viewed through a potential new Government (i.e. the potential rise of Sinn Fein mirroring Fianna Fáil in the 1930s, with housing as a national(ist) objective, offering political divergence from the status quo on a solution to crisis, and set in the context of following economic turmoil (e.g. the great depression being akin to the financial crisis of 2008)). The critical juncture of the early 1930s provides a potentially good comparative opportunity to analyse the choice of pathways between a continued focus on the private sector (as per HAP provision in 2016) or instead the engagement of a public approach to delivery.</p> |

| Juncture | Focal point | Key features | Opportunities for comparison with contemporary crisis |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p>1940s 1939-1943 Report of Inquiry into the Housing of the Working Classes in Dublin; 1946 Census – 320,265 houses without sanitation.</p> | <p>1948 Housing Act, with commitment to a ten-year plan to build 110,000 houses, principle of welfare housing and the development of large-scale housing schemes.</p> | <p>New coalition government, set in the context of poor housing quality, with learning from welfare state approaches from abroad; 1948 coalition government.</p> | <p>The 1948 Housing Act established the principle of welfare housing, under which ‘the socialised home ownership regime expanded’ (Norris 2016, 90) providing public housing for rent and for purchase. The instigation of the principle of welfare housing, the impact this had on the following fifty years and elements of which continue today, therefore represents a juncture in Irish housing policymaking. The processes leading to the introduction of this Act offers a basis to the research.</p> <p>There are similarities with the contemporary crisis, especially if viewed through a potential new Government offering political divergence from the status quo on a solution to crisis, the role of coalition government, and set in the context of following economic turmoil (‘The Emergency’ of 1939-1946 being akin to financial crisis of 2008). Also, there is learning from international examples of welfare state approaches. However, focus on 1948 as the juncture for comparative comparison with the contemporary crisis might not be beneficial, as the juncture was for an extension of the policy approaches already in train, as opposed to a refocus or new direction of policy goal, although the identification of those social mechanisms could be beneficial.</p> |
| <p>1950s-60s 1963 housing collapses and the 1964 survey of unfit dwellings identified 60,000 occupied houses as unfit for habitation.</p> | <p>1966 Housing Act, informed by the 1964 White Paper which identified the need for 50,000 new houses, provided rights of purchase and supportive financial structures, providing a route to homeownership.</p> | <p>Refocus of policy from an incumbent political party, expansion of public housing together with a focus on owner-occupation. 1962 – 9,000 households on Dublin Corporation waiting list; 1963 – collapse of two tenement buildings; survey identified 60,000 occupied houses unfit for human habitation; 1964 delegation visited housing solutions.</p> | <p>The magnitude of the expansion of public housing provision in the decade following the 1966 Housing Act, together with an increasingly high level of owner-occupancy and the mechanisms made available to support this, suggests that this could be viewed as a significant juncture in Irish housing policymaking. The processes of politics leading to the policy within this Act could provide a basis for the research.</p> <p>There are similarities with the contemporary situation, given recognition of insufficient housing and similar calls for an expansion in public housing provision, whilst promoting homeownership through tenant purchase. The change in political thinking and policy focus within an incumbent political party, with a move towards offering political divergence from the status quo on a solution to crisis, could provide insights to the current crisis, and therefore offers opportunity for comparative analysis. Analysis of social mechanisms leading to policy change could provide insights to contemporary policy setting and formulation. The critical juncture of the early 1960s provides a potentially good comparative opportunity to analyse the choice of pathways between a limited focus on public provision in the face of crisis, instead of against a public approach to delivery and provision.</p> |
| <p>1980s NESC (1988) highlighted owner occupation is the preferred housing tenure given residualisation and stigmatisation of public housing stock.</p> | <p>1991 A Plan for Social Housing promoted owner-occupation whilst highlighting that the direct provision of public housing would not be appropriate. Support of NESC for owner occupation as tenure of choice.</p> | <p>1980s fiscal restraint and learning from overseas; residualisation and stigmatisation of public housing stock; focus on the private sector as the main provider of housing.</p> | <p>The paradigmatic change of focus from public provision of housing to a policy approach which recognises the private sector as the main provider of housing represents a significant juncture in Irish housing policymaking, which is still relevant today.</p> <p>Fiscal restraint during the 1980s possibly matches financial crisis of 2008-2010 and the following austerity, and there is similarity with NESC calling for a change in policy direction, this time for increased state intervention (rather than less state intervention and a focus on private sector provision as the tenure of choice). The literature suggests that the current crisis is an outcome of, or indeed is still part of, the juncture with focus on the private sector as the main provider of housing. The promotion of owner-occupation as the tenure of choice also mirrors current policy approaches, and the tracing of processes and social mechanisms leading to that policy change could be beneficial for comparison with a contemporary case. Elements of this period could be analysed through a case study relating to the ultimate regulation of the private rented sector from 2004.</p> |

APPENDIX B - Outline of Data Collection Methods (after Kvale, 2015).

| Investigation Stages | Research Detail |
|---|--|
| Thematising provides the purpose for the research investigation. | The research involved interviewing actors in the contemporary housing case studies about their experiences and perceptions of the policymaking processes, and specialists of Irish housing history. The objectives of the research and the structure and focus of the interviews are based on the themes arising from the literature review and process tracing of historic episodes of significant housing policy change – around the social mechanisms of efficiency, legitimacy and power. |
| Designing the research process. | <p>This study involved up to fifteen actors involved in Irish housing policymaking processes, and five specialists on the history of Irish housing and wider Irish history.</p> <p>Key decision-makers were identified by Chubb (1992) as the triumvirate of senior ministers, senior civil servants, and special advisors. A purposive sample was undertaken, with interviewees selected based on their position or involvement (as a senior minister, civil servant or special advisor) in the policy or decision-making process leading to the legislation within the two contemporary cases.</p> <p>This study identified up to 15 triumvirate participants each involved in either or both policymaking processes. This purposive sample comprised of 6 senior politicians, 3 special advisors, and 3 senior civil servants. In addition, three key participants involved in the policymaking processes were identified and labelled as civil society participants. With a focus on political actors, each interview explored how social mechanisms for previous historic policy change are manifested in more recent policymaking processes.</p> <p>A literature review identified a wealth of academic information, based on research and papers published by specialists on the history of Irish housing. A purposive sample was undertaken, based on that literature review, and 6 potential participants were identified, each with knowledge and expertise of one or both historic policymaking processes and / or historic periods. The interviewees were asked for their comment, interpretation and analysis of the context and social mechanisms for the historic period leading to the enactment of the legislation.</p> |
| Interviewing | <p>Conducted through face-to-face meetings, or over online video platforms, depending on availability of the participants, their location, and regarding Covid-19 lockdown and safety limitations and prevailing requirements.</p> <p>Each question had been evaluated with respect to the thematic dimension, as Kvale (1996) suggests, to ensure that the questions cumulatively align with the aim of the research outcomes – based around the themes of efficiency, legitimacy and power. However, a benefit of the semi-structured, in-depth interview technique is the spontaneity of the interaction, and therefore the process enabled for a dynamic dimension, which was particularly important for developing rapport, and for exploring perceptions and motivations.</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Transcribing</p> | <p>Each interview was transcribed by the researcher, into an individual Microsoft Word document. Notes and observations were also transcribed into an electronic interview management log.</p> <p>With the aim of ensuring that each interview transcription represented the discourse and meaning of the interview, though recognising that full naturalised transcription is time consuming, and not necessary in every circumstance, each transcription was a mixture of naturalised and denaturalised transcription. The denaturalised format was used for questions which seek a more factual response, reducing spoken repetition. Naturalised format was used for the interview responses to the questions seeking insights into perceptions, motivations, influences and thoughts.</p> |
| <p>Analysing the data refers to methods of analysis appropriate to the study.</p> | <p>According to Yin (2018) it is easier to make sense of the information and data collected when divided into themes and categories, to assist in identifying patterns.</p> <p>Given the scope and complexity of the data arising from the interviews, the interviews and the insights arising were themed around the cases and the social mechanisms of efficiency, legitimacy and power. Tracing the processes of policymaking and the influences on those processes enabled the comparative analysis between cases.</p> |
| <p>Verifying stage relates to ascertaining the generalisability, reliability and validity of the interview and data collected.</p> | <p>In terms of generalisability, as the study was undertaken by a sole researcher, the total number of interviewees was necessarily limited. The research does not therefore seek to represent the wide range of actors in the identified policymaking processes, or the wide selection of perceptions and motivations. Instead, it however seeks to offer important, nuanced insights into how key actors perceived the policy process and the motivations for their actions.</p> <p>The involvement of participants from across each policy process, and their professional and political standing, offer some data reliability and cross-certification.</p> <p>To ensure that the transcription captured the interviewee's true meaning, each transcription was sent for review and confirmation by the participant.</p> |
| <p>Reporting refers to the development of the final study.</p> | <p>Ensuring that it is accessible, legible and that any findings are substantiated, the primary research forms elements or chapters of the final thesis, with papers submitted for publishing in relevant peer-reviewed journals and at conferences for presentation to academic institutions (ENHR and IPPA).</p> |

APPENDIX C – List of Papers and Publications

Published peer-reviewed journal paper

1. Umfreville, P. and Sirr, L. (2020) Reform and Policymaking: theory and practice in the Irish housing context, *Administration*, 68:4, pp. 215-236 doi: 10.2478/admin-2020-0032

Manuscripts in preparation

1. Umfreville, P. (2024) Tracing the processes of Irish housing policymaking: a comparative historical analysis [Manuscript in preparation]. School of Surveying and Construction Innovation, Technological University Dublin.

Peer-reviewed conference papers

Three conference papers have been published based on the findings from the initial phases of the research undertaken within this PhD:

1. Umfreville, P. (2021a) Beyond (dys)functional: what does success look like in Irish housing policy? In: Charalambous, N. (Eds) *ENHR Conference Proceedings 2021*, 30 August to 2 September 2021, Nicosia, Cyprus, European Network for Housing Research, 540-562.
2. Umfreville, P. (2022) Housing Crisis: Bourdieu and the culture of Irish policymaking, *European Network for Housing Research (ENHR) New Researchers Seminar*, 23 February 2022 / 11 March 2022.
3. Umfreville, P. (2023) Responding to a Century of Irish Housing Crises: From Problem to Politics to Policy, *European Network for Housing Research (ENHR) Conference*, Lodz, Poland, 28 June 2023.

Book chapter

1. Umfreville, P. (2021c) Housing and policymaking, in L. Sirr (ed.) *Housing in Ireland: Beyond the Markets*, pp. 101-117. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

Article

1. Umfreville, P. (2021b) Can the 'wicked problem' of housing in Ireland ever be solved? *RTÉ Brainstorm*, 17 June 2021, <https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2021/0616/1228455-housing-policy-ireland-wicked-problem/>

Presentations

1. *How can an optimal housing system in Ireland be developed, monitored and evaluated?* TU Dublin 11th Annual Graduate Research Symposium, Dublin, Ireland, December 2020.
2. *Beyond (dys)functional: What does success look like in Irish housing policy?* European Network for Housing Research (ENHR) Conference, Nicosia, Cyprus (hybrid conference), 30 August 2021.
3. *Housing Crisis: Bourdieu and the culture of Irish policymaking*, European Network for Housing Research (ENHR) New Researchers Online Seminar, 23 February 2022.
4. *Housing in Ireland: A historical approach to contextualise contemporary housing crisis*, International Public Policy Association Summer School, Padua, Italy, 6 July 2022.
5. *A Century of Irish Housing Policy: From Independence to Path Dependence*, European Network for Housing Research New Researchers Online Seminar, 9–10 March 2023.
6. *A Century of Irish Housing Policy: From Independence to Path Dependence*, Property Industry Excellence Awards 2023 Launch Event, Dublin, Ireland, 24 May 2023
7. *Responding to a Century of Irish Housing Crises: From Problem to Politics to Policy*, European Network for Housing Research Conference, Lodz, Poland, 28 June 2023.
8. *History Matters! Learning from a Century of Housing Crises*, Sligo Field Club (Sligo Historical, Archaeological and Heritage Society), Sligo, Ireland, 18 November 2023.
9. *Responses to a century of housing crisis: Problem, politics and policy*, European Network for Housing Research New Researchers Online Seminar, 11–12 March 2024.

APPENDIX D – Credit Taxonomy

Reform and policymaking: Theory and practice in the Irish housing context

Administration, vol. 68, no. 4 (2020), pp. 215-236

The paper, ‘Reform and policymaking: Theory and practice in the Irish housing context’, was developed as a joint project between Paul Umfreville (PU) and Dr. Lorcan Sirr (LS), and published in *Administration*, volume 68 number 4 in December 2020.

The CRediT¹⁴ (Contributor Roles Taxonomy) approach enables the instigation, development, drafting and finalising of the paper to be split into 14 contributor roles, describing each contributor’s specific contribution to the scholarly output.

| Role | Definition | Project role |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Conceptualisation | Ideas - formulation or evolution of overarching research goals and aims. | LS – initial concept goals agreed with the publisher, the Institute for Public Administration (IPA). PU – aims developed within brief |
| Data curation | Management activities to annotate (produce metadata), scrub data and maintain research data (including software code, where it is necessary for interpreting the data itself) for initial use and later re-use. | N/A |
| Formal analysis | Application of statistical, mathematical, computational, or other formal techniques to analyze or synthesize study data. | N/A |
| Funding acquisition | Acquisition of the financial support for the project leading to this publication. | LS – whilst not funding based, recognition is given to the acquisition of the space within the special edition of the <i>Administration</i> journal for the inclusion and publication of this paper |
| Investigation | Conducting a research and investigation process, specifically performing the experiments, or data/evidence collection. | PU – review of literature to provide the basis for the paper |
| Methodology | Development or design of methodology; creation of models. | PU – review of literature to provide basis for the paper |

¹⁴ Developed by Casrai - CRediT Taxonomy from <https://casrai.org/credit>.

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Project administration | Management and coordination responsibility for the research activity planning and execution. | PU – lead author for contact with the publisher’s staff; Editor and Copy Editor |
| Resources | Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, patients, laboratory samples, animals, instrumentation, computing resources, or other analysis tools. | N/A |
| Software | Programming, software development; designing computer programs; implementation of the computer code and supporting algorithms; testing of existing code components. | N/A |
| Supervision | Oversight and leadership responsibility for the research activity planning and execution, including mentorship external to the core team. | LS – provision of supervision and mentorship during and after the development of the paper |
| Validation | Verification, whether as a part of the activity or separate, of the overall replication/reproducibility of results/experiments and other research outputs. | N/A |
| Visualisation | Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically visualization/data presentation. | PU – initial concept for a two-axis visualisation of Figure 1; development of Tables 1 and 2. LS – development of the visualisation as Figure 1 |
| Writing – original draft | Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically writing the initial draft (including substantive translation). | PU – writing of the initial original draft |
| Writing – review & editing | Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work by those from the original research group, specifically critical review, commentary or revision – including pre- or post-publication stages. | PU – review and editing, including during the post-peer review stage and the editing stage LS – provision of review, pre-peer review and commentary on revisions pre-publication stage |

Summary of contributor roles:

Paul Umfreville: conceptualisation, investigation, methodology, project administration, visualisation, writing - original draft preparation, writing - reviewing and editing.

Dr. Lorcan Sirr: conceptualisation, acquisition, supervision, visualisation, writing - reviewing and editing.

APPENDIX E – Invitation email for interviews

Contemporary cases

FROM: d19127225@mytudublin.ie
DATE:
SENT TO: *recipient*
SUBJECT: TU Dublin Policymaking Research
MESSAGE:

Dear *[FirstName]*,

As part of an ongoing PhD research project within Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) we are interviewing key decision makers regarding the process of policymaking in Ireland. This comparative research will analyse historical and contemporary policymaking processes.

This phase of the research is focused on the policymaking process which led to the *[Residential Tenancies Act 2004 / Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014]*.

Rather than analysing the outcomes of policy, the research instead explores the process of policymaking in relation to the themes emerging from the initial phases of the study:

- Efficiency
- Legitimacy
- Power

As a *[former minister and long-serving politician / senior civil servant / special advisor / Board member]* you have obviously been a key decision-maker over the years and would have extensive experience and knowledge about policymaking processes. As such, we would be much obliged if you would be willing to be interviewed for this doctoral research. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes.

Please note that all participants will be treated in strict confidence. The data collected will be saved in an encrypted file and access is strictly restricted to the undersigned. Your participation in the research is voluntary, however your participation would be greatly appreciated.

We would appreciate, in the first instance, if you can forward you acceptance in principle to participating in this research, and thereafter further details and background information can be provided. Should you have any queries pertaining to the research please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards

Paul Umfreville (PhD candidate)

Dr. Lorcan Sirr (Senior Lecturer, TU Dublin – lead supervisor)

Historic cases

FROM: d19127225@mytudublin.ie
DATE:
SENT TO: *recipient*
SUBJECT: TU Dublin Policymaking Research
MESSAGE:

Dear *[FirstName]*,

As part of an ongoing PhD research project within Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) we are interviewing social historians regarding the process of policymaking in Ireland. This comparative research will analyse historical and contemporary policymaking processes.

This phase of the research is focused on the policymaking process which led to the *[Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1932 / Housing Act 1966]*.

Rather than analysing the outcomes of policy, the research instead explores the process of policymaking in relation to the themes emerging from the initial phases of the study:

- Efficiency
- Legitimacy
- Power

As a specialist *[on the history of Irish housing / of Irish social history]* you have extensive experience and knowledge *[about policymaking processes around housing / of wider aspects of Irish history]* which can provide valuable context within which policymaking is situated. As such, we would be much obliged if you would be willing to be interviewed for this doctoral research. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes.

Please note that all participants will be treated in strict confidence. The data collected will be saved in an encrypted file and access is strictly restricted to the undersigned. Your participation in the research is voluntary, however your participation would be greatly appreciated.

We would appreciate, in the first instance, if you can forward you acceptance in principle to participating in this research, and thereafter further details and background information can be provided. Should you have any queries pertaining to the research please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards

Paul Umfreville (PhD candidate)

Dr. Lorcan Sirr (Senior Lecturer, TU Dublin – lead supervisor)

APPENDIX F – Interview Questions



Interview questions – Contemporary Cases:

2004 – PRTB

General / Intro

- What was ‘the problem’ (or problems) which the legislation and *PRTB* was to address?
- What was the cause(s) of that problem(s)?

Efficiency

- How did perceptions of efficiency impact the different options for policymaking?
- What alternative policy options existed?
 - When and why were alternative policies (that may have addressed the situation at that time) left aside?
 - Were issues around affordability considered as part of the policymaking process?

Legitimacy

- What were the influences on the acceptability and authority of existing institutions?
 - Did these influences undermine or support existing institutions?
- Why was the Commission on the Private Rented Sector so influential?

Power

- What actors, institutions or organisations influenced the policymaking process?
 - Why were some lobby groups, such as IPOA, unsuccessful in their petitioning, whilst others, such as Threshold, were more successful?
 - What were the relationship dynamics between politicians and civil servants during this process?
- What was the role of public opinion in this policymaking process?
- How important was the political consensus (for regulation of the PRS) in this process?
- Despite consensus, why did it take four years from the Commission to report through to enactment and implementation?

Conclusions

- Which of the social mechanisms – efficiency, legitimacy, power – had the greatest impact on encouraging or inhibiting housing policymaking?
- Why was the policy response focused on the quality of supply rather than quantity?
- What is success in Irish housing policy?

2014 – HAP

General / Intro

- What was ‘the problem’ (or problems) which the legislation and *HAP* was to address?
- What was the cause(s) of that problem(s)?

Efficiency

- How did perceptions of efficiency impact the different options for policymaking?
- What alternative policy options existed?
 - When and why were alternative policies (that may have addressed the situation at that time) left aside?

Legitimacy

- What were the influences on the acceptability and authority of existing institutions?
 - Did these influences undermine or support existing institutions?
- How important was the political consensus for continuing to focus on private sector provision of social outcomes?
- Why was the legitimacy of traditional approaches to meet social housing needs challenged during this policymaking process?
- Historic cases highlight the importance of external report or Commission recommendations as impetus for policymaking - was this considered?

Power

- What actors, institutions or organisations influenced the policymaking process?
 - Did the collapse in social partnership impact policymaking after the crash?
 - How did the EU-ECB-IMF programme of financial assistance impact on policymaking?
 - How did the establishment of the Dep. of PE + Reform impact on policymaking?
 - What were the relationship dynamics between politicians, civil servants and special advisors during this process?
- What was the role of public opinion in this policymaking process?
- How important was the political consensus (for support to access the PRS) in this process?

Conclusions

- Which of the social mechanisms – efficiency, legitimacy, power – had the greatest impact on encouraging or inhibiting housing policymaking?
- Previous (historical) policy responses focused on government support for housing supply. Therefore, why was the policy response focused on supporting access the PRS?
- What is success in Irish housing policy?

Interview questions – historic cases

1930s Case

Efficiency –

General question – what issues are relevant in relation to the perception actors had regarding the economic benefit or costs of different housing choices that were identified and /or available?

- What were the financial realities facing the new state, and what were the different housing choices that were identified and /or available?
- How was Minister Mulcahy (CnG) able to overcome the efficiency and productivity focus of criteria for policymaking that had been promoted by the Cumann na nGaedheal government, which allowed for the reversal in thrust of government policy enacted by the 1931 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act?
- Why was Cumann na nGaedheal not able to capitalise on the 1931 Act during the General Election campaign?
- How were fiscal constraints overcome by the Fianna Fáil government to enable the more generous rates of subsidy and the implementation of the 1932 Act?
- What was the interplay between Ministers O’Kelly and MacEntee, and the Taoiseach in agreeing the funding of the increased grant subsidies in the new FF government?

Legitimacy –

General question – what issues are relevant in relation to the authority of existing institutions, and the acceptability of those institutions for the public and decision-makers, over alternative institutional arrangements?

- What led to the proposals for a National Housing Board to be dropped, or for the legitimacy of local authorities to be recognised?
- The legitimacy of Fianna Fáil as a political party within a democracy was questioned, yet by 1932, we had FF in government and a new Act with wide ranging powers for housing development. Therefore how did that happen... how were these issues of legitimacy overcome?
- What role did the civil service play / what was FF’s attitude to civil service (and vice versa)??

Power -

General question – what issues are relevant in relation to the inclusion and exclusion of actors in agenda setting and decision-making processes, or their influence on those processes?

- Was there a shift in the power dynamics in the Cumann na nGaedheal government between Ministers Mulcahy on one side, and Minister Blythe and President Cosgrave on the other – which resulted in the change of position from fiscal prudence to facilitating the seeking of a solution to the housing problem (through the 1931 legislation)?
- How important was the housing problem (and for a solution to be identified and implemented) in FF's quest for power?
- How important was the public perception of FF being in conformity to the Church? Is this critical and requiring exploring, or a narrative used to promote electability?
- What was the relationship and respective power in the Fianna Fáil government between Ministers O'Kelly and MacEntee, and President de Valera?

Conclusion...

- Which of the social mechanisms – efficiency, legitimacy, power – had the greatest impact on encouraging or inhibiting housing policymaking?
- Why?

Possible additional questions for housing historians...

- How would the policy response to the historic case address the causes or symptoms of the current crisis?
- How can historic housing policymaking processes inform current policymaking?

1960s Case

Efficiency...

General question – what issues are relevant in relation to the perception actors had regarding the economic benefit or costs of different housing choices that were identified and /or available?

- What were the reasons for (and mechanisms that allowed for) the easing of criteria around social investment?
- Is this a reflection of the increasing power that Minister Blaney (FF), and the Department of Local Government had in Cabinet / government?

Legitimacy...

General question – what issues are relevant in relation to the authority of existing institutions, and the acceptability of those institutions for the public and decision-makers, over alternative institutional arrangements?

- What were the reasons or the process that led to an acceptance of local authorities being the key to the provision of housing (i.e. as provider of the majority public provided homes, or as supplementary grant aiding private houses)?
- The learning and experience from overseas linked into Ireland's new international outlook in the 1960s, and identified new construction methods, but did this learning also have an impact on or augment the role of local authorities in the process of housing development?

Power...

General question – what issues are relevant in relation to the inclusion and exclusion of actors in the policymaking process, or their influence on those processes?

- How was Minister Blaney able to overcome the efficiency and productivity focus of criteria for policymaking promoted by the Taoiseach and Finance Minister (Minister Ryan)?
- What were the power dynamics between the Department, local government, and the NBA?

- How important was the developer lobby in policy development in the late 1950s and early 1960s (or did these arise following the 1966 Act, developed given the government subsidy to private builders)?
- If this was important, how did Minister Blaney obtain the building industry's support?

Conclusion...

- Which of the social mechanisms – efficiency, legitimacy, power – had the greatest impact on encouraging or inhibiting housing policymaking?
- Why?

Possible additional questions for housing historians...

- How would the policy response to the historic case address the causes or symptoms of the current crisis?
- How can historic housing policymaking processes inform current policymaking?

APPENDIX G – TU DUBLIN Research Ethics and Integrity Committee Approval

The TU Dublin Research Ethics and Integrity Committee gave its approval to the primary research.

**Research Ethics and Integrity Committee
Technological University Dublin,
Grangegorman, Dublin 7**



08/09/2023

Dear Paul,

The Research Ethics and Integrity Committee of the Dublin Institute of Technology has reviewed your application entitled The development, monitoring and evaluation of an optimal housing system in Ireland: the role of policymaking, our reference REC-19-250.

Your application has been approved by the committee. As part of the decision-making process the following is noted: **amendments have been approved**. Note that if there are any changes in the research as described in this submission (REC-19-250) you must notify the REIC.

The committee would like to wish you the best of luck with your work.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Steve Meaney', positioned above a horizontal blue line.

Steve Meaney, PhD

Chair - Research Ethics and Integrity Committee, Technological University Dublin - City Campus

APPENDIX H – Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet



A century of Irish housing policy

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study which forms part of my PhD research. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please do contact me (see the details below) if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Who I am and what this study is about?

The research for this study is being undertaken by Paul Umfreville who is a doctoral student at Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin). The research is supported by INM Mediahuis, through its PhD Student Support Scheme provided to TU Dublin.

Building on previous research which highlighted the importance of key policymakers (ministers, senior civil servants, special advisors) in contributing to, and influencing policymaking, this research explores policymaking and decision-making processes in Ireland, analysing the influences and motivations of, and relationships and interactions between, those key decision makers.

What will taking part involve?

Your participation will involve a semi-structured interview, focusing on themes arising from an initial review of literature:

- *Efficiency* - the perception actors have regarding the economic benefit or costs of different choices.
- *Legitimacy* - the authority of existing institutions, and the acceptability of those institutions for the public and decision-makers, over alternative institutional arrangements.
- *Power* - the inclusion and exclusion of actors in problem recognition and decision-making, or their influence on those processes.

The interview will take up to one hour and can be undertaken at a location of your choice and convenience.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You have been chosen as being, or having been, a key decision-maker with experience and knowledge about policymaking processes, or a specialist on the history of Irish housing and / or wider aspects of Irish history relevant to historic housing policymaking. You therefore have experience and knowledge about the context of Irish policymaking in the period(s) studied.

Do you have to take part?

Participation is completely voluntary, and you should only take part if you want to. Once you have read this information sheet, please contact me if you have any questions that will help you decide about taking part. If you decide to take part, I will ask you to sign a consent form and you will be given a copy to keep.

You can still withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason.

What are the possible risks and benefits of taking part?

Participating is not anticipated to cause you any risks. Whilst there are no immediate benefits for participating, it is hoped that this research will have a beneficial impact on the understanding of how policymaking is undertaken. There will be no payment for taking part.

Will taking part be anonymous or confidential?

It is for you to determine the level of anonymity that you require to participate.

The research focuses on processes of housing policy change, with interviewee selection based on the small number of participants involved, or with knowledge and expertise of historic periods identified through the literature review. This part of the study will involve up to twenty participants, comprised of six senior politicians, three advisors, three senior civil servants, three civil society participants and five social historians. Given the relatively small number of participants involved there is the potential for the identification of respondents who may have been or are in the public eye.

Anonymity could impact the usefulness of the collected data and the learning and reporting of this as a case study, although your participation would still be very useful. The data arising from the interview can be pseudo anonymised if you require (personal data can no longer be attributed to a specific person, and all direct and indirect identifiers will be removed). Direct quotes may also be taken from the interviews, but these will be de-identified if required.

You are therefore asked (through the Research Consent Form) to identify whether you prefer to be identifiable, or for data from the interview to be pseudo-anonymised.

How will information you provide be recorded, stored, and protected?

The interview will be recorded and will be stored securely in a password-protected folder. You will be given opportunity to review the transcription of the interview to ensure that this accurately reflects what was said – this will be provided within two weeks of the interview, and you are asked to review, comment, and respond within two weeks.

All contact details and the key to identification will be safely stored securely and separately from the interview data to safeguard your identity. Only the researcher and supervisors will have access to the data.

All data will be retained for no longer than necessary, for the purposes of the study. This will be kept securely for two years after the study has finished. Data retention will be subject to periodic review by the researcher and / or supervisors.

What will happen to the results of the study?

Results of the research will be published. If you wish to be given a copy of any reports resulting from the research, please ask to be placed on our circulation list.

Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This study has been reviewed and approved by the TU Dublin Research Ethics and Integrity Committee.

Who should you contact for further information?

Researcher:

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APPENDIX I – Research Consent Forms for Semi-Structured Interviews



Research Consent Form

| | | | |
|---|--|-------------|--|
| Researcher's Name | PAUL UMFREVILLE | | |
| Academic Unit | School of Surveying and Construction Innovation, TU Dublin | | |
| Title of Study | A Century of Irish Housing Policy | | |
| The following section should be completed by the research participant (Please place a 'X' where appropriate) | | | |
| | Yes | No | |
| Have you been fully informed of the nature of this study by the researcher? (Note that this would typically include use of a participant information sheet.) | | | |
| Have you had an opportunity to ask questions about this research? | | | |
| Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? | | | |
| Have you been fully informed of your ability to withdraw participation and/or data from the research? | | | |
| Have you been fully informed of what will happen to data generated by your participation in the study and how it will be kept safe? | | | |
| Do you understand that it may be possible to identify you from your responses (due to your current / previous role)? | | | |
| Do you agree for the data arising to include identifiable attributes? (Tick 'no' for attributes that may identify you to be pseudo-anonymised) | | | |
| Do you agree to take part in this study, the results of which may be disseminated in scientific publications, books or conference proceedings? | | | |
| Have you been informed that this consent form shall be kept securely and in confidence by the researcher? | | | |
| Name of Participant | Please use block capitals | | |
| Signature of Participant | | Date | |
| Signature of Researcher | | Date | |

Contact:

Paul Umfreville
 School of Surveying and Construction Innovation
 Technological University Dublin
 Room 364, Bolton Street
 Dublin D1 Email: d19127225@mytudublin.ie

APPENDIX J – Interviews (Potential and Participating Interviewees and Detail)

| Participant type | Identified potential interview participants | Number of interviews undertaken | Reasons for non-participation |
|------------------|---|---------------------------------|--|
| Politician | 6 | 5 | 1 x respondent indicated that they would participate but a severe Covid infection required long-term rehabilitation. |
| Civil Servant | 3 | 2 | 1 x responded to indicate that they did not wish to participate in the research. |
| Special Advisor | 3 | 2 | 1 x responded to indicate that they did not wish to participate in the research. |
| Civil Society | 3 | 3 | - |
| Social Historian | 6 | 4 | 1 x did not respond. 1 x agreed to be interviewed but was not available. |
| | 21 | 16 | |

Table J1: Potential and participating interviewees (pseudo-anonymised) by participant type.

| Case | Interview Participants |
|------|--|
| 1932 | SH1, SH2, SH3, SH4 |
| 1966 | SH1, SH2, SH3, SH4 |
| 2004 | P2, P4, P5, CS1, CS2, CiSo1, CiSo2 |
| 2014 | P1, P3, P4, CS1, CS2, SA1, SA2, CiSo2, CiSo3 |

Table J2: Interview participants by case.

| Participant | Length of interview (minutes) | Transcript (word count) |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| P1* | 59 | 5433 |
| P2 | 45 | 3437 |
| P3 | 27 | 1945 |
| P4 | 60 | 5075 |
| P5 | 51 | 2964 |
| CS1 | 90 | 6600 |
| CS2 | 68 | 5942 |
| SA1* | 51 | 3643 |
| SA2 | 75 | 8475 |
| CiSo1* | 60 | 5460 |
| CiSo2 | 87 | 7571 |
| CiSo3 | 30 | 3129 |
| SH1* | 65 | 3943 |
| SH2 | 55 | 4524 |
| SH3 | 47 | 4259 |
| SH4 | 75 | 4432 |
| 16 Interviews | 15 hrs 45 mins | 76,800 |

Table J3: In-depth interviews – participants (pseudo-anonymised) and source data arising. (*denotes pilot interview)

APPENDIX K – Summary of the Methodological Limitations and Means of Mitigation

| Methodical Limitation | Mitigation |
|---|--|
| <p>Limited case selection required due to research undertaken by a sole researcher</p> | <p>The scope of the research is necessarily limited. However, evaluation of the literature highlighted two historic and two more recent cases of policy change, each of which provide an example of a process of policy responses to housing crisis.</p> <p>The selection of cases include self-reinforcing path dependent sequences and reactive path dependent sequences from both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Together, the four cases give a good selection from which to draw assertions and generalisations on policy change and the role of identified variables on that change</p> |
| <p>The potential for a lack of rigour in case study research (Yin, 2018, pp. 18–21)</p> | <p>The research adheres to Yin’s (2018, p. xxi) assertion that effective ‘research inquiries are methodic, demand an acceptable level of discipline, and should exhibit transparency about their procedures’. Archival documents are all public. Interview transcripts were verified by the interviewees.</p> |
| <p>Generalisations across cases ‘are too complex to meaningfully compare with each other’ (Beach and Pedersen, 2016, p. 54)</p> | <p>The aim of research is to expand and generalise theories, not to extrapolate probabilities. Process tracing for each of the cases provides an outline of the process of policymaking, allowing for comparative analysis from which generalisations and assertions to be drawn.</p> |
| <p>An unmanageable level of effort (Yin, 2018)</p> | <p>Given that this case study research does not depend solely on ethnographic or participant-observer data, the level of effort for a sole-researcher is manageable. The undertaking of the interviews, typing-up the notes, identifying themes, and undertaking analysis is very time consuming – this element of the research is limited and augments the archive document review - the limitation of a sole researcher means that further study is identified, which is beyond the means and remit of this research.</p> |
| <p>Question on the trustworthiness of the data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985)</p> | <p>The analysis of official and public documentation from within both case studies, augmented by interviews, will provide some corroboration and triangulation. The involvement of participants from across the policymaking processes, and their professional and political standing, offer validity, reliability, and a measure of triangulation.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Documentation and archival records as sources of evidence may reflect the reporting bias of the author (Yin, 2018).</p> | <p>The potential risk has been ameliorated by utilising the alternative perspectives offered by newspaper and media texts together with Dáil speeches and interviews.</p> |
| <p>A distinctive characteristic of case study research is the role of interpretation - it can be the interpretation of the researcher which is emphasised rather than that of the actor (Stake, 1995).</p> | <p>Whilst there is recognition that the researcher's interpretation of the data might differ from another's, the involvement of participants from across the policymaking processes offer a measure of triangulation, enhanced by undertaking reflection and consideration, particularly as information is filtered through interviewees. The transcribed text was verified by each interviewee, and the potential quotes were highlighted to ensure that any potential researcher bias is controlled.</p> |
| <p>Yin (2018) sets out the weaknesses of interviewing as a source of evidence, including the possibility of bias, particularly through poorly articulated questions; response bias; inaccuracies due to poor recall; and reflexivity, and, that the interviewee might provide information that the interviewer wants to hear.</p> | <p>Can be mitigated by asking good questions, being a good 'listener', being adaptive, and using multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2018, pp. 82, 113). But, interviewing as a source of evidence has strengths, including that the source material can be insightful, providing explanation as well as perceptions, attitudes and meanings (Yin, 2018).</p> <p>Each interview was fully transcribed and provided to the interviewee for review. One politician responded to indicate that 'the fact that the spoken word sometimes doesn't look so good when transcribed, I'm happy that the transcript captures what I wanted to say' (P2).</p> |
| <p>The Covid-19 pandemic presented some potential difficulties for the undertaking of the research, and with a small, purposeful sample population there is potential danger of identified participants not being available for interview, or indeed not being willing to be interviewed. This could impact on wider research validity, whilst remote interviewing raises concerns around platform security and confidentiality, and ethical issues and consent processes (Lobe <i>et al.</i> 2020).</p> | <p>Potential for moving from face-to-face data collection to 'socially distant' methods, which provide flexibilities in time and location for data collection. Indeed, new working practices since the pandemic highlight that some participants preferred to have virtual interviews.</p> <p>The interviews were generally face-to-face meetings, depending on availability of the participants, their location, and regarding Covid-19 lockdown and safety limitations and requirements. Where this was not possible, or where preferred by the participant, TU Dublin's MS Teams and zoom online video platforms provided opportunity to undertake interviews remotely.</p> <p>Remote videoconferencing however requires additional consideration of ethical issues, and the following procedures were put in place: platforms provide a 'waiting room' facility – utilised to enable the organiser to screen and admit participants, avoiding any unwanted participants from attending or inadvertently joining the interview session; audio recording was undertaken through a separate portable recording device (as per face-to-face meetings), rather than the record function on the platform, overcoming issues around remote storage of recorded data.</p> |

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| <p>Small sample size for interview participants.</p> | <p>The wider document review provides the substantive data for the research, from a range of sources for the four cases – national and newspaper archives, reports, parliamentary proceedings and Census material. The interviews augment the research and focus on the triumvirate of proxy-policymakers – the politicians, civil servants, and special advisors involved in the contemporary policymaking processes, or renowned social historians identified in the literature review setting-out the context to the historic cases. Whilst a relatively small number, the sample is directed to provide effective augmentation to the document review. In total, over 15 hours of in-depth interviews and over 76,000 words of transcribed text provided an extensive though very detailed source of primary data.</p> |
| <p>Identified interviewees potentially not wishing to be involved.</p> | <p>Early contact with potential interviewees suggested that discussing housing outcomes is subject to wariness. The initial approaches to participants therefore outlined that the research was not to analyse the outcomes of policy, but rather seeking to understand the process of policymaking. Using contacts within TU Dublin’s School of Surveying and Construction Innovation to facilitate introductions for the researcher, correspondence emphasised the aim of interviews to explore the process of policymaking, rather than to critique the outcomes of housing policy.</p> <p>With the range of identified interviewees, there was scope for some drop-out whilst maintaining the integrity of the research. Of the twenty-one long-listed identified potential interviews, sixteen took place providing a good spread of participants across the cases and by participant type (Appendix J). Therefore, forms of mitigation were not deemed to be necessary given the involvement of participants, and as interviews augmented the wider document review.</p> |
| <p>Participation by informed consent, reflection on potential harm to participants, and confidentiality.</p> | <p>The research process complied with the required institutional ethical processes, with approval from TU Dublin’s Research Ethics and Integrity Committee for the research.</p> <p>During the data collection phases of the research, informed consent was received from participants. The consent form used during the research outlined the voluntary nature of the participants’ involvement, the ability to withdraw, and the proposed use of the data arising. A key consideration in the use of the data arising from the interviews is the need to protect the confidentiality of participants using pseudo-anonymisation.</p> |

APPENDIX L – List of Employability and Discipline Specific Skills Training

| Module / Course | Reference | Commenced | Credits (ECTS) |
|---|-----------|-------------------|----------------|
| Research Integrity | GRSO 1012 | 5 February 2020 | 5 |
| Social Theory Reading Group for Research Students | PGRE 9015 | 6 February 2020 | 10 |
| Research Methods | GRSO 1001 | 30 September 2020 | 5 |
| Exploring Research Methodologies for Level 10 | RESM 9004 | 29 January 2021 | 10 |
| Planning Law and Institutions | SSPL 9003 | October 2020 | 5 |
| Progressing Your Research | Module 3 | 7 March 2022 | 5 |
| | | | 40 ECTS |