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**Domestic Constraints on Globalisation:
A case study of Irish Social Security
1986-2006**



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Volume 1 of 1

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of PhD 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

Signed Mary Murphy (Candidate)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mary Murphy', written over a horizontal line.

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Date 15th May 2006

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my dear father, Patrick Murphy

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Abstract

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Domestic Constraints on Globalisation

A case study of Irish Social Security Policy 1986-2006

This thesis looks at the extent to which Irish social security policy outcomes and the process of social security policy making has been influenced by global factors and Ireland's relatively high level of internationalisation. It asks, has Ireland's immersion in the global economy impacted on the content or the process of mediating policy? Using hypotheses developed from competition state theorists, it first examines whether Irish social security policy has recommodified and refocused towards the market. Having examined indicators relating to regulation, retrenchment, residualisation and activation/conditionality and defamiliarisation it concludes policy has shifted towards an 'Irish style' recommodification but has shifted less in this direction than might have been expected in a 'competition state' as internationalised as Ireland.

Understanding how this policy was mediated involves examining Irish governance and institutions, interests and policy discourse in the Irish social policy community and exploring whether governance processes were influenced or transformed by international economic and political processes. The thesis examines eight types of policy decisions and isolates explanatory variables that can help account for the trajectory of change. It identifies, over the two decades of the study, three distinct policy periods during which identifiable policy coalitions worked within the policy institutions to pursue different policy ideas. These periods are differentiated by degrees of ambition, openness, and capacity relating to policy change. The key variable determining the different period was who held political power. The thesis concludes that within the broad scope of policy permitted in a competition state that the consensus nature of the Irish policy system is confined to a relatively narrow set of policy options and that the complexion of the government is the factor determining the policy focus and the choices relating to type, scale and pace of policy development.

Social Welfare Glossary

Claimant: a person applying for a payment in his / her own right for themselves or also for child and adult dependants.

Contingency: this refers to a specific 'state' which a person must be able to prove in order to be eligible for payment for example disability, illness, old age, unemployment.

Contribution record: record of amount of PRSI paid or credited to people during their working lives.

Credits disregards: 1994 scheme allowing homemakers to disregard a period spent caring for under-12s at home. A maximum of 20 years can be disregarded when calculating the claimant's eligibility to a social insurance based pension.

Governing contribution year: the year(s) in which you must have paid a certain number of PRSI contributions (or received a certain number of PRSI credits) to be eligible for a social insurance payment.

Limitation rule: the limitation rule means in households where both adults have eligibility for a payment in their own right (for example, both are unemployed) the total payment to the household is reduced to 1.7 times the rate of two adult payments. This rule does not apply where both adults are old-age pensioners or are entitled to disability allowance.

Means test: there are four specific tests for different categories of income. Income for earnings (and income from spouse's earnings), Benefit and privilege (value of living in the family home) Savings and investments, Rental income from property

Pay-related social insurance (PRSI) payments: Employed people pay insurance (usually a per cent of earnings) into a fund that then covers them should they be unable to work.

Pre-entry credits: are given when you first start work and are awarded retrospectively to the beginning of the tax year in which you start work and the previous two tax years.

Qualified Adult Allowance: payment issued to a claimant in respect of a qualified adult, formerly adult dependant allowance.

Qualified Adult: a claimant can claim a payment (for non old-age payments usually 70 per cent of the adult payment) when the claimant can prove a spouse or partner does not have a social welfare payment in their own right or earn adequate income from employment (€88.88 per week or more), formerly called adult dependant.

Secondary Benefits: a collective term given to a group of payments, mainly the medical card, housing supplements or subsidies, fuel allowances, back-to-school allowances and Christmas bonuses and free schemes for those on old-age pensions. The term secondary benefits has no particular legal meaning, but is usually used to describe the non-cash benefits a person on social welfare might be getting in addition to their main payment such as the back-to-school allowances etcetera. It is important to note that some of these schemes (in particular, medical cards and differential rents) are major schemes in their own right and are available subject to conditions such as means tests both to people on social welfare and to people whose income

is from other source, in other words they are not linked to a 'main' social welfare payment

Signing on for credits people getting certain payments from the Department of Social and Family Affairs (for example Unemployment Benefit, Disability Benefit, Maternity Benefit) automatically get credits. People not getting a payment but eligible for credits have to show they qualify (for example by sending in medical certificates in the case of illness, or by 'signing on' as unemployed). A person out of the PRSI system (paid or credited) for more than two years will normally have to pay 26 PRSI contributions before claiming credits.

Social assistance payments these are means tested and funded totally by the Exchequer. To qualify a person must prove a contingency and pass a means test.

Social insurance credits are designed to protect the social insurance record of someone who has already been in insurable employment but is temporarily unable to work (either short-term or long-term) for specific reasons such as unemployment, illness or certain types of caring work.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance a means-tested safety net system for those who fall out of social insurance or assistance because they cannot prove any of the contingencies or because they have a specific need that cannot be met in the mainstream social welfare system.

Universal payments a class of payments paid to everyone who passes a specific contingency and are paid regardless of means and social insurance record.

Voluntary PRSI contributions If aged under 66 and no longer covered by PRSI you can pay voluntary contributions so you can be covered for a limited range of social insurance payments. Payment is usually a percentage of income or if on a very low income a fixed amount.

Abbreviations

ABP	Area Based Partnership
ALMP	Active Labour Market Programme
BIWG	Benchmarking & Indexation Working Group
BTW	Back to Work
CB	Child Benefit
CDA	Child Dependent Allowance
CMRS	Conference of Major Religious Superiors
CORI	Conference of Religious in Ireland
CPA	Combat Poverty Agency
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CSW	Commission on Social Welfare
DA	Disability Allowance
DB	Disability Benefit
DCRGA	Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs
DETE	Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment
DOF	Department of Finance
DOL	Department of Labour
DOT	Department of an Taoiseach
DSFA	Department of Social & Family Affairs
DSFCA	Department of Social, Family & Community Affairs
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
DWS	Developmental Welfare State
EAPN	European Anti-Poverty Network
EMU	European Monetary Union
ESRI	Economic & Social Research Institute
ETUC	European Trade Union Congress
EU	European Union
FA	Farm Assist
FAS	State Employment and Training Agency
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FF	Fianna Fail
FG	Fine Gael
FIS	Family Income Supplement
FLAC	Free Legal Advice Centre
GAIE	Gross Average Industrial Earnings

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEU	Gender Equality Unit
GNP	Gross National Product
IB	Injury Benefit
IBEC	Irish Business & Employers Confederation
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
IFA	Irish Farmers' Association
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INOUE	Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
ISME	Irish Small & Medium Enterprises
ISSA	International Social Security Association
LES	Local Employment Service
LFS	Labour Force Survey
NAPS	National Anti Poverty Strategy
NAPsincl	European Union Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy
NEAP	National Employment Action Plan
NESC	National Economic & Social Council
NESDO	National Economic & Social Development Office
NESF	National Economic & Social Forum
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NPB	National Pensions Board
NWCI	National Women's Council of Ireland
OECD	Organisation for Co-operation and Development
OPFP	One Parent Family Payment
OYETCP	Open Your Eyes To Child Poverty
P2000	Partnership 2000
PCW	Programme for Competitiveness and Work
PD	Progressive Democrats
PESP	Programme for Economic & Social Progress
PEU	Public Expenditure Unit
PNR	Programme for National Recovery
PPF	Programme for Prosperity & Fairness
PR	Proportional Representation
PRB	<i>Pay Related Benefit</i>

PRSTV	Proportional Representation Single Transferable Vote
PSEU	Public Service Executive Union
PSRI	Pay Related Social Insurance
PTJI	Part-Time Job Initiative
QA	Qualified Adult
RR	Replacement Ratio
SMI	Strategic Management Initiative
SVP	St Vincent de Paul
SWA	Supplementary Welfare Allowance
TD	Irish Member of Parliament
TWIGS	Integration of Tax & Social Welfare Working Group
UA	Unemployment Assistance
UB	Unemployment Benefit

What is required is an account of the process by which social issues move onto the policy agenda, what proposals are accepted and rejected, and why, how and by whom such policies are implemented (Pierson, C 1998 96)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION, OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

1 1 Ireland in the global economy

This introductory Chapter introduces this thesis by placing Ireland in a global context It then sketches out the research interest and describes the research rationale, aims and objectives, methodology and chapter structure

Across the world social security systems are under pressure The pressures come from a combination of economic and political globalisation in the form of new social vulnerabilities and neo-liberal global policy regimes Domestic pressures include demographic changes, ageing populations and changing household structures Ireland, in common with all other countries, is exposed to these pressures This thesis is primarily concerned with how the Irish social security regime responded to those pressures According to the Globalisation Index Kearney (2003, 2004, 2005) Ireland is one of the worlds most globalised countries This thesis is especially concerned with examining whether the type of social security change experienced in Ireland can be attributed to Irish exposure to the international economic environment (Scharpf and Schmidt, 2000a 2) The thesis examines, over the two decades 1986-2006, what happened Irish social security policy It concludes Irish social security recommodified but did so in a particularly Irish style, qualitatively different to other liberal welfare regimes and other small open European economies such as Netherlands and Denmark By understanding how Irish social security policy developed in the way it did the thesis enables greater understanding of how social security regime adjustment is managed in the context of a highly globalised political economy and gives insight into domestic

constraints on globalisation

In one of the most widely accepted definitions of globalisation Held et al (1999 6) describe globalisation as

a process which embodies a transformation in the spatial organisation of social relations and transactions, assessed in terms of their extensivity, intensity, velocity and impact, generating transcontinental inter-regional flows of activity, interaction and the exercise of power

All sub-systems exist within a larger state and international political economy. This state-centred approach understands the state as a powerful actor which must satisfy internal political demands while carefully managing international economic participation.

Since states are intrinsically Janus-faced, standing at the intersections of transnational and domestic processes, their structures, capacities and policies are always influenced by identifiable aspects of the particular world circumstances in which they exist (Evans et al, 1985 350)

While Hay (2006) and Smith (2005) dispute the extent of Irish globalisation the starting point of this thesis is that Ireland is indeed one of the world's most globalised countries. Lane and Ruane (2006 5) note that Ireland is to the 'forefront of the economic globalisation' and how 'standard trade and financial indicators show that the scale of international economic transactions between Ireland and the rest of the world ranks near the top of any group of comparator countries'. The extent of Irish globalisation is a key factor informing Irish policy development as the extreme openness of the Irish economy makes it vulnerable to globalisation (O'Connor, 2003). The three most important contextual changes for social protection policies, the globalisation of the world economy with social contributions increasingly being seen as a threat to competitiveness, the prevalence of neo-liberal approaches amongst national and international policy makers and the European Monetary Union (EMU) and Stability Pact (Sarfati and Bonoli, 2001) are consistently themes in Irish policy discourse that set the context for Irish social security policy-making.

Cerny (2000a 22-23) characterises the competition state as a state where all state actors (politicians and bureaucrats) respond to the pressures of global markets by promoting the

competitive advantages of the state

state actions are often designed to enforce global market rational economic and political behaviour on rigid and inflexible private sector actors as well as on state actors and agencies. The institutions and practices of the state itself are increasingly marketised or “commodified”, and the state becomes the spearhead of structural transformation to market norms both at home and abroad.

Programmes for Government (PFG) (Ireland 1992a, 1994a, 1997d and 2002b), the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) three-year strategy documents (1987, 1990, 1993, 1996, 2000, 2003 and 2005a, b), the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) (Ireland 1997c, 2002c) and the National Competitiveness Council (2000) all provide very useful overview statements on economic and social strategy. They emphasise the necessity of high employment rates to the maintenance of a low-tax economic model. The first words in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy report (NAPS, Ireland 2002a 1) make reference to ‘maintaining our international competitiveness through policies that encourage enterprise and investment’. NAPSincl (2003a 1) sets out the core objective of national policy:

A dynamic national economy, full employment and the effective elimination of long-term unemployment, equality of opportunity, life-long learning, adaptation to information society, the promotion of research and development

NESC documents have in common an emphasis on the need for a consistent policy framework for small open European democracy. They argue the framework needs to be based on low inflation, steady wage moderation and a set of complementary policies, which promote and facilitate structural adjustment of supply-side policies in order to produce flexibility and improve competitiveness (NESC 1996 14-15). NESC firmly places competitiveness in a global context: ‘globalisation places a premium on structural adjustment’ (NESC, 1996 vii). A strategy report of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC 2000 1) outlines a vision for Ireland based on an economy and society that

responds especially to the constantly evolving requirements of international competitiveness, understood as the necessary condition of continuing economic and social success

Clearly these quotes illustrate how the concept of a competition state applies to Ireland (Dukelow 2004) Boyle (2005 16) describes Ireland as an exemplar competition while Kirby and Murphy (2006 forthcoming) make a strong argument that the concept of a competition state describes

accurately the nature and operation of the Irish state in the era of the Celtic Tiger since it prioritises goals of economic competitiveness over those of social cohesion and welfare

The research objectives are informed by a theoretical understanding that globalisation, in the form of a new competitive form of capitalism, has impacted on the Irish political economy and consequently on Irish social security and other forms of social policy

1.2 Research Interest and Rationale

The thesis has a central puzzle. The thesis argues that, despite Ireland's status as one of the world's most globalised nations and the emphasis on competitiveness in national policy discourse, recent Irish social security reform, while consistent with many characteristics identified by Competition State theory, does not fully conform to what might be expected in a Competition state. The central research question seeks to understand why this might be the case and to understand, in the Irish context, how domestic constraints limit policy choices even in highly globalised competition states.

Given the apparent success of the Celtic Tiger the Irish model of development is of strategic interest to other small open economies struggling to find a path through an increasingly globalised world (Cousins 2005a, Dukelow, 2004, Castles 2001, Glyn 2002, Smith 2005). Lessons pertaining to Irish social development are therefore highly relevant. How do domestic limits on the impact of globalisation translate into Irish social security policy in Ireland? How are global impacts mediated into Irish social security policy? Who mediates what policy and how do they do it? What role do institutions, policy ideas and interests play and what is the relationship between these variables? This thesis aims to illuminate some answers to these intriguing questions and in doing so identify what is required to mediate a more equitable Irish model of development, an outcome that is fully possible even in a globalised world.

Research Aims and objectives

The starting point for this research is the development of the Irish social security system from the Commission on Social Welfare (CSW, Ireland, 1986) in 1986 to 2006. The research examines how the global context influences recent social security¹ reform in Ireland and how global impacts are mediated into Irish social security policy. The thesis is concerned not only with what happened to Irish social security but with how and why certain policy choices were made and others disregarded.

This research aims to understand what happened to Irish social security policy over the two decades 1985-2005. The thesis does not comment on or evaluate the effectiveness of the Irish social security regime. Rather it examines how such reform has been domestically managed and how the international political economy has influenced Irish social security reform. Heidenheimer et al (1990) describe policy as action or non-action. This research endeavours to establish what did or did not happen to Irish social security policy and to understand how and why policy decisions and processes followed the pattern that they did.

- what changed in relation to Irish social security policy,
- the domestic and international process through which change was mediated
- the domestic and international rationale for the specific Irish change trajectory

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The thesis extracts from the work of competition state theorists Torfing (1999), Cerny (1999, 2000, 2002a,b) (Cerny, Menz and Soederberg, (2005), Alber and Standing (2000) and Jessop (2002)² a set of common analytical positions to develop a three part theoretical framework comprising the changes that happened, the process through which changes were mediated, the rationales that informed the policy decisions. This framework to guide the investigation

¹ Social security is defined as all cash based income transfers funded by the Department of Social and Family Affairs in the Republic of Ireland

² The individual work of these theorists is outlined in Appendix B

of how the Irish social security system changed in the context of Ireland's significant globalisation is outlined below and elaborated on in the following chapter .

What – the changes that happened?

International literature rarely addresses Irish social security reform and Irish academic research has not conclusively resolved what has happened to Irish social security. Where the question is addressed, different researchers have not agreed about the interpretation of what happened. McCashin (2004) and Daly and Yeates (2003) both suggest that Ireland escaped a neo-liberal reform trajectory, while Kirby (2002), Allen (2002), Taylor (2005) and Dukelow (2004) suggest Irish social welfare outcomes illustrate a stronger neo-liberal trajectory. Cousins (1995, 2005a) and Kennelly and O'Shea (1997, 1998) argue that the distinguishing feature of the Irish social security system is an absence of significant reform.

The initial challenge for this research is to provide a fuller picture of Irish social security changes so more definite conclusions can be drawn about what happened to Irish social security policy. In competition state theory the context for domestic social security policy is international competitiveness. Low taxation and wage moderation lead to pressure for cuts in public sector spending and limits the capacity to fund social security and leads to regulation, privatisation and the use of new public management techniques. Public investment is expected to focus on learning and training, to enhance labour market supply and to create flexible labour markets. There are shifts from universal to targeted social protection spending. This residualisation causes new and multiple forms of inequality with the weakest, those not able to access the labour-market, suffering most from adaptation. The welfare system becomes more contingent and productivist with increased active provisions based on trampoline metaphors. Rights are more conditional and linked to obligations. Labour market activation policy can be carrot or stick but will promote welfare to work strategies. There is an increase in women's labour market participation; this impacts on the capacity of the family to provide welfare and commodifies care. Chapter Two develops a theoretical framework to critically evaluate recent Irish social security change. The overall thesis hypothesis is that recommodification of social security occurs as social policy is subordinated to the needs of the economy (Jessop 2002). Redistributive welfare rights take second place to a productivist reordering of social policy to meet present and future economic needs. Chapter Two unpacks what recommodification means and develops indicators that can capture the degree to which such recommodification is taking place in Ireland. Chapter Three familiarises the reader with the Irish social security system, Chapter

Four uses this framework to examine Irish social security policy over the years 1985 – 2005

How – the process of mediating change ?

International social security literature (see Chapter Two) highlights how nation states adapted their social security systems in response to new pressures and challenges in an increasingly globalised world. A central tension in this literature is captured in Pierson's (1998: 53) imagery of 'irresistible forces and immovable objects'. By irresistible forces Pierson means external globalisation pressures and internal and demographic pressures for change. By immovable objects he means the powerful capacity of path-dependent national institutional frameworks to shape the impact of these pressures on social security policy. Diversity of responses to common global and domestic pressures illustrates the crucial role played by nationally specific structures and politics in mediating domestic and international pressures for change. (Cerny 2002a) theorises that changes in the international political economy transform the traditional domestic 'iron triangle' of politicians, bureaucrats and non-elected actors into a 'golden pentagon' where new multilevel governance and trans-national actors are new features of the domestic Irish social security policy community³

Competition state theory is used here to develop a framework to examine how globalisation impacts on the governance and policy mediation of the Irish and international policy community. The framework is influenced by Hay (2004b: 246) and Swanks (2002) analysis which stresses how 'policy making even in response to common external challenges is a highly complex and differentiated process'. Chapter Two develops a more detailed theoretical framework that enables exploration of how policy is mediated. It offers a conceptual framework to map the Irish social security policy community and international policy community and to account for how changes in policy are mediated in those policy communities. Chapters Five and Six explore in some detail the context through which Irish social security policy is mediated by mapping and analysing the domestic and international policy community (interests, institutions and discourses) in which policy was mediated. Chapter Five examines the changing governance characteristics of the Irish social security policy community, the way the policy processes have changed and the impact of the international system on these changes. Chapter Six explores the economic and political impact of globalisation on Irish social security.

³ The words 'iron' and 'golden' do not have normative values

Why- the rationale for policy change?

Competition state theory stresses how political agency, the role played by domestic institutions and practices, national and international interest groups and the evolving relationship between the public and private determine policy choices all determine change (Cerny et al, 2005 17) Swank (2002) differentiated states according to institutional characteristics and laid particular stress on how the type of electoral regime and number of veto points impacted on the style and culture of domestic mediation of policy decisions

Having established and interpreted what happened and having mapped and analysed the domestic and international policy community in which policy was mediated, the third task is to develop a better understanding of the policy dynamic which drove the policy decisions that gave the Irish social security regime its distinctive character Again Chapter Two further develops a framework to enable exploration about how the specific features of the Irish political system contribute to the culture of decision making and act as a constraint on policy making This framework is applied to case studies of specific social security decisions and policy processes in Chapter Seven and Eight in order to answer the research question in two ways The case studies enable discussion of the relationships between Irish policy processes and policy outcomes to international economic and political processes They also highlight the domestic constraints and vetos which limit the impact of international forces of change Chapter Nine concludes with the answer to the research question and reflects on what has been learned about the Irish social security community

1 4 Research Methodology

This section describes the approach to the research, outlines the data collection and analytical methods and addresses limitations of this research approach The thesis research methodology is in a constructivist interpretative approach whose ontology accepts that reality is relative and socially constructed but that it is nonetheless epistemologically possible to objectively establish fact through a mixture of rigorous methods The research approach is in the constructivist tradition of critical theory, which understands that the 'natural order of things' is really the dominant discourse which has power over other subordinate discourses, for example in the way the 'male' discourse dominates the 'female' discourse (Palen 2000 223) Critical theorists seek to expose, where possible, the social construction of reality and the role of ideas and discourse in managing or mitigating policy adjustment and political relationships

Truth is always speculative and one's own perception of the truth is grounded by one's own particular experiences. Denzin and Lincoln (2002) stress the need to identify the researcher as a multicultural subject. In this case the researcher is a white female middleclass political activist, who works within a particular interpretative community with its own philosophy or ontology. The researcher was, up to one year prior to commencing the research, an identifiable actor in the policy community that is the subject of the research. This positioning, which clearly has both advantage and disadvantage, has been borne in mind throughout the research period. Prior participation in the policy community meant some information and interviews were more accessible to the author. However, it also meant that some policy elites may be less likely to expose sensitive information than they might be to a more 'neutral' researcher. The researcher also has to be aware of self-bias and that her perceptions of events are influenced by how she personally participated in some processes.

An Inter-disciplinary Approach

The thesis is characterised by an inter-disciplinary methodological approach, which offers the opportunity of a rounded and nuanced account of Irish social security development. The choice of an interdisciplinary approach and particularly an inter-disciplinary approach that incorporates an international political economy perspective is motivated by the need to reflect on the changing nature of the domestic state in the context of globalisation. The focus on globalisation makes international political economy highly relevant to a small open economy such as Ireland, hence the choice of this theoretical approach over alternative sociological frameworks. This is especially so the disciplines capacity to theorise dimensions of power and the relationship between internal and external power.

This is not to suggest that an international political economy approach is sufficient it has a limited capacity to examine policy detail and needs to be augmented with other theoretical approaches. Therefore the research draws heavily on the social policy discipline to utilise available historical, descriptive and analytical social security literature as well as quantitative data from welfare economics literature. Political and policy science conceptual tools are used to enable the understanding of discrete and detailed policy process of change: of particular relevance are political science concepts to understand systems change and policy science concepts to enhance appreciation of the policy community and the different degrees and types of change and discourse. An academic justification for this research is this

interdisciplinary approach and the examination of in-depth social security policy change through the lens of international political economy. The interdisciplinary approach offers a rich conceptual framework that incorporates domestic and international dynamics underlying social security changes although it is a challenge to integrate these approaches and manage such wide ranging information and analysis.

Research methods, strategies for obtaining information and data analysis techniques have to be nuanced enough to pick up the internal tensions in the state where competing discourses exist. The following section discusses the secondary literature review, and the primary research methods which include case studies, document analysis and elite interviews.

Secondary Research - Literature Review

A political economy approach to social security also treats social security as part of a larger social system of production and is relevant to the context of globalisation. The first methodological decision is the choice of the subject area for literature review and the decision to choose social security over other social policy subject areas (for example health, housing or education). The academic justification for the choice of subject area is reflected in the large and growing international literature concerning advanced welfare states attempts to reconfigure or calibrate their social security systems (Scharpf and Schmidt 2000 a & b, Hemreijck 2003, Sarfarti and Bonoli 2001, Esping-Andersen 2001, Pierson 2001). Castles (2002) and Cousins (2005a) note the absence of material relating to Irish social security in international literature. Daly and Yeates (2003:86) reflect 'in the case of Ireland, there is the problem that it rarely appears in the international literature'. A number of recent domestic publications illustrate the topicality of this subject matter (Taylor 2005, McCashin 2004, Dukelow 2004, Cousins 2005a) but do not fully exhaust the discussion. This thesis aims to contribute towards filling some remaining gaps (for example the role of social partnership in mediating social security change and theorising about development of Irish activation policy), contributing to and contesting this domestic and international literature. Social security policy appears the most appropriate policy area to investigate. It is an area of social policy that is in the main determined nationally and it, more than any other social policy area, lies in the nexus of the market-state-family relationship that comprises the political economy. The main literature review develops the conceptual framework for the research reviewing a broad range of interdisciplinary literature to elucidate ways to understand change. The chapter focuses on competition state literature and argues commodification is a

useful way to theorise social security change Chapter Three reviews Irish social security literature

Case Study Approach

The methodological approach used in this thesis reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the research and is based on a process of 'analytical induction', which Znaniecki (1934, cited in Evan et al, 1985 348) described as 'drawing concepts, questions and causal hypotheses from a variety of existing theoretical debates' The methodology sets up an analysis that 'explores the role of several variables encapsulated as institutions, interests and ideas in the determination of outcomes' (Hall, 1989 90) Such analysis favours the case study as an heuristic methodological approach that allows depth and insight into the story of Irish social security reform This type of approach avoids narrow mono-causal explanations and opens up the possibility of leading to more realistic and wide ranging understanding, knowledge and answers At the same time the dangers of a single case study approach need to be avoided, in particular the danger of presenting the case study as unique The hope is, in adopting a case study approach over a comparative approach, that the detailed analysis can unearth a more thorough understanding of the domestic constraints on globalisation and that this learning can be successfully comparatively applied and tested in other countries and policy areas

The case study will comprise a review of social security reform in Ireland from 1986 to 2006 Heidemheimer et al (1990) advised that a period of at least a decade is required to follow processes of policy change The 20-year period chosen encapsulates a rich body of social security policy processes where institutional memory remains fresh The starting point, 1986, is a clear benchmark to the extent that the CSW⁴ (Ireland 1986) was launched and key discussions which contributed to the reestablishment of social partnership were underway in NESC⁵ The research covers the period up to the completion of the thesis (April 2006) and hence incorporates two significant recent developments, the report Developmental Welfare State (NESC, 2005a) and a significant and radical structural reform proposal (DSFA 2006)

⁴ The Commission on Social Welfare (CSW) was an expert working group which produced a consensus report which contained over 100 recommendations and significantly influenced social security policy

⁵ The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) is a social and economic policy advisory body to government See Chapter Five for greater detail 20

The period under review is broken down into a number of separate case studies. Chapter Seven examines case studies that highlight learning about the decision-making process in three key policy areas; child- income support; women and social security reform social security cutbacks. It also analyses a key policy process, Social Partnership. Chapter Eight examines policy mediation processes that dealt with the macro debate between equity and efficiency; including policy relating to income adequacy; work incentives and conditionality. The chapter traces how policy relating to 'working aged' social security claimants has been mediated. These case studies were selected according to two criteria. The first four, in Chapter Seven, were chosen to draw out and illustrate the relationship between political culture and decision making. The processes examined in Chapter Eight represent key policy moments where policy related to work incentives and activation was strengthened. These were chosen to demonstrate how the journey from a redistributive welfare state to a productivist workfare state was mediated and to highlight the role of the social construction of change in the mediation policy. To enhance causal or explanatory capacity and to go beyond descriptive accounts of policy mediation the processes are analysed in a common framework which enables comparison across a number of variables. This common framework traces individual policy 'journeys' that represent important debates in Irish social security discourse and captures the recent narrative of social security in Ireland⁶. The analysis draws on data gathered through interviews with members of the policy elite and documentary analysis of policy reports and media coverage. The methodological framework used aims to identify features common to distinct policy processes. It builds on an approach used by Mabett (2004) and Boyle (2005). The latter's working approach involved identifying the policy problem, the source of the problem and the policy initiative to deal with the problem. It uses key documents, proposals, policy coalitions, decision points and decisive factors. The framework used here augments Boyle's reference points with 'political party input' 'international influence', 'Social Partnership' and 'type of discourse'. These reference points will assist in identifying competing ideologies, discourses, advocacy

⁶ The theoretical work in Chapter Three, the knowledge and analysis of what happened in Chapter Four, the mapping of the domestic and international policy community in Chapters Five and Six are tools to help navigate the eight policy process journeys.

coalitions and political struggles. The analysis also aims to identify any correlation between changing policy and changing governance⁷

Table 7 1 Indicators accounting for key social security policy decisions 1985-2005

Indicators	CDAs	CB	Women	Cuts	Incentives	Adequacy	Activation	Conditionality
Policy problem								
Source of Problem								
Who initiated								
Membership								
Policy coalitions								
Key documents								
Key proposals								
International influences								
Social partnership								
Discourse								
Outcomes								
Key Factors								

Document analysis

In deciding how to approach the examination of social security change various approaches could be taken. One possible approach was to utilise the existing framework developed by Esping Andersen (1990) and to reapply his methodology over 1970, 1990 and 2000. This was considered and rejected on the grounds that it gives a very limited account of change accounting only for social insurance payments and being especially weak on gender. A second alternative approach might have been to identify two static points in time and to

⁷ A summary of the overall findings from the analysis of both Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight are included in Table 8 1 at the end of Chapter Eight

compare indicators (such as the total social wage for different population groups) at those two points. However, influenced by Pierson (1994), the chosen approach is not to measure quantitative inputs or outcomes but to analyse the type of qualitative policy changes that happened and to determine how the structure of social security policy was changing. The primary research method is document analysis or examination of written material including primary and secondary social security legislation, administrative circulars outlining changes and annual budget policy decisions⁸

A key challenge in the research is going beyond a descriptive account of change and undertaking a critical and meaningful analysis of such a large amount of data. Disaggregating the reform process into discrete dimensions and indicators increases the capacity to make sense of multidirectional change. Chapter Two develops the research strategy for this technical examination of this data.

Elite interviews

Document analysis is combined with information from elite interviews as the main research methods used to map the international political economy, domestic political institutions and specific social security institutions. Policy tracing runs the risk of being descriptively fascinating but being weak in terms of causation or explanation. Pinning down the range of influences does not mean accounting for what actually determined any policy⁹. It is

⁸ Documents cover a number of government Departments including Department of Social and Family Affairs, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Department of Finance, Departmental policy statements, annual reports and strategic policy statements. Relevant documents include Budget Statements, Social Partnership agreements, National Economic and Social Council and National Economic and Social Forum Reports, National Antipoverty Strategy reports and submissions and relevant documentation from key international social security institutions.

⁹ Much 'policy discussion' is in person, by phone or email, located in cabinet, committee or corporate arrangements and therefore quite inaccessible and hidden from public view. In Ireland it also takes place in clientelistic informal lobbying and advocacy processes. Despite the role of the Freedom of Information legislation the policy process it is still quite covert and difficult to decipher. This limits the study's capacity to uncover policy dynamics. The in-depth interviews with 25 policy actors will illuminate these gaps.

necessary to go behind the process and account for what influences and shapes the interests of the key actors engaged in those processes. This means accounting for the causal power of political discourse and rhetoric (Torpington, 1999) in influencing and explaining change.

Such an approach requires interviews with key policy actors. This type of narrative research is an effective strategy for obtaining information from those who have the greatest insight into decisions, the 'insiders'. Elite interviews enable probing and questioning and take the reader beyond a description of the mechanics of the policy process and closer to understanding why certain decisions were made. Elite interviews enable the reader to unearth, to some extent, the motivations of key policy actors, to understand the deeper political culture that informs the process of policy making and to gain insight into policy actors' understanding of their role in the context of the political culture. The challenges in eliciting facts from highly political and secretive policy processes are illustrated by Hecl's (1974b) insights into the study of the UK policy process. He notes the difficulty of capturing how public service personal relations are characterised by ambiguity and contradiction. The same may be expected of the secretive and closed Irish policy world.

Burton (2001: 216) noted how many policy makers are happy for their world to remain murky as it is easier to practise in such an environment. Traditionally in Ireland the policy community had been relatively accessible to the academic community. The sampling strategy in relation to interviews was to seek a broad representative sample of the policy community as represented in Figure 5.2. This meant interviewing a representative sample of the five aspects of the policy community, political, bureaucratic, non-government organisations and social partners, international community and experts. The policy actors interviewed include government Ministers, Ministerial advisers, opposition spokespeople, key civil servants, at least one of each social partner pillar, community and voluntary sector representatives, academic and independent experts and media commentators. The researcher's previous and ongoing professional relationships with some of those interviewed biases both the interviewee and those interviewed.¹⁰ 17 interviews took place one year into the research project and were used to scope the scale of change, to map the policy community and to prioritise policy areas for more detailed analysis. The interviews focused on eliciting the views of the interviewees on four main themes, how social security has changed over the relevant time frame, the interviewee's organisation's role in mediating change, the interviewee's perception about the wider domestic and global political

¹⁰ Four interview requests were directly declined, one other failed to respond to repeated requests

environment of social security change and the degree to which national and international economic constraints impact on social security policy. The interview also attempted to gain a sense of the interviewee's own personal interpretation of these themes. See Appendix A for interview schedule. The interviews were taped, transcribed and analysed in a manual framework, which sought to systematically and rigorously account for the data obtained. The same style and approach was used in all 17 interviews. After 17 interviews a clear pattern began to emerge and there was sufficient quality data to begin analysis.

Eight further interviews took place six months before completion of the research. These were used to more selectively acquire additional information, tease out remaining questions about specific policy processes and develop recommendations. These were not taped but recorded in note form as each interview proceeded. They were not analysed in the same framework as the earlier interviews or as each other but used more selectively to reinforce or confirm key observations. In all 25 interviews privacy was guaranteed, direct quotes from those interviewed are only used when it is impossible to identify the source or if information is already public.

The three primary data collection and data analysis research methods, case studies, document analysis and elite interviews, are brought together throughout the case study to produce a narrative or story of social security reform. The story makes connection between variables (including international drivers, institutions, ideas and interests) to give a full account of the domestic and international factors influencing policy process.

1.5 Thesis Structure

The case study methodology permeates the thesis structure. Following this introductory section Chapter Two uses the literature review to compare competing theoretical positions and develop the theoretical framework based on competition state theory. Chapter Three reflects on the Irish Social Security System, its history, objectives and its place in comparative welfare typologies. To examine whether Irish social security policy has recommodified Chapter Four examines five indicators, activation / conditionality, regulation, retrenchment, residualisation and defamiliarisation. Chapter Five uses Cerny's (2002a) concept of the golden pentagon as a framework to review five points of the Irish social security policy community, political actors, bureaucrats, non-power holding actors, policy elites and multilevel governance. Chapter Six examines how aspects of economic and political globalisation impacts on the domestic mediation of policy and on policy outcomes.

Having established what happened and where and how policy is mediated the thesis then turns to examining why specific policy choices were made. Chapter Seven aims to further understand how Irish political institutions, actors and ideologies impact on social security policy. It examines three policy 'case studies' child income support policy, cut backs and gender and also assesses the degree to which Social Partnership social security processes influence policy. Chapter Eight relates to policy concerning people of working age and the scrutinises three key policy processes, the Expert Working Group on Integration of Taxation and Social Welfare (Integration Report, Ireland 1996a) and the Benchmarking and Indexation Working Group (Benchmarking Report, Ireland 2001b) and the journey through five stages of activation or conditionality policy from Job Search in 1987 to Job Seekers Allowance in 2006. This isolates the key policy dynamics impacting on the journey from social protection to economic connection or Irish style commodification. Chapter Nine examines the relationship between ideas, institutions and interests, concludes that this relationship offers an adequate theoretical explanation for Irish social security reform.

At the heart of the globalisation debate is an argument about diminished democracy or the general diminution of the ability of democratically elected governments to pursue social policy goals that depart from market oriented principles (Swank 2002 274)

CHAPTER TWO THEORETICAL APPROACH TO EXAMINING IRISH WELFARE

2 1 Introduction

This chapter aims to develop a theoretical framework that will be used in later chapters to examine changes in Irish social security. It begins by surveying literature concerning the impact of globalisation on the welfare state. It critically analyses quantitative empirical approaches to the study of social security reform and concludes the inconclusiveness of this literature and lack of theorising about the state in a global economy limit this approach and its capacity to make sense of how social, economic and political processes together create welfare change.

It is then argued that more qualitative International Political Economy literature in the form of competition state theory offers a more richly developed theory of the state in the context of globalisation. The work of theorists associated with competition state theory is reviewed in some detail before reviewing the usefulness of commodification as a conceptual tool. The chapter concludes by developing a number of frameworks that can be used in the thesis to examine what happened Irish social security, how it happened and why it happened.

2 2 Survey of Globalisation / Welfare State Theories

There are many definitions of globalisation. This thesis adopts a widely used definition of globalisation which stresses that globalisation is an economic and political process.

Globalisation is a process which embodies a transformation in the spatial organisation of social relations and transactions, assessed in terms of their extensivity, intensity, velocity and impact, generating transcontinental inter-regional flows of activity, interaction and the exercise of power (Held et al., 1999 6)

Globalisation, in the context of literature concerning social security policy, refers to a number of pressures deriving from outside domestic states including international competitiveness, the mobility of capital worldwide and intensified international trade. A central cause of intensification of such pressures has been the impact of new information and communications technologies which have made possible both the more intense and immediate global interconnectedness that drives finance, production and trade and also new forms of corporate organisation and governance that have come to dominate more and more key production chains worldwide. Yeates (2002) identifies three main bodies of literature concerning globalisation and social policy, the first concerns the impact of globalisation on social policy, the second concerns how the welfare state contributes to globalisation and the third the globalisation of the social policy process.

This Chapter is primarily concerned with the first body of literature – the impact globalisation has on welfare (literature related to the global social policy process is reviewed in Chapter Six). Table 2.1 outlines a typology based on the work of Cousins (2005a: 47) to make sense of the vast, contradictory and often inconclusive range of literature concerning globalisation and social security. It groups the literature into different typologies that reflect two main variables – whether the theorist is positive or negative about the future of welfare and the degree to which the author stresses the impact of globalisation over the domestic as a driver of social security reform.

Table 2.1: Scales of influence of globalisation on welfare

Strength of Globalisation	Strong	Nuanced	Weak	Does not exist
Positive impact on welfare		Positive impact through compensation in social democratic states (Rodrik, 1997: Garrett 1998) Positive policy convergence (Jenson and St Martin, 2003) Some states well positioned to manage globalisation (Swank, 2002: Weiss, 2005)	Other pressures equally strong, welfare state resilient to change (Pierson P, 2001) Adaptation to new social risks (Esping-Andersen, 1999, 2001)	No new trend of globalisation (Hirst and Thompson,1997)
Negative impact on welfare	Negative race to the bottom (Deacon, 2000a,b) End of Welfare (Ohmae, 1995) States retrench believing global pressure (Hay, 2006)	Competition state welfare policy politically mediated (Cerny et al., 2005) States fiscal capacity curtailed (Scharpf, 2000)		State uses globalisation to hide a neo liberal ideology (Hay, 2004)

The Debate about the impact of globalisation on social security

Literature concerning globalisation and social security can be grouped into those who argue there will be negative outcomes, retrenchment or recommodification and those who argue that the welfare state is resilient and will compensate for and adapt to new risks. The overemphasis

on trying to prove or disprove welfare retrenchment has, at times, produced 'sterile debate' (Sarfati and Bonoli 2001:5). This debate, reviewed below, is often frustrating and inconclusive.

Arguments presented on both sides seem to be either very general or very narrowly focused and hence mutually incompatible, while the empirical evidence seems generally inconclusive Scharpf and Schmidt (2000a:4)

A common way to judge the adequacy of any theoretical framework is to test if the theory is empirically supported. Political economists or those using more quantitative methodological approaches have produced the most empirical evidence to support their theories. Their evidence, while still inconclusive, generally supports the compensation hypotheses and refutes the hypotheses that globalisation will cause the welfare state to decline, retrench or race to the bottom. Using largely quantitative evidence, political economy theorists (Pierson, 1996; Huber and Ray, 2001; Green-Pedersen and Haverland, 2002) argue that the absence of retrenchment offers proof that globalisation is not a threat to the welfare state. Garrett (1998) argues that social democratic states are more likely to compensate for the increased risks of globalisation. Swank (2002) concurs but concludes liberal states have retrenched¹¹.

However, there are challenges relating to producing adequate macro quantitative empirical evidence to adequately support such hypotheses. Allan and Scruggs (2003:3) question the validity of many quantitative claims made in the absence of a comprehensive cross-national and cross-temporal data set on comparative welfare state programmes. Alber and Standing (2000:102-103) argue that comparability of existing data collections cannot be assumed to be reliable, consistent or valid and conclude 'that social science has difficulty in arriving at a common interpretation of recent trends'. Over-reliance on quantitative analysis of macro-expenditure also fails to capture the dynamic of institutional change underneath broad spending variables. Daly and Yeates (2003:87) remark on how relatively narrow conceptualisations of welfare change based on social expenditure and crude financial indicators are not justified 'it is now evident that social expenditures are a poor guide either to a nations commitment to welfare or to the quality of social rights obtaining in societies. Time might be more productively spent examining qualitative change in the nature of

¹¹ Swank also found demographic pressure a key factor in explaining retrenchment. Throughout this period Ireland maintained a relatively youthful demographic profile.

welfare institutions, trends with regard to the policy content of the welfare state or welfare state outcomes across different groups especially gender'. Globalisation impacts on gender-related welfare policy in a number of ways impacting on family formation, increasing women's labour market participation. Industrial restructuring leading to increased women's employment also leads to commodification of child and elder care and declines in fertility. This in turn impacts on labour supply and migration policy. Despite this there is little attempt in the mainstream political economy literature to feminise the globalisation debate.

An adequate examination of changes results in not simply a conclusion of retrenchment or resilience but will account for the inconsistencies and multi-directional change. It is also more likely to highlight how globalisation is only one of a number of factors influencing the pace and direction of welfare change. Cousins (2005a:49) concluded

More recent studies have generally returned more nuanced findings accepting that globalisation can have an impact on welfare states but arguing that its impact varies depending on the political and economic context or that it is outweighed by other factors.

Esping-Andersen (1999, 2003) argues that pressures associated with post industrialisation, demographic ageing and welfare state maturation are more powerful than exogenous pressures. In his image of 'irresistible forces and immovable objects', Pierson P.(1996, 2001) argues a strong and empirically supported case that globalisation's influence on welfare institutions and outcomes is mediated and limited by domestic political institutions and interests. He finds welfare institutions in a state of permanent austerity but path dependent and resistant to change. Arguments that discount the power of globalisation and focus on social and economic transformations at domestic state level do not contextualise the domestic state in terms of a transformational theory of the state and its relationship to the international political economy. Pierson P. (1998), for example, argued that globalisation accompanies and accentuates but does not cause a 'triple transition' (slowdown in the growth of productivity, maturation of welfare state government commitments and ageing of the population). He failed to examine how globalisation impacts on the nature of the state, the nature of governance or mediation of change and how therefore impacts on how such pressures are actually negotiated. Nonetheless Pierson P. (2001) captured the multi-dimensionality of social security reform by conceptualising three dimensions of reform, each of which, while evident in all welfare regimes, are more likely to dominate in a specific type

of welfare regime. The first of these dimensions, restructuring, refers to 'reforms which seek to make contemporary welfare states more consistent with contemporary goals and demands for social provision' (Pierson P 2001 425). These include reforms to meet new social needs presented by changing demographics and family structure and are more likely to dominate in a social democratic regime. The second dimension is 'cost containment' understood as attempts to keep balanced budgets in the context of fiscal austerity, deficit reduction and tax moderation and it is more likely to be found in conservative and liberal regimes. The third dimension, recommodification, attempts 'to restrict the alternatives to participation in the labour market, for example, by either tightening eligibility or cutting benefits' (Pierson P 2001 422) and is most likely to be found in a liberal regime.

Swank (2002) influenced by Pierson P (1998) found retrenchment in only liberal regimes and argued that certain pluralist systems of interest representation and liberal programmatic structures provided a conducive environment for neo-liberal regimes. Lures electoral institutions (2002 282). He concluded that configurations of national institutions play a large role in determining ways in which national policy makers respond to the economic and social pressures associated with globalisation. The fact that Ireland has a liberal regime but does not have a pluralist or majoritarian electoral institutions associated with other liberal regimes suggests Ireland may respond to globalisation differently than other liberal regimes.

This short evaluation of methodological tensions in the debate highlighted the need to understand welfare change in a more qualitative way that focuses less on the quantitative expenditure inputs and more on institutional changes to welfare policy and content and how this impacts in differentiated ways on different groups. This was especially highlighted in relation to the need for a gender analysis. Quantitative methodologies, because they cannot account for the causal power of political discourse and ideas, are limited in what they offer in terms of understanding the causal factors of welfare change. Standing and Alber (2000 103) stress the need to 'unravel policy development to analyse national policy debates and official policy justifications of change'. Approaches incorporating political discourse analysis may offer a richer understanding of the processes underpinning social security change and especially the use of state rhetoric to legitimise change. The focus on negotiation of policy implies the need to examine the transforming role and discourse of the state and how this is reflected in the mediation of policy. It also implies the need to be aware of the changing role of the variables that influence policy mediation, ideas, interests and institutions.

2.3 Complex International Political Economy Competition State Theory

Having acknowledged the strengths and limitations of more quantitative approaches to understanding the impact of globalisation on social security the discussion now turns to more complex or transformationist approaches to globalisation (Smith 2005:17-18). These approaches accept that globalisation does exist and is a highly complex set of qualitative processes which reconfigure power upwards, downwards and outwards to markets and which transforms national governance. One set of 'complex' literature is now discussed in more detail. Competition state theory offers a transformational approach, which examines the linkage between globalisation, transformation of governance and subsequent commodification of welfare outcomes. Cerny et al. (2005) define a competition state as what happens when globalisation resituates the state so that it prioritises the needs of global capital over those of its own citizens. Cerny et al (2005) describe the emergence of a 'competition state' which emerges out of the tensions between the demands of economic globalisation and the old embedded state / society practices that characterised the national welfare state. The process is a political rather than economic process.

The emerging embedded neoliberal consensus is not simply a developing from outside or from above: it is also a political construction promoted by political entrepreneurs who must design projects, convince others, build coalitions and ultimately win some sort of political legitimacy from inside and from below (Cerny, Menz and Soederberg, 2005:19).

Kirby and Murphy (2006:forthcoming) explain how 'in this situation, state actions are often designed to enforce global market rational economic and political behaviour on rigid and inflexible private sector actors as well as on state actors and agencies'. The institutions and practices of the state itself are increasingly marketised or "commodified", and the state becomes the spearhead of structural transformation to market norms both at home and abroad. Many domestically oriented interest and pressure groups are increasingly marginalised in the formulation of policy while transnationally linked groups not only gain influence but also can play state actors off against one another.

It is possible to extract from the work of competition state theorists Torfing (1999), Cerny (1999, 2000, 2002a,b) (Cerny, Menz and Soederberg, (2005), Alber and Standing (2000) and Jessop (2002) a set of common analytical positions that will be used to develop a framework

to guide this investigation of the Irish social security system (Appendix B). The framework should enable rigorous examination of the thesis objectives. There are clear challenges in drawing such works into a collective theory, not least their choice of quite different language to describe similar concepts and the reconciliation of Marxist and non-Marxist approaches. However all stress the political and discursive construction of economic reality and distance themselves from a more fundamentalist Marxist type of economic determinism. All accept that globalisation exists, is here to stay and has reoriented the domestic state to be more internationally focused. All argue that globalisation is a key driver behind the transformation of the industrial welfare state into a competition state. They describe a withering, or hallowing, of the state into a larger but less effective state focused on micro rather than macro policy. They stress the power behind deregulated international capital markets and understand this change in Polanyian concepts of market disembeddedness and commodification. All are wary of overly functionalist globalisation explanations and focus instead on the powerful causal role of national political mediation and the discursive construction of change. They highlight shifting forms and new spatial levels of governance, new actors and emerging roles of transnational political elites. All expect remarkable country-specific heterogeneity but offer ideal type models as tools to help develop ones understanding of change.

The overall thesis hypothesis is that recommodification of social security occurs as social policy is subordinated to the needs of the economy (Jessop 2002). Redistributive welfare rights take second place to a productivist reordering of social policy to meet present and future economic needs. However it is necessary to unpack what recommodification means and develop indicators that can capture the degree to which such recommodification is taking place. In competition state theory the context for domestic social security policy is international competitiveness. Low taxation and wage moderation lead to pressure for cuts in public sector spending and limits the capacity to fund social security and leads to regulation, privatisation and the use of new public management techniques. Public investment is expected to focus on learning and training, to enhance labour market supply and to create flexible labour markets. There are shifts from universal to targeted social protection spending. This residualisation causes new and multiple forms of inequality with the weakest, those not able to access the labour-market, suffering most from adaptation. The welfare system becomes more contingent and productivist with increased active provisions based on trampoline metaphors. Rights are more conditional and linked to obligations. Labour market activation policy can be carrot or stick but will promote welfare to work strategies. There is

an increase in women's labour market participation, this impacts on the capacity of the family to provide welfare and commodifies care

2.4 A critical assessment of Competition State Theory

Pierson asserts there is only weak evidence supporting the causal impact of globalisation (1998: 540). Cerny and Jessop do not attempt to empirically prove their respective hypotheses. Cerny claims the value of International Political Economy (IPE) is not that it can provide answers but that it can provide questions (1999: 147). Jessop asserts the value of ideal type models lies in how they can assist one to understand change and further one's knowledge about future collective choices; he does not expect they can be empirically proven (2002: 4). Torfing (1999) and Standing and Alber (2000), on the other hand, use competition state theory to develop country-specific case studies; their work testifies that the theories are useful windows through which welfare change can be examined. The real test of adequacy is not whether you can prove a theory but whether you can use a theory. Competition state theory has already been practically applied in Ireland (Kirby, 2002; Dukelow, 2004; Boyle, 2005; Kirby and Murphy 2006). More recent work by Cerny, Menz and Soederberg (2005) uses the theory to examine change in a wide variety of states.

Phillips (2005) identifies a functionalist bias where competition state theorists understand the form of state as an outcome of its adaptation to the challenges of economic globalisation. This bias, according to Phillips, results in a failure to consider the role of politics in producing 'variation, contingency and specificity in the institutional structures of states, the nature of state strategies and the types of state-society linkages that prevail in particular political economies' (Phillips 2005: 110). A functionalist theory would not be able to accommodate the variety of outcomes described in Cerny et al. (2005). Different varieties of capitalism are compatible within the competition state. Torfing (1999: 7) explains that liberal social market states, statist social democratic states or corporatist conservative states pursue different strategies towards a competition state. Jessop (2002) anticipated states would contain elements of four variants of the competition state: neo-liberal, neo-corporatist, neo-statist and neo-communitarian. Cerny et al. (2005: 21) identify heterogeneity at nation state level but offer three competition state models which, they argue, are emerging varieties of neo-liberalism, the Development State model, the Anglo-American model and the European Neo-Corporatist model. He understands this as divergence within convergence on the 'roads to globalisation'. The debate in this thesis about whether Ireland's model of development is a

neo-liberal, neo-statist or neo-corporatist model is further discussed in Chapter Four.

Crucially, globalisation brings both opportunities and threats (Cerny et al., 2005). Competition state stresses the role of politicking and how policy is influenced by discourse and the domestic political mediation of policy change. Torfing (1999), for example, identified political mediation and discourse as the *key* variable in determining the scope, extent and style of the transition of social security policy to workfare¹². Cerny refers to a limited convergence of the Left on a political imperative to reinvent the social dimension of politics within the various versions of social neo-liberalism (Cerny et al., 2005:20, 21). NESC (2005a, b) is evidence in Irish discourse of trying to innovate creatively within the new neo-liberal playing field

As with other key political economy theories competition state theory is inadequate when it comes to theorising about gender or race related change. None of the literature reviewed above explicitly account for gender and care related change. Competition state theory, apart from the broad predictions of recommodification and residualisation of those furthest from the labour market, fails to develop hypothesis about how changes in the state and the market impact on the capacity of society to produce reciprocal or family based forms of welfare. This clear limitation implies a potential failure to observe any trends outside of the productivist model (mirroring the original feminist critique (Lewis 1993) of Esping-Andersen's 1990 work). This is a major omission given that competition state theorists predict shifts in the risk of poverty to those furthest from the labour market (Cerny et al 2005, Alber and Standing) and that such shifts are highly likely to further feminize poverty. Nor, in a theory that focuses in shifts in governance, is there is any analysis of whether shifts

¹² Competition state theory is broadly compatible with Pierson's (1994, 1996, 1998, 2001) and Swank (2003) political science work. Pierson (1998) argued that political resistance to retrenchment means that governments are much more likely to mediate and restructure rather than dismantle welfare states. Swank (2002) hypothesises that the type of political institutions and the number of veto points are crucial variables that determine domestic capacity to negotiate restructuring. The larger the number of veto points the more difficult the negotiation of change and the more likely the status quo to remain. These hypotheses are compatible with and enrich competition state theory and may be of real value when trying to explain quite specific Irish welfare reform choices.

in governance impact on patriarchal power relations and subsequent gender related welfare outcomes.

However, competition state theory's focus on the changing nature of the state gives it a clear theoretical edge. Political economy understands welfare as being dependent on the politically negotiated relationship between the market and the state: if the state or the market changes then changes in welfare policy and outcomes will follow. Competition state theory enables us to appreciate the states own conflicting demands and internal and external pressures. It stresses the importance of understanding the context in which the state is making specific decisions and how governance is transformed to include a new transnational power elite and multilevel governance (further examined in Chapters Five and Six). There are clear weaknesses, including its treatment of gender and methodological challenges relating to measuring or quantifying qualitative change. However competition state theory still offers a way forward to explore and examine what happened Irish social security policy, the processes through which decisions were made and the rationale for those changes.

2.5 Commodification

The discussion now turns to the challenge of conceptualising defining and measuring the type of welfare change or commodification envisaged by competition state theory. Commodities are the objects, through whose production and exchange, surplus is created, extracted and amassed (Scholte, 2000). In Polanyian (2001) terms, commodification occurs when any resource is given a monetary value and becomes tradable in a market with a view to extracting profit. Commodification is often used to describe how globalisation is increasing the reach of the market system into different areas of life, including education, health, housing, sport and care, with a negative affect on welfare. Scholte (2000) describes how over time a widening spectrum of resources (consumer goods, finance capital and information / communication) has been incorporated into the capitalist accumulation process. Competition state theory uses the concept of commodification to explain how the globalisation of the political economy impacts on the relationship between the state, the market and welfare outcomes. Competition state theorists hypothesis that the market economy is again being disembedded from society. This happens as more social, political and economic relationships are negotiated in commodified terms with monetary values attached to them and as the state deregulates laws that previously protected citizens from market excess.

In the case of labour, commodification occurred when labour became a saleable commodity in the market. Polanyi (2001) argued, however, that labour was a false commodity because, unprotected, labour is too vulnerable to the market's greed for profit. If labour is left unprotected the market's urge to maximize profit would destroy human labour by forcing its commodity price below that considered necessary for human survival. Polanyi (2001) anticipated that following a 'movement' towards commodification, society, sensing a diminution of human welfare, will respond in a 'double movement' by pressing the state to protect commodified labour from the excesses of market greed. Society would press the state to decommodify labour.

The state responds to such a double movement by controlling or regulating the labour market and introducing social protection to remove the citizen's complete dependency on that market. Polanyi's (2001) concept of commodification places welfare policy, labour market regulation and social protection legislation within the broader state / market relationship. The extent of decommodification depends on the degree to which the state has intervened to protect the citizen from the vagaries of the market system. It is a political choice as to how much the state chooses to decommodify labour and embed the market into society.

Scharpf and Schmidt (2000a) describe how the relative weakness of the international political economy was a vital factor explaining the growth of the modern welfare state and the particular varieties of capitalism that emerged. Once the ideological demand for change had occurred after WW2 the formation of the modern welfare state, expansion of social rights and decommodification was enabled by the weakness of the capitalist world economy after World War Two. Domestic states were relatively unconstrained by the nature of a weak world economy and were able to decommodify labour and embed the market without endangering the viability of the national economy. Scharpf and Schmidt (2000a 1) explain how this was a time of embedded liberalism with few constraints on domestic policy choices.

since exit options for investors, producers and consumers could be controlled national policy makers had considerable freedom to regulate the conditions of investment production, employment and distribution without endangering the international viability of the national economy

Since the 1970's, however, a series of internationally focused decisions have eroded national economic boundaries. Capital exchange, currency controls, and trade barriers have been removed. This stronger international political economy impacts on the capacity of the domestic state to maintain the level of social protection and labour market regulation found in strongly decommodified mature welfare states. As social rights become less affordable, decommodified welfare states become less viable. Hence we see recommodification or combinations of welfare retrenchment, increased labour market conditionality and labour market deregulation. People are more likely to have to resort to the labour market or private markets for various forms of social protection or public services that were previously delivered by the state.

Measuring levels of commodification

Just as Boyer and Hollingsworth (1997) observed many varieties of capitalism so too there are many levels of decommodification. Even under similar pressures some societies chose to remain more decommodified than others. Esping Andersen (1990) developed a methodology to measure and compare levels of decommodification¹³. Esping-Anderson's methodology was, and still is, the subject of lively debate and criticism (Lewis, 1992; Room, 2000). Van Hoorhis (2002) argues there are critical methodological and weaknesses in the conceptualisation and quantification of decommodification measures. Nonetheless Esping-Andersen's work is still used extensively. It was utilised by Scruggs and Allan (2003a,b,c) to assess whether states have recommodified over the period 1970 to 2000. They found that most states welfare states have consistently decommodified¹⁴. Korpi and Palme (2002) and Alber and Standing (2000) used different definitions of decommodification to analyse data to assess if recommodification has occurred. All find some evidence of recommodification that contradicts the more positive conclusion of Scrugg and Allen (2003a,b,c). However all are open to contestation on methodological grounds. None use the same definition or measurement and results cannot be compared.

¹³ Esping Andersen defined decommodification as the state's attempt to provide social rights that guarantee welfare, independent of the market. However, from the perspective of this thesis, his definition fails to account for conditionality (imposed labour-market behaviour as a condition of receiving a social security payment).

¹⁴ However their quantitative data and use of Esping Andersen's original methodology and definitions are beset with methodological, data and comparative difficulties.

In evaluating the possible use of Esping Andersens methodology to measure recommodification, the author concluded that, because the methodology does not account for of how levels of conditionality impact on levels of personal commodification, it was not a useful conceptual or methodological tool. Given that the intention of decommodification is an expression of societal and state strategies to make people feel less vulnerable, it is surprising there have been few attempts to develop qualitative methodologies to measure outcomes from the perspective of the social security claimant or end user. It would, for example, be useful to know whether people believe they have over time experienced commodification and feel more vulnerable to market changes. A great deal more needs to be done to develop methodologies and indicators capable of measuring the true extent of commodification and the adequacy of social protection from the perspective of the vulnerable. Such a measurement would need to include analysis of how rules governing claimants social and economic behaviour impact on feelings of vulnerability.

The most serious and sustained criticism of the concept of commodification comes from a gender perspective which argues that to equate citizenship with simply paid work is gender blind. Bradshaw and Shaver (1995) reflect that the concept of commodification makes sense only for those who are in the paid employment market and does not make sense for those who not (including many women who work in the home in caring or household roles). Feminists have developed defamiliarisation as a concept of female social citizenship (Lister, 1994). This is defined as the degree to which individual adults can uphold a socially acceptable standard of living independently of the family either through paid work or provision of social security. Progress towards social rights for women (defamiliarisation) can be measured by reference to three policy issues, enabling women access to paid work, enabling employment in the context of women's different role to men as primary carers within the family and access to individual rights with the social security and tax systems (Kilkey and Bradshaw, 1999). This gender analysis raises some fundamental issues about the concept of commodification (more reliance on paid markets) as a negative outcome for people. If access to paid employment can be seen as a positive social right for women then surely too access to paid employment is a positive social right for people living in poverty who are otherwise denied various social rights of participation. The key question is how does commodification impact on the citizen's quality of life and to what degree does participation in paid employment enhance social citizenship? Torfings (1999) differentiated between positive or offensive workfare and negative or defensive workfare clarify types of

commodification (in Chapter Three)

Notwithstanding the clear challenge, especially the gender challenge, inherent in both conceptualising and measuring commodification, it has much to offer as a theoretical concept. For both men and women it allows exploration of welfare change in the context of the individual's transitional relationship between the state and the market. As a theoretical concept commodification offers a nuanced and qualitative approach to understanding how societal change impacts on individual welfare. By enabling an understanding of how the nature of social security can change without the amount of social security expenditure changing it enables one to understand the paradox of worsening welfare outcomes happening without parallel welfare expenditure retrenchment. While there are methodological difficulties in defining and measuring commodification it remains a theoretically useful way to approach an examination of welfare change.

2.6 The Theoretical Framework – Outline of the Theoretical Approach

The following sections develop a number of hypotheses relating to the three key thesis questions. Firstly what happened Irish social security or more precisely did the changes anticipated by the 'competition state' happen. Secondly how was social security policy mediated in the policy process, and thirdly why did policy outcomes take the form they did.

What happened Irish Social Security

Hypotheses developed in 'new politics of the welfare state' political economy literature (Pierson P, 2001, Swank 2002) and outlined in the earlier literature review are used to assist in the development of the framework. By building on the Pierson's conceptual framework and augmenting it with competition state theories hypothesis discussed above that social security delivery becomes more regulated, outcomes more residualised and payments more conditional on active labour market behaviour and by building gender related hypotheses into the picture the following framework emerges.

Activation and conditionality Passive income maintenance shifts to active spending on training and education. Welfare is reinvented into 'workfare' where income support is more conditional and linked to obligations to participate in the labour market. Cerny et al (2005: 18) define workfare as 'new regulations and programmes designed to enable or

compel the poor to enter the labour market through a combination of offensive carrots (training, education employment subsidies) and defensive sticks (reduced and time-limited benefits)' This extends to women and increased labour market participation of women impacts on family capacity and commodifies care

Retrenchment The prioritisation of international competitiveness results in a 'low tax, low inflation' fiscal policy as expressed and supervised in the EU's Growth and Stability Pact Fiscal pressures lead countries to resort to short-term cost cutting and long-term cost containment and cost avoidance

Residualisation The state aims to reduce fiscal obligations by decreasing welfare recipients' dependence on the state and forcing them to rely more on the labour market Employment routes out of poverty are prioritised at the expense of redistributive and egalitarian objectives The focus on maintaining low welfare rates to promote work incentives has inegalitarian implications for those who cannot exercise employment routes out of poverty (Cerny et al , 2005 17) Non-labour market participants including the elderly, people with disabilities and those involved in 'caring' duties at home are more vulnerable in 'the increasing relative gulf between the rich and poor'

Regulation The function of the state changes New public management regulatory frameworks enable governments 'to steer not row' (Cerny et al 2005 17) New forms of governance lead to the delegation of policy to new actors at national and other levels There is a trend towards the privatisation of provision, and public service delivery is organised around commercial or market-consumer principles

Defamiliarisation As the labour market potential of women is recognised various policy changes take place to promote women, including mothers, participation in the labour market These include individualisation of tax and social welfare, education and training supports for women and provision of childcare in the private market

Table 3 2 WHAT Indicators for what policy changes happened

Recommodification	Indicators
Activation / Conditionality	Active Spending - carrots Conditionality - sanctions Extending to lone parents / disability
Retrenchment	Cost cutting Cost containment Cost avoidance (failure to expand or to meet new risks)
Residualisation	Targeted payments – Increased relative poverty, Non labour market (old, disabled, home duties) poorer
Regulation	State as regulator Privatisation New Public Management – customer focus
Defamiliarisation	Individualisation Women’s Access to Education and Training More market provision of childcare

How – the process of mediating change

Hay (2004b 246) reinforces Swanks (2002) conclusion when he stresses how ‘policy making even in response to common external challenges is a highly complex and differentiated process’ Competition state theorists are used here to develop a framework to examine how globalisation impacts on the governance and policy mediation of the Irish and international policy community Cerny (2002a) describes how the policy community transforms from an ‘iron triangle’ to a ‘golden pentagon’ This imagery while perhaps a little forced nonetheless provides a conceptual framework to map the Irish social security policy community and international policy community and to account for how changes in how policy is mediated in those policy communities and to link those changes to international political economy changes

Cerny et al., (2005) describe the emergence of a more fragmented and complex social security policy community. They identify how power shifts to employers, business and capital within that community and how pressures from the international political economy result in new forms of multilevel international governance including the presence of new international policy elites. Chapter Five and Six examine whether governance has been transformed according to the indicators or features outlined in Table 2.3 which will guide the discussion in Chapter Five.

Table 2.3 How Indicators for the process of mediating change

Hypotheses: Transforming Governance	Indicators
Iron Triangle to Golden Pentagon	Presence of international policy elite Multilevel governance
Fragmented and Complex	More actors More institutional spaces
Power shifts to capital	Shifts in power between institutions Regulation

Why – the rationale for policy changes

Competition state theory stresses how political agency and the role played by domestic institutions and practices, national and international interest groups and the evolving relationship between the public and private determine policy choices (Cerny et al., 2005:17). Chapter Two referred to how Ditch and Oldfield (1999) differentiated between ‘innovative’ and ‘consolidating’ regimes. Swank (2002) also differentiated states according to institutional characteristics and laid particular stress on electoral regimes and the number of veto points. Hay (2004a:205) observed how:

Certain political systems, those that are centralised adversarial first past the post or two-party, for instance, are more prone to crisis engendered institutional change than others, who may be characterised by incremental reformism.

It has been asked whether or not Irish political culture and institutions might be the key variables capable of explaining the Irish welfare reform trajectory and in particular its

apparent path departure from the Anglo-Saxon or Liberal welfare regime. It was stressed earlier how all competition state theorists stressed the importance of political mediation, discourse and ideas¹⁵. This points to the relationship between Irish political culture, and institutions, interests, and patterns of political discourse. How do features of Irish national political culture and political institutions shape and determine Irish social security policy change? The thesis hypothesises that Irish institutions promote a consensus based political culture, and therefore there is a minimalist approach to political discourse and exposure to only to ideas acceptable to the consensus political culture. This low-key and incrementalist approach to Irish social security reform mitigates against extreme forms of positive and negative policy and slows the pace of reform. While features such as clientalism, Catholic church values and patriarchy have been extensively discussed in Irish literature (Lee 1999, O Connell and Rottman 1992, Coakely 2004, Chubb 1992) other features which are part of and/or contribute to a consensus oriented policy community, the weak resourcing of the policy community, the role of social partnership in policy mediation and the underdeveloped role of civil society are examined in more detail in Chapter Five and Chapter Seven. Chapters Five, Six and Seven develop discussion about the co-ordinative problem-solving style of Irish policy discourse, the pragmatic rejection of ideological debate and debates whether the Irish policy community can be said to be insular or whether it is beginning to be dominated by EU discourse. Table 2.4 outlines the key features one might expect in a the Irish social security policy community and the type of signposts that will guide the exploration of why Irish social security policy is mediated the way it is.

¹⁵ Influenced by Blyth (2001, 2002), Cox (2000), Lister (1988), Standing (1999), Deacon (2001a,b, 2002), Pierson (2001), Swank (2002, 2003), Alber and Standing (2000), Schapf and Schmidt (2000a, b) as well as Lijphart (1999) and Tsebelis (2002).

Table 2.4 Why indicators for rationale for policy changes

Hypotheses:	Indicators
Conservative consensus policy community	
Conservative values	PR electoral system/clientalism Catholic Church Values Patriarchal Powers Structures
Weak policy community	Under resourced policy community Ideational ‘cognitive lock’ role of social partnership. Civil society role underdeveloped
Lack of policy discourse	Coordinative problem-solving discourse Pragmatic rejection of ideological debate Insular and dominated by EU discourse

Conclusion

The thesis has a central puzzle. The thesis argues that, given Ireland’s status as one of the world’s most globalised nations and the emphasis on competitiveness in national policy discourse, a competition state theoretical framework (Cerny et al., 2005) was most suited to examine the experience of Irish social security policy reform. Having critiqued more quantitative approaches to analysing the impact of globalisation on social security, the chosen theoretical approach, based on competition state theory, understands change in a more qualitative and transformative fashion. The thesis links a number of theoretical approaches which have in common a focus on the linkage between globalisation and increased competitiveness and the political mediation of a more commodified social security regime. Using those theories and adapting work by Pierson P. (2001) a framework was developed that will now be used as a theoretical framework to examine what happened to Irish social security and to explain the process through which it happened and the rationale for decisions made. Chapter Four uses this theoretical framework to examine what happened through the lens of activation / conditionality, retrenchment, residualisation, regulation and defamiliarisation. Chapters Five and Six describe and analyse the shifting patterns of governance in the social security community within a competition state and highlight the

increasing fragmentation and complexity of policy mediation and the increased influence of multilevel governance and presence of international elites Chapters Seven and Eight examine distinct processes where social security policy was mediated and highlight among other trends the causal impact of Irish political culture on the scale and scope of Irish social security decisions, as well as the social or political construction of discourse Chapter Nine concludes and discusses what we have learned and whether the theoretical framework has been adequate to the task of understanding how social security policy has been managed in a highly globalised country

If the examination, finds that recent Irish social security reform, while consistent with many characteristics identified by Competition State theory, does not fully conform to what might be expected in a Competition state then the central research question is why this might be the case and to understand, in the Irish context, how domestic constraints limit policy choices even in highly globalised competition states The table below summarises the key themes examined in the research

Table 2 5 Summary of theoretical framework and research methods

Method	Hypotheses	Indicators
<i>Case Study</i>	<i>WHAT Happened</i>	<i>Recommodification</i>
Document analysis	Regulation	State as regulator Privatisation New Public Management – customer focus
Document analysis	Retrenchment	Cost cutting Cost containment Cost avoidance (failure to expand or to meet new risks)
Document analysis	Residualisation	Targeted payments – Increased relative poverty Non labour-market participants are poorer
Document analysis	Activation / Conditionality	Active Spending – carrots Conditionality - sanctions Extending to lone-parents and/or disability claimants

Method	Hypotheses	Indicators
Document analysis	Defamiliarisation	Individualisation Women's Access to Education and Training More market provision of childcare
<i>Case study</i>	<i>How – Process</i>	<i>Transforming governance</i>
Document Analysis/ Elite Interviews	Iron Triangle to Golden Pentagon	Presence of international policy elite Multilevel governance
Document Analysis/ Elite Interviews Secondary Lit	Fragmented and Complex	More actors More institutional spaces
Elite Interviews Secondary Lit	Power shifts to capital	Shifts in power between institutions Regulation
<i>Case Study</i>	<i>WHY – Rationale</i>	<i>Conservative consensus policy community</i>
Elite interviews and document analysis Case studies Secondary Lit	Conservative values	PR electoral system/clientalism Catholic Church Values Patriarchal Powers Structures
Elite interviews and document analysis Case studies Secondary Lit	Weak policy community	Under resourced policy community Ideational 'cognitive lock' role of social partnership Civil society role underdeveloped
Elite interviews and document analysis Case Studies Secondary Lit	Lack of policy discourse	Coordinative problem-solving discourse Pragmatic rejection of ideological debate Insular and dominated by EU discourse

To examine the origins of policy is to understand the processes of policy change with a view to understanding how to shift policy in a more radical direction

(Ginsburg 1992 2)

CHAPTER THREE - OVER VIEW OF THE IRISH SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM

3 1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the Irish social security system in its historic context in order to discuss how it can be classified and to provide a basis for discussing its trajectory of change. This chapter is sub-divided into four main sections: history, objectives, structure and international comparative literature. Because path dependency is a strong explanatory variable in understanding Irish social security reform, an insight into its history, structure and objectives prepares the ground before examining more recent changes.

Path dependency is a concept derived from political science, historical sociology and new economic history. It understands that existing institutions and policies restrain options for change. Previous commitments must be honoured, the institutional complexity involved in meeting the future implications of previous and present policies makes policy reform more complex and difficult to negotiate (Heclo 1974a). Path dependency also influences the political mediation of policy; the structure of existing policy and formal institutions are key variables determining policy change in the way they influence policy-making capacity of governments and type of policy feedback. Pierson (1994 14) emphasises how 'policy feedback' from previous political choices leads to 'new institutional politics' where alliances and interests that developed around previous institutions and policies influence future paths of development. Political action about policy choices is therefore influenced by references to past social relations, ethos, myths and ideology (Harryson and O'Brien, 2003 1). We cannot understand how the future is determined without reference to the past. However, path dependency is a theoretical tool for explaining consistency in policy decisions and is not an appropriate tool for explaining change; accepting that path dependency exists does not mean that change is not possible.

3.2 History

One cannot reflect on Irish social security history without referring to Ireland's colonial past. McLaughlin (2002) highlights how the absence of a new poor law in Ireland (North and South) led to a stronger and long lasting reliance on charitable welfare. This, alongside an absence of nation building, she argues, contributed towards a social policy culture with unusually dominant elite values, an aversion to rights culture and strong institutional positioning of professional middle classes. The first UK statutory system of social welfare was means-tested Poor Law (1838), introduced in Ireland as the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act 1847. In Poor Law the objective of preserving work incentives was paramount, the principle of 'less eligibility' meant those who benefited from Poor Law had to be worse off than those in the lowest-paid employment (Cousins, 2003:12).

Until Ireland gained independence in 1921 social welfare schemes introduced in the United Kingdom also applied in Ireland. These included Workman's Compensation Act (1897), Old Age (Non-contributory) Pension (1908) National Insurance Act Sickness and Unemployment Benefits (1911) (Cousins 1995:13). After independence, the ideology of the new state was deeply conservative (Burke, 1999:26) as was the international ideology. While the economic resources of the new state were simply not there to support any radical social policy, even if they were, the political desire seemed equally lacking. That said, during the 1930's the social insurance system was expanded and new social assistance schemes introduced; Unemployment Assistance in 1933, Widows and Orphans Pension in 1935 (Mills 1999:7). Poor Law was renamed Home Assistance in 1939, and, while some administrative arrangements improved, the basic Poor Law principle of less eligibility remained for many categories. The infirm, the widow, the orphan and the aged (Cousins, 1995a:18) were considered 'deserving' of social protection. For all others the objective of preserving work incentives drove policy.

Early Irish approaches to income maintenance and social policy were relatively insular. There was little reformist social analysis associated with the secular left and ideals of equality. Instead the Catholic Church promoted a social policy based on alleviation of poverty and subsidiarity (Acheson et al 2004:83). The strong 'catholic hegemony' Mahon (1987:54) was combined with a strong insularity which kept national attention focused inwards (Lee 1999). This attitude and approach continued on into the 1950s and '60s. In contrast to most other European states 'the ending of the second world war was not a

moment of great upheaval for Ireland' (Conroy, 1999 34) nonetheless some international debates influenced change in Ireland and the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), established in 1947, influenced by the 1942 UK Beveridge principles, adopted the 1949 DSW White Paper on Social Policy. This in path dependant fashion consolidated the inherited contingency-based system of benefit and means-tested payments and retained the principle of ungenerous basic standard payments and protecting the incentive to work. Over time social insurance coverage was extended, but not to public-sector employees or the self-employed. Home Assistance remained alongside contingency-based means tested payments for selected groups of deserving poor. The unambitious and insular policy culture was somewhat broken down, by first Europeanisation and now globalisation. A built up of demand in the 1960s led to insurance and means-tested schemes expansion during the 1970's with Retirement Pension, Invalidity Pension and a Death Grant introduced in 1970, a Deserted Wife's Benefit in 1973 and Lone Mothers Allowance in 1974. Social insurance was extended to all employees, except part-time workers, in the form of Pay-Related Benefit (PRB) in 1974 and contributions became related to wages in 1979. In 1977 a new national means-tested scheme, Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA), replaced what remained of the Poor Law or Home Assistance scheme.

The impact of EU membership and the feminist movement was felt in the 1970's and early 1980's when Irish social security policy welfare was rather grudgingly reformed to meet the EEC Social Security Directive 79 / 7. Introduction of equal treatment into the social security system had a chequered history. Despite judicial and political intervention it has been only partially achieved and Irish social security payments still remain family based and non-individualised (Murphy 2003). The 1980's fiscal and unemployment crises caused a structural shift from insurance payments as an increased number of claimants became dependant on means-tested Unemployment Assistance. Government responded to this crisis by targeting expenditure at those most in need, expanding the use of SWA and maintaining real increases in social assistance payments. This was, in part, funded by retrenching social insurance payments.

The influential 1986 Report of the Commission on Social Welfare (CSW, Ireland 1986) is the only comprehensive review of the Irish social security system. It recommended retaining, consolidating and strengthening the system with a focus on improving the adequacy of the payment and reinforcing the social insurance system. The latter occurred over the next decade. Social insurance cover extended to new groups of workers, the self-employed in

1988, part-time workers in 1991 and Community Employment participants and civil servants in 1995. Several means-tested payments were also introduced or improved including, a Pre-Retirement Allowance and a Lone Parents Allowance in 1990, the latter subsequently amended to One-Parent Family Payment in 1997, and Disability Allowance in 1995. The Carers Allowance was introduced in 1992 and a 1994 Home Makers Disregard disregarded time spent caring for children in the calculation for entitlement to social insurance pension. New social insurance benefits were also introduced including Widowers Contributory Pension in 1994 and Carers Benefit in 2000. Asylum seekers were excluded from mainstream social security provision in 1999. Somewhat later than the UK, Ireland developed a habitual residence test in 2004, which excluded migrant workers from mainstream social protection. Ireland has thus far avoided following the UK down the welfare-to-work path of tax credits, merging benefits and job placement agencies or making payments more conditional. Over this time social welfare payments, while much improved, have never reached an adequate level and are still considered ungenerous by international comparison (CSW Ireland, 1986, NESC 2005a).

3.3 Present Day Structure

The current Irish social welfare system contains almost equal elements of means tested social assistance and social insurance payments together with a universal Child Benefit payment and other universal additions for old-age pensioners including free travel, heating units and a television licence. There is a means-tested in-work payment called Family Income Supplement (FIS). All of these are administered centrally through the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA). There is also a means-tested safety-net payment administered by the Health Service Executive through a regionally delivered SWA scheme. This scheme also incorporates a number of additional supplements, some of which are discretionary, for example, Emergency Needs Payments, and some of which are means tested; such as Rent Supplements, Diet Supplements and back to school allowances. Ireland is highly dependant on means-tested payments with three times the EU average dependency on such payments (NESC 2005a). Social insurance payments are in the Beveridgean tradition, low and flat rate. Irish social security payments are low and do not exceed 30% of the gross average industrial earnings for working aged claimants or 32% per cent of the gross average industrial earnings for pensioners.

The rules of the social welfare system are legally gender neutral, however the legacy of the male-breadwinner system and the culture of social welfare in Ireland mean the payment

structures closely resemble a male breadwinner model McLaughlin and Yeates 1999, Mlauglin Kelly and Yeates 2002 More recently the social security system has begun to be characterised by racial bias as migrants became excluded from mainstream and supplementary social security provision The family based payment structure recognises the concept of dependency within the family and enables adult claimants to have financial responsibility for 'dependants', both adult and children A claimant with a dependant adult is entitled to claim a Qualified Adult Allowance (QAA) The fact that 95 per cent of these QA claimants are women highlights the underlying gender bias of the system (Murphy, 2003) Child Income Support is paid through a claimant to a dependant child by means of a Child Dependant Allowance (CDA) addition to the claimant's social welfare payment Low-paid workers with children may be eligible for a means-tested Family Income Supplement A universal Child Benefit payment is paid to all families with children regardless of income Bradshaw and Shaver (1995) note that Irish tax and social security system is comparatively more generous to dependant mother and wives

Despite some simplification the Irish system remains very fragmented with a large number of contingencies¹⁶ The policy legacy of the early development of these contingencies is a critical variable in explaining later decisions The traditional Poor Law principle of 'less eligibility' and maintenance of the incentive to work still dominates attitudes towards rate setting which keep social security payments low and income inadequate The path dependency of highly targeted ungenerous and inadequate payments may be an important explanatory factor in explaining recent Irish reform Payments were already so low and targeted that there was no room or reason to reduce them even further As Mathews (1990 116) argued 'given the low absolute level of the payments, however, attention should be focused more on design than cuts'

The biggest structural path departures from the UK (Ireland's natural comparator) are the ongoing retention of a number of contingent means tested payments, including separate income support for lone parents, a third tier means- tested SWA safety net, a less punitive and less expansive interpretation of conditionality / workfare and a resistance to developing

¹⁶ Contingencies refer to a specific attribute a person must have or a behavioral condition they must comply with to qualify for a payment a lone parent must be parenting alone, an unemployed person must be available for and genuinely seeking work If circumstances change and the contingency no longer applies, they are no longer eligible for that payment even if their need remains the same

tax-based income-support measures. NESC (2005a) highlights comparatively low social expenditure, more targeted and ungenerous payments, higher inequality and poverty and a less focused conditionality policy as key points differentiating the Irish regime from other small open European economies. Within the group of liberal regimes Ireland stands out in terms of its recognition of poverty and appreciation of social justice (but not social rights) and a less judgemental approach to the destitute and unfortunate. By large there is an absence of the social moral paternalism that characterises the welfare discourses of other English speaking countries. Irish constitutional politics has had some impact on Irish social security, the weak culture of rights as, for example, illustrated in the non incorporation of international human rights into domestic law is in part the consequence of the written constitution. McCashin (2004) also identifies constitutional vetos on reform of Irish social security. Some of the more positive treatments of wives (in terms of greater generosity towards dependants (Bradshaw and Shaver 1995) and the limited attempts towards activation of women with caring responsibilities are influenced by the primary role afforded to mothers in the 1937 constitution. The presence of a contested land border has to date not materialised in or prompted an underlying objective of harmonisation. Indeed the contested nature of the border perhaps enforced difference. Even in the mid 2000's (post Good Friday Agreement and ceasefires) there is little evidence of an objective of harmonisation. There is increased cooperation and technical transfer of knowledge and systems primarily around fraud, frontier workers and migration.

3.4 Objectives of the social security system

Cousins (1995a) argues that is difficult to discern the objectives of a social security system that developed in such a fragmentary and ad hoc fashion as the Irish system. There is however consensus that the origins of the Irish social welfare system lie clearly in the liberal objective poverty alleviation (Powell, 1992) rather than a more social democratic objective of equality. McCashin (2004) stressed how policy development was dominated by a Fianna Fáil government responding in an adhoc but populist fashion to the needs of the day. Ferriter (2004) stressed the historical primacy of anti-poverty objectives but also identified as did Roche (1984), from 1958 onwards, awareness that social security policy was relevant to efficiency objectives of increased productivity and economic growth.

The 1986 CSW agreed three financial objectives for social security policy: the abolition of poverty, income redistribution and income replacement. It also agreed to five principles through which the efficacy of policy should be measured: adequacy, redistribution,

comprehensiveness, consistency and simplicity. It did not define an explicit efficiency or work-incentive objective or principle but stressed the importance of protecting work-incentives as an overall constraint of tax-transfer policy. Neither did it establish consensus about the primacy of adequacy or redistribution principles in determining policy. While McCashin (2004) argues that CSW saw income redistribution as an objective of the social security, its larger historical legacy was the concept of an 'adequacy benchmark' which promoted poverty reduction as the primary political objective. O'Neill's (1993) review of social security policy objectives confirms that the dominant equity and efficiency considerations influencing tax and transfer policy did not include income redistribution but did include poverty alleviation, earnings replacement and incentive preservation. The National Anti-poverty Strategy (Ireland 1997c, Ireland 2002a) also highlighted consistent poverty alleviation¹⁷ and incentive preservation objectives. Income redistribution or income equality was explicitly rejected as a government policy objective during the process of negotiating the NAPS. Johnston (2002: 3) refers to the fact that 'one weakness in the revised NAPS is the absence of a relative¹⁸ income poverty target', a feature critically reviewed by the European Commission who noted lack of attention to income inequalities as a major weakness of Irish policy (Hanan, 2002: 5).

3.5 International Comparative Context

This section places the Irish social security system in an international context. There is no ideal welfare type nor is it necessarily fruitful to force countries into boxes or labels (Kasza 2002, Cousins, 1995b, Arts and Gelissen, 2002, Van Hoorhis, 2002, Peillon, 1994, Bamba, 2004, NESC, 2005a). It is useful, nonetheless, to reflect on welfare regime literature as it relates to Ireland. Titmuss (1956) originally located Ireland as a residual laggard welfare regime with a heavy reliance on social assistance means-tested payments. Much modern debate about comparative welfare regimes focus on Esping-Andersen's Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism (1990) and his typology of liberal, conservative and social democratic welfare regimes. This debate has been of limited use. As Cousins (1995b) notes that Esping-

¹⁷ Consistent Poverty has been defined as living below a specified income level (60 per cent of median disposable household income) and experiencing enforced deprivation of one of eight indicators of deprivation such as a warm overcoat or a second pair of shoes.

¹⁸ Relative Income Poverty refers to the proportion of the population falling below a certain income level, this population are considered to be at risk of poverty and experiencing income inequality.

Andersen did not rise to the challenge of locating Ireland in any one regime, probably because Ireland does not fit into any of Esping-Andersen's (1990) ideal types (O'Donnell, 1999; Boyle, 2005; Cousins, 1995b). Further the typology has been roundly critiqued from a number of perspectives and particularly from a gender perspective. Dissatisfied with Esping-Andersen's definition and methodology Castle and Mitchell (1993) stressed the importance of culture in identifying welfare regime typologies and developed a Families of Nations typology. They added a fourth 'radical' category to Esping-Andersen's typology to account for Australia and New Zealand (NZ) and concluded that Ireland was a hybrid of liberal and radical welfare regime models. Leibfried (1993), dissatisfied that Esping-Andersen's typology failed to account for Southern European welfare regimes, developed a fourth 'Latin Rim' category. Because of Irish peripherality, Catholicism and its agricultural economy, he associated Ireland, to some degree, with this Latin Rim typology.

NESC (2005a) argues Ireland is a hybrid system. While some acknowledge the liberal nature of Irish social security, some are more comfortable describing Ireland's system as 'cross cutting' (McLaughlin, 2001), or as moving from a conservative to liberal welfare regime (McCashin, 2004). This thesis, however, concurs with Kennelly and O'Shea (1998), Pierson (2001), Peillion (2001), Dukelow (2004), O'Connor J. (2003) O'Connor A. (2005) and later work of Esping-Andersen (2003), who classify Ireland as a liberal welfare regime. While the more general welfare state (including health, education housing and social services) may more accurately be described as mixed or hybrid, when it comes to classifying the Irish social security system it is possible to make a convincing case that Ireland has many features one associated with a liberal or residual welfare regime. These include a Poor Law legacy of less eligibility, ungenerous social welfare payments associated with low Replacement Ratios (RRs¹⁹), an exceptionally high proportion of means-tested payments (NESC 200a:98) and flat-rate social insurance payments. Even taking into account both public and private spending on social inclusion the OECD finds Ireland is a low spender on social protection by EU standards (NESC 2005a:113). Ireland has, relative to wealth as measured by GNP or GDP, low levels of social expenditure or transfer effort. Finally if the proof of the pudding is in the eating, when evidence of welfare outcomes is reviewed Ireland ranks amongst the highest levels of relative poverty and income inequalities in the OECD.

¹⁹ Replacement ratios measure the ratio of income when unemployed to income when in work. (Callan et al 1996)

Structure, history and culture are not the only ways to define or differentiate social security regimes, gender or racial typologies have also been developed to highlight the danger of classifications which fail to capture how structural features of social security exclude certain groups from forms of social protection. This awareness of excluded groups and structural discrimination will become more relevant as globalisation and associated pressures produce new vulnerabilities and social risks. Lewis (1992) firmly locates Ireland as a strong male-breadwinner social security regime with a household payment structure, low female labour market participation and weak childcare provisions. While clearly a male breadwinner social security regime McLaughlin, Kelly and Yeates (2002) and McLaughlin and Yeates (1999) note how the Irish system has generous treatment of dependants, non working wives and children. Other positive features which distinguish the Irish system is the early introduction of Carers Allowance. More recently, the Irish social security regime has begun to display a sharp racial segregation or division where habitual residents are defined as the only legitimate receivers of welfare and asylum seekers are segregated from mainstream social security (Gebbes 2003).

Korpi and Palme (2003:435) associated Ireland with the UK, the US, NZ, Canada, Denmark, Switzerland and the Netherlands as 'basic social security institutions', a group which experienced the greatest degree of retrenchment, as measured by a decline in RRs over the years 1975 to 1995. Eardley et al. (1996) classed Ireland, along with the UK and Canada, as having an integrated safety-net social assistance regime. Gough (2001) placed Ireland with the UK and Australia as a regime type that was extensive, inclusive and with above average benefits. Ditch and Oldfield (1999) who ranked continental European countries, as a 'consolidator' while ranking other English speaking countries as 'radical innovators'. Consolidators 'have not engaged in any significant policy development beyond uprating of benefit level, the refinement of existing objectives and minor administrative changes' (1999:65). Radical innovators (Australia, Canada, UK and USA and New Zealand) all introduced significant changes and displayed evidence of policy innovation and share diffusion of policy knowledge. While Ireland failed to respond to Ditch and Oldfield's survey Ireland does appear more inclined to consolidation than radical innovation. While structurally similar to liberal regimes, it is less open to change and has less capacity to innovate in its political culture or political institutions. This important distinction will be developed later in the thesis. Clearly Ireland does not fit neatly into Esping-Andersen's or other typologies. However the broader categorisation of 'liberal' or 'Anglo-Saxon' fits with Irish social security historical path dependency and historical colonial UK dependency. It

also fits with a more general cultural hegemony with other English speaking countries, with which Ireland is consistently compared.

The conclusion that Ireland belongs to the Anglo-Saxon regime was demonstrated in an influential paper by Sapir²⁰ (2005) which distinguished the efficient but unequal UK and Irish models from the efficient and equal Nordic models, the inefficient and unequal Mediterranean models and the equal but inefficient Continental models.

Table 2.1 European welfare typology (Sapir 2005) Equity –vertical,efficiency – horizontal

	Low Efficiency	High Efficiency
High Equity	Continental Belgium, Germany, France, Luxembourg	Nordic Austria, Denmark Sweden Finland, Netherlands
Low Equity	Mediterranean Spain, Greece , Italy	Anglo Saxon UK, Ireland, Portugal

3.6 Chapter Conclusion

Some key observations can be made at this stage. The difficulty in locating Ireland in international comparative typologies highlights that the Irish state has mediated its own unique brand of social security. It continues to do so based on path dependant liberal objectives of poverty alleviation and incentive preservation in a strong male breadwinner model which most closely resembles the Anglo Saxon model favouring efficiency at the expense of equality. The author concurs with Cousins (2005a) that on balance the United Kingdom (UK) is indeed still Ireland’s natural historical comparator. However while the structure of the social security system might most closely resemble UK other aspects of Irish

²⁰ Sapir (2005) differentiated the equity axis by reference to the inclusiveness of secondary education systems and the generosity of redistribution systems, deregulation or flexibility of labour markets differentiated the efficiency axis.

policy development most certainly do not. The Irish social security system is differentiated from the Anglo Saxon world's liberal or residual model and other liberal English speaking regimes by way of its colonial, rural and Catholic history (Daly and Yeates 2003, Cousins 1995b), its institutional orientation to corporatism (Dukelow 2004) and its proportional representation electoral regime. While this thesis is not comparative broad reference is made in later chapters to the Irish social security regime reform experience relative to other international models. The strongest benchmark for assessing change is the degree to which change has been consistent with or is a path departure from a loosely defined liberal regime. However Ditch and Oldfield's (1999) differentiation of consolidating regimes from more innovative English speaking regimes suggests that accounting for Irish political culture and its relationship to innovation might be an important step towards accounting for the Irish reform experience.

Pierson (1994: 44) identifies the phenomena of policy 'lock-in' as a process of path dependence where initial choices of institutional design have long-term implications. In the Irish context it is possible to see the impact of original political choices about the balance between social insurance, universal and residual payments, about the degree to which the social security system is a strong male-breadwinner model, about the emphasis placed on poverty alleviation or work incentives and the lack of focus on equality objectives. The degree to which these choices are 'locked in' or have powerful alliances arguing to retain them will clearly influence the capacity for reform. The presence of path dependent institutions and alliances makes it more likely that change will be negotiated in an incremental fashion. The next chapter examines how the social security system has changed.

Does the crisis of the welfare state mean economic forces of production must clash with social demands of redistribution or does challenge amount to a more modest disequilibrium pointing to a round of more piecemeal adjustments?

(Heidenheimer et al 1990 265)

CHAPTER FOUR: WHAT HAPPENED TO IRISH SOCIAL SECURITY 1985-2005?

4.1 Introduction

Ireland is a test case for how globalisation impacts on social security policy (Dukelow, 2004, Cousins 2005a, Smith 2005). This Chapter aims to describe and analyse what happened Irish social security policy over the years 1985-2005. Even though Irish social security literature is relatively sparse there is, nonetheless, an interesting tension in the literature between three distinct conclusions, Irish change has been negative. Irish change has been positive. Irish change has been sparse and insignificant. As discussed in the previous chapter the author accepts the difficulty of categorising the Irish social security system but nonetheless, for the purpose of having an operational benchmark for loose comparison, has chosen to benchmark Irish reform to international trends is the Anglo-Saxon liberal welfare regimes. The chapter proceeds by using the theoretical indicators outlined in the previous chapter to frame the examination of what happened. It begins by reviewing recent relevant Irish social security literature. It then over the next five sections addresses trends relating to aspects of activation / conditionality, retrenchment, residualisation, regulation and defamiliarisation. It ends by examining whether the Irish social security experience of recommodification has been negative or positive and whether the Developmental Welfare State (NESC 2005a) might drive Irish social security policy in a different direction.

4.2 Debates on the current Irish social welfare system

Ireland rarely appears in international literature and too often the national literature is overly descriptive or theoretically underdeveloped. Recent literature such as the McLaughlin and Yeates (2002) which discusses recent seminar papers examining North-South issues relating to social need and administration and two substantial publications McCashin (2004) and

Cousins (2005a) filled gaps but considerable analysis remains to be done to more fully understand or explain the development of Irish social security policy (Cousins, 2005a).

Taylor (2002), Kirby (2002), O'Hearn (1998) and Allen (2000) locate Irish social security reform on a neo-liberal trajectory with negative income distribution outcomes. Dukelow (2004) stresses employment participation and evolving concepts of social citizenship. Conroy (1999) identifies how continuation of gender biased policy means inequalities remained unchallenged. Fanning (1999) notes policy is driven by poverty alleviation, making work pay and protecting the traditional role of the family. Kennelly and O Shea's (1998) conclusion that Irish reform is modest relative to the UK is consistent with Daly and Yeates (2003) and McCashin (2004) who assert Ireland is developing a benign regime. Although Nolan (2000) described a declining welfare effort and O'Riain and O'Connell (2000:339) described 'solidarity without equality' both highlighted that this did not mean a neo-liberal trajectory. Cousins' (1995a) assessment of policy change up to 1995 notes how change was minor and incremental. In later work Cousins (2005a:70) reflects on why there have been few radical challenges from either the left or right for structural reforms to the Irish social security system. He notes, how despite obvious pressures, there has been little public demand for reform. He concludes, using methodology developed by Pierson (1996), that Ireland has undergone less restructuring than the UK.

Table 4.1

	Benefit Rules		Structure		Funding
Indicator	Replacement Ratios	Scope	Privatisation	Insurance	Funding
Ireland	0	++	0	-	-
UK	--	0	-	--	+

0 = no significant change; - = reduction; -- = large reduction; + = increase; ++ = large increase

Source : Cousins (2005a:70)

There is consensus, to some degree, that measured against the UK or other liberal regimes,

Ireland did not experience significant change but there is conflict about whether the change that did occur has been negative or positive. Most agree there was little change in Ireland at a time when other countries experienced substantial change. There are two puzzles. Was Irish change negative or positive? Why was there not more fundamental structural change over this period? To answer both questions we need to first examine empirically the nature, style and pace of Irish social security reform. This is done through the theoretical framework outlined in the previous chapter and repeated in Table 4.2 below. Competition state theory particularly stresses the activation / conditionality hypothesis hence more detailed attention is paid to this hypothesis than to the retrenchment, residualisation and regulation hypotheses. The following sections now examine each indicator in turn.

Table 4.2 What happened

Hypotheses	Indicators
Recommodification	
Activation / Conditionality	Active spending Greater workfare (incentives and sanctions) Extend conditionality to lone parents / disability
Retrenchment	Costs Cutting Cost Containment Cost Avoidance (no adaptation to risks)
Residualisation	More targeted payments Increased relative poverty, Old, disabled & home duties greater risk of poverty
Regulation	State as Regulator Privatisation New Public Management – customer focus
Defamiliarisation	Individualisation Women's Access to Education and Training More market provision of childcare.

The following chart summarises the trends in key data relating to Irish social security Collated from Irish Departmental Annual Statistical Reports the data is presented in five yearly snapshots from 1985 to 2004 (2005 data were unavailable at the point of completion of thesis) Given the male breadwinner model nature of the Irish social security system women are always not fully visible in this data Figures for Qualified Adults are not consistently available so the number of unemployed recipients with children has been used as proxy figure but this may overestimate number of QA's in both 1990 and 1995 Overall the data in the chart supports the conclusion that, over the two decades, there was little structural change The next four sections draw from that data, from interviews with key actors and from technical analysis of key documentation to establish whether Irish social security has recommodified according to the indicators developed by the author as applications of the logic of the competition state to social security

Table 4 3 Irish Social Security Trends 1985-2005 (2004 most recent year)

		1985	1990	1995	2000	2004
Total expenditure % GNP		14 6 %	12 4 %	11 4 %	7 8 %	9 2%
Cash exp (euro)		2,918m	3,567m	5,218m	6,714m	11,291m
Total recipients		725,518	733,297	839,633	869,994	957,000
Social Insurance		396,438	382,843	339,780	440,057	531,768
Social Assistance		339,080	350,454	499,853	429,937	435,964
Social Assistance %		46 %	47 79 %	59 53 %	49 %	45%
Benefit Dependency ratio as %of total population	recip	20 5 %	20 9 %	23 4 %	23 %	23 9%
	ben	37 5 %	37 %	40 9 %	37 8 %	36 5%
Unemployed Passive (LR)		207,032	224,711	277,746	116,069	131,339
Unemployed Active (BTW, FIS, FA, PTJI)		2,230	6,569	21,404	64,,833	40,216
Pay Related Benefit		69,375 recip	20m exp	16m exp	N/A	N/A

	1985	1990	1995	2000	2004
Lone parent and widows / widowers	115,044	139,322	176,027	206,130	212,952
Disability SI	81,991	96,928	95,063	97,922	106,590
Disability SA	DPMA	DPMA	48,000 DPMA	54,303 DA	72,976
OAPs	234,090	247,272	254,156	267,760	292,425
Carers		1,240	5,056	16,478	25,610
SWA expend (euro)	23.399m	62.103m	151.634m	295.160m	605.820m
SWA recipients	21,341	25,572	68,086,	72,010	110,784
No's insured	1,178,950	1,430,264	1,551,680	2,299,910	256,106
Population in relevant census year	3,443,405 1981	3,525,719 1991	3,626,087 1996	3,917,203 2002	4,000,000 2004
Insured as % of pop	34.23 %	40.56 %	42.79 %	58.71 %	64%
Females	N / A	357,620*	421,473*	464,588	526,098
- as % of total		48.76 %	50.2 %	53.4 %	54.9%
Qualified Adults	163,948	149,373	152,142	127,903	119,000
- as % of population	4.6 %	4.2 %	4.2 %	3.4 %	2.9%
Child Benefit	1,187,465	1,108,561	1,065,471	1,018,175	1,051,005
Child Allowances	405,748	444,462	473,510	374,877	357,000
Children as %pop	11.4 %	12.4 %	13.2 %	11.4 %	9%

(Source: Annual DSFA statistical reports, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2004)

4.3 Activation / conditionality

Pierson (2001) expects this dimension of recommodification, namely a greater focus on work

incentives, activation and conditionality, to be of greater significance in a liberal welfare state such as Ireland. Competition State theorists expect the state to become a commodifying agent and to play a transformative role in social policy by subordinating the welfare state to market forces. This can happen through privatisation of social services like health or education. It happens in social security policy by stressing the link between social security and the labour market or paid employment. No one doubts that Ireland, over the last two decades, laid greater stress on employment (Dukelow, 2004) and activation (McCashin, 2004) and promoted paid employment as the best route out of poverty (NAPS, Ireland 1997c, 2002a). Less attention has been focused on critical analysis of the Irish activation strategy. The three indicators examined in this section are: increased availability of active labour market measures, greater workfare (defined as both punitive sanctions and supportive incentives (Cerny et al., 2005)), and the extension of work obligations to those traditionally considered not to be active in the labour market. These are now reviewed in turn.

Increased availability of Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMP's)

From 1975 policy relating to ALMPs rested with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) and their national training and employment agency AnCo (restructured into FAS in 1992). Since the foundation of AnCo, Ireland had always been a large spender on ALMPs. As well as skills training, AnCo introduced the Employment Subsidy Schemes and Community Training Workshops in 1978 and the Social Employment Scheme in 1985. FAS introduced the Community Employment Development Programme in 1991 which was changed to the Community Employment Scheme in 1994. In 1993 the Employment Support Service was established by the DSW. The percentage budget spent on income maintenance-based activation schemes administered through the DSFA has grown over time and there has been a shift in the ratio of expenditure on passive social security payments to the unemployed relative to 'active unemployment' payments supporting education or labour market activity. Boyle (2005) observes how the Department's active spending increased from 45 per cent of the Department's total budget in 1993 to 2.5 per cent in 2002, numbers availing of 'active' payments grew from 2,230 FIS recipients in 1985 to 64,833 in 2000 but declined to 40,216 in 2004. The variety of options grew to include Back to Work, Enterprise or Education Allowances, Part Time Job Incentive, FIS and Farm Assist. In 1998 the DSFCA (formerly DSFA) set a target of increasing the proportion of unemployment spending on active measures by 20 per cent. The Department of Finance administers a Revenue Assist work incentive.

The numbers of participants on ALMPs totalled 82,184 in 1998 and increased to 101,000 in 2000 and dropped back to 88,772 in 2001. In 1999 the numbers participating on Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs) represented over 100 per cent of the total number of unemployed as defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). In 2001 Ireland ranked 6th out of 30 OECD countries for spending on active labour market measures and, along with Scandinavian countries, spent double the OECD average (Boyle 2005). One explanation for such positive Irish engagement in ALMPs is the fact that Ireland was for a long time a significant recipient of European Structural Funds, which promoted the use of such programmes. Ireland made active and creative use of such funding and some times stretched it use for other social policy purposes. Such ambiguous or contradictory purposes mitigated labour market progression outcomes²¹ (O'Connell, 2002, Indecon 2005). Cousins (2005a) argued that counting non-progression focused schemes actually overestimates ALMP expenditure.

On the other hand some National Development Plan (Ireland 2000c) social inclusion objectives might just as easily be interpreted as actions to meet the changing technological needs of the economy. Moran (2005) highlighted how 21 out of 37 initiatives listed under the social inclusion element of that NDP refer to employability, training or up-skilling. Failure to account for such labour market focused educational expenditure underestimates total ALMP expenditure. Skills training in Irish Post-Leaving Courses (PLCs), for example, focused on basic IT skills and tele-sales services to serve the labour market needs of foreign investors with cheap, flexible low-paid (often female) labour (Breathnach, 2000). This is likely to continue as policy responsibility for life-long learning is with the labour-market focused DETE rather than the Department of Education and Science.

Boyle (2005:11) notes the paradoxical situation that Ireland, 'with an anorexic level of spending on social policy', still managed throughout the 1990s to spend 2% of GNP on active labour market measures. This is consistent with the competition state hypothesis that public investment shifts over time to focus on projects which enhance capital or create flexible labour markets which promote enterprise, innovation, learning and training. Expenditure under social inclusion measures in the National Development Plan (2000-2006) is in reality serving the changing and growing labour market needs of the economy. At the

²¹ Boyle (2005) refers to the populist motivation behind the persistence with community employment schemes even though, with low progression rates, the schemes were not meeting labour-market needs.

same time competing social policy objectives fudge the economic orientation of ALMPs and failure to achieve institutional co-ordination means there is less labour-market progression from ALMP's than one might expect from such a high level of expenditure (O'Connell, 2002)

Greater workfare (punitive sanctions and supportive incentives)

Workfare is often associated with the concept of 'conditionality' where work obligations or conditions are attached to payments Dwyer (2002 24) argues that conditionality occurs when 'eligibility to certain basic publicly provided welfare entitlements becomes dependant on an individual first agreeing to meet particular compulsory duties or patterns of behaviour' Van Oorschot and Abrahamson (2003 301) stress how social security regulations in almost every country associate the right to a payment with an obligation to seek and accept work In Ireland conditions for access to unemployment payments have always included a requirement regarding attachment to the labour force, claimants have to be 'available for and genuinely seeking work' to receive payment No such employment or labour-market condition is obliged of other claimants of working age²² It is consistent with competition state theory that social security becomes more conditional and that work and behaviour obligations become more stressed The following discussion assesses how conditional the Irish system is relative to other countries and whether the degree of conditionality has changed over time

McLaughlin (2001) argues that defensive workfare, conditionality and compulsory labour market activation found in other liberal regimes is remarkably absent in the Irish policy regime Boyle (2005 59) argues a punitive social security regime was never a serious political option for Irish politicians O'Riain and O'Connell (2000 334) describe 'less a welfare backlash welfare to work strategy, more a social inclusion strategy', Jordan et al (2000 27) argue Ireland 'does not (unlike the UK) rely on negative sanctions or pressures' and Daly and Yeates (2003 94) comment that 'Ireland has much less interest in using public resources to change general behaviour of claimants ' McCashin (2004 200) goes so far as to say

²² The One Parent Family Payment does facilitate recipients moving into employment and Disability Allowance encourage and assist claimants to identify and take up available training, educational and other self-development opportunities where appropriate (O'Connor A , 2005)

Ireland does not have any workfare strategy to reduce unemployment supports or coerce unemployed people into work, none of the workfare type policies implemented elsewhere are adapted in Ireland

Dukelow (2004 22) however provides evidence of legislative and administrative reforms focused on implementing a more active form of conditionality and suggests 'the balance has shifted towards greater compulsion, targeting and spending restraint' Taylor (1995, 2002 57) disputes a benign assessment arguing there has been 'a distinct neo-liberal tinge to the preference for more stringent criteria for eligibility to welfare entitlement' but offers no practical evidence to support his conclusion Allen (2000) makes similar conclusions with little supportive evidence A more thorough investigation of empirical evidence is required before it is possible conclude whether or not Irish social security has become more conditional The following discussion assesses whether Irish policy is characterised by positive supports or negative punitive measures and compares the use of Irish sanctions relative other OCED countries

Reviewing evidence about Irish conditionality

McCashin relies on analysis by Hvinden, Heikkila and Kankare (2001 188, cited in McCashin (2004 220) and reproduced in the table below to conclude (2004 224)

the general rules governing entitlement to Unemployment Assistance (UA) and Unemployment Benefit (UB) have remained largely unchanged in the last decade Nor has there been a reduction in the duration of UB entitlement or the real value of the payments The detailed rules determining unemployment status that a person must be available for and genuinely seeking work have also remained intact during this recent period of activation

It is difficult however to defend McCashins conclusions According to the table Ireland experienced four changes in this period, this is an average amount The Netherlands as we will see experienced seven changes while some countries, Portugal, Sweden and Luxembourg experienced very few Further as Table 4 5 shows it can also be argued that Ireland experienced substantially more change then that reflected in Table 4 4

Table 4.4 Changes in social security in 16 European countries

	More activation	Benefit reduction	Limited time eligibility	Tighter eligibility	Stricter work availability	More means testing	Lower un-employment	Higher Labour Participation
Denmark	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Finland		X		X	X	X		
Norway	X		X	X			X	X
Sweden				X	X			
Austria		X	X		X			X
Belgium		X	X		X			X
France	X				X			X
Germany		X	X	X		X		
Luxembourg								X
NL	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Greece			X			X		
Italy	X				X			
Portugal								
Spain		X		X	X			X
UK			X	X	X		X	
Ireland	X	X					X	X

Source McCashin 2004 220 (originally in Hvinden, Heikkilä and Kankare (2001:p188))

Hvinden, Heikkilä and Kankare's (ibid) assessment, that Ireland experienced benefit reduction but did not experience limits on duration, tightening of eligibility, stricter work availability or increased means testing, is open to contestation. There is evidence of change in each indicator (duration, tightening of eligibility, stricter work availability, increased means testing). While some change is modest in scale, temporary in nature and inconsistent it is still true to say that, over the last twenty years, Irish UB and UA payments have been retrenched, eligibility has been tightened and the duration shortened. Table 4.3 below, shows significant recommodification and is evidence that Ireland experienced more recommodifying change than many claimed. Work incentives dominated Irish social security discourse in the early 1990's (O'Donoghue, 1992). However it is still difficult to decide from the analysis in the table or elsewhere, whether, on balance, the Irish change was 'offensive and supportive' or 'punitive and defensive'. One clear trend however is inconsistency. While social insurance-based changes have been more restrictive, many of the social assistance-based changes have introduced significant carrots and substantial income disregards. However NESC (2005a) highlight how positive carrots such as back to work supports are often prematurely withdrawn and are inconsistently available to broadly similar claimants. Loftus (2005) shows how there has been a consistent failure to annually index earned income disregards across a number of income-support measures.

Table 4 5 Recommodifying Irish Social Security Changes 1985-2005

Change	Carrot or offensive measures	Stick or defensive measures
More active measures	Back To Work / Education / Enterprise Family Income Supplement Farm Assist Part Time Job Initiative	Restriction in eligibility criteria for Back To Work / Enterprise / Education
Benefit reduction	Real increases in lower payments Income disregards for Disability Allowance, One Parent Family Payment	Abolition of Pay Related Benefit No indexation policy No benchmarking policy
Limitation of benefit duration	No limit imposed on Unemployment Assistance, One Parent Family Payment	1997 OPF obliged to seek work when child 18 2004 limited benefit duration for new claimants 2004 lone parents transitional payment cut
Tightening of eligibility	Significant expansion of social insurance coverage 1996 Easing and simplification of Unemployment Assistance to facilitate part-time work	1992 Substantial loss of earning rules limited eligibility to Unemployment Benefit for part-time workers 1993 Graduated earnings and benefits introduced 1993 Changes for irregular and part-time workers, shift workers and week-on / week off workers access to social security 2004 Graduated earnings' indexes doubled

Change	Carrot or offensive measures	Stick or defensive measures
Stricter work availability	1998: NEAP referral process voluntary with no sanction	<p>1996: Reciprocal obligation of the unemployed to seek work stated in PPF national wage agreement</p> <p>1997: Genuinely Seeking Work (GSW) guidelines published. More intense application of obligations</p> <p>1998: new guidelines drawn up by DSCFA - stricter wage guidelines, shift in occupation required, stricter job seeking required</p> <p>Reinforced GSW and AW rules</p> <p>Increased expenditure on fraud controls – increased surveillance and intense scrutiny of claims</p>
Means testing	<p>1993: Improved means test for Unemployment Assistance</p> <p>Improved qualified adult means test</p> <p>1997: Increased disregard for OPFP</p> <p>1997: Significant disregard Disability Allowance / Disability Benefit</p> <p>1994-2002: Improvements in Family Income Support</p> <p>1994-2002: tax exemption limits</p> <p>2005: minimum wage out of tax net</p> <p>PRSI exemption schemes</p>	<p>1992: Income limits imposed. Unemployment Benefit limited by nine weeks when redundancy payment over IR£12,000</p> <p>Means test on Deserted Wives Benefit</p> <p>Change in means test for Unemployment Assistance (reversed in 1993)</p> <p>1994: Child Dependent Allowances frozen to promote work incentives</p> <p>1994: Income disregards for UA, OPP and SWA frozen</p> <p>2004: Means testing of CDAs (€350 limit)</p>

Levels of Sanctions / Enforcement

It is informative to review the scale of Irish sanctions relative to other countries, to assess whether they have changed over time and the degree to which they are enforced relative to other countries. In an index of 19 countries (developed by the Danish Ministry of Finance in 1998 and cited in Marin and Grubb 2001) Ireland ranked one of the least strict countries below both the UK and Denmark which, in turn, are below the OECD average and well below Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands which were above the OECD average²³. Auer (2000) (cited in Martin and Grubb, 2001:141) compared levels of activation in Denmark, the Netherlands, the UK and Ireland and concluded that Ireland was exceptional, showing little evidence of 'a general shift in attitude and / or policy stance clearly tightening their surveillance of benefit eligibility'. The story suggests a fairly benign and supportive Irish regime.

The story however needs to account for the reality that the Irish system has always had strict conditionality criteria. The Irish system has the ultimate sanction in that it can deny an unemployment payment to those who refuse to seek or accept offers of work. Conditions relating to unemployment payments were first introduced following on from the British National Insurance Act (1909). While 1921 UK legislation which introduced a 'genuinely seeking work' clause did not apply in Ireland, Irish policy-makers regularly interpreted Irish law to mean that unemployed claimants had to prove they were looking for work. In 1986 this requirement (which had been repealed in the UK in 1936) acquired legal status in Ireland. Dukelow (2004) noted that initial attempts in the early 1980's to curb expenditure focused on increasing surveillance and more intense scrutiny of those claiming benefits and more critical view of job refusals (DSW, 1983.13). Taylor (2002) and Allen (2000) emphasised this tendency to heighten fraud controls, pointing to the fact that new technology enabled more intensive scrutiny of claimants. This brief historical reflection suggests a benign assessment is not consistent with the historical experience of unemployed people. In a more personal history of conditionality, Allen (1998) argues there has always been an Irish culture of strict monitoring and surveillance of claimants and cites graphic evidence of hostile policing of unemployed people.

²³ Martin and Grubb (2001) question the effectiveness of the Danish ranking tool on the grounds that it did not account for differences in implementation

The 1987 Job Search Programme combined measures to control abuse with offers of training in job search methods. Job Search reported success as the numbers of unemployed people who were found to be in employment when registered as unemployed. This evaluative focus (rather than, for example, reporting success as the numbers who successfully found jobs) suggests fraud control and not activation was the primary concern of Job Search (INOU, 1997, Bond, 1988). When unemployment was at its peak the Department had neither the resources nor the inclination to fully police whether people were genuinely seeking work (INOU 1998). Employers were also reluctant to be burdened with large numbers of job seekers. While a strong undercurrent of policing mentality remained, some policy was relaxed, claimants signing on for credits were exempted from Genuinely Seeking Work criteria for and new guidelines allowed claimants participate in voluntary work²⁴

Tightening of sanctions

By late 1996 however unemployment had fallen according to the Labour Force Survey (CSO, 1996). There was growing political impatience with the lack of decline in the number of live register claims. Confusion about how to reconcile different measurements of employment, led to the report Unemployment Statistics (NESF, 1998). There was also an anti-fraud campaign and calls for greater conditionality and policing of the unemployed. Allen (1998) recalls how the Irish Small and Medium Enterprise (ISME) employer's organization contributed to the public concern by labelling the unemployed 'social misfits' and 'course junkies'. IBEC language was more subtle and highlighted activation (IBEC, 1996). Clause 4.33 in Partnership 2000 (Ireland, 1997b) referred to the reciprocal obligations of the unemployed and the 1997 FF / PD Action Programme for the Millennium (Ireland, 1997d) prioritised 'attacking fraud and abuse of social welfare'. The White Paper on Human Resource Development published in May 1997 proposed a revitalised national employment service to engage in a new labour -market activation policy nationwide (1997 5.61, 5.62).

²⁴ The mid 1990's atmosphere was at times quite hostile to the unemployed. The INOU campaigned against the External Control Unit of the Department of Social Welfare 'interrogating' unemployed people and for very strictly imposing availability rules denying payment when claimants engaged in voluntary work or leisure pursuits during the working week (INOU, 1996). As late as 1999 the INOU called for an emergency meeting with Minister Dermot Ahern to end 'absurd' roadblocks that had been set up in order to try to ambush people doing the double – 'working and signing' (INOU, 1999).

The impact of this discourse made it politically easier to reinforce conditionality criteria. New resources were invested in setting up a special unit to undertake management of the live register and to focus on 'customer activation' and 'a more effective application of conditionality requirements' (Dukelow, 2004). This case management approach by the DSFCA (2000b: 25) involved both fraud control and employment support functions. In April 1997 existing guidelines on availability and seeking work were published with a view to stricter implementation of job seeking obligations. This was followed in June 1998 by new regulations tightening availability and job seeking guidelines (SI 137, 1998)²⁵

Significant changes were introduced. Claimants were required to take jobs with lower wages than in previous employment, to shift occupation and to show proof of job seeking. Section 42 of the 1993 SW Consolidation Act laid down the specific conditions and included Section 4.7 sub-section 4C where failure to take up a labour market, training or education option can lead to a payment review. Guidelines on the management of the live register through a case management Customer Activation Approach were issued to the Department's Local Area Control Teams (DSFCA, 2000b).

²⁵ Legislation requires genuinely seeking employment suitable to your age, education, physique, location and family circumstances and showing genuine efforts to secure employment. Being unavailable for work would include the following: looking for one particular type of work only. Looking for part-time work only. Moving to a place where the prospect of getting work is significantly reduced. Placing unreasonable restrictions on taking up work due to domestic circumstances. Placing unreasonable restrictions on the rate of pay for the job. Not having childcare facilities in place.

New Regulations, introduced in May 1998, define reasonable steps to secure employment as one or more of the following: Oral and written applications for work to employers. Looking for information on the availability of employment from employer's advertisements and employment agencies. Availing of suitable training opportunities. Acting on the advice given by Job Facilitators, FÁS or other placement agencies such as the Local Employment Service (LES) or steps towards self-employment. Departmental Guidelines advise that if you have not found suitable employment in your preferred area of work, within a reasonable period (3 months) then you should broaden the range of work and wage you are looking for.

Use of sanctions

It also matters whether such punitive or 'strong' conditionality was or is implemented or enforced. Given the hostile media environment and escalated hype about fraud, Taylor (2002: 519) noted the 'fear that supportive conditionality could lapse into periods of renewed hostility to the unemployed'. Martin and Grubb (2001) comparatively analysed data relating to the period of benefit sanction following a voluntary quit or refusal to accept work / active labour market measure. They also analysed data relating to the incidence of refusals and sanctions. Their data for thirteen countries does not, unfortunately, include Ireland but nonetheless it is possible to use Irish information to compare Irish sanctions and incidence of use of sanctions with other OECD sanctions. In relation to voluntary loss of a job, Ireland does not rank as one of the more lenient countries, the nine-week exclusion is an average exclusion (similar to countries like Norway, Germany and Australia). The fact that Irish claimants can be totally excluded from payment for failure to accept an offer of an active labour market measure places Ireland at the higher end of the punitive scale for this kind of refusal (similar to Spain, France and Denmark).

DSFA's unpublished administrative analysis of live register flows shows that the level of benefit sanctions imposed for voluntary job loss or non-take up of employment amounted to 0.5% (3,517 of 251,253) claim closures in 2004. The table below, collated from Social Welfare Appeals Office Annual Reports, outlines numbers of unemployed claimants who appealed decisions to withhold these payments on grounds of failing availability or genuinely seeking work tests. It shows these increased substantially to almost 3,000 by 2000 (when unemployment levels were falling).

Table 4 6 Numbers appealing loss of payment - 'available for or genuinely seeking work'

Year		1985	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Benefit	UB	3,098	1,999	855	919	1,263	1,370	1,738	2,481	1,588	1,811	1,626
	UA / GSW	n/a	n/a	369	421	974	1,157	1,865	2,821	1,983	2,262	1,874
	UA / means	619	1,544	4,126	3,652	3,449	2,911	2,246	1,757	1,511	1,511	1,167

Source Social Welfare Appeals Office Annual Reports 2000-2004

Appeals Office Annual Report 2000 (2001 8) outlines a substantial work increase for the Appeal Office 'available for and genuinely seeking work appeals increased by 1,700 or 47 per cent in 2000' A subsequent report (2002 12) noted concern that

Claimants who are ill-equipped to take up employment --- frequently come to attention on appeal as a result of having their unemployment payments disallowed for failing to fulfil the statutory requirements of being available for and genuinely seeking work

This suggests active and inappropriate implementation of conditionality These rules also impact differentially on men and women The historical legacy of the strict male breadwinner full-time definition of employment still applies Claimants have to be available for full-time work and to prove childcare supports are in place, which, to this day, restricts many women from registering as unemployed (Murphy, 2003) Cousins (1992) noted that 1992 rule changes restricting access to unemployment and disability benefits were motivated by perceptions of high levels of take-up of these benefits by married women Unpublished administrative data show that in 2004 a significant 5,290 claimants, the vast majority women, were refused payment on the grounds of their not being available for work at the initial stage of the claim because they did not have childcare arrangements or because they were seeking only part-time work (Murphy, 2003)

In parallel with enforcement of a stronger conditionality regime, the DSFA was required under the European Employment Strategy to work closely with the DETE to develop a National Employment Action Plan These plans include a preventive strategy, under the requirements of EU Employment Guidelines, of engaging systematically with persons at an early stage of unemployment in order to prevent their drift into long-term unemployment The scheme is described as voluntary and gives a commitment that those who fail to engage would be given another chance to re-engage However at the time it was first introduced the discourse relating to the NEAP was ambiguous, PD Minister Mary Harney claimed 'dole payments would be cut' (Irish Independent 18 June 1998) while the Fianna Fail Taoiseach and Minister Ahern claimed that 'throwing people off the dole is no remedy' and rejected this threatening approach (Irish Times 18 June 1998) The 1998 NEAP report to the EU stressed how 'action continues to be taken also to ensure that those receiving unemployment payments are aware of their obligations to actively seek work or to avail of employability enhancing obligations' (Bond, 1998 11)

Unemployed claimants clearly heard the hard message. By December 1999, under the NEAP, 78 per cent of the 18-24 target group with six months unemployment and 36 per cent of adults aged 45-55 and with 12 months unemployment had signed off the live register. Three years later out of 13,129 of the 20,000 referred between January to October 2001, 63 per cent had left the live register. Given the exit rate was even higher among those who didn't turn up to the intervention it cannot be assumed that the quality of the intervention led to progression from the live register. Rather the threatening discourse prompted many to assume they would be forced to take action in relation to activation and many pre-empted such action by activating themselves. There was also significant job growth which would have led in any case to substantial live register exit. The end result was a significant exit from unemployment (Murphy C, 2002). The INOU continue to voice fears about commitment to a voluntary engagement (Tinsley, 2004). In 2005 the voluntary engagement was applied to older unemployed with similar results (DETE, 2006).

The international comparison suggests Ireland ranks relatively high on policing 'available to work' criteria and 'genuinely seeking work' criteria. Ireland has not shied away from actively implementing a conditional regime. Rhetoric played an important role in the period of job search. A traditionally active approach to fraud control and a policing mentality is embedded in Departmental culture but co-exists with relaxation of criteria relating to genuinely seeking work during mass long-term unemployment. The NEAP made a positive contribution to 'mobilising labour supply' and hence making social security more productivist and labour-market oriented. Rhetoric and discourse again played a role in sending signals to claimants. Now we turn to examine the third indicator, the extension of conditionality beyond unemployed claimants to all working-aged claimants.

Extension of Conditionality to Working-Aged Claimants

There has been a significant extension of eligibility criteria for active labour market measures to lone parents and to people with disabilities but crucially participation for these groups remains voluntary. Pearson (2003), Grubb (2004), Daly and Yeates (2003) and McLaughlin (2001) observe that, relative to Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, NZ, the UK and the US, Ireland has been slow to activate and move towards greater conditionality spouses of the unemployed, lone parents or people with disabilities. Since the year 2000 there is more reference in discourse to extending conditionality and workfare approaches to these groups. The DETE have been subtly promoting more activation in their annual Labour

Market Review (FÁS 2004). However DSFA continues to tread carefully on the path towards greater activation. The DSFCA (2000e) argued that without a childcare infrastructure, it would be neither possible nor reasonable to introduce work conditionality for lone parents. The DSFA (2003b) applied the same logic about service deficits to explain their reluctance to extend conditionality to people with disabilities.

A recent NESC (2005a) proposal to bring social assistance claimants into a more conditional framework based on a participation income and other government proposals (DSFA 2006) have injected pace into the debate. Cousins (2005a) noted the significance of this new language of 'working age' and 'life time attachment to the labour force'. Already developed in UK policy discourse, such ideologically motivated language, implying those of working age should be at work, has important gender implications placing all working aged claimants, including mothers, on an employability continuum. This language is consistent with DSFA's recent use of 'working aged' or 'distance from the labour market' to classify claimants according not to 'who' they are but their relationship to the labour market (Bohan, 2005; O'Connor A, 2005; DSCFA, 2000e; DSFA 2003c, 2006).

A key report (DSFA, 2006) was considered by the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion and launched for consultation in March 2006. The report described as 'radical' (OPEN, 2006) recommends a partial abolition of the limitation rule and full abolition of qualified adult and one parent family payments and replacing these with a parental allowance for parents with children under eight and a job seekers allowance for parents with children over seven. Employment is defined as 19.5 hours thus protecting the concept of choice for parents to provide their own after school care for school going children. The proposal is in the process of public consultation, if it is positively received a process of legislative change will begin in the 2007 social Welfare Act and given there have already been calls for a ten year implementation period it is unlikely to be fully operational within the next five years. Until it is implemented in full Ireland still deviates from a strong model of conditionality in its reluctance to extend conditionality to lone parents, the spouses of male claimants and people with disabilities.

Section conclusion

This section analysed, at a considerable level of detail, the competition state hypotheses that Irish social security policy has become more active and conditional. It reviewed **three main**

indicators. It established that Ireland ranks high in the use of active labour-market measures and that, over time, there has been pressure to achieve more employment progression from these measures, this suggests a productivist agenda. Behind the façade of ‘supportive conditionality’ and a ‘voluntary’ implementation of the NEAP, the Irish state has been both willing and able to legislate for greater conditionality, to implement existing sanctions and controls on unemployed claimants and to engage in a quite hostile fraud discourse. However these defensive approaches have been balanced with supportive carrot-like incentives to employment. While there have been some changes to enable other social security claimants to participate voluntarily in active labour-market programmes this has been inconsistent and limited in scope (OPEN, 2006). There has not been, by mid 2006, extension of conditionality beyond unemployed claimants to all working-aged claimants. The next three sections of this chapter examine more briefly how Irish social security developed in relation to retrenchment, residualisation and regulation.

4.4 Retrenchment

Retrenchment has been described as ‘cutting back, scaling down or general tightening or reining in of social security spending so that the scheme is less attractive claimants’ (Green-Pedersen, 2000: 40). Given that liberal regimes have less reason and opportunity to cut already ungenerous rates, the thesis expects to find evidence of only moderate cost cutting in Ireland. Pierson (1996), Green-Petersen (2000) and Lindholm (2005) argue that it is difficult to separate reforms motivated by cost cutting from other policy-motivated reforms. Retrenchment necessarily makes welfare schemes less attractive or worthwhile to claimants and this in itself implies increased vulnerability to the market or commodification. This section examines evidence relating to Irish retrenchment under three definitions of retrenchment: cost cutting, cost containment and cost avoidance. Where possible the approach is to try to fit relevant Irish change into specific retrenchment indicators. In reality however it is difficult to distinguish between short term cost-cutting, cost-containment (restricting the longer-term implications of ongoing commitments) and cost-avoidance or rejection of new cost commitments.

Taylor (2002: 507) noted how the 1980’s in Ireland, and in many other countries, were dominated by cuts in public expenditure. This extreme period of cuts included the first stage of withdrawal of Pay Related Benefit in 1984 and is outside the scope of this study. This section takes up the story about Irish social security retrenchment from the Commission of Social Welfare (Ireland, 1986) which proposed an expansion of the social insurance base.

and making payments more adequate (McCashin, 2004). The timing of the 1986 CSW report was highly significant in that, while it did not stimulate significant public debate about social security priorities, it had a ready audience in the NESC which was preparing a strategy report which would be a key influence in developing the 1987 Programme for National Recovery (PNR, Ireland, 1987b). The CSW consensus on adequacy and social insurance expansion gave the NESC an immediate and positive focus on social security policy. Thus, when the then Taoiseach Charles Haughey requested all Departments to prepare expenditure cuts (MacSharry and White 2000:68-70), the social security budget was somewhat protected by both government and social partnership commitments to protect the real incomes of the poorest (Ireland 1987a,b).

Cost-cutting

Retrenchment is defined by Pierson (2001) as cost-cutting responses to budgetary constraints and fiscal austerity. This section aims to isolate changes primarily justified by the need to meet short-term budgetary imperatives. Most retrenchment studies review macro expenditure levels and overall trends in spending. Irish welfare effort could be defined as social security spending as a percentage of Gross National Product (GNP); a reduction in this percentage would mean evidence of Irish social security retrenchment. Using this definition, welfare effort, measured as social welfare expenditure as a percentage of GNP, halved from 14.6 per cent GNP in 1985 (DSW 1986) to 7.8 per cent GNP in 2000 and rising to 9.2 per cent in 2004 (DSFCA 2000f). However using an alternative definition which defines retrenchment as a drop in real levels of expenditure there is no evidence of Irish retrenchment. Headline expenditure grew substantially over the same period almost doubling in real terms from 2,918m in 1985 to 6.714m in 2000 and 11.291m in 2004. This real increase was significantly ahead of inflation. This information provides contradictory results and does not inform as to the content of social security policy or the impact on personal social protection outcomes.²⁶ It is more informative to review actual changes in benefit levels and personal welfare. Below we review recent work which attempts to capture such micro-level change.

²⁶ There are other more technical problems associated with macro expenditure data. Given that tax relief on pensions almost equals social security expenditure on pensions analysis of tax relief's, as expenditure forgone would give a more accurate assessment of expenditure. In the Irish case comparisons over time need to take into account changing levels of unemployment, while cross national comparisons need to account for the Irish population profile and dependency structure.

Hay²⁷ (2006 12) measures changes in unemployment benefit levels and places Ireland eighth in an index of welfare generosity of ten west European countries. He estimates that by 1995 Irish generosity dropped by 6% to 94 from a starting point of 100 in 1985. Korpi and Palme (2003 441) use changes in the value of the Replacement Ratio to measure retrenchment in personal welfare outcomes or individual loss of social protection²⁸. Contrary to Pierson's (2001) logic, that liberal regimes will experience least retrenchment, they conclude that the largest cuts in Replacement Ratios appear in more liberal countries dominated by basic social security institutions with below-average rates (the UK, Ireland, NZ, Denmark, Canada, the Netherlands and the US). In the Irish context the drop in Replacement Ratios reflected cuts in benefits (1988), taxation of benefits (1993), abolition of PRB (1994), reductions of IR£15 in Injury Benefit, and restriction of the minimum payment for Maternity Benefit as well as non-indexation of benefits to net wages. Allan and Scruggs (2003 20) measure a similar definition of retrenchment over the period 1970 to 2002 and concur that benefits and pensions significantly retrenched.

Several countries move from the bottom to the top of the ranking (Norway and Finland) while others have moved precipitously down (Netherlands, UK, Ireland) as a result of the abolition of pay-related Benefit. By 2000 the least generous state pensions were in Austria, Ireland, New Zealand and Switzerland, all of whom have relatively low replacement rates in all pensions.

Cousins (2005a) refutes Korpi and Palme's (2003) assessment and argues that proponents of retrenchment are over-reliant on abolition of pay-related Benefit as a proxy for retrenchment. Cousins (ibid) argues abolition of pay-related Benefit was motivated by redistribution from social insurance to social assistance payments in order to meet the commitment to protect the real incomes of the poorest (Programme for Government (Ireland 1987a 3), Programme for National Recovery (Ireland, 1987b). O'Connor A (2005 30) rejects Cousins' argument.

²⁷ This index was scored using unemployment Benefit and allowed for variation in demand according to unemployment and retirement levels. Using this methodology only Ireland, Germany, France and Italy registered a decline in welfare generosity from 1985-1995.

²⁸ They utilize replacement ratio data from the Social Citizenship Indicator Programme to analyse retrenchment trends across OECD countries over the years 1975 to 1995.

arguing that the stated aim of the 1987 FF government was to control costs rather than to redistribute between welfare claimants

Abolition of pay-related social insurance was made politically plausible by agreeing to redistribute cost savings to fund increases in lower social assistance payments. Given other payments were already low government had little room to manoeuvre more cuts. Social assistance replacement ratios' decline over this period was a function, not of cutbacks, but of minimum wage policy and tax reductions, policies motivated more by work incentive than cost containment policy. Changes introduced in the Dirty Dozen and Savage Sixteen (discussed in detail in Chapter Seven) were introduced as shorter term responses to fiscal austerity in the context of 1992 preparations for Economic and Monetary Union or the context of the 2003 post 9/11 recession. In both cases the monetary savings accrued as a result of these cuts were relatively low (the Savage Sixteen cuts only realised savings of €58m). Given the political risk and subsequent blame attached to both sets of cuts, one can conclude that the fiscal pressure to cut social security spending was strong at that time. This is consistent with Swank's (2002: 277) observation that international capital mobility is not systematically and directly related to social security policy change in the contemporary era but is at times of fiscal stress.

CSW's (Ireland 1986) consolidation- focused proposals could be achieved through minor and incremental reforms. The political sensitivity to cutting welfare was reflected in the strategy of achieving reforms on a 'no losers' basis by levelling up payments or by enabling old relatively insignificant payments to naturally die out (Heclo, 1974, Heidenheimer 1990, Pierson 1994, 1998). The number of Child Dependant Allowances was, for example, reduced from 36 to three on a no loser's basis, no new claimants were allowed to register for Deserted Wives Benefit but existing claimants were allowed to continue to claim the benefit, Single Women's Allowance (a payment given to single women living in the family home) was also phased out in this way and, since 2006, no new claimants are allowed access the Pre-Retirement Allowance.

These cutbacks were the exceptions that proved the rule. Real increases in expenditure outweighed cost-containment measures over the period 1986-2004 and substantial investment was made in improvements in lone-parents payments, disability allowances and farmers' social assistance as well as the introduction of the Carers Allowance / Benefit.

Short-term cost cutting was not a consistent feature of Irish social security. Post-1986 changes that lower the attractiveness of the payment were more likely to be motivated by practical or ideological recommodification objectives as by immediate fiscal pressures for retrenchment.

Cost-Containment

Cost containment means restructuring to mitigate longer term cost implications of already existing commitments. Many countries automatically link benefit rates to developments in the economy (Veit-Wilson, 1998). Examples include indexing payments to the inflation rate, growth in average industrial earnings or the minimum wage. Governments often pursue cost-containment and limit future cost increases by manipulating such indexation policies (Heidenheimer, 1990; Pierson, 2001; and Lindholm, 2005). There is evidence, in debates about monitoring social welfare payment generosity, that Irish civil servants manipulate indexation the formulas used to track the trends in payments. A SIPTU Pensions Brief (2005: 3) warned how government used annual earnings data from the previous year as the formula to determine social welfare levels for the current year. For example 200 euro is 34 per cent of average industrial earnings for 2005 but only 32 per cent of average industrial earnings for 2006. However in Ireland the dominant tendency has been not to manipulate indexation policy, but to firmly resist the adoption of any such indexation policy.

Avoiding indexation of payments is a technical and more obscure way to achieve spending cuts than by cutting levels of payments or eligibility criteria. Decisions not to develop indexation policy can yield considerable cost savings over a number of years. McCashin (2004: 81) notes that, unlike other countries, Ireland has no statutory requirement to index social security payments. Taylor (2005) argues the expenditure control culture of the Department of Finance (DOF) overly influenced social security indexation policy. Certainly over the last two decades Department of Finance strongly resisted pressure to adopt an indexation formula for pensions, working-aged adult and child social security payments. In 1998 government explicitly rejected a Pensions Board recommendation for a 34 per cent Gross Average Industrial Earnings (GAIE) indexation formula for contributory old-age pensions (this later evolved into government policy). In the course of this debate the Department of Finance (DOF) argued that

to adopt an index for pensions might open the door for direct comparison between those pensions and other social welfare payments. There could be

several undesirable side effects including fiscal cost and disincentive effects for employment and economic expansion (NRB, 1998 88)

In 2001 the government again explicitly rejected a majority recommendation from the Social Welfare Benchmarking and Indexation Working Group (Ireland 2001b) for a 27 per cent of GAIE benchmark for the lowest social assistance payments. The terms of reference instructed the working group deliberating indexation policy to have

regard to their long-term economic budgetary PRSI contribution, distributive and incentive implications, in light of trends in economic demographic and labour market patterns (2001b 2)

This terms of reference highlights how policy relating to work incentives and labour market patterns were a significant factor determining deliberations about policy concerning income adequacy. In the group those resisting indexation policy focused primarily on the need for adaptability and flexibility in the context of international competitiveness.

the uncertainty associated with the medium to long-term well being of the economy requires that the government should not be tied into a position in a critical area of public expenditure (ibid 61)

The need to promote work incentives was also a concern. The groups' majority recommendation was qualified by the following statement:

an essential part of a strategy for income adequacy should be a proactive policy of engagement with people of working age on social welfare to ensure that, where possible, they have the opportunity to avail of employment, education and training opportunities (ibid 61)

A focus on work incentives cannot however explain government failure to increase income disregards relating to Unemployment Assistance, one-parent family payments or secondary benefit retention. Loftus (2005 71) argues

The €146.50 disregard and the €293.00 ceiling set at the introduction of the One-Parent Family Payment in 1997 were set at these levels to take account of

the cost of childcare, the upper limit was related to average industrial earnings at the time. These have not been increased during eight years of strong economic growth. The threshold at which payment is withdrawn is now less than the earnings of a full-time worker at the National Minimum Wage.

She further notes a similar situation applies in relation to the threshold to retain secondary benefits under the Back to work Allowances: what's included in the level remains at 317.43 euro, just over 10 euro more than the full-time National Minimum Wage. Freezing supplementary welfare rent-allowance income thresholds from 1994-2005 resulted in a 26 per cent drop in the value of the disregard for Rent Supplement thresholds. Income disregards help people into employment; freezing them is inconsistent with a stated policy objective of enabling transition to employment. This suggests that cost containment is driving this policy.

A 1986 decision to relax an informal inflation indexation formula (which had previously maintained the real value of Child Dependant Allowances (CDAs)) was followed by a decision to freeze the nominal value of CDAs in 1994. The fact that cost savings were low suggests this policy was primarily motivated by the need to provide for work incentives rather than for cost containment purposes.

Korpi and Palme (2003) note how, under pressure from high unemployment, governments manage growing need by relaxing conditions for access to social assistance. The Supplementary Welfare Allowance System (SWA) was introduced in 1974 as a safety net for people with urgent or exceptional needs. Over the years of high unemployment the cost of SWA soared as the scheme provided help for mainstream items such as basic living, utility bills, travel and childcare costs. In 1992 a set of cutbacks known as the 'Dirty Dozen' cuts signalled the reversal of this trend by restricting use of SWAs for utility bills and introducing a minimum rent contribution. In 1994 the amount of Rent Supplement available through SWA was capped and an earnings threshold over which rent could not be paid was introduced. In 2003 a further set of cuts entitled the 'Savage Sixteen' brought further restrictions on the use of SWAs including restricted use of the supplementary welfare system, ceasing the use of heat, diet and Crèche Supplements and further attempts to restrict eligibility to Rent Supplement. These cuts, all introduced on a no losers basis, can be interpreted not so much as policy to save immediate costs but as a policy to control and contain future costs or regain control over an expenditure programme.

The evidence proves that cost containment is a clear objective of Irish indexation policy. Callan et al (2004) note that the increased distance between benefits and wages and a direct outcome of rejecting indexation policy, mean social welfare pensions and working aged payments were less generous and income inequality higher than if an indexation policy has been agreed. Such political resistance to indexation is also reflected by a reluctance to set tangible monetary targets in the NAPS (Hanan, 2002). The growth in both relative poverty and income inequality can be partially correlated with the absence of an adequate indexation policy. Work incentives were also a major consideration in arriving at a decision to reject indexation policy for both working age and pensions payments. Paradoxically governments failed to index and preserve the effectiveness of earned income disregards. The conservative ethos of cost containment appeared stronger than the neo-liberal ethos of enabling access to employment.

Cost Avoidance

The two decades 1986-2005 saw considerable expansion of contingencies and some positive restructuring of a number of existing payments. However, at the same time, there was a conscious avoidance of addressing other newly defined social risks through the social security system. This section first reviews social security expansion and improvements. It then discusses evidence of cost avoidance, paying considerable attention to two structural characteristics: failure to reform in any meaningful way the male breadwinner model and recent reforms which led to a racial structuring of the social security system. These reforms are a function of underlying patriarchal and racial power structures as well as fear of future costs.

Social security expansion and improvements

In 1996 responsibility for administration of an unpopular Means Tested Disability Payment (DPMA) moved from the Department of Health to the Department of Social Welfare. The latter Department improved the administration of the scheme, making it a much more entitlement-based payment and renamed it Disability Allowance (DA). The Department however, despite significant lobbying continues to resist the introduction of a Cost of Disability payment (Conroy, 2003, McManus, 2003). Small Farmers Assistance (SFA) was restructured to a more accessible payment called Farm Assist (FA); the administrative improvements resulted in increased take up. The FA reform recognised new risks and new

needs arising from the structural reform of agriculture and the specific welfare needs of small farmers. However it was also a direct response to a rally of over 40,000 people under the banner of the Irish Farmers Association (IFA). The same decade saw the introduction of a Carers Allowance (1992). In an interview with the author key civil servants reflected how Minister Michael Woods, the Minister responsible for its introduction, was motivated to introduce support for carers by his direct experience of hearing needs expressed in his political clinic work in his constituency. However as will be seen in section 7.4.3 the same urgency has not been applied to dealing with the social risks of childcare as experienced by families with children where both parents are in paid employment. Nor as seen in the following section has the state responded to meeting social risks associated with migration.

A racial model of social security

The recent presence in Ireland of asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers has led to a recalibration, or restructuring, of the social security system. This recalibration, motivated by cost considerations and the objective of discouraging larger movements of asylum seekers and poorer migrants to Ireland, excluded these new social risks from social protection. The exclusion happened in four distinct ways: regulations obliged attachment to the Irish labour market in order to activate EU social insurance contributions; the habitual residents rule; policy on direct provision; migrant workers exemption from PRSI system.

Since joining the EEC in 1973 Ireland has had to ensure the Irish social security system reflected the principle of free movement of workers within the EU. It does this by acknowledging social insurance contributions from other EU countries for the purposes of qualifying for social insurance benefits in Ireland. All EU countries reciprocate.²⁹ In order to contain the costs of such reciprocity Ireland (like other EU countries) introduced regulations which held that in order to activate a social insurance record from another EU country a person has to demonstrate recent attachment to the workforce (defined as one week's social insurance contribution) (Ellis 1996).

Ireland, under EU regulations, must also ensure all EU citizens are equally treated under rules governing access to social assistance. In practice, up to 2004, all EU citizens could apply for Irish social assistance payments under the same rules that apply to Irish nationals. Through the 1980's and 1990's given high levels of unemployment few EU nationals sought

²⁹ Ireland has also voluntary reciprocal pension agreements with a large number of non EU countries.

Unemployment Assistance. Any social assistance claims by EU citizens, were, in order to minimise 'social tourism' or 'benefit shopping', subject to rigorous monitoring under conditionality rules. However, in response to fears associated with the impact of the accession of ten new and poorer states into the EU, the Department of Justice obliged the Department of Social and Family Affairs to introduce a Habitual Residence Condition (Section 17 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2004, 1st May 2004). While the legislation was introduced to prevent migrant workers from EU Accession States immediately claiming social security the Irish government was obliged to apply the legislation to all EU citizens including Irish people. Unless a person can prove Habitual Residence in Ireland, or the UK Common Travel Area, for the two previous years they can be refused social assistance benefits.

Non-nationals, including migrant workers and people being recognized as refugees, are most likely to suffer from its provisions as most migrant workers find it impossible to meet the criteria in relation to their intention to live in Ireland permanently (NCCIR, 2005). Pressure from lobby groups and a legal challenge from the European Union resulted in two changes in 2005. EU migrants were allowed access to family-based payments and working migrants are now allowed access to social security. However, the rule still prohibits all other migrants and asylum seekers from accessing social security.

A system of direct provision of social security and denial of the right to work to asylum seekers was introduced in 1999. Asylum seekers are accommodated in institutional hostel-type lodgings, isolated from Irish society and denied the right to work. Access to social security is restricted to a subsistence payment worth less than 15 per cent of the lowest weekly social assistance payment. The payment has not been indexed since its introduction in 1999 and is clearly inadequate to enable participation in Irish life. Less in monetary terms than that allocated to Irish people in equivalent institutional / hostel care it is a rare instance of direct inequality in the Irish social security system (Fanning et al, 2001).

EU regulations, in order to ease worker mobility, exempt migrant workers from paying PRSI contributions if they are working in an EU country for a period of less than 52 weeks and if they are covered by PRSI in their country of origin. Following lobbying by the multinational construction company, GAMA, the Irish government legislated to exempt PRSI contributions for non-EU migrant workers without a qualifying criteria that they are covered by PRSI contributions elsewhere. This legislation leaves migrant workers without any social

insurance protection in either country and exposed in the event of illness or accident and this impacts on their future eligibility for pension coverage.

There have been contradictory trends in cost avoidance patterns. Irish governments have been willing to respond to need highlighted by lobby groups or identified through direct political constituency work. It is more likely to respond to some need and pressure groups (carers and farmers) than other need or pressure groups (women and non-nationals). Such lack of response directly impacts on welfare outcomes. The proportion of women claimants grew from 45 per cent of social welfare claimants in 1985 to 55 per cent of social security claimants in 2005. This shift reflected a number of structural changes including the dramatic growth in female labour force participation, feminisation of poverty and increased incidence of parenting alone. This failure to adapt to the parenting needs of two earner households is a significant indicator that Irish social security has been slow to adapt to new social risks. Direct provision for asylum seekers, exemptions from PRSI for migrant workers and a habitual residence rule combine to exclude asylum seekers and migrant workers from mainstream social security system. This has directly contributed to increased homelessness and destitution in the adult migrant population and nutritional deficiencies among both adults and children in direct provisions accommodation (Fanning et al 2001; NCCIR, 2005). Such policies seem contradictory in the context of an EU that promotes labour market mobility, gender equality and high rates of employment for men and women. However they are less contradictory when the failure to meet new social risks is understood in the context of commodification where social risk is left to the mercy of the market.

Section Conclusion

Compared to what might be expected in the competition state literature Ireland has experienced limited social security payments cuts. The CSW (Ireland, 1986) proved useful in providing a menu for social security development that was low key, incremental and consistent with fiscal environment of the late 1980's. The most significant features of Irish retrenchment were cost containment, resistance to indexation formulas and failure to calibrate and accommodate other new social risks. These failures consolidate gender and racial structural divisions in both the social security system and society. Pierson P. (1994, 1998, 2001) expects that in liberal regimes there would be limited restructuring to meet new social needs and this is evident in the Irish case. The desire to keep social expenditure low, to have limited state intervention and the preoccupation with basic poverty alleviation means that liberal welfare regimes have limited ambition in relation to social policy, preferring to

leave the solution with the family or market

4.5 Residualisation

This section examines evidence related to the thesis hypothesis of residualisation. Indicators reviewed here include more use of targeted payments, increased gaps between the rich and poor and new or shifting risks of inequality where those most distant from the labour market, older people, carers, women in the home, lone parents and people with disabilities, suffer most poverty. The section concludes there is significant Irish evidence of residualisation.

Greater use of targeted payments?

Competition state theory expects states to shift from universal to selective social security payments (Alber and Standing, 2000: 101), however 'Ireland is exceptional within the EU for the high proportion of its social spending which is means tested' (NESC, 2005: xvi). An already targeted welfare state does not need much adjustment to be consistent with the notion of a targeted competition state welfare regime.

The 1988 extension of the social insurance system to the self-employed and farmers, increased levels of employment participation and increased labour market participation of women all contributed to significantly greater coverage of the population in the social insurance system. However, so far, expanding social insurance provision has led to little shift in the balance between the numbers claiming social assistance and insurance payments nor led to progress in decreasing reliance on means-tested payments. Reliance on means-tested social assistance payments accounted for 46 per cent of payments in 1985 and rose to an all-time high of almost 60 per cent in 1995³⁰. Economic growth and a substantial decrease in long-term unemployment meant the numbers dependant on social assistance subsequently returned to the 1985 level of 45 per cent by 2000 and it has remained steady since at 45% in 2004. This reliance however remains the highest in Europe, three times the EU average and, for example, over nine times the level of Belgium. Such path dependency would be

³⁰ Unemployed claimants with exhausted eligibility to insurance-based payments had to revert to means tested payments, emerging school leavers went straight into means-tested payments and as O'Connor (2005: 11) suggests, changes in eligibility criteria for social insurance payments may have also shifted some claimants towards means tested payments.

reinforced by the (NESC 2005)³¹ recommendation that Ireland should maintain its hybrid model and reliance on means-tested payments³²

The structural persistence of a large number of social assistance claimants indicates a significantly residualised population (NESC, 2005) There is also increased vulnerability (Kirby 2005) Growth in the number of SWA claimants from 21m in 1985 to 332m euro in 2000 and 605m euro in 2004 in SWA-related expenditure shows greater reliance on a safety-net provision The major growth in supplementary rent allowance expenditure shows a partial adaptation to meet previously unrecognised housing needs and the increased social risk of homelessness (Hickey and Downey, 2005) Other indicators of residualisation, the numbers of homeless and the numbers using food banks (Friel and Conlon, 2004) also show increases in the late 1990's and early 2000's

Given already high levels of means-tested payments there is little surprise that no evidence can be found of movement from social insurance or universal to residualised means-tested payments In fact, for child-income support the opposite is true, a move from targeted payments to a greater focus on universal Child Benefit Over the late 1980s policy focused on concern that families with children faced potential poverty and unemployment traps The government focused on increased Child Benefit as its primary child-income support and anti-child poverty strategy From 1986 the role of means-tested child income support was de-emphasised and in 1994 a policy decision was made to freeze the nominal level of these payments This led to a fundamental shift in the structure of child income support for low-income families At the same time the social risks to be met through Child Benefit were

³¹ This recommendation is a significant policy shift from the previous 1986 CSW recommendation to expand social insurance coverage and, over time, reduce the use of social assistance payments

³² The distinction between social assistance and social insurance payments has somewhat blurred over this period There are means-tested income limits to various social insurance-based payments Improved income disregards in Unemployment Assistance and relatively high earnings thresholds for One Parent Family Payment and Disability Allowance and State Pension (formerly Non Contributory Old Age Pension) recipients bring the payments closer to a partial basic income style of payment Policy is very inconsistent across time and across claimants Some disregards have not been indexed and have deteriorated over time while at the same time other new and significant income disregards were introduced

stretched by political actors to include childcare (Montague, 2001). NESC (2005a:52) showed how in 1993 means- tested CDA expenditure was 25 per cent higher than the expenditure on universal Child Benefit and by 2003 Child Benefit was five times higher than expenditure on the more targeted payment.

The ratio of targeted to universal payment for low income families child income support shifted from 74:26 in 1993 to 37:63 in 2002 (CPA 2005b). This has impacted on the distributional outcome of child income support. For those in medium and higher income brackets who received only Child Benefit the value of the payment increased by 173% from 1994 to 2004. However low income families relying on the combined child-dependant allowances and Child Benefit saw a total increase in the combined child income support payments of only 52% from 1994 to 2004. This policy was clearly driven by work incentives and is a clear indicator of how social policy is subordinated to the needs of the economy and to a productivist reordering of social policy. The outcome is a stubborn and high level of child poverty (CPA, 2005).

Rise in overall income inequality

This shift from targeted to universal child income support payments runs counter to Alber and Standings (2000:101) expectation of shifts to means tested payments. However the outcome, high levels of child poverty, is consistent with the type of residualisation expected in a competition state (Cerny et al., 2005:17). For adult payments the reality remains a consistent reliance on high levels of targeted payments. These payments are not only means tested but are characterised by a minimal subsistence type of support (O'Connor A. 2005:35,101). For both fiscal and work incentive reasons payments have been allowed to decline relative to average net earnings. The Benchmarking Report (Ireland 2001b:46, Table 6.6) shows social welfare increases fell considerably below net earnings increases over the 1991 to 2001 period with the long-term UA payment increasing by 64 per cent compared to net average industrial earnings increasing by 109.1 per cent.

These low rates are a key contributory factor to worsening income distribution inequalities. The share of income of the bottom 10 per cent declined from 2.28 per cent of total income in 1987 to 1.74 percent in 2003 (Household Budget Surveys) While consistent deprivation based poverty fell, the inequality indicator or relative income poverty, increased to 21.3 per cent of households (CSO, 2005a,b), the highest relative income poverty in the EU where the average is 15 per cent (Eurostat, 2004). Responding to the analysis in Table 4.1 Whelan et al

(2003 38) commented ‘The levels of persistent poverty suggest that social policy is not responding effectively or intervening early enough to prevent poverty becoming long-term’

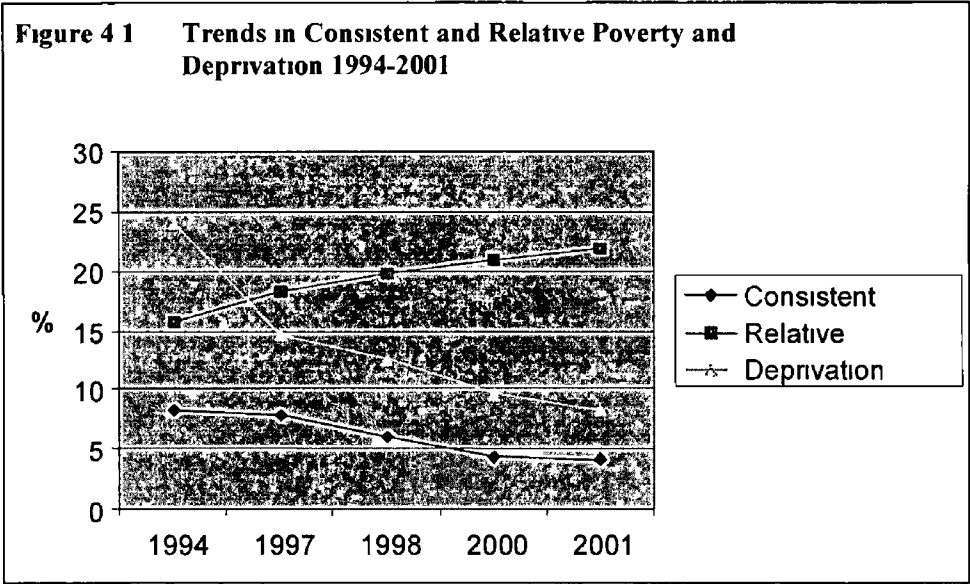


Figure 4 1 Poverty Trends 1994-2001 Source Whelan et al (2003), Monitoring Poverty Trends in Ireland Results from the 2001 Living in Ireland Survey, pp 37-39³³

Shift in who experiences risk of poverty

Competition state expectations are confirmed by shifts in the composition of welfare claimants who experience risk of poverty There are new and multiple forms of inequality with the weakest with those further away from the labour market and with more obstacles to labour market participation, suffering most from adaptation Shifts in the risk of poverty have moved across certain groups with the old, disabled and those on home duties, the vast majority of whom are women, experiencing a higher risk of poverty over this time These trends are consistent with the competition state hypothesis of greater income inequality The increased levels of employment, the net inward migration of labour-market-aged workers and the decreased unemployment rate have had little impact on Irish benefit dependency levels From 1986 to 2005 Irish benefit dependency ratios have held constant over the two

³³ Consistent Poverty Percentage of households below 60 per cent mean income threshold and experiencing basic deprivation Relative Poverty Percentage of households below 60 of median earnings Deprivation Risk of scoring one or more on basic deprivation index

decades at 20 per cent of the total population for claimants (37 per cent for all adult and child recipients), compared to 12.4 per cent of the total population in 1980³⁴

Ireland has however experienced a considerable shift in the types of benefits, with a drop in unemployment related claims and an increase in the numbers of people dependent on disability, lone-parent and caring contingencies (FAS 2004, Grubb 2004). Lone parents have shifted from less than 1 per cent of the working age population in 1980 to over 4 per cent in 1999. FAS (2004) observed how the total decrease in numbers unemployed (down 37,000 or 20 per cent) over 1998 to 2003 was absorbed by corresponding increases in the numbers on lone parent (up 13,000 or 21 per cent) or disability allowance (up 21,000 or 44 per cent) over the same period that the overall increase in working aged population rose by 260,000 or only 11 per cent. Some of this change can be explained by improvements in social welfare design and coverage, information and take up campaigns and rerouting people to more appropriate payments through Local Employment Services (LES) and the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP). Some of the shift is more structural and highlights new social risks.

Increases in numbers on disability allowance and lone parents allowance is also an indicator of the payments capacity to meet new social understandings of disability and family breakdown. The same can be said of the increase in numbers availing of Farm Assist as compared to farmers' smallholders' assistance and the numbers availing of improved carer's allowance, both of which meet previously unrecognised social risks³⁵. O'Connor A (2005: 21) notes that stability in the proportion of the working aged population in receipt of social welfare and their composition is problematic. NESC (2005a: 85) notes how 'a person may become entitled to social welfare when in their teens and remain on it until they are reclassified as early retired'. Despite this, and unlike other liberal regimes in the UK and the US, until 2006, (as described in section 4.3.3), there was no meaningful attempt to place time limits on entitlement.

34 Benefit dependency levels, the proportion of the working aged population claiming social security payments, vary across OECD countries ranging from 11 per cent of the working age population (15-64) in Japan to 24 per cent in France and 38 per cent in the Slovak Republic. However these figures are misleading as to some degree they do not capture the degree to which large sections of the population may be outside both the formal labour market and the benefit system.

Table 4 5 Percentage of persons below 60 per cent of median income by labour force status

	1994	1997	1998	2000	2001	2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Employee	3 2	4 7	2 6	6 5	8 1	9 2
Self Employed	16 0	14 4	16 4	17 9	14 3	-
Farmer	18 6	16 7	23 9	24 1	23 0	-
Unemployed	51 4	57 7	58 8	57 1	44 7	42 1
Ill / Disabled	29 5	52 5	54 5	52 2	66 5	54 0
Retired	8 2	13 5	18 4	30 3	36 9	31 0
Home Duties	20 9	32 6	46 8	44 3	46 9	37 0

Source CSO (2005) European Survey on Income and Living Conditions, First results 2003, Dublin

Table 4 5 illustrates the shift in the composition of groups experiencing relative poverty. Consistent with what would be expected under a competition state, those outside the labour market experience a higher risk of poverty. Unemployment, while still significant, is no longer the major risk factor, those with disabilities are now most likely to experience poverty while the aged lone parent and caring claimants are increasingly likely to experience relative poverty. Consistent with expectation of greater numbers of 'working poor' in competition states is the evidence that those in work experienced a 6 per cent increased risk of poverty, mainly experienced by part-time and casual women workers.

The risk of poverty is clearly associated with reliance on social security. Whelan et al, (2003 22, Table 4) highlights how those relying primarily on social welfare, particularly those in receipt of social assistance means-tested payments, are most likely to fall below poverty lines linked to average incomes. So while fewer people were unemployed the risk of poverty for those remaining unemployed doubled from 23 9 per cent in 1994 to 43 1 per cent in 2001, while for older people the risk increased in the same time frame from 5 3 per cent to 49 per cent.

Section Conclusion

The expectation of greater inequality and residualisation in competition states is entirely consistent with the Irish experience. Ireland has had clear path dependence towards means tested payments. This pauperisation of segments of society is directly attributable to a conscious policy decision to keep social welfare payments means tested and to keep social welfare payments at low and ungenerous levels. The risk of poverty has shifted to the most vulnerable, those relying solely on those payments and unable to access paid participation in the labour market. However even those who do access paid employment find this is not always enough to avoid poverty.

4.6 Regulation

This section reviews evidence relating to three aspects of the remaining hypotheses: Regulation. The section first reviews whether the function of the state is changing from direct delivery to regulator. It then reviews whether social security has been privatised and finally reviews how new public management concepts have been applied to social security delivery. The section concludes by commenting on the internal delivery agenda that drove the modernisation of Irish social security.

State as regulator

A regulatory state 'provides a framework of rules and performance indicators or targets for market actors to follow' (Cerny et al., 2005:17). While Ireland had historically been a mixed economy welfare state, social security, unlike health and education, has been an exclusively statutory responsibility (Cousins 1995a, Fanning 1999). Over the past two decades the state has made some attempts to divest itself of secondary social security functions thus following a more regulatory path. It did so primarily in an indirect fashion, by promoting the social inclusion role of the non-profit private sector. The Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP, Ireland 1991) initiated the first local Area Based Partnerships to which the state delegates employment support functions including the Local Employment Service (LES). The White Paper Supporting Voluntary Activity (2000:69) sought to define and regulate the relationship between the state and the Community and Voluntary (DSFCA 2000f) sector and signalled a shift to service contracts requiring a new model for third-sector organisations (Acheson et al 2004:123). NESC (2005a:206-7) proposes a further 'shift in governance and reinvention of the role of the state away from provision of services to a

regulator of rights and standards and enabler of local activist networks' NESF (2006) recommends that a National Strategic Framework would support a Local Partnership Network based on interagency working of statutory and non statutory local service providers who work through annual Service Delivery Agreements. This changing style of governance is however slow to evolve and there is considerable distance between the rhetoric of recommendations and policy implementation.

Privatisation

Changing governance means more than simple delegation of tasks. Renegotiation of the relationship between the private and public spheres involves a shift in power. One area where government policy facilitated a shift in power was pensions policy where government invited the private pension industry to chair the National Pensions Board (NPB). This business-led governance promoted the commodification or privatisation of pensions. Strongly advocated by the international financial services sector, the Pensions (Amendment) Act 2002 introduced second-tier private Pension Savings Retirement Accounts. This policy was chosen in spite of opposition from civil service advisers who found themselves disempowered in this new form of governance. A further but failed example of the states' attempt to divest itself of its traditional social protection role was when attempts to transfer disability protection to employers were blocked by the veto power of employers in 1988 and 1992. This contrasts with the UK experience where the state was successful in privatising disability payments. US firms have been enabled through government fiscal policy to provide private welfare packages which include private health insurance and disability protection. Government has also encouraged the Irish Farmers Association to adopt a private market solution to farmers' social risk of disability. Evidence suggests Irish governments want to divest themselves of social security functions but can only do so with the consent of business and employers. Irish governments are vulnerable to veto players blocking policy and perhaps are less able to divest social protection functions than other liberal regimes.

New Public Management

A parallel government administrative reform agenda was also evident from the early 1990s and was launched as the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) in 1994 (Murray and Teahon, 1997). This required all Departments to focus on the quality of public service and the concept of customer care. Consumerism, choice and new public management discourse were evident in the Public Services Management Act (1997). SMIs involved 'customer

service plans', 'customer service targets' and 'service delivery models'. The Irish experience mirrored international public service reform experiences where many countries incorporated a value-for-money approach with customer care, staff training and customer charters (DSCFA 2000a,c,d). Interviews with policy makers highlight that 'expenditure reviews' which emphasise value for money had some impact on policy development.

Changes in social security delivery during this period were consistent with the Irish SMI focus on the claimant as a customer. This change led to significant improvement in service delivery. Some of the change agenda was driven by internal staff processes and trade unions. However well-organised and ambitious claimant groups also forced the pace of change. In an interview with the author one senior DSFA official remarked how 'key voluntary sector organisations dragged us into the 20th century'. However evaluations highlight considerable resistance to new public management practices and institutional change in the Irish public service (NESC, 2003). A strong centralised bureaucracy has a strong veto on change. This is reinforced by the strength of the public sector trade unions to veto change. Irish targets and performance indicators are applied in a more softly negotiated fashion than, for example, more punitive UK league tables. Reforms in a highly consensual political system such as those in Denmark or the Netherlands usually have to achieve a higher degree of cross-party acceptance and this usually moderates the more extreme ideological type of reform (Pollit, 2005).

Modernisation and Fraud Control

The residual safety-net emphasis of the Irish social welfare system had always meant the need for an effective administration of weekly payments. One of the greatest challenges for Irish social security policy and the related modernisation agenda is the delivery challenge which dominated the DSFA (formerly DSW and DSFCA) over the two decades. While some delivery focused changes can be traced to the ideological neo-liberal management values of competition states other localised drivers or triggers of initiatives to modernise Irish social security predated SMI type public sector reform agendas. Very high levels of unemployment of the 1980's pressurised the Department to administer in excess of 300,000 weekly unemployment payments. This, combined with its usual workload, put huge strain on the Departments' internal administrative infrastructure and preoccupied the Department over the 1980's and 1990's. Near calamity occurred when systems failed in a transition from Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI) to Personal Public Service Numbers (PPSN) in 1979 and again when a new IT system failed in the late 1980's. In both instances hundreds of

thousands of claimants faced non-payment and money was paid on demand to avert disaster. In a clientalist and populist administration politicians must be able to assure voters of the effective delivery of such a basic weekly payment. The Department were under pressure to deliver.

However the author's interviews with key Departmental staff reveal an alternative motivation for increased investment in more efficient operational systems. Exposure of high levels of disability fraud in the mid 1980's had caused shock waves within the Department and wider civil service and forced the unprecedented resignation of the Departmental Secretary General. Politicians³⁶ were subsequently reluctant to spend public monies on social security without being assured that the Department was operating the most effective fraud control mechanisms possible. Minister Woods responded by pioneering investment in modern administrative systems that ensured the credibility of social security budgets. The fact that the Department was one of the first in the world to invest in a technically advanced administrative infrastructure was more an outcome of local crisis in delivery systems than because of a shift towards the type of new public management expected in a competition state.

The evidence supports the thesis hypothesis that Irish social security delivery demonstrates features of regulation, privatisation and new public management. However these features are constrained by the slow movement towards more regulatory governance of social security. Reform has been limited by the capacity of employers and trade unions to veto change and the way new public management has been negotiated in Irish political culture (NESC 2003, 2005b). By far the biggest driver of change in systems and management of social security was a local concern about path dependent problems associated with the effective delivery of a large volume of weekly payments. This concern occasioned the 1985 restructuring of the Department of Social Welfare into a small Aireacht or policy making section and the services directorate which focused only on delivery. This focus on delivery is perhaps more politically sensitive in a proportional representational electoral system (PR) where brokerage

³⁶ Sensitivity to fraud is often attributed to the FF political culture which supports social security for the deserving poor and Fine Gael's (FG) historically suspicious attitude towards social security. However fraud appears to have been a concern of all parties including the social democrat and left wing parties in the 1990s.

politics makes government more sensitive to efficient delivery and more vulnerable to the electoral consequence of any administrative systems failure. The legacy however is a weak policy system and weak policy making capacity.

Three legacies are apparent. The openness of Irish industrial policy enhanced the Department's early capacity to pioneer such technology. The Department were able to utilise the presence of a US multi-national information technology firm, Digital, to pioneer sophisticated social security delivery systems. The Department has since gone on to trade this technology on the global market and acted as expert adviser to many countries globally, a rather unexpected example of the influence of globalisation on Irish social welfare development. The nature of the delivery challenge and its focus on fraud control and administrative efficiency led the Department towards technology systems that maximised internal efficiencies but which were underdeveloped in relation to enabling tracking of data for the purposes of policy development and information exchange across agencies. The legacy of the delivery challenge is also important in that it had an impact on the policy-making capacity of the DSFA. With a clear priority given to delivery agendas the Department never developed a full policy capacity. Policy functions continue to be delegated to social partnership institutions and private consultancy companies.

4.7 Defamiliarisation

As argued earlier the trend towards commodification has to be assessed differently for women where a move to paid employment has different implications in terms of social citizenship. Here the question is not so much whether the focus is on moving women into employment (which can be considered an extension of women's social rights) but whether that move into employment (which undoubtedly occurred) was enhanced by, individualisation in social security structures that enable greater independence of the family, access to education and training to increase the likelihood of access decently paid employment, childcare provision to enable women adequately accommodate care responsibilities. If this has not been the case then the movement of women into paid employment is a less significant extension of social rights than might otherwise have been the case.

Individualisation

Pressure from the Irish women's movement and the legal requirements of the EU 79 / 7 Equality Directive resulted in a considerable restructuring of the social security system in the early 1980's. However, this restructuring was reluctantly undertaken. The Fourth Report of the Joint Committee on Women's Rights (Ireland 1996d) observed that both political and legal intervention was required to force full implementation. Further anomalies arising from such reforms led to a legal challenge regarding the relative treatment of married and cohabitating couples. Government responded to the need to equalise treatment of married and cohabiting couples by levelling down and limiting the amount of social protection that could be awarded to all new two-adult households. This limitation rule³⁷ was a considerable reinforcement of the male breadwinner system. There was some symbolic reform of language in the male breadwinner model including renaming 'dependant adults' as 'Qualified Adults' (QA) and a collective renaming of prisoners wives, unmarried mothers and deserted wives allowances as 'lone parents allowances' in 1993 and then 'one parent family' payments in 1997. While these changes reduced the labelling of women as related to men they did not fundamentally alter the male breadwinner social security model.

Although the number is declining, there were still 119,000 Qualified Adults in 2004, 95 per cent of them women. Despite extensive lobbying, there has been only slow progress towards voluntary or mandatory individualisation of payments (Murphy 2003). While the One Parent Family Payment enables access to employment, it still prohibits, by regulation, 'meaningful' relationships between men and women by restricting co-habitation (a social, sexual or financial relationship with a person of the opposite sex) (DSFA, 2006, NESF, 2001). Women are forced to live as 'independent' claimants or dependent cohabiters by regulations which impose lifestyle and behavioural limits and restrict women from forming family lives of their choice (NESF, 2001, DSFA, 2000e). However it is not clear in mid 2006 whether a recent proposal to abolish One Parent Family Payment, the limitation rule and the Qualified Adult will survive a number of possible vetoes to become policy.

³⁷ The limitation rule limited the total amount of social security an unemployed two-person household could claim to that of an adult and an adult dependant (or approximately 1.6% of an adult payment)

Women's Access to Education and Training

Up to the mid 1990's the issue of unemployment in Ireland was a predominantly male issue, much of women's unemployment remained hidden, and women were considered in social security terms as the 'qualified adults' of unemployed men. While Ireland had a significant investment in Active Labour Market measures, few were oriented at women and of those where women had high participation rates, such as Community Employment, there was low progression into paid employment (DSFA 2006). In 1996 the INOU and the NWCI cooperated for the first time to establish a 'Breaking the Barriers' campaign to reform how the live register acted as a barrier to women's access to state employment schemes, training and education opportunities. The groups negotiated a policy process through P2000 to make recommendations concerning underlying access by women to labour market programmes and supports. The P2000 Working Group on Women's Access to Labour Market Opportunities (Access Group, Ireland 2000a). The group only reached consensus on a lowest common denominator consensus recommendation to extend eligibility for certain programmes to Qualified Adults of those on the live register. Spouses of those in low income and women who have been primarily engaged in domestic or care duties in the home were not considered eligible. Few of the large number of recommendations were implemented, even a basic Recommendation (No 18) to develop an 'Information Manual' guide for women seeking to return to work was not implemented (Ireland 2000a).

Despite a €40 million Equality for Women measure in the National Development Plan 2000-2007 the issue of women's participation in the labour market has yet to capture public or political imagination. An NESF (2006) project team Towards An Inclusive Labour Market, which aimed to increase the participation of atypical workers in the labour market, also failed to advance the policy interests of women as atypical workers. In the process of compiling the report the male secretariat refused an offer from the Department of Justice Gender Equality Unit (GEU) to gender proof the report. Such was the frustration of those advocating gender focused reforms that both the GEU and the NWCI took the unusual step of complaining in writing to the Chairperson of the NESF that the offer to gender proof the report had been rejected. The NESF has been critiqued for what was considered a weak gender analysis in NESF DWS (2005a). The Equality Authority were concerned enough to fund a gender equality audit of the substantial NESF DWS (2005a) report.

There were however some social security policy changes to enable women access to employment. In 1996, social insurance payments were extended to part-time workers (80 per cent of whom are women). The same year saw improvements in rules concerning means testing of work-related income for Qualified Adult payments (95 per cent of whom are women). In 1990 parenting alone payments were restructured into a pro-work incentive Lone Parent Allowance and then in 1997 further changes were made so that a new One Parent Family Payment incorporated a specific income disregard to compensate for the cost of childcare for lone parents (95 per cent of whom are women). This disregard was however not indexed and lost value (Loftus 2005) until its value was partially restored in Budget 2006. While the disregard was useful and while over 60% of recipients accessed paid employment, the structure of the payment trapped women in low paid and part time employment and limited its effectiveness in enabling women move into full time employment (McCashin 2004).

More market provision of childcare

Women's social risk is closely associated with children and the cost of childcare. Care emerges as a central issue in women's labour market decisions, mothers' decisions are mediated primarily by childcare responsibilities and secondly by employment opportunities. Childcare lobby groups do not accept that increases in child benefit are a contribution towards meeting childcare costs and it is generally accepted that the government failed to respond, in a meaningful way, to childcare challenges associated with greater female labour force participation (Oakley 2005). Over the two decades the Department introduced payments to support parenting (Adoptive payments, the extension of Maternity Benefit and the introduction of Maternity Assistance) and indicated its willingness to administer, but not fund, a Parental Leave payment. However lobby groups continue to highlight the failure to further extend maternity leave / Benefit or to introduce paid parental leave (Murphy, 2003). The primary childcare strategy of the past decade has been the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme under the equality framework of the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform which, in the main, has worked to incentivise increased supply in the private childcare market. This is consistent with what might be expected in a competition state.

Coakley (2005) notes how the EU policy framework where paid work is seen as the key to

participation and social inclusion and as a route out of poverty and where the adult worker model promotes increased labour force participation of mothers. She highlights ambiguity concerning the new norm of working parenthood on the one hand and moral expectations of parental responsibility on the other. NWCI (2000: 8) argue that while encouraging participation in paid employment government policy also assumes 'women will respond to all of societies caring needs on a unpaid basis'. Highlighting the need for a set of interrelated support frameworks for mothers in low-income families Coakley (2005) advocates reframing policy in a paradigm which includes choice, security and well-being in work and care for mothers, fathers and children.

The DSFA (2006) represents an important step in Irish social security policy. If implemented the report proposal will significantly advance both individualisation of social security and activation of low income mothers into paid employment. However it is not clear whether there is policy commitment from other agencies for the training, education and childcare reforms that need to accompany the proposed social security reforms (O'NEILL 2006). The DSFA (2006) analysis accepts that Ireland is out of line with international best practice when it comes to supporting low income mothers into paid employment. It could be said that women have returned to work in spite of the unavailability of labour market supports directly oriented towards women's education and training needs. The defamiliarisation of Irish women has yet to occur.

7.8 Offensive or defensive social policy?

Having reviewed the five sets of indicators (developed by the author for the purpose of evaluating Irish social security reform over the past two decades) it is now possible to conclude. There is sufficient evidence to confirm a recommodification of Irish social security. However there is also evidence to suggest this happened in a slow and incremental way. Key limitations include less conditionality, less privatisation and fiscalisation of social security and lack of labour market, social security and childcare reforms enabling more movement of women to work. Two factors might explain the lack of pace of reform. Irish path dependency is an important factor in explaining the relatively slow reform process. With payments already highly targeted and residualised there was little room for retrenchment and, with over 30 adult contingency payments, implementing change is complex. High levels of economic growth and significant decreases in unemployment also

meant less pressure for reform. However these two factors alone can not account for the style of Irish reform.

NESC (2005a) argues there are in fact significant pressures for reform of Irish social security. These pressures include high levels of benefit dependency, inequality and in-work poverty and, the overarching pressure for reform, the need to compete in a competitive global market. NESC (2005a ix-xiii) identifies the problem that 'social policy as a whole is not sufficiently aligned with the economic policies being pursued by the state' and identifies the challenge of reconceptualising the welfare system to 'connect more fully with the dynamic economy'. NESC (2005a 1) argued that 'the social dividend of strong economic performance must however take forms that are supported of the country's ongoing ability to trade advantageously in the world economy'. This is consistent with a move to a productivist and recommodified social policy. The chapter ends by reflecting on the style of Irish commodification prescribed by NESC and asks whether it is most similar to 'offensive' neo-statist social policy' found in Netherlands and Denmark or defensive neo-liberal welfare-to-work strategies found in the UK and the US (Torfing 1999).

The Developmental Welfare State

It is difficult to read between the lines of Irish rhetoric and assess a realistic policy position from the ambiguous and contradictory discourse that dominates much Irish and other countries national political discourse (Montague 2001, Roche 1984, Veit-Wilson 1998). It is clear that within the process of deliberating the Developmental Welfare State there is a strong policy coalition seeking to promote a positive social policy of a social investment type state. An alternative coalition seeks to limit social protection to that consistent with a low taxation competition state. This tension is resolved by use of ambiguous language typified by the phrases 'supportive conditionality' (NESF 1994, NESC 1999) and 'sensitive activation' (NESC 2003). Take for example the following NESC statements (2005a 221) describing how Irish activation policy

is not based on time limits or coercion but on the obligation and the need for welfare recipients and public authorities alike to periodically review the extent to which recipients best interests are being facilitated by the arrangements governing their access to an income

The taking of employment if coerced seldom leads to a lasting job match or

provides employers with the quality of employees they seek. What can be required of welfare recipients is participation in interviews where the range of public supports available to them are explored and they are offered every assistance to identify their personal goals and seek the means to realise them.

Torring (1999) argues that an offensive strategy disarticulates the concept of welfare from neo-liberal discourse and rearticulates it in a social democratic and universalistic discourse. Nicaise (2002) also distinguishes different approaches along an axis with a welfare approach and a social inclusion approach as the two opposing poles. The NESC description above, while ambiguous, seems more consistent with a social democratic or social inclusion than a neo-liberal or welfare discourse. However closer examination shows that the content of the policies proposed do not necessarily match such rhetoric. Defensive neo-liberal welfare to work strategies are characterised by ungenerous payments, such as in the UK and the US, that result in more inequality and in-work poor. Key characteristics differentiating offensive strategies in the Netherlands and Denmark (Torrington, 1999: 18) include activation based on education and training aimed at skill improvement rather than job search, broad programmes that upgrade the work of the skills of the workforce in general work, rather than focusing on only welfare recipients, a legal framework which guarantees that a person cannot be activated into 'futile work for the sake of work', empowerment rather than surveillance, control or punishment, relatively high rates of payment, more equitable outcomes and less in-work poor. Table 4.5 compares a welfare offensive model against the present Irish model and that proposed in the NESC developmental state model.

Table 4 6 Different workfare models, Offensive, Present Irish, DWS

Offensive Model	Present Irish Model	Developmental Welfare State (NESC 2005a)
Activation based on education and training aimed at skill improvement rather than job search	NEAP focused on job search Community Employment focused on social needs rather than skills Back to Education Allowance restricted	Participation income focus ambiguous, individually tailored, will include education and training but primarily aimed at self reliance and employment
Broad programmes that upgrade the skills of the workforce in general work (not just focusing on welfare recipients)	Segregated and targeted	Universal services but individually targeted and locally tailored
Legal framework guarantees no activation into 'futile work for the sake of work', empowerment rather than surveillance / punishment	Some empowering discourse Discourse highlights fraud control No legal guarantees	More empowering discourse Active control & review of payment No legal guarantee but framework for rights and standards
Relatively high rates of payment (Torfing 1999 18) Few in-work poor	Low welfare payments for all Significant increase of in-work poor	Low 'basic' welfare payments for working aged, higher for children and elderly In-work poor likely and tackled with 'services dividend'

O'Connor (2005 183) advised there is a thin line between supportive and punitive policies. While Irish policy is more conditional, or punitive, than might be generally accepted it is not as punitive as liberal models especially as the type of US and UK models described by Torfing as clearly defensive. However the Irish preoccupation with fraud control and the tendency to link control and surveillance objectives with activation objectives (O'Rallagaigh, 2005) limits the empowerment aspect of the policy. Likewise job search rather than skills enhancement has been the clear focus of the NEAP activation strategy. The social democratic and universal orientation of the Danish offensive model requires broad inclusive up-skilling programmes targeted at all workers rather than just welfare recipients. NESC (2005a) on the other hand, proposes to retain a layer of local 'activist' services to target those most in need.

Low rates of generosity differentiate Ireland, with replacement ratios of less than 30 percent gross average industrial earnings, from offensive policies which are characterized by relatively high rates of payment with replacement ratios of 89-96 per cent gross average industrial earnings for low-income groups (NESC 2005a 19). These low replacement ratios correlate with the highest level of income inequality in the EU 15. The defensive model outcome of increased numbers of working poor is also a feature of Irish policy where the percentage of employees below the 60 per cent median income line rose from 8.3 per cent in 1994 to 18.8 per cent in 2001 (Whelan et al., 2003 24). NESC envisages a hybrid social security regime with a large number of means-tested recipients in receipt of a relatively ungenerous 'participation income'. NESC's (2005a 19,219) recommends that people of working age should receive a 'basic payment' to enable a 'minimum threshold of income adequacy' to 'guarantee them access to the basic necessities of life' and identifies the NAPS target of €150 in 2002 terms by 2007 as 'the minimum justified by the present circumstances'. It is difficult to interpret this as a proposal for generous rates.

To conclude the present discussion, present Irish policy is so far consistent with a defensive model and the NESC DWS recommendation of Danish flexicurity represents a shift towards a more offensive model. However it ultimately fails to fully disarticulate the concept of welfare from a neoliberal discourse. Ireland is more likely to maintain her place in the Anglo Saxon welfare world with a mix of efficient but inequitable welfare policies than to move into a Nordic world of flexicurity with efficient and equitable outcomes (Sapir, 2005).

4.8 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter explored the development of Irish social security policy over two decades in a framework developed by the author as applications of the logic of the competition state to social security. The five broad areas reviewed review. It then over the next five sections addresses trends relating to aspects of activation / conditionality, retrenchment, residualisation, regulation and defamiliarisation confirmed a significant level of recommodification of Irish social security policy but not as much as one might have expected given Ireland's level of economic openness to the highly globalised economy and the keenly felt pressures of international competitiveness, already expressed in a low taxation and social expenditure model. This is especially so in relation to working aged women who appear to have experienced increased labour market participation without significant defamiliarisation. One might expect not only a greater level of recommodification of Irish social security but also given the mid 1990's experience of welfare reform in both liberal regimes and countries like Netherlands and Denmark that this would also have happened sooner (Sweeny and O'Donnell 2003, NESF 2000, Loftus 2005, OPEN, 2006). The Chapter concluded however that NESC DWS is an important benchmark and a clear indicator that Ireland began, in the early 2000s, to engage in a more robust recommodification agenda. The ambiguity on NESC discourse suggests that while further reform is likely to be towards a more productivist and recommodified model this reform is likely to be modest in scale and pace and not of the degree anticipated in a Competition State.

What is it that limits the pace and scale of development of Irish social security? Pierson P (1998) expects 'irresistible forces' (endogenous or exogenous pressures for change) to collide against 'immovable objects' (path dependent national institutions, interests and ideas). Swank (2002) hypothesises, that the type of domestic political institutions and the number of veto points are crucial variables that determine domestic capacity to negotiate restructuring or recalibration. Torfing (1999:5) identified the process of the political mediation of policy or the discursive construction of policy discourse as a key variable in determining type of change. Competition state theorists emphasise the relationship between transforming governance and the changing nature of a more complex and fragmented multilevel state. The thesis now moves in a new direction, a direction that explores how policy is mediated and what factors influence policy mediation. The next chapter outlines and discusses how the key characteristics of changing social security governance might account for some of the policy choices of this era.

No government has so far been prepared to display to parliament or to the public the actual processes by which it reaches decisions in the field (Sir Samuel Goldman, British Treasury 1971, in Hecló et al 1974a xx1)

CHAPTER FIVE

IRISH SOCIAL SECURITY POLICY

COMMUNITY

5 1 Introduction

The aim of this Chapter is to examine the effects of the consensual and clientalistic nature of Irish politics on policy capacities and policy styles. Competition state theorists claim that globalisation is primarily a political construction used to legitimise shifts in governance and power. These shifts lead to recommodifying policy outcomes which prioritise the market. Domestic mediation, national political culture and institutions, interests and ideas determine the national style of policy recommodification. This question is approached in two ways: firstly the chapter examines the domestic Irish social security policy community and to explore shifts in governance within that community. It uses the indicators framework introduced in Chapter 2 but uses indicators relating to how policy is mediated in the policy process. This is to assess the types of shifts in governance including a growing complexity and fragmentation of the policy community, shifts in power towards capital within that community, multilevel governance and emergence of a new policy elite (Cerny, 2002a). It should be noted that descriptions and evaluations of the various aspects of the policy system is perhaps over-reliant on implicit self-evaluations of that community in the elite interviews by policy actors from within the community.

<i>How/Process</i>	<i>Transforming governance</i>
Iron Triangle to Golden Pentagon	Presence of international policy elite Multilevel governance
Fragmented and Complex	More actors More institutional spaces

Power shifts to capital	Shifts in power between institutions Regulation
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The Chapter is also guided by the framework developed to examine the rationale of social security change. It will examine the veto culture of the Irish state, the social security policy capacity of the state and how the state manages social security policy discourse. Any examination of policy discourse is made difficult by the use of ambiguity by government, both as a method of producing consensus, for reducing conflict, and as a method of securing implementation. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to exhaust an examination of policy discourse and the reader should be alerted to the rather cursory and brief treatment of discourse.

<i>WHY/Rationale</i>	<i>Conservative and consensus policy community</i>
Conservative values seek to preserve status quo	The PR electoral system Catholic Church values Patriarchal power structures
Weak policy community	Under resourced policy community Role of social partnership Civil society role underdeveloped
Lack of policy discourse	Coordinative problem-solving discourse Pragmatic rejection of ideological input Insular and dominated by EU discourse

The chapter uses veto theory to map key characteristics of the Irish state and outlines Irish vetoes including the proportional representational electoral system, the political culture of consensus, the Irish civil service, social partnership and the middle class. The concept of the golden pentagon (Cerny, 2002a) is used to map and critically analyse five key features of the Irish social security policy community: politicians, bureaucrats and non-elected office holders, multilevel governance and policy elites. Having mapped the community, the chapter then examines how policy ideas are processed within that community. It concludes that the interdependent dynamic of Irish institutions, interests and discourse about policy influences

the breath and pace of social security reform options. In particular the closed co-ordinative discourse restricts social security change to small scale incremental reform.

Parsons (1995:14) understands policy as an intended course of action or the rationale or decision to adopt, or not to adopt, an option from competing courses of action. Policy community refers to institutional spaces and ideational processes where actors where actors with a common policy focus use a shared language work to discuss and bargain about policy ideas (Sabitier, 1989). Policy science literature warns against attempts to analyse too much order in chaotic policy processes (Burton, 2001). Each process is unique, complex and has too many variables to be packaged into a one-size fit all model (Howlett and Ramesh, 1995). It is helpful nonetheless to disaggregate policy processes into three discrete independent variables: 'interests', 'institutions' and 'ideas' which Hay (2004a:204) argues actively determine the pace and direction of policy change in any policy community. While Hay often refers to ideas as significant paradigm shaping ideas in this context I refer to ideas as more small scale 'policy ideas'. This thesis aims to ultimately account for the explanatory power of all three variables. The journey begins, however, by mapping relevant institutional spaces, the actors within those spaces and the interests of those actors in the social security policy community of the Irish state.

5.2 Irish Veto Players

There is a lively literature contesting different understandings of the Irish state, its capacity, level of autonomy and model of development. Ó'Riain and O'Connell (2000) argue for a state-centred Irish 'flexible developmental state' where separate economic development and distributive roles are managed by a relatively autonomous 'state-led' social partnership process. Marxist informed approaches, which emphasise labour and capital power relations include Allen's (2000) class analysis, O'Hearn's (1998) dependency approach and Cousins (1995,2005a) 'power relations industrialisation'. These emphasise how constraints imposed by dependence on foreign investment and class conflict inform the policy decisions of a less autonomous state. Kirby (2002) argues that Ireland's changing relationship to the global economy brings with it changes in domestic policy as the state is transformed, to meet the needs of global capital, into a more complex and fragmentary competition state which subordinates social policy to the needs of the economy. Taylor (2005), drawing on Jessop's (2002) Schumpeterian Workfare State, stresses the growing importance of negotiated

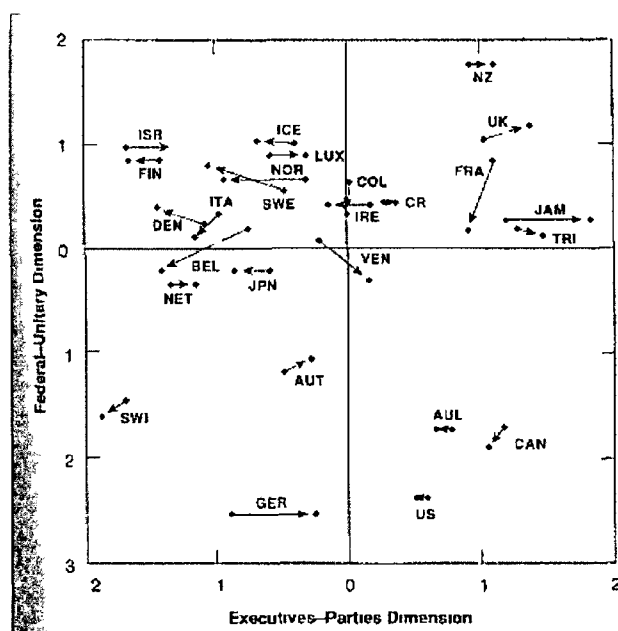
governance of public policy. While the literature captures serious debate and difference of opinion about the nature of the Irish state it is also possible to reflect on common observations about key characteristics of the peculiar post colonial institutions of the Irish state. These include the proportional representation electoral the system, populist culture and use of corporatist governance. There is also consensus in the literature that the early Irish state was conservative. It set much store on continuity of policy making and rejecting any policy innovation (Lee 1989; Acheson et al.; 2004, Ferriter 2004). The emphasis on economic liberalism under the Cumman na nGaelhead, and insular economic protection under Fianna Fáil was embedded in the national psyche. Kiam Caudle's (1967:96) observation 'the view that a welfare society and economic progress are incompatible is still widely held' remains as valid today as when he wrote it in 1967. The next section examines these national institutions and argues that in addition to this conservative economic culture there is also a strong veto culture in Irish policy communities.

For the status quo to change, a certain number of individual or collective decision makers must agree to this change. A veto player can be understood as 'an individual or collective actor whose agreement is required for a policy decision' (Tseblis, 2000:209). Relative to comparable Anglo Saxon regimes, Ireland has a higher and an increasing number of veto players³⁸. Lijphart's map of shifts in democratic styles in 26 states from 1980 to 2000 illustrates how Ireland moved from a majoritarian style democracy to a consensus-oriented democracy³⁹. Ireland is the only English speaking country or liberal welfare regime on the left hand 'consensus' axis.

³⁸ Lijphart (1999) hypothesised that countries with coalition governments, bicameral legislatures, flexible constitutions, presidential institutions, corporate interest group mediation, federal or decentralised governance and PR-based electoral systems will have more veto players and as a result will experience more difficulty in achieving policy change

³⁹ Ireland is characterised by Lijphart (1999: 67, 114-117, 189) as a unitary and centralised, two and half party, semi-presidential system with parliament and an elected president, a medium influencing prime Minister and as being 'weakish' in relation to judicial review and constitutional rigidity.

Figure 5 1 Shifts in Democratic styles of 26 states Lijphart (1999 255)



Since 1981 the number of Irish veto players increased relative to other English speaking liberal regimes⁴⁰ Key Irish vetoes, the proportional representational electoral system, coalition government, civil service, social partners and the middleclass are discussed below

A highly centralised executive cabinet dominates a bicameral parliament of the ‘Dail’ and ‘Seanad’ (Connolly, 2004 249) Such highly centralised governance should make it relatively easy for a political party with a parliamentary majority to implement significant welfare change (Cousins, 2005a 123) However, over the last two decades, it has proven impossible for one political party to achieve a parliamentary majority Lijphart (1999) distinguished between parliamentary systems with multi member districts with Proportional Representation (PR) and single member first-past-the-post plurality or majority voting systems Like Malta, the Irish electoral system has national level multi-seat constituencies ranging from three to five seats decided by Proportional Representation Single Transferable Vote (PRSTV) (Sinnott, 2004)⁴¹ Gillespie (I T 18 02 2006) describes this type of system as

⁴⁰ Using a different methodology Tsebelis (2002) ranks Ireland as medium in relation to veto players, with more veto players than Australia and double the veto players of UK, Canada and New Zealand Tsebelis does not score the US but expects it to ran high on veto players It may be important that Ireland is significantly different to other English speaking countries

⁴¹ See Lijphard (1999,148) and Sinnott (2004) for full explanation of PRSTV

having 'seismographic qualities which enable minor tremors in public opinion transfer into significant changes in parliamentary representation'. This electoral system is more favourable to smaller parties and independents and reinforces the likelihood of coalition governments and a veto culture (Lijphart, 1999:150). Contending politicians, in order to attract as wide a range of transfers as possible, avoid controversy, 'crowd the middle' and cloud ideological differences⁴². Multi-seat constituencies lead to intra-party competition, when politicians are unable to differentiate themselves by way of party or policy they instead emphasise brokerage relations with the electorate. Thus the political culture is 'localistic, clientalistic and intensely responsive' Boyle (2005:22). Local political knowledge is an important input to policymaking and counteracts alternative sources of analysis from academics or experts. This type of electoral system is also open to sensitive to key groups who can swing votes including transfers towards or away from certain parties or candidates. Gillespie (I.T. 18.02.2006). It advantages large interest groups representing sectoral or local interests. These groups if they have sufficient organisational capacity to swing their membership or public opinion will get more disproportionately more attention from the political system. This leads to dysfunction in the policy system where policy decisions that are in the national interest may fall to lobbying from sectoral interests. Both de Buitlear et al., (1998) and Barry (2005:49) lament the quality of Irish governance and the clientalist nature of the political system.

Irish PRSTV led to permanent coalition government, electoral uncertainty and short-term political tenure. This changed the nature of government decision-making and reinforced short term political decision making where budget spending followed electoral cycles (Cousins, 2005b). Parties manage or minimise potential policy conflict among coalition partners by using programme managers to gain early consensus of all party leaders involved in the government (Murray and Teahon, 1997; 258, O'Halpin, 1996: 8). This more complex and fragmented policy-making process makes it difficult to move without consensus and leads to procrastination and paralysis.

⁴² This is especially so because governments are decided, not by who wins the first seat, but in multi-seat constituencies, who wins the last seat. Last seats are always decided on transfers and are often not determined until the eight or ninth count. The need to attract transfers from opposing parties leads parties towards playing safe in order not to alienate potential transfers. This reinforces consensus politics.

The Irish civil service is characterised by its homogeneity. Catholic, middle class, male, with a rural, educated background, the typical civil servant works in a conservative culture that has been slow to transform under the Strategic Management Initiative (NESC, 2003; Pollit, 2005). Policy change is dominated by slow, incremental, path dependant administrative considerations (Crotty, 1998). Civil servants can and do veto policy agendas. The civil service is not a monolithic interest group. Departments compete with each other and the Department of Finance has effective veto power over other Departments. Policy capacity is generally weak and, because government Departments have devolved policy functions to numerous statutory agencies, is increasingly fragmented. Two key features limit civil service power. EMU has reinforced Department of Finance vetoes of public expenditure decisions. Access to Ministerial power is also more limited in the more crowded policy community. A senior civil servant observed to the author how:

Access to the Minister varies from Minister to Minister, but access to policy is diminishing because of the multitude of channels and more actors, there are almost a dozen channels to the Minister. It's a more crowded policy space with a lot more different groups.

One reason the space is more crowded is the establishment in 1987 of Social Partnership (NESF 1997; McCarthy, 1998, 1999; Murray and Teahon, 1987). A different animal to continental state corporatism, the Irish social partnership process and individual Irish social partners have evolved as strong veto players (Hardiman 2001; NESC, 2005b) and act as a barometer of consensus (NESF, 1997). The composition of both the civil service and social partners is very much male, white and middle class. Cousins (1995, 2005a) and Hardiman (1998) highlight the power of the bourgeois or middle class in determining the development of a tiered welfare state. McLaughlin (2002) notes the power of professional elites. Case studies of the politics of redistribution highlight the veto power of the middle class, reflected the influence of the media, as an important variable in the Irish income related policy debate (Montague (2001), Lawless (2001) and O Flynn (1999). The state also remains patriarchal. Women (and other groups experiencing inequality) are underrepresented in decision-making (NWCI, 2004; Galligan, 1998; O'Connor, 2006; Hardiman, 1998).

Ireland's distinctive postcolonial political institutions and populist culture can be distinguished from other countries with liberal welfare regimes. The Irish constitution has directly vetoed social security policy in relation to gender related social security decisions

The impact of the Catholic religion on national political culture, and through that, on the content and character of social welfare systems is discussed by McCashin (2004) and McLaughlin (2002). However it is not clear that Catholicism has had a very significant impact on Irish social security. In an overview sense Catholic values are reflected in the constitution and the special emphasis on the family and the mother in Irish social policy religion but the Church did not directly influence on social security policy as it did health or education policy. PRSTV dominates the Irish state; it can structurally account for multi-partyism and coalition governments and is culturally connected to consensus, corporatism and incremental unambitious policy making. The impact of a consensus culture on political philosophy and the degree to which policy systems are oriented towards normative decision making is important factor impacting directly on policy choices both in terms of how the policy process operates but also in terms of the assessments politicians and civil servants make of what is acceptable to the public. Who is considered to be part of the consensus culture (or the majority that matter) is important. For example within social partnership the issue of tax individualisation was considered acceptable to the social partners but was not acceptable within the broader political consensus.

The state is not autonomous, but a reflection of power relations (Cousins 2005a) and there have been shifts in power both within and between the institutions and actors in different policy communities. As with other national systems of social security governance (Carmel and Papadopoulos 2004) Irish social security governance has changed. With increasing use of agencies, regulation and delegation a key component of that state, the civil service, has become more fragmented. Over 20 national agencies with a social security function were established over the last twenty years. There has also been a growth of social partnership structures and working groups. Such fragmentation dilutes the states capacity to act in the national interest, key arms of the state are likely to compete against and veto each other.

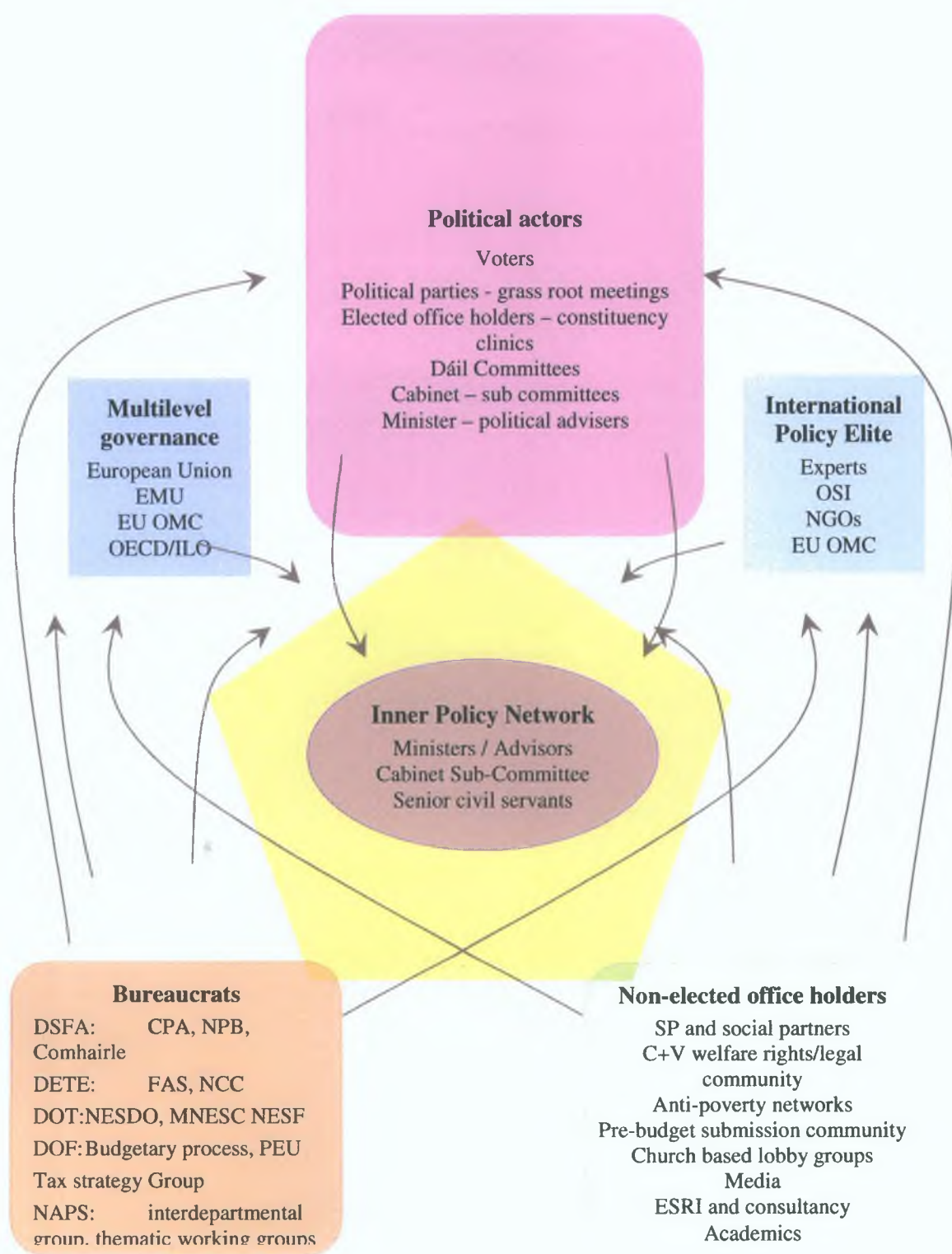
5.3 The transforming social security policy community

The shape of pre-globalisation policy communities is captured by Hecló's (1974b) image of an 'iron triangle' of relevant elected office holders, bureaucrats and non-office holding actors (business and voluntary associations with the capacity to influence policy). Globalisation causes a transformation of that community from an 'iron triangle'. Two new points of power, a new policy elite and multilevel governance (Cerny 2002a) transform the iron triangle into a five pointed 'golden pentagon' are illustrated in Figure 5.2 and the following sections

discuss features of each of the five points of Cerny's golden pentagon

The model is used as a tool to aid descriptive commentary. The choice of this model to represent the social security policy community is motivated by its capacity to highlight change in that community and the relationship between that change and the international policy community. This makes the model appropriate for the task in hand but it is accepted that there are other ways to understand and analyse policy communities (Hudson and Lowe, 2004). While the addition of a transnational policy community and a policy elite are borne out in the analysis the two features are still emerging and not enough analysis has been undertaken in this thesis to assess the degree of power that has been transferred to these new actors. Despite the perhaps unfortunate use of colours, the model is not used by Cerny (2002a) or this author as a normative model suggesting one form of policy community is superior to the other.

Figure.5.2 Irish Social Security Golden Pentagon Cerny 2002a



5.4 Political parties

The historical origin of Irish political parties lies in a post independence civil war intra-nationalist split, which dominated Irish politics and militated against a left-right ideological divide or strong social democratic tradition in Irish politics. The low level of industrialisation and urban working class meant no significant labour movement and no development of class politics (Mair, 1992: 389). This attitude is borne out by the 'the striking electoral debility of class-based, left-wing parties' in Ireland and the fact 'there is no other single country in western Europe that even approaches the weak position of the Irish left' (Mair, 1992: 384-5).

Like southern Europe, postcolonial Irish politics is dominated by conservative, nationalist, clerical parties (Laver, 1992) and especially by a populist Fianna Fail Party. The system is evolving from a two and a half party system of Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour to one where smaller parties (Greens, Sinn Féin, Socialists Party, Workers Party, Democratic Left and the neo-liberal PD's (only the latter two parties have served in government) Independent TDs (members of the Irish Parliament) are also increasingly relevant to the composition of coalition government. The focus on brokerage means a high premium on effective delivery of income maintenance. This preoccupation with delivery systems coupled with an emphasis on pragmatic centrist or consensus policies means little incentive in the political system or civil service to invest in research. The policy capacity of political parties is relatively limited and no parties develop extensive social security policies. Open to pluralist lobbying, they tend to be policy 'takers' rather than policy 'makers'. Nonetheless different approach to social security can be distinguished across political parties. One academic interviewed by the author noted that while

there are no great differences between political parties on social security policy, you could say that FG are most right wing, PD's are not interested, FF are most pragmatic and Labour the most philosophical

Fianna Fail is 'wary of welfare' (Ferriter, 2004b: 16). Their limited approach to social security is to see it as a 'safety net' type of welfare system focused on poverty alleviation. Their approach tends to be untheoretical, random, ad-hoc and unplanned with policy often

developed in response to clinic work⁴³. Cousins (2005a:119) stressed how 'FF cumman (local branches) acted as a forum for mediation of interests'. FF developed the social security system for political gain as part of 'a strategic incorporation of the indigenous bourgeoisie, the workers and small farmers ... a clear political logic of winning and keeping the support of key classes' (ibid:121). The other dominant party, FG, is confessional or Christian Democratic and displayed a somewhat ambiguous attitude to social protection. Traditionally a pro-enterprise party seeking to reward effort and incentive and promoting the concept of the small state, it was identified with an anti-welfare approach. On the other hand its fair society agenda promoted public discourse about social justice and at one time key FG figures championed a basic income system.

Labour adopts a social democratic ideological position underpinned by a goal of full employment and a preference for social insurance or universal welfare coverage. This approach promoted state intervention alongside public sector reform. Most significant policy processes relating to Irish social security policy were initiated under Labour.. The PDs actively engage in Irish social security political discourse and echo the Reagan and Thatcher welfare agendas, which promoted a smaller welfare state, privatisation of public services and greater self-reliance. Of the smaller left wing parties the Democratic Left's (previously the Workers Party) understanding of welfare was markedly different to that of Labour in that they promoted a basic income approach. The Green Party also promoted a basic income approach and their discourse has strong undertones of self-reliance. Sinn Fein promotes anti-poverty and equality initiatives but have developed little specific social security policy.

⁴³ This has resulted in the complex number of contingencies (over 35 different categories of payment).

Table 5 1 Ministerial Government 1982 - 2005

Year	Minister	Part y	Minister of State / Party	Adviser	Ministerial style and capacity
1982-1986	Desmond	Lab	Donnellan FG		Long term planning
1986-1987	Hussey	FG	Pattison LAB		Reluctant Minister influenced by US
1987-1989	Woods	FF			Capable, conservative, safe, managerialist
1989-1991	Woods	FF			
1991-1992	Daly	FF			No legacy
1992-1993	McCreevy	FF			Neo-liberal ideology
1993-1994	Woods	FF	Burton LAB		
1994-1997	De Rossa	DL	Durkan FG	Callender	Risk taker and ambitious
1997-2002	Ahern	FF		Cousins	Safe but unambitious social democratic
2002-2004	Coughlan	FF		Cousins (year 1)	Weak, uninformed and inexperienced
2004-2005	Brennan	FF			Ambitious pragmatic neo-liberal

The Taoiseach (Prime Minister) and 14 cabinet Ministers have collective cabinet decision-making responsibility for all policies, including social security policy Peillion (2001 174) believes state legitimacy to be quite dependant on welfare issues but the social welfare ministry is not high status within the Cabinet In interviews with the author one key policy actor observed that

Social welfare never rated that highly in government, there was no great kudos in having that ministry, it was the Cinderella of the services and if you wanted to be promoted you would avoid welfare, it was a cul-de-sac and a backwater⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Such low status is reflected in Gemma Hussey's upset reaction when appointed Minister to DSW in 1986, low status still prevailed when Seamus Brennan strongly resisted his 2004 Ministerial transfer to DSFA

With centralised cabinet oriented policymaking the Dáil and Dáil Committees have an underdeveloped role in policy making. The Cabinet Social Inclusion Cabinet Sub Committee, to which NAPS reports, meets infrequently. There was no Dáil discussion of the content of national wage agreements, the CSW (Ireland 1986) or NAPS (Ireland 1997c, 2002a) in the Oireachtas. Shadow social security spokespersons focus debate on anomalies rather than major policy issues. In an interview with the author a previous social security spokesperson described a lose-lose role:

FF are like a Hoover, they suck in everything. It is not much good coming up with good ideas because they will be taken by some one else or if they are bad they will be laughed at, government or other parties will have a field day.

Opposition and government backbench TDs sit on social security-related Oireachtas Committees dealing with social, employment, children's, women's and older peoples affairs. These committees have a limited role in policy development. One previous Minister observed in an interview with the author how the 'Committee system is generally a joke; nobody tries too hard to make it work'. A review of the Social and Family Affairs Oireachtas Committee 1995 debates illustrated how time was taken up with anecdotal references to local individualised political clinic visits. These queries from local clinics feed into the social security policy community through committee work, the parliamentary question process or more informal contact between party colleagues. Delivery issues dominate in a clientalistic political culture. Because politicians have little interest in long-term policy planning social security policy is developed in an ad-hoc and fragmented fashion. A former Ministerial adviser reflected in an interview with the author:

The Department knows that what the Minister is going to be concerned about is the parish pump and somebody coming up to him at Mass and saying I didn't get paid. He is not concerned that we didn't come up with a radical plan policy proposal last week. If you are a politician dramatic changes aren't necessarily a good thing unless they're actually going to work.

The civil service and the political arena link and overlap through the political role of the Minister who has a powerful influence on their Departmental policy approach. FF Ministers dominated the last 20 years. Although Minister Woods served multiple terms and Minister

Ahern served a full five-year term there was, there was otherwise as depicted by Table 5.1 a high degree of Ministerial turnover and great diversity in Ministerial style and competence. However no matter who was Minister civil servants knew that Ministers were in power and that the prime goal was to deliver the commitments in the Programme for Government.

On the other hand Ministers interviewed by the author, were wary of the complex social security system and acknowledged their dependence on the expertise of the civil service. The close working relationship of senior civil servants and FF Ministers meant populist approaches to decision-making permeated the thinking and practices of civil servants. In 1992 Labour, eager to disempower the traditional civil servant link with FF, initiated the use of 'political advisers' and 'programme managers'.⁴⁵ In practice the role of political adviser has varied widely, from a political role to a co-ordination role or from a technical policy adviser to a political or media adviser. They are not as powerful as they are perceived to be. O'Halpin (1996)⁴⁶

FF held the social security ministry for 18 of the last 20 years and so dominated the last two decades. Their pragmatic approach also permeated civil service thinking and led to an over focus on delivery at the expense of policy-making capacity. The Labour Party appears to

⁴⁵ Ministerial advisers liaise with senior civil servants and act as a link between the Cabinet, Oireachtas Sub Committees and the Civil Service.

⁴⁶ One political advisor commented in an interview with the author 'One person can't make all that difference. You are a link between a Minister and the civil servant. A lot of work is just delivering what has already been politically agreed in Programmes for Government, not delivering new ideas. You are very unlikely to bring in any one particular thing. One person isn't going to do that, the best you can do is influence things or move things along faster than they would have otherwise.'

have initiated most key social security processes over the last 20 years⁴⁷ A difference in policy emphasis is not the point of departure between political parties What seems to differentiate parties is the level of ambition for a planned approach to social security reform and levels of appreciation about how social security policy relates to national development However all parties (even those who pride themselves on ideological influences) are moderate Smith (2005 186) reports the conclusion of an interview with an Irish official it was ‘highly unlikely that an extremist policy platform would ever come to power here’

5.5. The Irish Civil Service

Laffan and O Donnell (1998 161) cite arguments by Lee (1989) and Mjoset (1992) that Ireland’s lack of a national system of innovation was inimical to economic modernisation NESC (2005a, b) make the same case for social innovation A lack of policy capacity and a weak tradition of policy making is a second defining feature of the Irish civil service While the civil service is homogenous there are great cultural and ideological differences and a clear hierarchy between the key government Departments in the social security policy community The table below summarises social security relevant government Departments

⁴⁷ The Labour Party initiated the 1949 White Paper on Social Welfare, introduced Unmarried Mothers’ Allowances in 1973, reformed Home Assistance into the 1977 Supplementary Welfare Allowance, launched the original Green Paper on the Voluntary Sector in 1976, launched the 1978 Green Paper on Pensions Policy, established the 1986 National Pensions Board, initiated the 1986 Commission on Social Welfare, the 1994 Expert Working Group on Integration of Taxation and Social Welfare Democratic Left initiated the NAPS and the 1997 National Pensions Policy Initiative

Table 5.2 Government Departments- Social Security Policy Community

	Department of Social Welfare, DSFCA, DSFA	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Department of An Taoiseach	Department of Finance
Level of Integration	Turf war with the DETE	Turf war with the DSW	Cross cutting	Isolationist
Key Policy Section	Aireacht	LTU Unit	Social and Economic Policy Unit	Public Expenditure Unit Division
Statutory Bodies	CPA,NPB,Comhairle,FSA	FÁS, Forbairt, National Competitiveness Council Enterprise Ireland	NESDO,NESC,NESF,NCPP Local area based partnerships Area Development Management	
Ideology and Values	Delivery Focused Social Democratic Activation	Enterprise Anti Welfare	Consensus Integration	Conservative Cautious Cost avoidance Neo-Liberal
Key Strategy	Delivery Supports Activation	Conditionality Work Incentives	Employment	Expenditure Control Work Incentives
Social Security Policy Capacity	Poor	Medium	Strong	Poor

	Department of Social Welfare, DSFCA, DSFA	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Department of An Taoiseach	Department of Finance
International Integration	EU NAPsincl ILO / ISSA Network of Six English Speaking Countries	OECD NEAP	NAPsincl	OECD
Partnership Approach	Positive	Difficult	Positive	Difficult

Department of Social and Family Affairs (also DSFCA, DSW⁴⁸)

The structure of the DSFA is heavily influenced by the priority it affords delivery. Departmental staff interviewed by the author emphasised the degree to which administrative and delivery challenges preoccupied Departmental management and limited the Department's capacity to engage in policy-making. This did not relate to simple resource capacity, the degree to which delivery of payments preoccupied the Department impacted on the identity of those in the Department. Even senior managers identify themselves as delivery agents who follow policy agendas imposed from outside the Department and reject the role of initiating or leading policy debate. Divided into operational and policy divisions (the brains and the brawn), the policy division (the Aireacht) is small and under-resourced. The Aireacht is forward thinking, bright and competent staff have fostered good relationships within the policy community and engaged positively in Social Partnership. Internal preoccupation with effective delivery of income supports was compounded by serious administrative failures in 1981 and 1989⁴⁹. One key policy adviser observed in an interview with the author how

The Department is not hugely policy focused, they are more concerned about what Ministers will live with, most senior managers are survivors of high unemployment, they were slower to adapt to Active Labour Market Measures than they should have been. They are generally driven by the need to pay people, it's much more delivery focused than policy or outcome focused.

Over the last two decades DSFA established five statutory organisations and engaged in several new multi-level governance processes associated with the EU Open Method of Coordination (Frazer, 2002). These include Comhairle (previously National Social Services Board) which focuses on citizens' information and administrative and technical issues related to the delivery of welfare (Acheson et al, 2004), the Combat Poverty Agency which has a statutory function to advise the Minister on poverty related policy⁵⁰, the National Pensions Board and the Family Support Agency. The Office for Social Inclusion supports

⁴⁸ DSFA Department of Social and Family Affairs (2002 – present), DSFCA Department of Social, Family and Community Affairs (1997-2002), DSW Department of Social Welfare (1947 to 1997)

engagement with various NAPS institutional processes and the NAPSincl The DSFA also engages in Pension and Employment EU Open Method of Coordination These agencies institutionally strengthen the Department's policy capacity, however, it remains relatively weak, uncoordinated and fragmented and all of the agencies have underdeveloped policy functions

The Government attitudes to the Combat Poverty Agency (CPA) has been problematic (Acheson et al , 2004, Ireland 1996c) Opinions about CPA's contribution to social security policy varied amongst those interviewed by the author One Minister, positive about CPA, blamed the FF attitude to the poverty industry on their 'difficult and unhappy relationship between FF led administrations and CPA' However a policy adviser in FF advised, that the tension into relationship with CPA was because CPA tended to confuse lobbying and expertise One senior policy explained in an interview with the author

Because of its lobbying activities, if you want into the tax strategy group and said look ESRI said XYZ they would listen, but if you said CPA said everybody would shrug their shoulders, because of that they don't have any influence

Others observed that CPA had an inconsistent policy position on key areas like child income support where they were perceived to change their policy advice 'on an almost annual basis' A community and voluntary sector lobbyist noted that CPA were relatively ineffective in the social security debate and gave the example in an interview with the author of their submission to Benchmarking and Indexation Group

not only were they not invited onto the group but we had to fight to allow them give in a submission and even then they missed the boat, they misunderstood the brief of the group and no one even read the submission

A trade union worker identified in an interview with the author how CPA had

little discernible influence, not even in the context of NAPS May be it's because of changes in staff but there is little research output There is lots from ESRI but you don't need CPA to commission ESRI'

Where perhaps they had most influence was through their community development function in supporting the national policy work of key national antipoverty networks who participated in national policy debate through corporatist and pluralist processes (Acheson et al , 2004)

The Department's weak status in the hierarchy of Departments combined with weak policy capacity means it had little power to resist policy set outside the Department by international processes, other government Departments, political parties or Social Partnership processes (for example the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform imposition of the 2004 Habitual Residence Rule)⁵¹ It also means those in the policy role are under a significant workload pressure In interviews with the author one senior civil servant observed how

the policy section is too small to be sustainable, there is a huge issue about building up expertise and policy capacity It means huge pressure on individuals and huge overload, no one will take the policy jobs

Within the Department there is tension between those who believe the Department should take a leading role in social security debate and those who believe the Department is an administrative Department, there to develop administrative systems to deliver policy developed elsewhere While the opinion of the Secretary General is seen as an important factor in determining the formal position the latter opinion appears more dominant among the more senior officials and particularly those whose work has been dominated by delivery

Department of Employment, Trade and Enterprise (DETE)

DETE (previously Department of Labour (DOL)), unlike DSFA, had no 'hands on' relationship with the unemployed The Department focused on the enterprise function and liaised most closely with industry, employers and competitiveness policy It left its social policy function to its statutory body, the training and employment agency FAS (previously AnCo) DETE statutory organisations including FAS, Enterprise Ireland and the National Competitiveness Council promote activation and welfare to work related social security policy Historically DETE (or DOL) had an obstructive working relationship with DSW

⁵¹ The capacity of the Minister to argue their case against more senior ministries appears to be crucial, Minister Woods for example was able to set and win policy agendas while Minister Coughlan appeared to have had little success defending the social security interests

One former DETE Minister described in an interview with the author ‘a turf war lasting seven years between the two Departments’ where

Any attempt by us to move into their territory was resisted and there were arguments. The turf war was stupid, it wasn’t ideological it was just about organisations. If you lost responsibility for something you lost clout, if you lose clout you lose budgets and bodies and promotional opportunities.

While the turf war was more about institutional issues than policy, ideological differences are evident between the two Departments. One previous DSFA Minister reflected in an interview with the author how ‘the underpinning attitude of the DETE was to see social security as a hindrance and as an obstacle to employment’. Various attempts were made to co-ordinate policy across the two Departments. These ranged from Programme Managers (1992), the Tax Strategy Group (1995), and a Strategy Group on Long and Short-Term Unemployment (1997) that focused on welfare to work and activation issues. Since 1998 the Departments are required to work together under the EU Lisbon Process to deliver the National Employment Action Plan (DETE). While, nationally and internationally, DSFA still play ‘second fiddle’ to the more senior DETE, the EU Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) and NAPs incl process has mainstreamed many of DSFA interests (Murphy C 2002). The relationship is now more nuanced but still characterised by conflicting positions in opposing advocacy coalitions, institutional turf wars and little coordination in relation to overlaps in data sharing and activation strategies. The institutional overlaps between the FAS employment support services and the DSFA jobs support unit remain unresolved. Some senior civil servants in the DSFA argue that responsibility for long-term unemployment should transfer to DSFA. However senior DSFA have shown little policy ambition in this regard⁵². In any case FAS have survived previous institutional reform attempts (Boyle 2005) and many interviewed are cynical about attempts to reform or relocate FAS.

⁵² In 2003 the Minister for Employment Trade and Enterprise, Mary Harney, in an example of Irish pragmatism, offered FAS to the Minister for the DSFA. The latter declined the offer because the Department believed that if institutional reform was to take place that it needed to be a more considered and less pragmatic reform than that on offer.

Department Of Finance (DOF)

The DOF more senior than other Departments, is both ideologically and pragmatically associated with low public expenditure (Lee, 1989). O'Connell and Rottman (1992:231) argued:

the most important part of the postcolonial legacy ... the DOF played a dominant role in state policy formation for much of Ireland's post independence history, was opposed in principle to increases in state expenditure and taxes and in particular to increased commitments to social welfare.

This is consistent with descriptions of the 'natural social conservatism of the Irish elites' Adshead (2006:forthcoming) which have 'unrelievedly negative' attitudes Jacobsen (1994:61). Fear of escalating public expenditure was reinforced by the experience of the high rise in spending of the 1990's. DOF has an underdeveloped policy agenda. Compared, for example, to the employment policy focus of the UK Treasury the equivalent in Ireland is more interested in keeping spending down than in how public monies were spent.⁵³ The Budgetary and Economic sections of the DOF have macro policy roles and the Public Expenditure Unit (PEU) serves as an institutional conduit for each Department to relate to the DOF⁵⁴. This unit is conservative about public spending and has a reputation for 'pouring cold water' over policy innovation.⁵⁵ One senior official described in an interview with the

⁵³ This may explain why Ireland does not seem to be following the role of the UK Treasury and develop fiscalisation of social security. The PPF Refundable Tax Credit Working Group report conservatively kept the sharp distinction between role of income support and role of revenue gathering.

⁵⁴ In the PEU a Principal Officer level official oversees the budgetary requirement of each spending Department. Each spending Department is required to transfer a senior Departmental official to the PEU unit in DOF. In this way the DOF access policy expertise needed to refute arguments for spending, (the spending Department could also benefit from having an inside voice within the DOF).

⁵⁵ A key member of the Commission on Social Welfare (1986) observed to the author 'I think one of the fortunate things about the CSW was that we had no civil servants. We didn't have anybody from finance; if we had I don't think we would have had a report.'

author how the job of the DOF official on any social security working group was to ‘ensure whatever was agreed was as minimal as possible in order to avoid impact on fiscal flows’ In order words it was to veto spending It did this in various ways, controlling the drafting of papers, refusing to adopt consensus reports and pressurising DSFA Ministers to cut current expenditure⁵⁶

A former Finance Minister advised, in an interview with the author, how that in the mid 1990s only three questions drove policy ‘the focus on the EMU, generating economy growth and no borrowing’ He argued that expenditure implications rather than ideological positions drove decision-making A former social security Minister however argued in an interview with the author that the DOF had a clear ideological policy agenda

welfare was seen as an obstacle to the free operation of the labour market, everything was in competition with the market in that Department, they vigorously resisted the NAPS and ALMPS

Generally the DOF align themselves in policy advocacy coalitions with the DETE and IBEC and against the DSFA, the DOT, ICTU and the community and voluntary sector To break the cultural dominance of the DOF, various governments tried to develop a counterpoint institutional power in the Department of the Taoiseach (and Department of the Tanaiste) Other methodological tools include poverty roofing and gender mainstreaming however no innovation has so far managed to break the monopoly role of the DOF

Department of an Taoiseach (DOT)

The DOT has no specific policy responsibilities in the area of social security but co-ordinates government Departments involved in Social Partnership and NAPS institutions The General Secretary to the Government, the most powerful civil servant in the country, heads this Department and attends all Cabinet meetings He chairs the NAPS Inter Departmental Committee, the NESC and the NESF and national wage agreements and plays a key role

⁵⁶ The most politically controversial social security reforms of the two decades were two sets of cuts in 1992 and 2003 The case studies in Chapter Seven highlight those cuts as the product of a public expenditure conscious DOF pushing cuts on politically weak first-time social welfare Ministers

linking political, civil service and social partnership actors⁵⁷ Three other Departments institutionally relate to the social security policy community The Department of Health and Children administers the SWA scheme through the Health Service Executive regional and local structures (previously the Health Boards) The Department of Education and Science has an interest in the use of social security payments to fund adult participation in second chance and third-level education Farm Assist income maintenance payment overlaps with Department of Agriculture incomes policy agenda

The examination of different government Departments within the social security policy community highlighted weak policy capacity in an increasingly complex and fragmented community A weak but emerging DSFA struggles in an institutional battle with a stronger DETE DOT supports the DSFA but is itself often vetoed by an expenditure resistant DOF All Departments are however subservient to the political will of strong Ministers and obliged to implement programmes for Government Hence even the power of DOF is less influential at election times as is evident in electoral budget cycles (Cousins 2005b) The question is then who, other than civil servants, influences politicians?

5.6 Non-Office-Holding Actors, Social Partners and Civil Society

In a pluralist and corporatist political system non-office-holding policy actors external to the political system and the civil service have strong policy influence While traditional forms of lobbying still dominate Irish policy making, Social Partnership has been a strong feature of the last two decades Pierson (1994) observed how governments manage the politics of welfare retrenchment by weakening opposition⁵⁸ The Irish institutional strategy differed substantially from such strategies in that it focused, in keeping with the Irish political culture, on consensus building through social partnership However, where groups could not be co-opted, the Irish state actively sought to control opposition This section first addresses social partners' participation and then reviews other forms of engagement by civic society actors

⁵⁷ From 1992-1997 the Department of the Tánaiste played a co-ordinating role and developed the NESF which provides input into social security policy development

⁵⁸ Thatcher tried to fragment and purposefully ignored welfare lobby groups and weakened the power of the unions Reagan pursued a 'defunding the left' strategy and restricted labour union power

Social Partnership

This modern period of Irish Social Partnership needs to be put into the context of Irish political culture. Corporatism was evident in Irish political culture since the 1930's. Social Partnership is not a new consensus driven political process but an expression of the Irish orientation to consensus, which underpins all aspects of Irish policy making. Corporatist structures were renewed in 1987, when government faced into a difficult period of retrenchment government, re-established Social Partnership. Trade unions, employers and farmers worked in several overlapping institutional spaces to develop consensus on policy strategies and to negotiate and monitor national wage agreements. This enabled governments to 'adopt reforms with reduced electoral and social risks' (Natali and Rhodes, 1998:7). In 1994 Irish Social Partnership broadened to include the NESF and in 1996 part of the community and voluntary sector was incorporated into partnership structures (Acheson et al., 2004).

The function of developing shared understanding and policy consensus dominates Social Partnership everyday work (NESF, 1997). Some credit social partnership as the cause of Ireland's more humane welfare trajectory, relative to the UK or the US (Kiely et al., 1999; Nolan et al., 2001; Kennelly and O'Shea, 1998; Daly and Yeates, 2003). Others observe how social partnership can, through co-option, limit protest and smother the potential for more radical change (Allen, 2000; Broderick, 2002; O'Cinneide, 1999; Murphy, 2002). Chapter Seven evaluates whether social security- related claims of partnership are over stated. This section concludes by briefly reflecting on the individual 'Pillars', the employers, trade unions, farmers and the community and voluntary pillar.

Employers

Peillion (2001) argued that employers in partnership use their social and political capital to curtail the level of social expenditure and to influence the development of services useful to them, Cousins (2005a) agrees that employers' major input has been to veto change. An employer representative, in an interview with the author, described their role in social security policy development:

It's quite limited, its rare enough that we would have something direct to say to social security or that we would come out saying something about rates increases, we're more likely to spell out the macro context and constraints.

IBEC participates in social security policy working groups but has limited expertise and input. IBEC focuses on the link between economic competitiveness and social security, PRSI rates and work incentives. ISME a competing business lobby group has, unusually in the Irish culture, engaged in active anti-welfare social security discourse. Peillon (1995: 378) notes how, because foreign companies tend to lobby through domestic networks, their lobbying activity is not visible. However, Murphy G. (2000) notes the increasing organisation of private business interests. There is significant evidence of foreign companies lobbying for social security changes outside Social Partnership structures.

Trade Unions

Peillon (2001) argued the ICTU features in the configuration of forces that have shaped the welfare system in Ireland. The interests of employed union members primarily fuel ICTU's interest in social security policy, these include interaction with low paid / casual workers, equality issues around parenting and maternity and child income support as it relates to childcare. Cousins (2005a) explained the paucity of the trade union contribution as a result of public sector unions having no direct interest in a means tested social security system primarily serving the poor. Hardiman (1998) concurs that trade unions' first priority are their own members.

Individual trade unions have developed specific social security policy interests because members are involved in the administration of social security (IMPACT, SIPTU, CPSU, PSEU) or because members in low paid or precarious employment have specific social security needs (Mandate, SIPTU). ICTU however has a weak practical capacity to develop meaningful policy. Participation in social security related processes is under-resourced and often delegated to relatively junior staff. At the same time individual senior trade union officials are part of the policy elite, brokering ideas and transferring policy learning from abroad (Laffan and O'Donnell, 1998)⁵⁹. A network of local unemployed centres also directly participates in the Community and Voluntary Pillar but have little impact on policy reform.

Farmers

Members of the agricultural and rural based lobby groups focus primarily on rural specific issues (pensions for farmers, Farm Assist and the social security needs of farming women).

⁵⁹ Roheen Callender, Peter Cassels and Patricia O'Donovan played this role in the policy community

A former representative described in an interview with the author how farmers prefer to negotiate directly with the relevant Department rather than through Social Partnership structures ‘When you are looking for a thing that’s not broadly based you are better off looking for the direct route to that Department than maybe using the Social Partnership route’ A senior representative acknowledged, in an interview with the author, that social security reform was not a big concern for the organisation

Our interest in the issue is mainly led by members needs but to be honest the phone isn’t hopping and there is no active demand for greater coverage’ The Trade Unions and Community Pillars keep social security high on the agenda so while we would never come out and oppose anything we would never be big activists

The Community and Voluntary Pillar (CVP)⁶⁰

The Community and Voluntary Pillar (CVP) is a partnership participation mechanism comprising a large number of diverse organisations representing specific interest groups (Acheson et al 2004 103) Only St Vincent de Paul (SVP) the Confederation of Religious of Ireland (CORI), the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE), the National Women’s Council of Ireland (NWCI) and OPEN (One Parent Exchange Network) directly input into social security policy Others interact on specific social security issues affecting their immediate membership Effective participation has required collapsing individual

⁶⁰ The C+V Pillar was organised by the government in 1996 as a mechanism to facilitate community and voluntary sector organisations to participate in SP It included seven groups (INOUE, CORI, SVP, ICTU Centres, NWCI, NYCI, Protestant Aid and one network of 26 anti-poverty and equality groups the Community Platform In 2003 a section of the Community and Voluntary Pillar (comprising a network of 22 groups in the Community Platform and NWCI) rejected the content of Sustaining Progress and were subsequently excluded from key partnership forums including NESC Government then augmented the C+V Pillar with other groups from the sector including the Wheel Pillar social security agendas are however still dominated by the more powerful groups (CORI, INOUE, SVP) but gender and equality based policy is absent given NWCI’s and Community Platform’s withdrawal

organisational interests into coherent pillar-level policy positions. This causes tactical tensions and internal power struggles and strained internal relations within the CVP⁶¹.

The sectors 1994 co-option into national corporate structures is unique to Ireland and can be reflected positively as strength of cause based interest groups in Ireland (Healy, 1998). It could also be interpreted as a state strategy to silence ideological debate or alternative political discourse expected from a third sector (Broderick, 2002: Murphy, 2002). High unemployment in the mid 1990s had necessitated the problem solving presence of strong unemployed / anti-poverty groups, however as high unemployment decreased such relevance diminished and the gaps between the community and voluntary sector agenda and business agenda widened (Hardiman 1998). McCashin (2004:276) notes the strategic importance Fianna Fáil attaches to establishing links with trade unions, voluntary organisations and community groups and describes this 'as a routine strategy of incorporation in a broad populist of agenda'. The state has subsequently manipulated the development of the community and voluntary sector by funding groups associated with voluntary sector service delivery models while retrenching funding for groups with redistributive policy agendas (CWC, 2005). This affects the relative capacity of the sector to engage in redistributive debate and has impacted on wider political discourse.

Social Partnership is, without doubt, a key institutional feature of the Irish social security policy community. While considered a relatively inclusive corporatist model it is limited in that it denies 'outsiders' access to policy processes initiated within Social Partnership, has no interaction with the political system and has only limited civil service interaction. In other corporate institutions, both trade unions and employers may be directly involved in administration of social security benefit, this is not the case in Ireland where social partners have little real expertise or interest in social security (Hardiman 1998). The role of Irish social partnership is more about maintaining a consensus around a shared macro understanding of an economic model than contributing in a detailed way to social security development. Cousins (2005a:114) concludes CVP have not been able to play a decisive role in social partnership, his analysis has echoes of Lister's (2004) analysis of 'voice without influence'. With less power and capacity than other pillars it is more accurately described as a pluralist lobby group than a corporate power with resources to negotiate (Hardiman, 1998).

⁶¹ The degree to which CORI have dominated income adequacy debates may have meant that other social security issues received less attention than might have otherwise been the case.

Wider civil society

The dominant role of the state in policy making is related to the long term weakness of representative societal organisations. While organising outside of mainstream political parties (land reform, Irish language, women's suffrage) was always part of the pre independence Irish political landscape, Acheson (2004) note how modern Irish civil society is relatively weak with no representative structure for civil society welfare groups and lower levels of volunteering and women's civic participation than other European countries. The latter is an important observation given the role women's agency (women and mothers living in poverty, women's movements and women administering welfare policies) play in shaping welfare states (Cousins, 2005a)

Anti-poverty sector (poverty industry)

All social security income supports are state delivered and tax or PRSI funded. Social security is distinguishable from the rest of the mixed welfare economy in that (apart from direct civil service staff interests represented by CPSU, PSEU, IMPACT and SIPTU) there are no large institutional insiders within the social security policy community. Nor is there any national welfare claimants' organisation. Civil society social security policy input is channelled through an infrastructure of welfare rights and citizens information organisations and free legal aid centres⁶². These focus on access to information and report back to the DSFA about policy anomalies and delivery standards. They tend not to directly lobby about wider distributional issues or engage in broader structural policy debates. However, these and other local groups representing people living in poverty, do organise into national networks and federations. Funded by CPA in a national anti-poverty network, these anti poverty groups represent the unemployed, rural dwellers, older people, children, lesbians and gays, travellers, people with disabilities, lone parents and refugees / asylum seekers. Each

⁶² The Congress Network (ICTU Centres for the Unemployed), overlaps with an INOU based welfare rights network both of which feed back a wide range of social security policy anomalies as does the network of Money Advice and Budgeting Services. The Local Area Based Partnerships network which feed social security issues through the Area Development Management Income Maintenance Group to the DSW and the DETE focuses predominantly on welfare to work issues. The largest network is the Citizens Information Centres which is coordinated (and subordinated) by the state agency Comhairle

group's social security agenda tends to be one-dimensional. There are distributional alliances including 'Share the Wealth' marches and anti-cuts campaigns. However anti-poverty groups do not always demonstrate solidarity with other groups (Allen, 1998) and there are episodes of mistrust and territorial dispute Acheson et al., (2004).

Some larger national organisations (like the INOU and the SVP) maintain a coherent institutional engagement with government departments. This can include regular contact and bilateral meetings with both Departmental officials and Ministers, direct lobbying of politicians, circulation of policy literature, lobby days and attending political clinics in local constituencies. The sector also participates in consultation processes under the auspices of the NAPS, customer service initiatives or one-off Departmental policy consultations. Most activity however is focused on the annual budget. The DSFA organises annual pre and post budget 'listening' forums for up to 40 groups who submit social security related budget submissions. As Acheson et al., (2004) argue this institutional space is however a state controlled space which, while popular with lobby groups, restricts more meaningful distributional debate Montague (2001). Quinn (2005) highlighted that successful pre-budget submissions lobbied for one specific change but many groups choose to present elaborate reports and use the pre-budget submission process as a broad media strategy (Montague, 2001).

The National Campaign for Welfare Reform, formed as a national campaign to support the publication of the CSW in 1986, had lost momentum by the end of that decade and there has been no national campaign body since. Without this, as one political adviser reflected in an interview with the author

there is no one pushing anything to the extent that it is a political issue, no one is worried about losing votes about welfare.

Forty groups came together to successfully lobby against the Dirty Dozen in 1992, but made a conscious decision not to develop a national social security lobby group. Again in 2004 a similar amount of groups campaigned against the Savage Sixteen cuts. Despite clear capacity to work together the preference is for ring-fenced activity in specific areas. This level of diversity means duplication of work and inefficient use of resources. WRC (2001) highlighted how the state and policy makers generally do not see the distinct and separate organisations within the sector, rather they hear only one message and are often confused

about who in the sector might be giving that message. Given the sensitivity of proportional representation to well organised sectoral interests, a national social security lobby group might be a more effective way of influencing change (Coleman, 2006). Instead there is a sector marked by lack of trust and territorial dispute (Acheson et al 2004). One key civil servant observed in an interview with the author 'the community and voluntary sector aren't coming up with proposals'. Groups who develop an overview positions risk stepping into the 'territory' of another group. Hence the only groups who developed overview positions are CORI and the SVP, neither of whom represents any one community of interest and both of whom have resources independent of the state. This however leaves civil society over dependant 'the most durable influence' of Catholic Church organisations (Acheson et al 2004: 89).

The most significant power of the sector is veto power, Chapter Seven outlines the significant veto power of groups like Women in the Home and lone parents' representative groups. Nor does the sector use this veto power strategically. McCashin (1992: 5) notes how it is

inconsistent to chastise policy makers for beginning to implement CSW reforms while at the same time calling for the implementation of the CSW report. What all this points to is that welfare pressure groups have not grasped and accepted the overall strategy of the CSW. The report is not just a litany of universally popular reforms, there are nettles to be grasped.

Church

While Fanning (2003: 7) acknowledges the affinity between liberal morals and Catholic principles of subsidiarity he also concludes the Catholic Church had been less directly influential in relation to social security policy than health and education policy where they had much more material and social capital. Fanning. Pellion (2001: 176) concluded 'the church possesses no stake in social security, about which it has little to say'. Hardiman (1998) concurs. The Catholic Church now tends to act as spokesperson for marginalised communities through social justice interest groups (CORI, SVP and Bishops Conferences as well as the justice desks of the Vincentians, the Jesuits and the Mercy orders). The major Church voice in the social security debate is CORI (formally CMRS) who throughout the last two decades focused their justice desk and social security energy on a basic income and

adequacy lobby One Minister described to the author the immense lobbying power of CORI

People would come in with proposals We were far too polite, we should have told them to get stuffed with their crazy ideas, we strung them along for years basically It was the persuasive feel and the clerical collar and the perception that he (Fr Sean Healy) had a big lobby behind him

In interviews with the author CORI are credited by many civil servants as impacting on social security adequacy by creative long-term campaigning strategies Powell (1997 16) describes CORI as ‘undoubtedly most effective anti-poverty lobbyist in contemporary Ireland’, Acheson et al ,(2004 87) note how government seek CORI approval in the area of social inclusion Their significant access to FF enabled them play a public role arguing for equitable distribution outcomes over budgets 2004-6 CORI and lay members of the Catholic Church were also instrumental in initiating the Wheel to act as a co-ordinating point and counter point to the development of an alternative co-ordinating hub, the Community Platform There is however ideological debate within Church based groups During the consultation to produce ‘Work is the Key’ a major social policy input from various British Isles churches tension arose between the Irish Bishops Conference support for employment based anti-poverty solutions and CORI’s promotion of a basic income paradigm

Think-tanks, academics and the media

The Irish social security policy community is noticeably devoid of think tanks One policy maker in an interview with the author observed ‘the policy reading circle is small, you are really only talking about a handful of people’ There is also a perception that ESRI, the largest and most technically able think tank or academic research body, has a policy monopoly in social security research The ESRI was established to engage with the policy community and has proved highly influential influencing language, definitions and technical discourse Most commissioned work tends to be associated with measuring the impact of budgetary policy on income distribution and poverty As one policy maker commented in an interview with the author

technically they are very good but they are rarely asked to look at social security, you can’t critique them for not doing innovative thinking – no body is paying them to do innovative thinking

Under its own initiative, the ESRI does publish annual budget policy commentaries, which focus on broader social security policy and critical analysis of mainstream policy (Callan et al 2001b) A civil servant testified in an interview with the author how

If you are doing something the ESRI recommend, even if you're not doing it for the same reason, it makes it easier if you say the ESRI recommended it

Other consultancy firms tend to be contracted on projects with narrow technical terms of reference determined by civil servants or politicians A small number of independent consultants are hired by civil society actors to develop alternative policy positions to reform specific contingencies of social welfare None of these consultants contribute to public discourse in the media

There is limited engagement in social security within universities⁶³ The lack of incentive within academic promotion structures to publish or engage in social security policy related debate and the exclusive membership of many Irish social security institutional processes might be contributory factors The establishment of the Policy Institute in Trinity College Dublin (TCD) in 1995 where civil servants can be seconded for six-month study periods has been used to produce two social security policy reports (Quinn 1999, Healy 2003)

While the media is a clear force influencing the Irish social security policy community there is little institutional social security expertise in the Irish media Some national and local radios stations and local newspapers have initiated advice orientated social security slots but no national current affairs medium has a social security focused programme and there is no specialist social security magazine or journal Nonetheless the power of popular media is often cited as influencing decisions or acting as a veto Montague and Trench (2000 48) observe how 'once a piece of research has been aired in the public it passes much more easily into the policy process One civil servant observed in an interview with the author

⁶³ Faculties engaging in social security tend to be sociology or social policy, there is limited input from law faculties, economics faculties and multidisciplinary faculties like equality or policy studies

it's not like serious analysis like in the Observer, it's the Joe Duffy show or the Marian Finucane (popular day time chat shows with telephone commentary from the public)treatment that will get something moving

Aware of this, most groups try to influence decision-making by influencing public opinion Church-funded groups⁶⁴ were among few organisations to use a theoretical informed policy approach or to play the role of think tanks by stimulating debate, some thing only one secular organisation, the INOU, was able to produce⁶⁵ Some lobby groups and social partner groups, aware 'of significant shifts in the media landscape that create new avenues' (ibid 48) have media strategies, employ press officers or use private media consultancy companies to manage specific campaigns aimed at stimulating public discourse and winning public opinion (WRC, 2001) Private Public Relations companies (Montague and Graphiconies) offer market special training and communication supports This indicates a significant shift from direct lobbying to communications strategies which are trying to influence public discourse and a growing awareness of the importance of influencing ideational thinking The final part of this chapter reviews the role of ideas and discourse in the Irish social security policy community

The non-office holding social security policy community is numerically strong but has little influence and can be described as Listers (2004) concept of 'Voice Without Influence' Only four organisations stand out as having any degree of voice with influence, they include the ESRI, INOU, CORI, and the SVP all of whom were cited in interviews with the author as having impact, and two of these are Catholic Church based This ongoing influence of the Church and its distinct social policy may be an explanatory variable in explaining some of the more benign policy decisions When civic society works together they have more

⁶⁴ CORI produces theoretically informed policy research documents, holds a major related conference each year and produces a well-regarded annual post budget analysis Other organisations, including the Bishops Commission on Social Welfare, the Jesuits, the Vincentian Partnership and the SVP sponsored research and produced policy proposals

⁶⁵ One NGO director explained in an interview with the author 'the more important point is how ideas translate in the popular policy discourse, that is why we sought funding for our journal the Margin and policy briefs from ADM funding'

effective influence on social security policy But there are numerous obstacles stopping more effective collaboration⁶⁶

5.7 Policy elites

The 'iron triangle' has an inner policy network A combination of power and knowledge-resources determines membership, which is made up of primarily Ministers and Ministerial political and personal advisers and key civil servants The membership of the Tax Strategy Group (TSG)⁶⁷ partially mirrors this inner network TSG is an inter-departmental committee chaired by the DOF, comprises senior officials and advisers from the DOF, the DOT, the DETE, Social Community and Family Affairs and the Revenue Commissioners It played a particularly important policy role in the 1992 to 1997 period, while of lesser strategic importance in more recent years still remains powerful No social partners or non-elected office holders are included in the inner policy network However TSG minutes record references to campaigning positions of ICTU, IBEC and the Community Pillar as well as the ESRI

Hall and Taylor (1996), Deacon B (2003) and Cerny et al , (2005) define an emerging alternative network based not on power or knowledge resources but on expertise and skills Policy mediators or entrepreneurs are found in small informal networks of powerful individual actors These networks are found in the overlap of domestic / international

⁶⁶ In interviews with the author various observations were made about CORI's (unhealthy) domination of the community and voluntary sector and their lack of capacity to work co-operatively with other groups It was also noted that Church organisations played a decisive role in establishing The Wheel and therefore a divisive role in shifting power away from social justice oriented civic society and towards voluntary sector service delivery organisations

⁶⁷ The TSG examines and develops proposals for taxation, PRSI and levies for the Budget and Finance Bill in the context of the framework of a medium term and longer term strategy set out in the Programme for Government They are required to examine the strategic approach for a general social welfare package and to assess the interaction of proposals on income tax, PRSI and levies with other social welfare proposals, including child income support, and in particular the impact of this interaction on the labour market and income distribution

institutions. The emerging transnational policy elite comprise experts working in social partnership institutions, (but not necessarily the social partners) and the ESRI who are held in high regard and its technical experts play a briefing / information role for the whole policy community. It also includes technical experts associated with the European Open method of Coordination group of policy experts (ESRI researchers and key civil servants heading the OSI office, country experts based in Brussels and heads of relevant NGO's). It also comprises non governmental lobbyists in international representative organisations and Irish people working in international organisations. Many Irish social security policy actors play lead roles in EU and other international organisations (either elected President or Secretary or as senior staff) (Laffan and O'Donnell 1998).

Whether based in Ireland or Brussels these key actors bring international experience and discourse back to the Irish social policy community. Apart from UN-based networking, which is more irregular and involves a smaller number of policy actors, most informal networking is EU-based. There is also a network of English speaking countries and connections with equivalents in UK organisations. These policy entrepreneurs⁶⁸ can form a distinctive policy network without formal power but with extensive knowledge resources and they have the capacity to bring new thinking into the policy community. Their subjective preferences, professional backgrounds, institutional affiliation and cognitive make-up will influence how and which ideas pass through institutions and this will impact on options for change.

5.8 Multi-level governance

By far the most important international policy influence in Ireland is the EU. Laffan and O'Donnell (1998:157) argue that membership of the EU is different to other international organisations 'as it alters the external environment of the traditional nation state and its internal dynamic of policy making'. Ireland has adapted to the administrative and political demands of multileveled governance in the European Union however social security is not a strategic policy area for EU relations.

⁶⁸ In interviews a number of people repeatedly referred to Peter Cassells, Brian Nolan, Hugh Frazer and Gerry/Ita Mangan and Fintan Farrell as being Irish 'policy entrepreneurs'.

The EU policy system is complex and characterised by multi-level governance where national and supra-national institutions and politicians, bureaucrats and civil society actors engage in a multitude of co-operative working arrangements. With a small budgetary base it uses regulatory policy and promotes policy through treaties, directives and recommendations. It also monitors policy through observatories and OMCs. Cram (1997) understands the EU as a bureaucracy where policy entrepreneurs seek to promote its potential role and independent agenda and expand its competencies by engaging in agenda setting and policy formulation, but not implementation. It invests in policy learning processes including networks, exchanges, conferences and research (Brine 2000). Aspects of the EU most relevant to social security policy include, Directorate General V, the Social Dialogue, the Social Policy Forum, the Structural Funds and social inclusion budgets, the Social Protection Committee, the Employment Committee and the Open Method of Co-ordination of monetary policy, pensions, employment policy and social inclusion policy. Each Commission Directorate (DG) has its own policymaking style, strategy and institutional features that influence policy-making patterns. DGV 5, the social policy and employment directorate, is characterised by a heterogeneous collection of mainly politically weak organisations arranged around social and civil dialogue (O'Cinneide, 1995, 2005: Frazer, 2002).

There is no commitment to EU level social security convergence.⁶⁹ The EU principle of subsidiarity means that social security policy is developed at domestic level and EU member states are protective of their domestic social security systems (O'Cinneide, 2005). EU social security policy is driven by a free labour market ethos, which promotes the free movement of socially insured workers and those seeking employment. There is also an anti 'social dumping' agenda, which, influenced by competitive driven global trends, seeks to avoid a 'race to the bottom' by putting in place minimum income guarantees. There were only two legal directives in the last two decades, the 1992 EU Directive on Minimum Income Guarantee (which did not fundamentally change Irish social security practice) and the Part-Time Work Directive (which required only moderate changes in social security provision for part-time workers). The political and policy influence is harder to measure. One leading trade unionist described to the author how the EU was a very strong positive influence that moved Ireland from a traditional catholic ethos of social policy to a:

⁶⁹ If convergence happens it is not necessarily a product or outcome of EU integration (Hay 2004).

whole notion of a social model and how there was a clear shift in language and thinking so that concept of social inclusion and full employment and a balanced social and economic policy were a familiar discourse

Open Method of Co-ordination

The political struggle to define a European social model is reflected in the compromise commonly known as the Lisbon Agenda which promotes competitiveness, job growth and social inclusion and which prompted a new policy process or governance process known as the 'Open Method of Coordination' (O'Conneide, 2005, Frazer, 2002, O'Donnell and Thomas, 1998) National states enter into a process of co-ordination with common objectives, agreed at Council level, of strategic action plans with short-term actions and long-term objectives, common indicators, joint EU evaluation, public accountability and the exchange of good practice (Frazer, 2002) OMC is an increasingly dominant policy style across five policy areas including social inclusion, pensions and employment-related social security issues and more a co-ordination of process than a co-ordination of policy De La Porte and Pochet (2004) view OMC as a politically significant governance mechanism that allows the EU to act as a semi- sovereign policy system Ferrara et al (2000) highlight the post-regulatory approach to governance that stressed the importance of hegemony (dominant discourses) for securing international co-operation In all OMC processes this hegemony privileges fiscal discipline over social needs or social cohesion and employment is the cornerstone of social inclusion policy A new language and technical discourse of policymaking includes concepts like targets, indicators and mobilisation of all actors The OMC potential to impact will depend on the capacity of the domestic policy community to use the OMC indicators as political tools to lobby for improved domestic performance Laffan and O'Donnell (1998 170) remark on how the resource implication of multi level governance makes it harder to manage structural in central government However to some degree engagement with this EU 'hegemony' is selectively filtered There is still a sense that Irish policy makers are in control Smith (2005 183) reports how a policy maker described to her in an interview how

I think maybe we are inclined to invoke Europe when actually the lines of policy are what we would do anyway

The Irish social security policy community is complex, fragmented and lacks integration. Most institutions, whether state or societal, work at national level⁷⁰ and are organisationally independent, they are stable and well resourced. There is overlap, dialogue and interaction between the institutions and interests. The Irish state is managing its engagement with international social security discourse at its own pace and to its own agenda. There is only emerging evidence to confirm Cerny's expectation of increased multi-level governance and an emerging transnational policy elite. The transformation from an 'iron triangle' to a 'golden pentagon' is ongoing. No international policy elite has yet had much discernable influence on the domestic social security policy community. However the OMC process may lead to 'cognitive Europeanisation' where member states adopt EU policy making tools for consultation and decision making (Sotiropoulos, 2004: 282) and this may influence future policy formation as much as direct regulation (Guillen and Alvarez, 2004: 297).

The community is relatively fluid. Policy agendas move across institutional spaces⁷¹ and membership of institutions change over time⁷². Brewer and de Leon (1983) stressed the importance of decision makers' subjective preferences. Senior membership of these spaces is primarily male, middle-aged, third-level educated, home-owning, white Irish indigenous in origin and shares common Christian based social and political values. This network of people is well integrated, stable, exclusive, and interdependent. Such continuity and stability enables informal networking. The Irish social security policy community is marked by two related weaknesses, underdeveloped policy capacity and weak policy learning capacity. One trade unionist noted in an interview with the author that

⁷⁰ Regional health board and social security structures and local office-level staff are not distinctly visible in the policy community. Community-based or work-based local level actors participate in policy debate through their own national organisations. Lack of direct local participation is seen as problematic and various institutions have initiated ways of opening up more sub national input into anti-poverty debate (NAPS Ireland 1997c, 2002a; CWC 2000, NESF 1997).

⁷¹ The NAPS, for example, was initiated in the political system, driven by the civil service, supported by civil society, underpinned through SP and strengthened through interaction in the EU.

⁷² Politicians are now members of the NESF, the CVP is now part of the NESC and more groups attend the DSFA pre-budget forums.

learning debate and thinking is in the wrong institutional spaces, we are building up capacity in the wrong places. A lot of social learning is in Social Partnership but both civil servants and politicians are asked to deal with and decide very complex issues and yet are given little capacity to analyse to deal with the issues.

NAPS institutional mechanisms attempted to integrate policy but 'joined up' thinking in terms of policy making is still a challenge and it is rare for the whole policy community to learn together. The political sub-sector is particularly isolated. Lack of learning reinforces the most fundamental weakness, the paucity of policy and research resources within the broad Irish civil service and political system. In the words of a political adviser interviewed by the author:

The real challenge is this policy community, we are really very bad at doing policy. We are structured very badly, it's a system-wide problem not just about social welfare. It goes back to the nature of our political system and its short-term pragmatic fix-it orientation, because the political system doesn't demand policy, they don't get policy.

While the words of the political adviser highlight the frustration of policy actors forced to work within a policy system dominated by the culture of short term pragmatic politics, it is important not to overstate that conclusion. While the Irish higher education system did not invest in developing capacity in public social policy studies, within the civil service there is not the type of infrastructure that one might expect to support a high capacity policy community. However, there are also strengths in the policy community. Certain actors in the policy community, particularly those in NESC and ESRI, are highly capable and well regarded by the international policy community and provide policy leadership in the Irish policy community. However, organisations are constrained by reliance on government funding and cannot be considered to be wholly independent. One should also be mindful of the tendency of policy actors and domestic literature to self-evaluate themselves as a weak policy community. This should not be simply taken at face value, such a tendency may reflect a post-colonial inferiority complex rather than reality.

5 9 Patterns of Discourse in the Irish Social Security Community

This section reflects on how knowledge and meaning are produced through discursive practices. Discourse reflects ‘a group of statements which provide a language for talking about, or representing knowledge about a particular topic. It rules in certain ways of talking and rules out other alternatives’ (Hall 1997: 44). This section examines how ideas are communicated, whether there is evidence of epistemic communities or policy monopoly, and what kind of discourse is evident in the Irish social security policy community?

Coakely (2004: 53) and Girvan, (2004: 358) argue that ideology appears absent in the Irish state. At first sight a lack of left-right division between political parties and a consensus approach between classes in social partnership suggests a pragmatic flexible state enabling innovative policy change to adapt to the global economy. However this absence of debate does not mean an absence of ideology. The absence of debate may in fact be a result of consensus about ideology. The Irish state has always had a dominant hegemony. In the early days of the state this reflected the conservative, Catholic and patriarchal ideology (Ferriter, 2004: 337) and was maintained by a strong Church-State relationship. In the later days of the state this has softened somewhat and has also been augmented with a strong neo-liberal hegemony.

Hegemony ideas are currently ‘cognitively locked’ into a neo-liberal agenda reinforced by political globalisation. The dominant ideology is reinforced and maintained by strong epistemic communities including Social Partnership and industrial institutions like the Industrial Development Authority and the National Competitiveness Council established to support the competition state. Irish political culture is a strong user of rhetoric, its model of development is legitimated by rhetoric about social inclusion. The state explicitly and implicitly, by controlling funding and filtering social partnership participation, is able to mitigate dissent from the hegemonic ‘shared understanding’.

Policy Episteme and Monopolies

Certain institutions, in the absence of well-resourced alternative policy advocacy coalitions, enjoy a monopoly role in Irish discourse. The ESRI analysis, for example, underpins social partnership (NESF and NESC) and anti-poverty institutions (the CPA, Office for Social

Inclusion and NAPS) Kirby (2002) argues that ESRI analysis is based on theoretical assumptions of rational choice hence poverty and social inclusion discourse is epistemologically rooted in classical economics theory. Such technical literature focused on statistical measurement dominates policy discourse, limits public debate and acts as a barrier to entry into the policy community⁷³. A second type of policy monopoly happens through social partnership. This monopolises the process of debate favouring consensus over conflict and maintaining a strong narrative of shared understanding where 'social partners leave ideological differences outside the door and problem solve in the context of a shared understanding', (McCarthy 1998, 1999, NESF 1997, NESC 2005b). Organisations which have tried to raise critical debate comment on the difficulty in raising the level of debate and discourse⁷⁴ (WRC 2001). Individuals who have ventured into public debate quickly find themselves silenced (Murphy 2002)⁷⁵.

The dominant macro discourse revolves around competitiveness and employment growth, the dominant social security discourse revolves around technical debates about how to measure the perceived, socially constructed, policy problem of the day, work incentives and replacement ratios, definitions and measurement of unemployment, definitions and measurement of poverty / inequality and, most recently, labour market impacts of migration. Alternative advocacy coalitions (sub-sets of groups defined by similar knowledge and interests working together within a policy community) promotes alternative discourses, a rights, equality and social spending approach and a less dominant discourse based on family values, parenting and responsibility⁷⁶. These debates mirror Levitas' (1998) typology of

⁷³ In interviews community based activists were told they could not be on certain committees because they would not be able to understand the technical nature of the debate.

⁷⁴ The NESC (2003, 2005) work conceptualising a developmental welfare state failed to stimulate policy debate whereas the NESC (2004) study of housing provoked serious debate.

⁷⁵ Jim O'Leary, for example, had to resign from the benchmarking process. Michael O'Reilly was ostracized within the Trade Union movement. Some policy entrepreneurs (Clinton 1994, Madden 1994, Walsh 1992 and Harney 2000) have made exceptional controversial welfare reform proposals.

⁷⁶ These coalitions tend to be tactical and short-term, built around specific campaigns and grouped to promote rights (disability coalition), redistribution policy (Share the Wealth) ending child poverty

Social Inclusion Discourse, Redistributive Discourse and Moral Underclass Discourse (Moran, 2005) Social inclusion discourse still dominates but a redistributive and rights discourse has lost some ground to a moral underclass discourse which links social security to conditions governing 'behaviour' (NESC 2005b)

Types of discourse

NESC (2005a) represents an attempt to modernise social inclusion discourse into one consistent with international competitiveness. This was developed in a strong state-society co-ordinated discourse in a consensus based social partnership institution, the National Economic and Social Council (NESC). Schmidt's (2000a) concept of 'co-coordinative discourse' refers to where change is managed through a closed elite level policy process confined to the type of problem solving or lesson drawing that leads to incremental reform. The alternative is 'communicative discourse', capable of promoting social learning and leading to a change in values and a more fundamental restructuring of policy. Processes that engage in broader communication and that seek wider social learning include commissions and public consultations.

The coordinative shared understanding underpinning the consensus social partnership is consistent with the political culture of consensus coalition governments. Social Partnership, in its early days represented a 'weapon' or a tool which government used to develop a societal consensus about retrenchment. The first social partnership agreement was the blueprint which was institutionalised through social partnership, NESC and the other institutional developments that flowed from the agreements – it was this relatively rapid institutionalisation of neo-liberal ideas that mean these ideas could act as a cognitive lock. They still act as a cognitive lock because neither those ideas or institutions have been effectively challenged or undermined. Over time more social security policies are developed within social partnership institutions⁷⁷. When elite policy makers control policy development

(OYETCP), childcare (Childcare 2000), personal responsibility in employment (Irish Small and Medium Employers), in sexual behaviour and parenting (Myers) and in social behaviour (McDowell)

⁷⁷ Activation, participation and employment, all key competition state features, are promoted but policy areas less consistent with the competition state, care, income inequality, social security, individualisation and social rights of migrants are 'agenda managed' and filtered out of mainstream political and social partnership discourse

in a highly co-ordinated and technical discourse it is more difficult for political actors to engage in the social learning needed to legitimise a more structural type of change.

Sources of policy ideas may differ across political administrations. One Minister explained in an interview with the author how his internationalist political convictions led him to read widely and to search out policy examples in places as far apart as Sweden and Roosevelt's US original New Deal, both of which he claimed influenced the original Social Employment Scheme set up in 1984 (Quinn 2005).⁷⁸ If commitment to searching out international ideas is 'ideological' then social democratic parties are more open to policy transfer and are most likely to look to social democratic inspired policy examples. FG, on the other hand, chose to visit the US in 1987 to examine workfare practices. Lack of subsequent engagement with more recent US welfare to work policy could be attributed to a more pragmatic FF which has less interest in seeking out other policy experiences or ideas anywhere. A FF Minister recalled in an interview with the author how he 'didn't need to read about what needed to be done or commission any research; I could see it all around me, in my constituency work, and in my clinics'.

Social security debate is limited by a hegemonic neo-liberal discourse and a political culture that tend towards short-term views and small incremental reforms. Cousins (2005a) notes the ideological dominance of the market and lack of realistic policy alternatives from right or left ideological sources. The weak civic society and lack of trade union role in administering social security contributes to weak social security debate in Ireland (Hardiman 1998). A political adviser described, in an interview with the author, the lack of capacity and drive in the policy community:

There is nobody pushing change, no one has a proactive approach for any clear change. So there isn't anybody really thinking, nobody is interested in trying to restructure social security, the poor aren't pushing, the Department aren't pushing, nobody is pushing it.

⁷⁸ He also described how having read an article in the Economist magazine he was curious to examine the Hungarian labour market experience. Using ILO contacts he arranged what was a first visit by an Irish Minister to then communist Hungary where he researched their use of tracking and placing underemployed people, which in turn influenced the development of Irish employment services.

Kennelly and O'Shea (1998) note the paucity of recent social security debate in Ireland. O'Connor A. (2005) observed that 'the suddenness of economic turnaround means social policy is only beginning to catch up with economic reality'. While Cousins (2005a), NESC (2005a) and O'Connor A. (2005) noted how the absence of crisis in the social security system dampens initiatives for reform there has also been strong resistance to and active vetoing of policy analysis that argues for solutions to relative income inequality, individualisation, childcare and the social needs of migrants.

5.9 Chapter Conclusion

The Irish social security policy community is a community in low level equilibrium experiencing a relatively 'frozen landscape' of social security reform (Esping-Andersen 2003)⁷⁹. Veto theorists anticipated that the more veto points the less capacity for radical change and the more muted the impact of globalisation. Middle class civil servants, social partners and pluralist interest groups work to reinforce the status quo. Wider civil society and organisations representing the poor are weak and unable to input effectively to policy learning, formation and implementation (Hardiman 1998). A powerful state-led policy network promotes a policy monopoly and episteme and significant state-society consensus exists alongside different short-term advocacy coalitions. A low level of political discourse and policy debate is dominated by coordinative lesson drawing rather than communicative social learning. Through multilevel governance it is possible to identify an emerging group of international policy entrepreneurs who act as conduits for ideas.

There are five ways institutional and cultural differences might be explanatory variables capable of accounting for the different Irish policy experiences than English speaking liberal regimes. Cousins (2005a:124), Stephens, Huber and Ray (1999) and Swank (2002) concur with Hay (2004:205) that 'centralised adversarial first-past-the-post and two-party systems are more prone to crisis induced policy making than others which are more prone to incremental reformisms'. Does this explain the slower pace of policy change? Multiple vetoes lead to policy cultures dominated by blame avoidance or policy avoidance (Hood

⁷⁹ Like the Irish weather (not too hot not too cold and rain all the year round) the Irish social security policy community as a temperate personality (not too left, not too right and incrementalism all the year round.

2002 16-20, Green-Petersen and Haverland 2002 24, Pierson 1994, 1996)⁸⁰ or by a consensus culture and a more ‘kind and gentle’ policy predisposition (Lijhpart, 1999 301) Does this explain a less radical policy or more benign policy trajectory? Thirdly an insular coordinative policy community closed to ideas and debate is less likely to be open to radical structural change of either a positive or negative type Fourthly the combined impact of strong business veto, a relatively inactive trade union movement and a numerically strong but divided and weak civil society place little pressure for social security reform To echo Hardiman (1998 122)

we may find at least part of the explanation for the relative lack of progress in redressing these inequalities may be found in a closer analysis of the patterns of interest representation in the form of party policies and interest group formation

Finally once unemployment was resolved there is a lack of appreciation within the ‘shared understanding’ of how social inclusion and competitiveness are inter-related and therefore a lack crisis, focus and urgency on resolving remaining social inequities All of these rationales may explain why the type and pace of Irish social security change is contrary to what might be expected in the world’s most globalised country It is useful at this stage to explore more precisely the link between Irish social security and Ireland’s position in the international political economy This is the focus of the following chapter

⁸⁰ Governments adopt blame avoidance strategies including presentational strategies, spin, timing, arguing, excusing, justifying, diverting, distorting, threats, agency strategies, shifting blame to agencies, regulators, and advisers They also engage in substantive policy strategies where policy is defensively chosen for electoral consideration

Economic and political pressures generated by internationalisation have fundamentally important impacts on both the material and ideological interests of a broad array of policy actors (Swank 2002:177)

CHAPTER SIX

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL GLOBALISATION

6.1 Introduction

Chapter One reflected on the openness of the Irish economy and how a high level of international economic integration is a defining characteristic of the Irish economy (Land and Ruane 2006:1). One might expect therefore that Ireland is vulnerable to the impacts of globalisation. This chapter reviews how globalisation (as defined by Held in Ch 1) impacts on Irish social security. Laffan and O'Donnell (1998:162) argue about the importance of 'appreciation of constraints and possibilities of international governance and its implications for developmental, technological, social, political and macroeconomic dimensions'. Competition state theory suggests globalisation influences the development of Irish social security in both economic and political ways. In the immediate and longer term economic globalisation and more intense global competitiveness directly impacts on the financial viability of the welfare state. The impact of political globalisation is more indirect but potentially stronger as it influences international ideas which permeate the domestic policy community through a transnational policy elite working in multilevel governance. It also causes internal shifts in power towards capital and business.

All governments react and adjust to the reality of globalisation in different ways (Weiss, 2005; Mosely, 2005). The first part of this chapter examines changes in social security that can be directly attributed to economic globalisation. It reviews the impact of high economic growth, the impact of competition for foreign direct investment, competitive pressures on taxation and social insurance policy, migration, technology, competition in procurement and the privatisation of pensions. Since the distinction between economic and political globalisation is not always clear, this part of the chapter ends by discussing how the politics of managing foreign direct investment might impact on attitudes to social security policy. The study of policy processes or the mediation of domestic policy is incomplete without examination of international policy transfer as a source of policy. Part two begins by

reflecting on the concept of policy transfer. It then examines institutions in the international policy community which interface with the Irish social security policy community. Competition state theorists stress the political mediation of policy ideas as an explanatory variable capable of explaining policy differences. This part of the chapter ends by discussing whether the fact that the Irish policy community has been exposed to different or less policy ideas than other liberal welfare regimes might account for path departure from these liberal regimes. The Chapter concludes that globalisation has so far presented both economic and political opportunities and threats and that the determining factor in how these impact on social security is how they are mediated by the domestic policy community.

6.2 Economic Globalisation

It is difficult to isolate the immediate economic impact of globalisation on social security policy. Welfare states developed at a time of embedded liberalism when trade barriers, capital exchange controls and fixed exchange rates meant less international constraints on domestic policy choices. Scharpf & Schmidt (2000a) outlined how international constraints developed when the Bretton Woods fixed exchange rate system broke down in 1973 at a time when the world experienced the first OPEC oil crisis. Government's economic and political response was to remove both trade barriers and capital exchange controls. National economies, no longer shielded against the international economy, had less control over their economic boundaries. With rising interest rates governments struggling against stagflation (rising unemployment and inflation) could not afford to re-inflate their economies. They depended less on Keynesian macroeconomic demand strategies and resorted more to micro management of the economy through wage restraint and spending controls. As Scharpf and Schmidt (2000a: 6) concluded

Governments are no longer dealing with captive capital owners and captive customers. National systems of taxation, regulation and industrial relations have now become vulnerable to the extent that they reduce the attractiveness of the national economy to mobile capital and the competitiveness of nationally produced goods and services in international markets. This has major impacts on employment in the internationally exposed sectors of the economy and on the financial viability of the welfare state.

Impact of high economic growth

Competition state theorists expect downward pressure on social security associated with regulatory and tax competition among national governments competing in internationalised product and capital markets. This competition necessitates budgetary constraint and cost containment measures. Though in the early 1980's there were significant cuts in education, health and housing expenditure there is no evidence of major retrenchment of Irish social security. Chapter Four reflected that a liberal welfare state with a high degree of reliance on means-tested payments had little room to decrease already ungenerous payments. Chapter Nine examines the role politics played in ensuring less social security retrenchment. This chapter focuses on whether experience of less retrenchment in this period can be explained by the exceptional levels of Irish economic growth associated with the high levels of international capital mobility and low taxation characteristic of the Irish economic development model (Smith, 2005). The combination of unusually high Irish economic growth rates and limited pressures from an ageing population meant Ireland did not suffer the same fiscal pressures experienced by other OECD countries. One academic interviewed by the author commented

The fact that we were so plugged into the global economy was part of our economic growth and decrease in unemployment, this meant that our social expenditure shrunk in a rather painless way relative to some other countries who didn't experience such job growth. The impact of economic globalisation on social security might have been to protect it from the type of benefit reductions and social security reforms seen in other countries.

In fact for much of the period since 1997 Ireland enjoyed budget surpluses and the capacity to expand social security rates and coverage. Chapter Four, reflected however, that only limited expansion occurred and that Irish social security development was a story of 'arrested development' where the government abstained from using the fruits of economic growth to expand and improve social protection to the degree that might have been anticipated as a correlate of economic growth (Alber and Standing, 2000 99)⁸¹. This is consistent with social expenditure and direct social security decreasing as a proportion of both GNP and GDP (Timeneon 2003). According to NESC (2005 61) expenditure on cash benefits as a % of GDP dropped from 13.6% in 1993 to 8.4% in 2001. Ireland's comparative

position for social spending decreased from 13th out of 14 to 14 out of 14 over that period (Hay 2006). This confirms that Ireland was always a comparatively low spender and is still comparatively low spender. Failure to use the opportunity afforded by economic growth to break a tradition of high rates of poverty suggests path dependant policy was a strong driving force determining Irish social security policy. Callan (2004) argued that Ireland always had high rates of relative poverty and that this increase in relative income poverty is a function, not so much of globalisation, but of the tax welfare model and an underlying social security policy orientated to 'make work attractive'. The comments of Burke about the about the early Irish state seem appropriate to the 21st century:

Whilst it is true to state that the economic resources of the new state were simply not there to support any radical social policy, even if they were, the political desire seems equally lacking. The ideology of the new state was deeply conservative (Burke, 1999:26).

Irish social security policy did adjust downwards to globalisation: As Kiam Caudle observed in 1967, it was already 'lean and mean' and key policy makers were happy that it remained so.

Low Tax Policy

The introductory chapter outlined how Irish policy discourse is dominated by the context of international competitiveness, the preferred Irish phrase for globalisation. What impact has this low tax-wage moderation Irish economic prescription on the amount available for social expenditure? NESC (2005) argued that globalisation pressures leave little choice but to remain with a relatively liberal welfare regime of means-tested basic rates; other options are considered politically unaffordable in the context of the pressures of international competition. However, the principle of low basic social security rates, or 'less eligibility', has always underpinned Ireland's liberal approach to social security. The Minister for Finance in 1965, James Ryan, confirmed that the Second Programme for Economic Expansion strategy in relation to social security was to 'keep assistance rates low on the grounds that to do so is to make work more attractive' (Ferriter 2004b;16). Even if there had been greater fiscal flexibility it is unlikely that any government would have sought to change this basic social security formula. In this sense it is unclear whether a restricted tax policy had that much impact on social security. This conclusion is reinforced by government's argument that lower taxes lead to increased tax yield over this period. Sweeney (2005)

argued that government compensated for low income with a variety of stealth taxes and service changes to the extent that low taxation policy did not lead to any diminution of revenue over this period. The policy of low taxation in practice since 1997 was not, it seems, a fiscal barrier to real increases in social expenditure.

Pay Related Social Insurance

The most obvious impact of economic globalisation, voiced by many policy actors interviewed by the author, was on the PRSI system. Although PRSI rates were low relative to other EU countries, the attention of policy makers focused on the implications of a PRSI rate increase on international competitiveness. One civil servant from the Department of Finance reflected in an interview with the author:

It wouldn't be a major thing on the table but it would always be on the table and IBEC would lobby to keep it down.

A civil servant interviewed explained in an interview with the author how pressure came not from globalisation but from traditional indigenous employers:

The one thing where I saw us getting pressure from IBEC was on PRSI rates, we would be hit very strongly with competitiveness arguments so that, to be honest, we would track UK PRSI and have the graphs ready for direct comparison. The competitiveness pressures with PRSI wasn't the European Union rates but small companies exporting to the UK or companies near the border in Northern Ireland.

The issue of PRSI rates and their impact on competitiveness pre-dated globalisation. Globalisation has reduced reliance on the UK export open market and so reduced pressure to track UK PRSI rates. But different forms of capital placed different policy demands on PRSI and international companies lobbied for different types of PRSI reductions. Social security policy actively responded to the needs and desires of international capital by exempting certain non-EU migrant workers from social insurance coverage. Foreign companies have directly lobbied the DETE to exempt their foreign workforces from inclusion in taxation and social insurance systems. A civil servant explained in an interview with the author that:

The reason employees PRSI thresholds were done away with was because they

impacted on transnational companies

International companies structurally impact on social protection by providing private packages that reinforce second-tier market-led social security provisions, these impact by changing the context and choices around work-related social protection provision. This undermines support for directly provided social security protection among workers (NESC 2005a). The net effect of all of this is a significant undermining of the viability of pay-related social insurance. A civil servant, in an interview with the author, set the 1995 White Paper on Social Insurance (DSFCA 1995) and PRSI policy development in context:

Social insurance in Ireland is driven mainly by the amount coming at us, the competitive pressure to decrease the PRSI rate was leading us to a situation where there are a lot of people in the system who didn't pay a contribution because of IBEC-driven exemptions, so there are consequences for capacity to deliver on social insurance in the future.

Migration

Migration is a most visible form of globalisation. The EU has always supported free-movement of workers as a basic requirement of a free market economy. However in practice EU policy only requires free movement of already employed or recently employed workers or job seekers. As discussed in some detail in Chapter Four, Irish state policy is to exclude migrants' needs from Irish social security and leave migrants to the mercy of the market and to limit asylum seekers to 'direct provision' welfare entitlement. In a fragmented and competing state such policy was led by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Direct Provision and Habitual Residence Rule) and the Department of Employment, Trade and Enterprise (PRSI exemptions) and opposed by Department of Social Family Affairs and the Department of Foreign Affairs on social and human rights grounds. In each decision the primary consideration was not social policy but national economic or security interests and in each specific case the social rights of groups and individuals was subordinate to the perceived economic need or threat. Legislation to remove social protection rights for migrant workers was brought into effect because only one foreign company, GAMA, lobbied for it. GAMA used 67% of the PRSI exemptions issued under that legislation between 2002 and 2005. This suggests that the pressure of globalisation (in this case labour market shortages in the construction industry) does not have to be very strong before the Irish government is willing to exempt migrant workers from social protection. It seems political will rather than

globalisation was the stronger driver

EU membership has push and pull influences on social security arrangements for migrant workers and asylum seekers. The government responded to EU enlargement with legislation restricting welfare entitlement to 'habitual residents' but was then forced to amend this policy in the face of EU directives on family payments. Legal obligations of the UN Geneva Convention (1951) oblige the Irish government to have a minimum standard of accommodation for asylum seekers. Reilly (2005) outlines a significant number of international instruments influencing this policy area.

Given the 2002 Census (CSO) is the most recent data it is impossible to give an accurate figure of the extent of migration to the year 2006. Foreign nationals represented 6% of the population in 2002. Over 60% come from within the EU 25 (and 70% of this 60% come from the UK). Leaving aside UK residents the 2002 census shows 1% of the population come from other EU 25 countries and 1% from the rest of the world. The impact of the May 1st 2004 Accession is illustrated in information from the QNHS September / October 2005 which shows the numbers of new member state nationals increasing from 7,716 in 2002 to 72,700 in 2005 an increase of 64,984 or over 842%. In a different type of displacement the numbers of EU 15 and non EU migrants dropped over the same period. These figures, however, are inconsistent with the numbers of PPSN numbers issued to new member states nationals which show up to 200,000 numbers issued since May 2004 (IT 06-04-2006), only 1,318 (8%) of whom are on the live register. However PPSN numbers are no indicator of the numbers of non nationals living or working in Ireland. The administration of PPSN numbers has been a cause of concern to DSFA because a number of high profile illegal sales of PPSN numbers to foreign nationals. There is also a significant and fluid movement of migrants to and from Ireland so that it is impossible to be precise about number of migrants in Ireland. The availability of the 2006 Census in 13 languages reflected the reality of the extent and variety of inward migration and gives some insight into the impact migration has on service provision, translation services and information strategies of government departments including DSFA.

Migration has other impacts on social security policy and outcomes. Whether migration is permanent or temporary migration will have different social policy implications for the receiving country. Temporary migrants tend to be aged 22-44 and require little in terms of social policy, permanent migrants reflect the general population's age profile and need in

terms of social protection and social services Ireland is receiving migrants at both ends of the skills distribution Previous emigration from Ireland damaged the skill distribution in the domestic labour force and, overall, present inward migration is restoring this imbalance with many migrants having above average rates of education The impact of migrants on wage rates and job displacement has been the subject of much controversy in recent years and it seems likely that there is some impact on wage levels in specific sectors including construction and hospitality (Labour 2006) Less attention has been focused on the labour market dynamic amongst low skilled migrants and indigenous unemployed or job seekers It is possible that some high benefit dependency amongst working aged Irish social security claimants may be in part be caused a different type of more hidden displacement The potential job seeker is discouraged in the face of indirect competition from what FAS (2004) have termed 'cheep and cheerful' low skilled migrant job seekers workers At the same time presence of an alternative workforce takes pressure of the state which has to some degree abandoned the challenge of upskilling low skilled Irish workers into these low paid jobs This policy challenge may become more potent if and when the state chooses to proceed with a more aggressive form of activation as envisaged by NESC (2005a) and DSFA (INOU, 2006) Migration is likely to be one of the most visible forms of globalisation in the coming years and if managed correctly there is no reason to assume it will be anything but a positive impact on options for social security policy

Competition and procurement – the EU Social Services Directive

Many definitions of globalisation reference technological expansion as a key feature of globalisation (Scholte 2000) Chapter Four already reflected on how the DSW's capacity to partner Digital lead them towards exploring social security related technology systems and know-how to other countries, particularly Eastern European countries This commodification of Irish social security expertise meant such knowledge became, for a time, a profitable export industry in its own right In fact the DSFA only recently closed it's internal 'international development desk', which tendered for social security restructuring contracts in developing countries Advances in technology on the one hand make it easier to track fraud across borders and on the other hand make it easier to make transfer payments mobile The most obvious impact of technology however, as discussed in Chapter Four was to improve service delivery

Social security delivery is also impacted upon through the EU procurement process, which obliges tendering, to private and public bodies, of delivery services previously monopolised

by statutory bodies, for example An Post's social security delivery contracts. Future GATT, World Trade Organisation (WTO) and EU Service Directives may open up delivery of public social services to competition to influence the structure, impact and delivery of social security policy (Yeates 2002).

The European Commission White Paper on Services of General Interest (2004) and 'Services Directive' (2004) aim to liberalise the market in services in Europe. This could have significant implications for a huge range of services provided for the general interest of EU societies and citizens, such as social, and health services.⁸² According to its own summary the legislative proposal is part of the process of economic reform launched by the Lisbon European Council with a view to making the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010. It proposes a genuine internal market in services to exploit the considerable potential for economic growth and job creation afforded by the services sector. The objective is a legal framework to eliminate the obstacles to the freedom of establishment for service providers and the free movement of services between the Member States. The proposal covers a wide variety of economic service activities – with some exceptions, such as financial services. The Social Platform launched a Europe-wide campaign for 'Social Services of General Economic Interest' to be excluded from the scope of this Directive.

The first reading of the European Parliament (16-02-2006) significantly rewrote the directive and deleted the controversial 'country of origin principle' where service providers could operate in a country but comply with their home countries regulations. Crucially for the purposes of this discussion they also extended and clarified the exclusion of non economic public services including social welfare with the amendment 'does not affect services pursuing a social welfare objective'. Commenting on the significant amendments, MEP de Rossa (2006:4) claimed a 'victory for workers and consumers so far. We have shown that democracy can and does work in the citizens favour at European level, but that it requires active engagement by political parties and trade unions and NGO's at national and European level to be successful'. A demonstration of Polanyi's (2001) double movement?

⁸² Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament on services in the internal market [SEC(2004)

An EU and global level internal market for pensions (and other forms of social protection such as private health insurance) has already been developed. The commodification or privatisation of pensions has been strongly advocated by the international financial services sector. International and national private-sector pressures allied to sectors of the state drove the logic behind these moves. The international context was the World Bank promotion of a privatisation agenda in pension policy.

Competitiveness and foreign direct investment

It was argued earlier that globalisation and intensified competition for FDI has at least reinforced the original social security policy formula. One trade union commentator observed in an interview with the author that 'low tax regime is conventional wisdom and the whole way we approach social policy is seeped in this wisdom'. The same official went on to observe that this influence was quite direct and that the swing back to market values and competitiveness in the mid 1990's was a result of overall globalisation and strong US influence.

Ireland was especially vulnerable to US Foreign Direct Investment and US macro ideas were very influential, I'm not saying it was that obvious, but policy makers would know that US investors would not like a huge investment in social policy.

It is impossible to prove that sensitivity to US companies is factored into the social security policy but in several interviews with the author, policy elites referred to a prevailing attitude of trying to 'bend over backwards to please investors'. Smith (2005: 179) also found in interviews with elites that 'globalisation appears to act as a cognitive filter through which Irish policy makers make sense of the complex world in which they live'. The competition state must reassure global capital and FDI stakeholders that Ireland is and will continue to be a low-tax economy. One official commented in an interview with the author, on how the Irish swing against the EU social model was influenced by pressure from US companies.

Normally Ireland gives a lame excuse for opposing things, we want to leave this to social partners to discuss back in Ireland or we have better legislation already, or this is too technical, rather than say it straight out that we have

changed our outlook and US companies are telling us that if this ever happens they will have nothing to do with Ireland again.

It was discussed earlier how there has been no direct diminution of welfare spending caused by a low-taxation policy. Nonetheless rhetoric associated with low tax policy suggests international competitiveness requires a reining in of social expenditure (Smith, 2005). Chapter One discussed how discourse about international competitiveness is a common feature in Irish political discourse about social security (Smith, 2005). Murphy (2004) attributed the reluctance to set NEAP targets to the need to be flexible in an open economy. The Benchmark and Indexation Working Group (2001) terms of reference for example specifically included assessing the impact of social welfare adequacy on international competitiveness. Both the DOF and IBEC representatives argued that international competitiveness required fiscal and social policy to be adaptable and flexible and this rendered inflexible benchmarks and indexation formulas unrealistic. One participant observed in an interview with the author how:

I had a real sense of the big picture, we weren't just talking about what the rate should be to keep people out of poverty, I became more aware that this was just a secondary objective to the primary objective of incentive to work and competitiveness.

From the DOF perspective, the influence of economic globalisation is direct, as one senior official observed in an interview with the author:

Countries were in competition to attract Foreign Direct Investment, we had to make sure our policies overall were conducive to bringing in companies, had to keep an eye on things like inflation, wages, social insurance, we were always conscious of what it would do to our attractiveness as a location.

From the DSFA perspective the impact of economic globalisation is less obvious. One key political adviser in the DSFA commented in an interview with the author:

I don't think I ever heard the word globalisation mentioned in social welfare. It's certainly not something that people were thinking, Oh my God I can't do that because of globalisation or we can't do that because that company is going

to leave, there is very little direct involvement.

What ever about the impact of globalisation on government departments the practical integration of European citizens may also have impacts. Quantitative differences in social security rates are more obvious to citizens or residents than qualitative differences in health care or other social services. Various NGO's have tried to use the new transparency of euro based social security rates to highlight inequality in social security generosity across countries and to lobby for upward convergence.

As expected in the Competition State theory, the economic impact of globalisation played some role in determining social security reform. Cerny et al., (2005) highlight that globalisation presents opportunities as well as threats. In the Irish case such influence was, indeed, often positive. Key policy elite interviewed by the author for this thesis stressed that globalisation impacted most strongly on social security through the degree to which Ireland's interaction with the world economy produced such phenomenal job growth. The shrinking of social security expenditure was largely a function of economic growth and falling unemployment rather than cutbacks and retrenchment. It is doubtful whether the Irish state would have sought to achieve as low a rate of social expenditure without the help of economic growth. High levels of economic growth associated with Irish globalisation may also have protected Ireland from harsher retrenchment⁸³. There were, however, negatives associated with globalisation. These included a political correlation between FDI, low taxation and approaches to social security policies. It also included a more direct negative impact on PRSI policy; a privatisation of pensions and personal social protection packages. More neutral impacts which depending on they are managed could lead to positive or negative outcomes include migration related social security issues and increased competition in social security delivery.

While economic rationales might explain some benign aspects of Irish social security policy development, such rationale cannot explain other aspects of Irish social security policy (for example the failure to individualise payments or update income disregards). Explaining

⁸³ One academic interviewed by the author observed how 'the scale of economic growth meant funding was available to do easy popular bits like restricting Child Income Support to Child Benefit, the movement of people into jobs meant they did not have to do the hard bits: those who might well have been politically motivated to slash and burn had no real reason or political justification to do it.

current Irish social security policy as an outcome of economic growth alone tends to interpret the Irish welfare state as relatively unproblematic and sympathetic. Apart from unemployment (which economic growth 'fixed') Irish social security appears to have had no technical or cultural pathology to fix (unlike, for example, the Netherlands with a huge disability pathology). Why would one want to change a winning formula?

NESC (2005a) exposed many reasons one might wish to reform the Irish social security system. High and growing levels of relative poverty or income inequality, high levels of income work poor and high levels of benefit dependency are clearly problematic. Whether the political and policy world chooses to grapple with such problems are of course political choices and not functional policy outcomes caused by economic growth. There is evidence of political discourse arguing for example, that Irish inequality was pathological or that the male breadwinner model should be reformed. While this never challenged the dominant episteme, these political alternatives prove that Irish style competition state social security policy was not an economic inevitability but a socially constructed political choice. Later Chapters examine how domestic factors influence the construction of such policy choice. The final part of this Chapter examines how political globalisation impacts on domestic social security change and contributes to the construction of political choices.

6.3 Political Globalisation

Globalisation also has political aspects that complex theories understand as highly complex set of processes that lead to 'a reconfiguration of power with implications for national governance' (Smith 2005: 19). Competition state theory views globalisation as a primarily political concept where changes in policy correlate with shifts in power and governance. Explanations for particular policy choices can be found in the interaction between domestic institutions and practices, national and international interest groups and the evolving relationship between the public and private (Cerny et al., 2005: 15). The remainder of this chapter focuses on how political globalisation and international institutions impact on policy transfer and discusses how the Irish policy community receives and diffuses policy ideas from the international policy community. The chapter concludes that although the DSW list 'international networking with social security organisations' as a strength (DSW Strategy Statement, 1996: 7) there is less evidence of international networking than one might expect.

Potential mechanisms for social welfare policy transfer

One civil servant interviewed by the author observed how ‘sometimes you would find yourself fighting off the politician who has heard of something brilliant that’s happening in the US’ Policy transfer and policy shopping are stages in the policy cycle most closely associated with international diffusion of policy (Skocpol, 1985) Dolowitz and Marsh (1996 344) defined policy transfer as ‘a process through which knowledge about policies is used to develop policies in another place’ A wide range of policy learning can be transferred The policy transfer process is often voluntary but can be directly or indirectly coercive (as in the case of IMF conditions) Policy transfer involves a wide range of actors including elected officials, political parties, bureaucrats, civil servants, pressure groups, policy entrepreneurs and supra-national institutions National states actively mediate the transnational diffusion of policy and adopt different policy transfer strategies including copying, emulation, synthesis, hybridisation and inspiration (Evans, 1985, Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996 344)

One of the more powerful ways to transfer policy is through policy regimes or institutional arrangements Regimes govern behaviour within policy processes and impose particular policies (Keohane and Nye, 1996) The Washington Consensus promotes neo-liberal concepts of the market economy and an ideology of competition, deregulation and privatisation (Gill 1995) The Geneva Consensus promotes free trade agreements in commercial and public sector trade including social security (Yeates, 2002) The impact of global regimes differs among nation states depending on how states choose to domestically invoke, interpret, implement and enforce these policies Some global organisations and policy mediators (UN, the EU and the IMF) have statutory and institutional power over policy but others (OECD) influence change through political dialogue

Hettne (1995) highlights the role of political discourse in promoting hegemonic regimes Cox R (1995) optimistically identifies ‘ontological shifts’ where the present commonsense of hyper capitalism, neo-liberalism and competitiveness, is challenged by a new ontology derived from international discourse about an alternative view of society Deacon (2003) is optimistic, like Cox, that an alternative political economy discourse might emerge based on social solidarity, equity and universality Deacon B (2003) argues different international actors have different ideological strategies and motivations The World Bank and the IMF have an aggressive ideological strategy compared to the more ideologically passive approach of the EU While the 1990s were heavily influenced by the neo-liberal discourse of the IMF

and World Bank, the globalisation political debate moved to a more socially responsible globalisation discourse in the 2000s. This debate links social expenditure and social cohesion and identifies certain active spending measures as social investment (OECD 2004, World Bank, 2003)

Standing (1999) concluded the future model of welfare is hostage to professional and ideological advice and pressure provided through international agencies. Because representatives of mobile capital linked to neo-liberal political parties co-ordinate discourse with international financial agencies, domestic political conflicts correlate with conflicts among influential supra-national actors. Who influences Ireland? Irish policy actors are part of the international policy elite transferring policy to Eastern Europe and developing countries; however, it is also the case that intergovernmental organisations are relevant to and influence Ireland. Ireland was a late starter in the international political community, remaining relatively insular (Conroy 1999) and joining the OECD in 1954, the UN in 1955, the World Bank in 1957, GATT in 1967 and the EEC in 1973. The EU was reviewed in Chapter Five, the IMF, the OECD, the UN / ILO / ISSA are reviewed below.

Governance Processes, International Policy Organisations

Yeates (2002) identified how international institutions use a variety of methods and processes to promote respective policy positions. The EU uses regulation and Open Methods of Co-ordination, the UN uses standard setting and promotes human rights, the World Trade Organisation deregulates welfare provision, the International Labour Organisation uses charters and conventions, the International Monetary Fund uses conditional structural adjustment programmes, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development produces expert country reports and monitoring and Multinational Co-operations lobby governments and transnational bodies. Likewise Irish organisations interact with the international policy community in a number of ways. Formal interaction with international organisations comes through established protocols and processes in which the Irish state participates by virtue of its membership of these institutions and its international legal obligations (Reilly 2005). Different parts of the policy community are formal members of international organisations: the UN, the OECD, and the IMF, and engage in formal governance processes which involve international policy organisations such as the EU and OMC, have international legal obligations or sign up voluntarily to international covenants as in the ILO. Informally policy actors network with international organisations and colleagues, read journal articles and popular media and attend conferences / networking

opportunities

This section outlines the formal and informal overlap between the Irish social security policy community and the international policy community Smith (2005 179) and Laffan and O'Donnell (1998) observed significant networking with these international organisations

United Nations

Some UN charters and declarations have direct social security implications For example, the UN Charter of Fundamental Human Rights sets out a right to minimum incomes The Irish government resists a justiciable rights approach to implementing these international obligations Social security lobbyists use these signatory and related monitoring and reporting processes as campaigning tools to promote a rights based discourse (Reilly 2005) Minister de Rossa used the occasion of the UN Summit on Social Development in 1995 as a political opportunity to initiate the NAPS He explained in an interview with the author 'I knew if I announced at a UN conference no one could wriggle out of it' Participants in the UN Gender Summit in Beijing 1995 used it as a political opportunity to protest directly about Irish unemployment to Irish Ministers Reilly (2005) concluded that the Beijing Platform for Action played a significant role influencing governmental discourse framing emerging activism and shaping new political spaces

ILO charters and conventions

ILO charters were significant for developing labour market standards and regulations in the 1960's and 1970s (Otting, 1994) The ILO now has little relevance to the post 1990's Irish social security debate and has been overtaken by more powerful EU One former Minister described to the author how

Going to the ILO was like kind of going to the Tralee races, I don't recall anything of any significance that wasn't already on the table, happening at the ILO, it was just a great big junket

A civil servant remarked to the author

ISSA and ILO research is not good quality and hardly relevant The scope of coverage is very wide and they are trying to be all things to everybody and end up being nothing to anybody

As with the UN conventions, ILO directives were used as, largely unsuccessful, campaigning tools. No key member of the Irish policy community was a member of the ISSA (a specialist social security network working under the auspices of the ILO (McKinmon 2004)), although the DSFA seconded an academic to the ISSA to help prepare a pensions policy paper for the EU Irish Presidency in 2004.

International Monetary Fund / World Trade Organisation

IMF country reports are read by the DOF, whose library regularly distributes IMF material, and IBEC staff and officials. Others interviewed felt the political nature of the IMF limited its relevance. While IMF structural adjustment programmes and poverty strategies are not directly relevant to Ireland they overlap with EU OMC and NAPS discourse. Indeed in this case policy transfer was from Ireland to IMF-funded African countries and Eastern European countries. Since the closure of the DSFA's 'international bureau' the state's direct social security policy transfer role is less active but policy diffusion continues through private consultancy firms, with close links to previous Department personnel, tendering for work in developing countries. Yeates (2002) commented that the WTO intention to liberalise services has potentially far reaching implications. If the free trade principle is applied to welfare services, including social security, health and education this would have immediate implications for the pensions industry but could also see private firms competing with the state to administer unemployment and disability benefits. There is no interaction between the Irish social security community and the WTO.

OECD country reports and monitoring,

The OECD played a leadership role in creating and disseminating liberal welfare reform and labour market policy proposal between 1994 and 2001 (Dostal 2004). How pronounced the OECD influence was in Ireland is not clear. According to one academic interviewed by the author the political nature of the OECD reduces its potential to influence policy.

The OECD jobs study was selling a particular line at the time but it was quite ideologically driven and exceptionally politicised. It was just used by those who were thinking that way anyway. Nothing would be taken as gospel because the OECD or the World Bank was coming out with it.

Others interviewed by the author agreed that the OECD had a definite political agenda to

push 'I'm not clear the EU have any dramatic agenda, unlike the OECD who have very clear lines on where they think you should be going' Another civil servant argued that the OECD was more successful in driving its agenda 'people are more aware of market-led policies because of the way the OECD push them' While all government Departments respected the quality of the OECD's work they did not necessarily use it to develop policy One civil servant described in an interview with the author how the Departmental planning unit

would draw from OECD reports and use them to selectively justify a position they already had developed, OECD work was used to defend rather than develop a position, we always try to throw a few quotes into the Ministers speech

OECD country visits were seen as important by the DOF which had most active Departmental engagement with them and participated in their Social Protection Committee The Public Expenditure Division actively sought out new OECD reports

During the year in the slack period you would be looking to see what is happening in Europe and in the OECD We are not in an ivory tower, we would get regular library reports alerting us to specific international reports and we would have contact with IMF and OECD personnel on their regular visits

The influence of the OECD is most evident in the policy areas of activation and employment incentives The 1994 Jobs Study was seen as influential because it created a climate of debate about incentives Most policy actors interviewed acknowledged that OECD material filtered through UK policy documents or the ESRI and that there was little direct reading of OECD material The domestic policy community does however selectively engage with the OECD by inviting them to promote domestic policy agendas In fact if Dostal (2004) is correct the OECD's most powerful influence was how the Jobs Study impacted on subsequent EU policy and the European Employment Strategy (EES)

Direct Voluntary Membership of International Organisations

Laffan and O'Donnell (1998 168-169) note how from the outset economic interests that would be affected by EU policies were quick to mobilise and establish a presence in Brussels and now play nested games at the national level and connected games in the Brussels arena

Most large national organisations are members of international representational organisations, ICTU, for example, is a member of the European Trade Union Congress (ETUC), IBEC is a member of the UNICE, the NWCI is a member of the European Women's Lobby, and many anti poverty and social justice focused NGO's are members of the EAPN (Laffan O'Donnell 1998) Some national organisations also have UN status and are part of networks that participate in UN summits Motivations for membership of these international institutions vary considerably but no one interviewed by the author used this pathway to directly influence Irish social security discourse Rather membership means access to information about funding and resources, networking opportunities, international solidarity and representation of the member's interests at EU or global level Some, however, noted the importance of the international policy community as a source of ideas and inspiration Others saw it as an indirect place to network or break down barriers with domestic policy actors, one Secretary General of an unemployed organisation in an interview with the author observed

‘that it was only when the Irish civil servants saw how credible we were as leaders of European policy debates that they took us seriously at home’

Such networking is sporadic with little expectation of policy learning Irish employers and unions are less interested in policy shopping than European employers and trade unions who jointly administer social security schemes An IBEC representative explained to the author how UNICE had little relevance to Irish social security ‘we wouldn't lay great stress on UNICE as a source of international thinking on social security’ A trade union leader on the other hand stressed that the ETUC was ‘a useful place to reflect’ A General Secretary of an NGO reflected on ‘how useful it was to get out of town for few days and see what other countries were doing’

English-Speaking Policy Community

Chapter Five discussed the evolving multi-level governance in the Open Method of Co-ordination While the EU has been an influential source for Irish policy transfer the most obvious international influence on Irish social security is UK social security (Cousins 2005a,b) There is ongoing institutional linkage and communication between Irish and UK ministries The Department of Social Development in Northern Ireland and the DSFA have regular contact, initiated a joint North-South summer school for staff, and undertake joint training and cross-border fraud controls

Cross-national linguistic or cultural factors determine how well less obvious informal policy transfer can take place⁸⁴ International policy communities influence social security systems Deacon A (2001) and Daguerre and Taylor-Gooby (2004) reviewed how UK New Labour drew from elements of US, Australian and European policy to develop their welfare-to-work policy Eardley (1996) identified how a group of English-speaking countries (including Ireland) network around social security reform Weiss (1999 129) highlighting the active ideological role of governments in English speaking countries, identified how 'the ideology of free-market economics dominate English speaking, London, Canberra and Washington, but not Paris, Bonn or Tokyo, where pre-existing regime orientations promoted more symbiotic views of the state-market relationship' Ireland as an English-speaking country is exposed to a more US-led policy discourse

Culturally in terms of policy influences, it is often argued that the UK and Ireland are influenced in social policy terms at least as much by the US as they are by mainland Europe'(Cousins 2005b,2)

Being exposed to such discourse however does not necessarily mean the policy community internalises the policy agenda of other countries or international institutions While the policy entrepreneur (outlined in Chapter Five) performs the role of bringing new thinking into the domestic policy arena that community selectively chooses which discourse is brought into domestic use

Many DSFA civil servants made reference to the importance of regular meetings the Department participates in with five other English-speaking countries, the UK, the US, NZ, Australia and Canada This 'six countries' network meets on a thematic basis to review social security Departmental challenges often associated with implementation or delivery issues such as fraud control or information technology Ditch and Oldfield (1999 75) conclude 'circumstantial evidence of some shared diffusion of policy knowledge' in this community and observe 'shared concern to hold back the growth in social assistance, to introduce and implement more exacting conditionality rules for the receipt of benefit and a commitment to encourage labour market supply of lone parents' Cultural familiarity and

⁸⁴ Consider for example, the case of Finland where a 'good fit' candidate for policy transfer is underutilised because little Finnish policy is accessible in any language other than Finnish

ease of communication means these meetings are quite influential, although the influence seems to be more at an implementation than at a policy level. They also expressed the importance of English-speaking countries to the Irish social security policy community. One civil servant described in an interview with the author

The six countries would be one of the more active international policy networks and the fact that they are English speaking is part of it alongside commonality and origins of the systems as well as the culture and attitude are similar

International ideas come from informal reading of UK and US academic journals and UK quality newspapers. Policy actors were more exposed to UK and US policy discourse and exposed to OECD and IMF discourse through reading such sources. One academic noted paradoxically that people open to new ideas are mostly reading UK and US literature, while on the other hand, civil servants are going to Brussels and are exposed to a different frame of reference where social protection is seen as a productive force. However civil servants interviewed played down the role of exposure to EU countries' policy systems through Brussels meetings. Senior civil servants may well be communicating with EU colleagues on a more regular basis but they tend to be much more influenced by the UK or other English-speaking countries. Rose (1991: 17) expected policymakers to remain 'within the knowledge environment that they trust, whose overall political values are consistent with their own'. This explains why policies in NZ and Australia are of active interest to Irish social security advisers. With the expansion of the EU in 2004, English is becoming the most dominant language and this is likely to increase the likelihood of policy transfer through the EU.

Exposure to international policy debates as an Explanatory Variable for Irish Change

Smith (2005: 179) argument that 'the cognitive powers of ideas about globalisation and competitiveness are further reinforced by the fact that Irish policy makers are exposed to them so frequently' is perhaps overstated. To what degree does exposure to international policy debate transfer into policy decisions? Is international policy transfer or exposure to international debate an explanatory variable capable of explaining why Irish discourse and policy differ to other English-speaking liberal regimes? Daguerre and Taylor Gooby (2004) explain the more radical workfare-based UK activation social security policy as a result of the disproportionate presence of policy transfer from the US caused by a lack of European-UK policy networks and under exposure to Swedish active labour market discourse or French social inclusion discourse. They identified three factors for effective policy transfer

an opportunity to seek new policy (political crisis), goodness of fit (transferability of policy to a broadly similar policy regime with similar underlying values) and clear policy networks and lines of communication Ireland and the UK both had opportunity in the form of political crises, both have goodness of fit in the form of liberal welfare regimes based on less eligibility and work incentive principles Might the contrast between the UK policy network's openness to the US and Irish policy network's openness to the EU explain the different policy choices? Might the 1986 Irish social democratic government have been oriented to seek social democratic policy examples compared to Thatcher's orientation to Reagan's monetarist regime?

A long history of policy contact influence and transfer between the UK and the US was strengthened under the Thatcher-Reagan years and again under the Chancellor Gordon Browns relationship with US President Clinton and his Labour Minister, Robert Reich The more active policy entrepreneurs in the smaller Irish policy community had disproportionately stronger networks with EU countries (in particular, the ICTU policy elite looked to the social democratic ETUC) However, at the same time, civil servants, policy makers and politicians (Hussey, 2000) were actively open to US discourse Irish policy makers looked in both directions, policy transfer alone cannot account for the decisions made Indigenous thinking seemed to most influence policy dialogue, one Minister described in an interview with the author how there was 'a fair amount of ideas and international influence but there were a lot of ideas around anyway' Some civil servant stressed how ideas were indigenously sourced (O'Rallagaigh, 2002) The 1986 CSW Chairman described in an interview with the author how 'they looked at the British experience but didn't buy it and how the EU had little influence on their thinking' Policy ideas about proactive labour market policies from English-speaking networks were only relevant if they were being pushed in Ireland One adviser interviewed by the author stressed how 'there is almost nobody nationally coming up with ideas'

Why is this? It was observed in the previous chapter that other English speaking countries have similar majoritarian political institutions and electoral systems which enable a more radical passage of and use of ideas Ireland stands out with more veto points and a conservative political environment as less open to ideas about change One trade unionist concluded in an interview with the author

that the Irish political system is not terribly open to being driven by ideological

currents Arguments are couched in non-ideological consensual language, we are much less open than a political system like Britain to swinging with an ideological tide

Ireland was exposed to the same mixture of international discourse, had a similar cultural and institutional 'goodness of fit' and capacity to transfer policy as the UK. But its political and institutional framework left Ireland less open to ideological debate or radical policy choices. While the Irish listened they never seriously contemplated radical reform. As one senior civil servant said in an interview with the author 'Ah sure we would never do that'

Stages of policy influence

This is not to suggest there has been no policy influence but to suggest there is less openness to significant change. Three phases of policy influence appear evident over the period in question. From 1987 – 1992 the crisis discourse was influenced by the The NESC strategy report of 1986 which argued that Ireland should take the small successful social democratic European states as its development model – it was as a result of this that the Mjosets (1992) study was commissioned by NESC. Within this framework social security policy outcomes appeared to be path dependent on the existing social welfare system provisions and the implementation of Commission on Social Welfare (1986). From 1992 - 1997 EU discourse became more dominant as the EU Social Policy and Delors White Paper was reflected in Irish social policy. Ireland also transferred innovative domestic policy ideas to the EU and elsewhere. At the same time EMU and the emerging Stability and Growth Pact framed discourse about social expenditure. From 1997 onwards the new political coalition appeared more open to an international discourse more dominated by a more neo-liberal OECD and in Ireland the appeasement of US investors. This change coincided with the election of a more right-of-centre coalition government in 1997, whose policies reflected the hegemony of global discourse, and also the fact that the 'European social model' lacked credibility among Irish policy makers. This led to active lobbies against proposed EU social policy. As a trade unionist described

In the 'mid nineties it started to take a swing back the other way with more market competitiveness issues impinging on the social agenda - it was a result of overall globalisation but also of strong US influence in Ireland which caused, post 1997, Ireland to lobby against more social provision at EU level'

It is not clear if the domestic political configuration is influencing or being influenced by the international policy dialogue. The two seem intertwined and exposure to an international policy community is actively and selectively mediated and both the English speaking social security community and the EU appear to be equally strong influences. Growth in the number of policy entrepreneurs, the focus on policy transfer in the EU OMC and the growth of an English speaking community in the EU will open up the policy community to new EU-sourced ideas.

6.4 Chapter Conclusion

The review of the impact of economic globalisation highlights how the high levels of economic growth benignly influenced social security policy development and employment growth. A low-tax development model subordinates social policy and rather more negatively influenced attitudes towards investing in expansion of social protection. Economic globalisation further influenced PRSI policy and rate setting, pensions policy, migration and social security delivery. One can tentatively conclude that policy makers are influenced by the macro conditions (real and perceived) necessary to appease foreign direct investment.

Irish social security policy has been exposed to the process of political globalisation. Ireland continues to be regarded as a key player internationally and is seen to punch above its weight. Commentators from other countries remark on policy makers' openness to invoking transnational developments and knowledge. Ireland has also led the field in setting up the Anti-Poverty Strategy after the Copenhagen Summit. There is as O Cinnieide (2005) argued a 'curious parallelism' between global and EU level discourse and Irish discourse. While the thesis did not set out as an exercise in measuring the degree of policy transfer it is clear that Irish policy is increasingly influenced by international trends. Most recently, since 1997, there has been increasing overlap between domestic and international policy coalitions particularly in the EU OMC and an emerging professional technical elite. The shift from the redistributive adequacy agenda of the 1986 CSW to a more productivist policy reflected shifts in the international policy community agenda. This shift also correlated with domestic level political shifts, political regimes relate differently to international institutions. However, given that the political culture may be less unreceptive to the more radical ideas it is possible that there are some policy debates which travel less far in the Irish context. International policy ideas are carefully filtered and selectively amplified to suit the agenda of the domestic actor.

It is my personal assessment that the social security system would look largely as it does today if social partnership never existed.(Cousins 2005a:205)

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE POLICY PROCESS

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine in depth particular policy decisions to enable a deeper understanding of the rationale informing certain policy decision and to explain why specific policy choices were selected or rejected. The Chapter reviews four social security policy processes: Child Income Support policy, policy relating to women, social security cutbacks (the Dirty Dozen and Savage Sixteen) and Social Partnership. These were chosen to draw out and illustrate the relationship between political culture and decision making. In particular they highlight the existence of veto points and consensus oriented political decision making. These case studies are analysed collectively using the format identified in the methodology section of Chapter One. This format identifies a range of factors that might inform decision making including; the source of the problem and the policy initiative; key documents and proposals; policy coalitions; decision points; political party input; international influence; Social Partnership; and types of discourse.⁸⁵

7.2 Child Income Support Policy

A review of recent child income support policy by Corrigan (2004) highlights a wide variety of policy goals tied up with a narrow range of child income support instruments. The focus here is on two decisions concerning key child income support policy instruments, a 1994 budget decision to freeze Child Dependant Allowances (CDAs)⁸⁶ and a 2002 budget decision to introduce a three-year timetable of Child Benefit increases. The review highlights that while policy options are first mediated in the wider policy community, the most influential

⁸⁵ A summary of the overall findings from the analysis of both Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight are included in Table 8.1 at the end of Chapter Eight.

⁸⁶ Child Dependant Allowances are means-tested child income support for welfare dependant families paid on a per child basis as an addition to the parents' weekly welfare payment.

factor at the point of decision is political or electoral concerns. Decisions are dominated by blame avoidance strategies and the lens through which the policy community views a particular policy proposal is a very different lens than that used by the politician.

Decisive moments - Freezing Child Dependant Allowances

From the mid 1980s various social security policy reviews focused, in the context of high unemployment, on the need to promote work incentives and recommended reforming child income support. The expert based CSW (1986), corporatist NESC (1990) strategy and a statutory advisory body CPA (Bond, 1992) all envisaged a decline in the role of the CDA and a simultaneous move to more unified (taxable) universal CB system (McCashin, 1992). Despite broad policy consensus about this reform option, the fear of negative electoral consequences of taxing Child Benefit meant it was never a serious political policy option. This is confirmed in the 2002 budget when government declined the option of taxing Child Benefit even though a substantial increase in Child Benefit meant it was possible to introduce taxation of Child Benefit without any losers. A senior trade union leader commented in an interview with the author that

the timetable of substantial Child Benefit increases presented an obvious opportunity to make Child Benefit taxable, it beggars belief that this was not done given such an obvious opportunity to reform in a no losers context

Back in 1992 Minister Woods, having rejected the option of taxing Child Benefit, but mindful too of any risks associated with social security reform, proceeded with a limited incremental downgrading of Child Dependant Allowances or 'de-emphasising' CDAs. His blame avoidance strategy was to allow below inflation budget increases that reduced the real value of CDAs. The Minister calculated that, given the nominal amounts of increases were small and insignificant in over all terms (a below inflation increase was eight pence while an inflation proofed increase was nine pence), the public would not realise that the real value of the payment was decreasing. This policy was repeated in 1993.

In 1994 a left Democratic Left Minister de Rossa, less prone to blame avoidance and more ambitious for change than the populist FF Minister, decided to go further. Ideally he wanted to abolish CDAs. However the fiscal constraint imposed by European Monetary Union entry criteria meant an unfavourable budgetary context. This limited the Ministers capacity to undertake significant structural reform. In an interview with the author Minister de Rossa

explained:

We wanted to abolish CDAs overnight and give increases in Child Benefit to compensate but the cost was massive so we decided to leave CDAs unchanged, it would become insignificant over time so that at some point we could say, all right, now we can abolish it.

The Minister went on to say:

I was mindful of the political risk in not giving any increase to CDAs, but bear in mind how budgets are constructed, they're done in secret so I didn't tell anyone, I'd come under pressure in the next budget, but once it's in it's harder to shift it.

The Minister intended to justify his policy position by promising compensatory increases in the universal CB payment; publicity about increasing CB would also distract attention away from the lack of increase in CDAs. However the scale of CB increases required to ensure no nominal losers necessitated fiscal room to manoeuvre. In order to achieve a no loser's scenario the Minister had to redistribute within his budget envelope from old age pensioners to children. This highlights the practical difficulty of funding even small scale reform on a no losers basis.

Child Benefit - Strategic Ambivalence

In Budget 2000 the government were forced into a major 'damage limitation' exercise when a decision to individualise tax bands was opposed by a lobby fronted by 'Women in the Home', a conservative women's lobby group. The policy to individualise tax bands survived but Government had emerged badly from the whole debacle and were forced to compensate perceived losers of tax individualisation (married women who did not participate in paid employment) with a home carer's tax credit. In the run up to the following Budget 2001 the government were under intense pressure from various interest groups to support parents with costs of childcare. Four distinct lobbies were evident: trade unions and employers (both social partners) lobbied for tax relief for childcare; a childcare users and providers coalition (Childcare, 2000) lobbied for a universal taxable Parental Childcare Payment; Women in the Home argued against tax relief which discriminated against the choice to work in the home; Child Poverty lobby groups argued that CB should be focused on child income support and

poverty alleviation

In Budget 2001 the government responded to the different lobby groups with no new child care policy instrument but with a three-year timetable outlining plans for substantial increases in CB. The then Minister Ahern argued that universal CB payments could cover separate policy objectives of child poverty, child income support and childcare. The Minister explained in his budget speech how

People living in poverty didn't need support to alleviate childcare costs, and for those who were working, poverty was not an issue so the increased payment could be used to defray their childcare costs

Such 'strategic ambivalence' is a blame avoidance strategy based on obfuscation. The tone of the budget speech included an element of opportunistic credit claiming for such large CB increases. However the primary motivation for the policy choice seems to have been to avoid the wrath of the very active 'Women in the Home' who had campaigned against the policy alternative of tax relief on child care costs. Policy actors involved in the debate interviewed by Montague (2001 94-95) confirmed blame avoidance was a huge motivation for government. The Barnados C E O told Montague

government had been scorched as a result of the introduction of tax individualisation in the previous 2000 budget. The politicians were not going to support the introduction of a measure which could be perceived as further disadvantaging mothers in the home

A trade union equality officer concluded to Montague that the

Government was determined not to revisit the situation it found itself in after Budget 2000, they were not going to get involved in a controversy once again with the 'women in the home' lobby

Instead of taking the blame government tried to divert blame by using 'agency strategies' (Hood 2004). A shift in governance from civil service or expert working groups to Social Partnership policy processes means it is harder to trace decision-making in a more

fragmented and complex policy community⁸⁷ In Budget 2001 government, having delegating childcare policy to a social partnership group government, hid behind the lack of consensus among those social partners and shielded their own responsibility for policy making In an interview with the author, a senior NESC employee blamed social partners not government on the failure to make progress on childcare policy

Groups in SP were deadlocked, and the childcare one almost seemed to feel they had the right to be deadlocked I'm amazed that they did not start something even if it is not the first option

The government also had to appease the child poverty lobby, which comprised eight well-organised community and voluntary sector groups working in an advocacy coalition Open Your Eyes To Child Poverty (WRC, 2001) The PPF Benchmarking and Indexation Working Group (2001) had examined issues involved with setting benchmark and indexation formulae for child income support payments Government had responded by adopting an income adequacy target for adults and children (NAPS Ireland, 2002a) Nolan (2002) noted that this target was deliberately ambiguous and open to different interpretations This ambiguity meant it was harder to hold the government to account and to 'blame' for failure to achieve a specific target

The history of a 1994 decision to freeze child dependant allowances shows how the larger and more populist FF 'with more flanks to defend', even though they had the same broad policy objective, could not have done the same as a small left-wing party This confirms that party politics matter Different political parties have different levels of ambition regarding the scope and pace of social security reform They also adopt different tactical approaches to achieve the same policy outcome It is also worth noting that Minister de Rossa did not escape unscathed, his personal political legacy was to be known as the Minister who was mean to old age pensioners It also highlights the necessity of a no losers strategy, the real fiscal cost of such a strategy and the consequent incremental nature of reform Irish policy

⁸⁷ All recent policy initiatives related to child income support originated from outside the DSFA The P2000 commitment to a £100 benchmark for CB, to the three year timetable for CB increases and the strategically ambivalent shift to incorporate the function of childcare to the NESC proposal and the Sustaining Progress commitment to a second tier child income support payment were all developed and decided outside of the DSFA

makers are forced to adopt. This confirms Hood's (2004) negativity bias theory where monetary losses register more significantly with the electorate than gains of an equivalent amount. The consistent veto on the taxation of Child Benefit highlights how fear of electoral loss is the key driver for the substantive policy choice. A presentational strategy based on strategic ambivalence, distortion and obfuscation suggests reliance on the 'Dan Rather' factor (Pierson, 1994:29), where the complex nature of the reform was difficult to explain or present in a 15-second TV sound bite.

The 2002 budget decision was largely about presentation strategy. The three-year timetable to substantially increase CB was not honoured but government had succeeded in giving the impression that it had a childcare strategy in the 2002 general election. Without consensus amongst social partners for alternative policy, governments, reluctant to take decisions, hide behind strategically ambivalent policy statements and targets. Social partnership consensus, would however, have been insufficient to overcome Fianna Fáil's vulnerability to electoral backlash from a key electoral group. Women in the Home, it seems, have more populist power than the combined corporatist power of ICTU and IBEC. Electoral concerns motivate 'substantive policy strategies' (Hood, 2004), policy is carefully and defensively selected with electoral considerations in mind. This impacts on outcomes. Everyone appears to gain from increases in Child Benefit. However there are losers, the failure to target child poverty and the absence of childcare support for working parents are serious losses to children and parents as well as the society and economy.

Case Study Two Women and Social Security Reform

While the EEC 79/7 social security equality directive required gender equality in Irish social security it took considerable legal and political intervention to rectify direct discriminations in the system. Equality came grudgingly and slowly and without any fundamental alteration to the male breadwinner model. Significant debate about women's access to independent income and employment did not result in significant change over the last two decades. This was in spite of a key shift in the Irish economy in the 1990s, the increase in the number of women, especially mothers, in full time employment (see graph below). It could be said that Irish women participated in the labour market in spite of, rather than because of, Irish social security reforms. Irish policy makers seem reluctant to make the shift from women as carers, mothers and wives to women as workers and full citizens. As Chapter 4 concluded Irish policy is still distinguishable as a male breadwinner model with a weak childcare infrastructure and a non-individualised or family based social security system, which does

not extend active labour market measures to women.

Figure 7.1 Trends in female labour force participation

(Total female working age population in 2005 1,585.900)



Despite the lack of momentum regarding social security policy changes to enable women access to employment some progressive change did occur in 1996 when social insurance payments were extended to part-time workers (80 per cent of whom are women). The same year saw improvements in rules concerning means testing of work-related income for Qualified Adult payments (95 per cent of whom are women). Parenting alone payments were restructured into a pro-work incentive One Parent Payment that incorporated a specific income disregard to compensate for the cost of childcare for lone parents (95 per cent of whom are women). These changes were initiated under Minister de Rossa, a socialist Minister, who had a female social security adviser seconded from the equality division of the country's largest trade union (SIPTU). However these appear the exceptions that prove the rule. A strong decisive factor for the more general reluctance to develop a childcare subsidy or labour market strategy for women was a political culture based on strong patriarchal values (O'Connor, 2006, Yeates, 2003, McAmhn 1987). This culture is reflected in ambivalent attitudes towards women's economic independence and labour market

participation. This section reviews key policy moments which illuminate how patriarchal values influenced both the policy process and policy content by reviewing policy processes concerning individualisation, the P2000 Working Group on Administrative Individualisation (DSFA 2003b) and on the Social Insurance Working Group (2004a), and processes relating to reform of the One Parent Family Payment (DSFA 2006)

7.3 Women and Individualisation

The issue of individualisation of Irish social security policy, or restructuring access to social security, is a consistent feature of policy reviews. The Second Commission on the Status of Women (Ireland 1982b: 80), the Commission on Taxation (Ireland 1982a) and the Commission on Social Welfare (Ireland 1986a) all rejected the concept of dependency and supported an individualised social welfare system as did the Expert Working Group on the Integration of Tax and Social Welfare (Ireland 1996a)⁸⁸. The Social Insurance in Ireland Report (DSW, 1996), NAPS (Ireland 1997c, 2000a) also supported individualisation as did Securing Retirement Income (NRB, 1998). The Report of the Working Group Examining the Treatment of Married, Cohabiting and One-Parent Families under the Tax and Social Welfare Codes (DSFCA, 1999), examined specific proposals for achieving individualisation, including administrative individualisation and social insurance options and reinforced individualisation recommendations. This long slow crawl through working groups and policy processes was accelerated by the NWCI who negotiated a PPF (Ireland 2000b) commitment to establish working groups to develop proposals for the expansion of the social insurance scheme and administrative individualisation of social assistance payments.

The first of these groups to meet, the PPF Administrative Individualisation Working Group (DSFA 2003b), suffered much the same fate as the P2000 Working Group on Women's Access to the Labour Market (Ireland 2000a). Heavily male dominated, it was badly chaired and marked by a stubborn resistance to progress the substantive issue. It recommended only voluntary individualisation. Fear of progressing with a more mandatory version of individualisation seemed prompted by the fear of electoral backlash from a male electorate (who it was assumed would perceive, in the event of individualisation, a personal loss of

⁸⁸ The 1996 report made recommendations relating to taxation of cohabiting couples, research on equivalence scales, and the abolition of Benefit and privilege for over 25s

income) However deeper patriarchal values were strongly evident⁸⁹ A participant in the group recounted, in an interview with the author, the inability of key male civil servants to grasp the basic concept of economic independence and its relationship to gender equality A second participant described how she 'had never seen such blatantly sexist attitudes' and recounted how one male participant had exclaimed that 'he couldn't understand the problem because he had always been very fair to his wife and been very generous with his money' The second group, the PPF Social Insurance Working Group (DSFA 2004a), was a more considered process but dominated by a male trade union agenda of limiting exposure of the social insurance system to gender related risk It avoided any substantial recommendations

A parallel series of policy processes reviewed the structure of the One-Parent Family Payment An expenditure review of the One-Parent Family Payment (DSFCA, 2000e) focused on overcoming barriers to work for lone-parents and questioned the length of time lone parents were in receipt of payment From a family formation perspective, it noted that

disincentives to form relationships can only be resolved where the status of individuals is not relevant to the support received and we believe we must in the

⁸⁹ This same observations can be made about other policy processes concerning women From the very start, the P2000 Working Group on Women's Access to the Labour market seemed doomed to failure The appointment of a DSFA Chair meant that the group was institutionally weak, the choice of a largely uninterested male chairperson reinforced the weak political priority and skills base of the group Participants in the group observed in interviews with the author how the process the group was 'poorly supported' and 'drafts badly composed' The process was 'mismanaged', with the chairperson frequently absent and group membership constantly changing Tensions between Departmental institutional agendas surfaced in the group as did tensions between different objectives of the NWCI and the INOU

future examine options in relation to universal child support and individualisation of payments⁹⁰

This direction was reinforced in the NESF Lone Parents' Report (No 20, 2001) which discussed abolition of the concept of dependency in an individualised welfare system. This report prompted the NWCI to commission 'A Women's Model for Social Welfare Reform' (Murphy, 2003) which focused on the development of a parental allowance, which could replace One-Parent Family Payment, qualified adult payments and the limitation rule. This research served as a campaigning tool to lobby for gender related social security reform. The recommendation of a parental allowance was further developed in a masters thesis by a DSFA civil servant (O'Connor A 2005). This work was then used to produce a key report outlining proposals to support lone parents (DSFA, 2006). This 'radical' report was considered by the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion and launched for consultation in March 2006. The report recommends partial abolition of limitation and total abolition of qualified adult in social assistance payments. It also proposes abolition of the One-Parent Family Payment and replacing these with a parental allowance for parents with children under eight and a job seekers allowance for parents with children over seven. Employment is defined as 19.5 hours thus protecting the concept of choice for parents to provide their own after school care for school going children. The proposal is in the process of public consultation, if it is positively received it will begin a long process of implementation in the 2007 Social Welfare Act. Looking forward, an ambitious Fianna Fail Minister Brennan must convince anxious cabinet colleagues that there is no electoral risk in the DSFA 2006 proposal. Lone parent groups and women's groups have clear veto power, any strong negative reaction from such groups will thwart the proposal to a 'nearly was' status.

The failure to make progress implementing recommendations relating social security policy reforms to enable women's right to participate in the labour market is consistent with other

⁹⁰ The limitation rule means a family cannot financially benefit by claiming two Unemployment Assistance payments, the maximum they will receive is the value of one adult rate and one qualified adult rate. This means that in a household where both adults (the man and woman) are unemployed there is no incentive for them both to register their unemployment. Not only does this leave them poorer (by 45 euro per week in 2004) it also means that the qualified adult is not directly eligible for many labour market, FAS or education programmes. At present one can only register as unemployed if looking for and willing to accept full time work. This rules out many women who for care reasons are only looking for and available for part time work.

unsuccessful initiatives by the women's movement and the trade union movement to introduce a paid parental leave Benefit. In fact new Carers Allowances (introduced in 1992) contingencies and the home care tax allowance in 2001 consolidated the carer's role for women.⁹¹ The failure to progress these reforms is puzzling in the light of significant labour market and skills shortages. As well as arguing for gender equality objectives the NWCI had argued that increased labour market productivity was a key requirement of a competitive economy and a key response to strategic labour market shortages threatening the efficiency of the economy. Male public servants who stubbornly resisted a gender agenda controlled the institutional processes concerning women's right to participate in the labour market. This suggests ambivalence about the role of women, in particular mothers, in the Irish political economy.

Individualisation was largely agenda managed through male dominated working groups and policy processes. Political pressure from perceived male 'losers' and the group 'Women In The Home' reinforced by patriarchal attitudes of key civil servants (who as a legacy of the marriage bar are predominantly male) meant lack of institutional support and ambition for policy analysis. Costs of implementing a 'no losers' scenario were not just financial; there is also a political cost associated with increases in the numbers of women signing on the live register to access either labour market supports or individualised social security payments. It is interesting to observe what broke the procrastination and policy paralysis concerning this important policy agenda.

Lack of gender equality participation in all aspects of the Irish policy making community (political, bureaucratic, corporatist, Church and academic) is a significant obstacle to gender-related social security reform's progression. Women require a critical mass to reinforce points made by individual women. The absence of adequate gender analysis in NESC (2005a) can be explained by the absence of gender balance in the NESC Council where only 18.8% (6 out of 32) council members were women and all senior NESC secretariat were men. Likewise failure to use conventional gender equality governance strategies such as gender quotas for working groups or gender proofing of policy proposals weakens the

⁹¹ Despite its strategic importance it is interesting to note that in large part it came about as an initiative from local clinic feedback and was developed as response to need rather than as an part of an integrated policy on caring. The carer's payment has since been enhanced and in 2001 Carers Benefit was introduced.

likelihood of positive gender equality outcomes Cousins (2005a, 1995a) noted how women play an important agency role in the development of the social security system but was critical of the Irish women's movement, as an actor in the policy community, to bring forward any specific policy recommendations

The division among women's groups and the lack of a clear counter hegemonic strategy are palpable No organisation has produced detailed costed coherent proposals as to how women's independence can be recognised in the context of the Irish social welfare system (Cousins, 1995a 144)

The energy and initiative for social security gender related reforms in 1996 was initiated by Roisin Callender, a female political advisor in the 1994–1997 rainbow coalition This highlights how women's participation in decision-making improves the likelihood of positive gender reform The Murphy (2003) NWCI commissioned research filled a significant research gap and influenced the DSFA (2006) policy proposal, as did a number of highly motivated female civil servants This informal advocacy coalition of non-government organisations and key (female) civil servants from DOT and DSFA was important At the same time, it is ironic that while women's agency played a key role in advancing a reform agenda it is also women's agency that, as was the case in relation to taxation of Child Benefit, will deny reform Any lack of consensus vetoes reform and lone parent groups and women's groups have clear veto power over the DSFA reform proposals

7.4 Cut Backs – a Case Study in Obfuscation and Distortion

Swank (2002) hypothesised that multiple veto countries like Ireland are dominated by blame avoidance approaches to social security retrenchment Where cuts are considered unavoidable political decision makers try to minimise negative impacts and obfuscate and distort the impact of cuts to the electorate as a whole This section reviews two separate examples of government cuts to social security spending, the Dirty Dozen (1992) and the Savage Sixteen (2003) Further detail is in Appendix C The first case study shows how the government used a strategy of 'obfuscation' to hide a series of social security cutbacks In the second case study the government used a 'justification' strategy to try to legitimise a series of cuts In both cases the government blame avoidance strategies failed and they resorted to blame management strategies, which included denial of cabinet responsibility and the partial reversal of some cuts

Dirty Dozen

In 1992, over a period of informal meetings, welfare rights workers in various NGOs observed a series of obfuscated social security cuts hidden in a variety of administrative circulars, secondary legislation and budget speeches

- 1 Treatment Benefit Necessary to have thirteen stamps paid in a recent contribution year making many long-term unemployed ineligible
- 2 Disability Benefit eligibility Necessity to have thirteen stamps paid in recent years was relaxed and many long-term unemployed are once again eligible⁹²
- 3 Means testing of casual earnings for UA changed income disregards of only £10 per week
- 4 Part-time workers must lose a substantial amount of the working week (now clarified as one day) to be eligible for UB Result is many still excluded from UB
- 5 Emergency Needs Payments (emergency help with utilities) restricted to a capped amount and only one payment per year (The Minister subsequently withdrew a specific administrative circular outlining protocols but left the policy in place)
- 6 The minimum payment for Maternity Benefit reduced to £50 and only women in current employment remain eligible
- 7 Injury Benefit cut by £15 per week to the same level as DB
- 8 Maintenance orders for spouses / children made recoupable from lone parent payments
- 9 Under 55's with redundancy awards of £12,000+ are disqualified from UB for nine weeks
- 10 Alleviation payments are abolished
- 11 The claimant must pay the first £5 of rent when on SWA Rent Supplement
- 12 Deserted Wife's Benefit is means tested if earnings over £10,000 per annum

Welfare lobby groups publicly exposed these cuts, implemented by a single party government over a six-month period, in a campaign which became known as the Dirty Dozen (Allen, 1998) The trade union movement became active in the campaign and Labour adopted the cuts campaign as a key focus of the national election later that year (Quinn, 2005) Government had been caught and blamed What could they do to minimise the

⁹² Cousins (1992) points out the motivation for this cut may have been a 'backdoor method' to exclude married women from claiming Disability Benefit and Unemployment Benefit

impact, how did they manage this blame? One clear blame management strategy was to avoid cabinet responsibility and to focus blame on an individual Minister. Groups and political parties opposing the cuts, as well as generally blaming the outgoing government, focused on the outgoing Minister for Social Welfare, Charlie McCreevy, who presented himself as a gung-ho right wing politician eager to implement neo-liberal reforms. Such was the personal attack and blame attributed to Minister McCreevy that, in order to limit electoral damage, he chose to stay at home in the subsequent general election, he explained to a journalist

I didn't canvass one house, I took the view that the best way of getting votes was not to canvas' (Irish Times 2002 / 06 / 05)

This campaign contributed to the government's electoral losses but it returned to power in a coalition with Labour who had campaigned on the basis of promising to reverse these cuts. The new Dublin based Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern (who had replaced the rural Albert Reynolds), replaced Minister McCreevy with a very experienced, 'safe' Minister Woods and instructed him to 'clean up' the mess that had been left behind by the previous Minister. This, however, was largely for public consumption and the Programme for Government contained no commitment to reverse the cuts. A 'presentational' strategy was used to 'spin' a line that the cuts were more comprehensively reversed than they actually were. The INOU monthly bulletin (April 1993) challenged the Minister that the cuts were 'dead'. An article 'Alive and kicking. Operational in an exchange near you' claimed

Both Dr Michael Woods, the Minister for Social Welfare and Joan Burton, the Minister for State for Social Welfare, seem to be under an illusion of some kind. They think they have managed to reverse the twelve cuts imposed by their predecessor Mr 'Mac the Knife' McCreevy. The truth is that since February they have changed, eased or rectified only three of last year's twelve infamous cuts, another two seem eased but on closer inspection are still close to their original intention.

The whole set of cuts were never fully reversed but the exercise in damage limitation worked to the extent that the cuts were politically neutralised. Nine of the cuts held firm and had substantial impact on part-time workers and on the supplementary welfare system. What political blame existed, immediate and long-term, was laid squarely at Minister McCreevy's

feet The dirty dozen legacy reinforced the tendency of blame avoidance, future Ministers were even more nervous to reform social welfare This did not however stop the government proceeding with more cuts on part-time workers in the reform of unemployment benefit for part time workers in 1993 However they were careful to gain the consensus of social partners before proceeding with abolition of Pay Related Benefit in 1994 (McCashin, 2004)

Savage Sixteen

After the 2002 general election FF returned to continue a centre-right coalition with the PDs A young popular rural TD, Mary Coughlan, was appointed as a first time Minister for Social, Family and Community Affairs The post 9/11 economic slow down meant a negative fiscal environment Inexperienced, 'she allowed herself be told what to do by officials and finance'⁹³ (Sunday Times 13/03/2005) and accepted a package of social security cuts A more politically experienced Minister might have been able to stand up to the DOF or used a more obfuscated presentational strategy Possibly because she had no policy or political adviser, 'she was new to the office and the changes went past her' (Sunday Times 13/03/2005), she presented the full picture of the sixteen cuts as an appendix to her annual estimates speech (DSFA 13/10/2003) She also issued a press release, which fully laid bare and attempted to justify the sixteen social welfare cuts

Because of a variety of factors including increased demand on certain schemes, improved payments and most importantly the need to ensure prudent management of the social welfare budget a number of schemes have been reviewed and adjusted to ensure prudent management of public funds and ensure I am in a position to care for those less well off, disadvantaged, ill or unemployed by providing pensions, Unemployment Assistance and other social welfare payments⁹⁴

- 1 The qualifying period for Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) Third Level Option increased from 6 to 15 months
- 2 Discontinuation of transitional half rate payment for lone parents who earn over €293 per week

⁹³ DOF officials had instructed the Minister to make 55m euro savings in direct social security expenditure rather than staffing or programme costs

⁹⁴ www.welfare.ie/press/pr03/pr131103.html 197

3. Rent/Mortgage Interest Supplement: recipient's contribution increased by €1 per week to €13 per week.
4. Where one of a couple is in full time employment, both are excluded from claiming Rent/Mortgage Interest Supplement.
5. Claimants for Rent Supplement will be referred to the Local Authority for an assessment of housing needs in a more systematic manner.
6. Health Boards empowered to refuse Rent Supplement in cases where the applicant has not already been renting for a period of six months.
7. Rent Supplement will not be paid to people who refuse offers of or who leave local authority accommodation without reasonable cause.
8. MABS Supplement will be discontinued.
9. Crèche Supplement will be discontinued.
10. Diet Supplement, is being phased out over a number of years.
11. Entitlement to half-rate CDA in respect of UB and DB claims will be discontinued where the spouse / partner has gross weekly income in excess of €300.
12. Increase the current weekly earnings threshold for reduced rates of DB and UB from €88.88 to €150.
13. Entitlement for new claimants of Widow/Widowers Pensions or One Parent Family Payments to half-rate payment of DB and UB will be discontinued.
14. Increase from 39 to 52 in number of paid contributions required for DB and UB and Health and Safety Benefit.
15. An increase in the period where claims for UB and DB are linked with a previous claim from 13 weeks to 26 weeks.
16. The maximum duration of UB will be reduced from 390 days to 312 days where a person has less than 260 PRSI contributions paid since first entering employment.

Political reaction was immediate, Labour (Irish Times 21/11/2003) launched a campaign, but instead of focusing on the young naïve Minister (who by this time had collapsed with exhaustion and stress) both government and opposition focused blame on the Minister for Finance, McCreevy, reminding the electorate of his association with the 1992 Dirty Dozen. FF first used presentational tactics to try to justify and argue its position but also to associate the policy with Minister McCreevy. FF Senator Manseragh (Irish Times 22/11/03) argued:

Attempts to depict the resilient Mary Coughlan, Minister for Social Welfare, as a surrogate for Charlie McCreevy and to relocate Labours politically successful

dirty dozen campaign of 1992 with a savage sixteen of 2004 is unlikely to catch on in the same way. It has to be open to any Minister to adjust schemes and reorder priorities.

An Irish Times editorial (23/11/2003) argued the cuts had ‘resonances of the exercise conducted by McCreevy when, as Minister for Social Welfare in 1992, he introduced a series of cuts known as the dirty dozen’. Minister McCreevy was taking the hit and his own cabinet was, it seemed, happy to let him take the hit.

In March 2004 the first cut fell to political pressure from a politically sensitive and powerful widows campaign. A cut restricting Rent Supplement was also the focus of vigorous campaigning by a coalition of 42 key organisations. This pressure contributed to the government defeat in the June 2004 local elections. Consequently a cabinet reshuffle was planned to create a ‘caring and sharing’ cabinet. Despite speculation that the Minister for Social Welfare might be punished for mishandling the social security cuts she was promoted to be Minister of Agriculture. Minister McCreevy, for his attributed role in the savage sixteen and other misdemeanours, was ‘side lined’ to the EC Minister, Mr Seamus Brennan, was appointed to the social security brief and was given political space to manoeuvre a blame management strategy. His first act was to immediately distance himself from the cuts, deny cabinet responsibility and promise to rescind cuts where they caused hardship (Irish Times 21/10/04). Carl O’Brien (Irish Times 29/11/04) described how ‘Brennan is likely to defuse the most incendiary of the remaining cuts and may tinker with the obscure cuts. If all goes according to plan voters’ memories of savage welfare cuts will fade’. As predicted in the midst of pressure to ‘right the wrongs’ (Irish Times 9/11/04) Minister Brennan, in his 2004 Budget speech,⁹⁵ declared how

Following detailed examination I decided to ease nine of the measures at this time while instructing that those remaining should be subjected to a continuing active review.

This fudge did not convince many political observers. Opposition spokespersons argued ‘many savage sixteen remained following the budget’ (Dan Boyle, Irish Times 21/12/04). The INOU wrote to Minister Brennan TD (6 January 2005) outlining how ‘we wish to express our disappointment that although some modifications were made to the now dubbed

⁹⁵ www.irewland.com/focus/budget/2005/estimates/welfare

savage sixteen welfare cuts / changes not all were altered or rescinded in full' The amended version of the cuts illustrated a careful strategy of rhetoric, press manipulation and distortion Appendix B outlines the amended cuts and illustrates the confusion, obfuscation and referral strategies used by Minister Brennan An anti-poverty lobbyist June Tinsley unravelled the distortion on national radio (The Sunday Show, 8/12/03) and argued

Two payments enabling and supporting progression are both only half reversed Of eight Supplementary Welfare Allowance cuts there have been no clear-cut reversals, two are subject to further consultation, the Creche and Diet Supplement are restored but are narrowed in focus, the Rent Supplement change is very unclear The six Unemployment and Disability Benefit payment cuts have the overall impact of weakening the value of the social insurance system and the Minister's text justifies this intention

Minister Brennan may not have convinced everybody but he did enough to cause confusion once again relying on the Dan Rather factor (Pierson 1994 29) where the media will not report overly complicated issues In two by-elections in March 2005 the savage sixteen appeared on no election material The blame avoidance strategy worked Minister McCreevy took the most direct brunt of the blame management strategy but fifteen cuts remain

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this brief examination of cutbacks To some degree they typify Donnison's (1982 209, cited in Lister 1988 2) description of the 'wolves in the Treasury always ranging abroad in hopes of bringing down a benefit or two' Why did a government leave themselves exposed to such retrenchment Both sets of cuts seemed motivated primarily by cost containment (preparation for EMU in 1992 and post 9/11 fiscal downturn in 2003), however both reflected substantive policy choices to retrench social insurance payments and the Supplementary Welfare Allowance scheme The 1992 cuts occurred in a political administration where both the Minister for Social Welfare and the Taoiseach were from rural constituencies Likewise in 2003 the rural Minister for Social and Family Affairs was dominated by a rural Minister for Finance It is possible that rural politicians were not sufficiently sensitive to the impact of social security retrenchment on an urban electorate

In the event of having to manage blame, similar blame management strategies were used to divert and minimise blame Both governments chose not to accept cabinet responsibility,

cabinet reshuffles replaced offending Ministers and gave room for manoeuvre; governments reversed some of the more controversial and sensitive cuts and used 'spin' and media strategies to distort the reality of the remaining cuts. Government also used agency strategies deflecting some cuts by subjecting them to social partnership reviews. This review of the cuts confirms the sensitivity of the Irish electorate to social security cuts and the strength of lobby groups acting together. It also highlights the successful role of rhetoric and spin in Irish social security discourse where ambiguous presentation of information was used as a strategy to deflect blame for social security retrenchment.

7.5 Social Security and Social Partnership

There is no doubt that Social Partnership institutions are a dominant feature of the Irish social security policy community. Rhetoric plays a key role in Irish social security governance. It is used to avoid change by pretending more is happening than is happening, it is also used to manage the process of negative change. Social Partnership institutions are often the vehicle for such rhetoric. Because of the substantial use of rhetoric it is difficult to discern the role and function of Social Partnership in relation to social security policy but there is little doubt that NESC plays a leadership role in Irish social policy and that this role is consolidated in the context of the Developmental Welfare State (2005). Opinion differs as to the degree to which social partnership practically determines the content and scale of social security changes or the degree to which its dominant role is ideational and building consensus or legitimating the economic development model that sets the context for Irish social security reform. These roles are, of course, not exclusive. This section begins by examining the practical content of the pay agreements from 1987 to 2006 and the NESC strategy documents relevant to each of those agreements. The role and function of social security related partnership-working groups are then considered.

Analysing the social security content of social partnership documents

NESC strategy documents and national agreements are framed in a discourse stressing requirements for a consistent policy framework in a small open European democracy: 'a macroeconomic policy approach which guaranteed low inflation and a steady growth of aggregate demand; an evolution of incomes which ensures continued improvement in competitiveness, policies that facilitate and promote structural adjustment in order to improve competitiveness' NESC (1996:13). NESC (1999:7) emphasised how 'constantly

evolving requirements of international competitiveness are understood as the necessary condition of continuing economic and social success' The more detailed analysis is complicated by the presence of the type of strategically ambivalent rhetoric expected in 'Janus' competition states, which address the needs of foreign investors and the domestic electorate (Cerny et al , 2005) Ambivalent policy discourse may help social partners mediate tensions between specific interests but makes it difficult to identify substantial policy content Even a cursory analysis of the titles of national agreements tells a story of focusing on employment, job creation, competitiveness and economic growth It is striking that none reference equality as a national goal

An analysis of real and tangible social partnership social security commitments highlights that, apart from rhetoric, commitments to ongoing processes and qualified commitments dependant on future resource availability, few specific social security commitments were negotiated by social partners O'Cinneide (1999 47) notes with frustration how the content of agreements comprises 'cutting and pasting lists supplied by government Departments' Some commitments negotiated were already government policy commitments, many were resource dependant, others were never implemented (Community Platform 1997, CWC, 2001) Fitzpatrick's (2006 30) note the frequent use of intangible commitments to 'continued attention' and ongoing monitoring' A review of the content of the six programmes to date unearths few tangible social security policy changes If one applied very strict criteria (a clear monetary impact in terms of either expenditure or impact on peoples social security rates or conditions) then very few changes were negotiated save minor changes These included, for example, a commitment to extend the age limit for Child Dependant Allowances up to 21 year olds in full time education for all short term payments and an agreement that claimants eligible for two types of payment can self select the payment they prefer Certainly social partnership as part of the policy process which led indirectly to other policy decisions made outside social partnership structures but influenced by social partnership Child, working age adult and pension targets discussed or agreed in social partnership forums certainly helped form the political decisions that led to increases social welfare adequacy over this period Outcomes negotiated in social partnership (some of which were already government policy) are summarised in Table 6.1 below and detailed in Appendix D

Table 7 1 Analysis of social partnership social security commitments

Date	NESC Strategy	National Agreement	Tangible outcomes agreed through social partnership
1986	A Strategy for Development Growth, Employment and Fiscal Balance	Programme for National Recovery (1987)	Maintained focus on the overall value of the lowest social welfare Widening the social insurance base to include PRSI for both farmers and the self-employed Acknowledging role of FIS Support Voluntary Activity
1990	A strategy for the Nineties Economic Stability and Structural Change	Programme for Economic and Social Progress (1990)	Twelve area based partnership boards to stimulate local development led responses to high unemployment CSW priority level rates by 1993 (conditional on available resources) Implement CSW child income support recommendations over ten years Commitment to a charter for partnership between the state and voluntary activity (delivered 2000) Modernise service delivery and support voluntary activity Extend Social Insurance to part time workers
1993	A Strategy for Competitiveness, Growth and Employment	Programme for Competitiveness and Work (1994)	Focus on 'facilitate entry and re-entry' and address disincentives to unemployment 'Urgent and careful consideration' to integration of tax/social welfare systems (child income support, FIS, employment incentives and dependency) Maintain real social welfare income/priority CSW rates (fiscal constraints) PRSI reform agenda (imposed by Minister) One stop shops, fraud and control

Date	NESC Strategy	National Agreement	Tangible outcomes agreed through social partnership
1996	A Strategy into the 21st Century	P2000, Inclusion, Competitiveness and Employment (1997)	Social inclusion less 'residual' and strategic objective in its own right Reducing Social Disparities £525m incl maintain real social welfare income Tackling long-term employment' FIS unemployment traps reform CSW minimum rates commitment Clause (3.3) 'reciprocal obligation of the unemployed', Fraud and Abuse 41 social inclusion oriented working groups processes (process not policy) incl Basic Income Working Group
1999	Strategy: Opportunities, Challenges and Choices	Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2000)	Real increase in social welfare rates, progress towards £100. 'higher increases priority if additional economic growth. (never subsequently honoured) Adequacy benchmarks working group Individualisation working groups CDAs extended to short term benefits, Child Benefit to be increased to £100 Carers Respite and examine social insurance anomalies
2003	Strategy: An Investment in Quality Services, Inclusion and Enterprise	Sustaining Progress (2003)	Poverty and Social Inclusion chapter commits to 'appropriate' engagement. Some existing government commitments were reiterated in Chapter five Ten 'Special Initiative' policy processes one of which to examine effectiveness of merging CDA's and FIS No new expenditure commitments, Statements on fraud .
2005	Strategy: People, Productivity, Places	Towards 2016	No new social security commitments. Affirmation of existing income adequacy, recommitment to NESC study of options to reform child income support and commitment to prioritise lone parents labour market activation.

This conclusion is reinforced in a review of the ten Sustaining Progress Special Initiatives (commissioned by the Department of the Taoiseach) The report by Fitzpatrick's consultants (2006) highlighted the lack of emphasis on outcome oriented actions Of 67 actions under ten initiatives only 18% of activity related to new initiatives, 36% to progressing existing activity and 24% to policy formulation Fitzpatrick's (2006 29-30) concluded this pattern 'does not fit fully with the spirit of the initiatives being action oriented problem solving tools' and that many intended achievements appeared 'fairly modest and process oriented'

TABLE 10 ACTIONS AND PROGRESS UNDER THE ENDING CHILD POVERTY SPECIAL INITIATIVE	
Action	Progress
1 A review of child income support arrangements to be undertaken, including examining the effectiveness of merging Child Dependent Allowance (CDA) with the Family Income Support (FIS)	The National Economic and Social Council are undertaking an in-depth examination of CDA and FIS
2 Develop a strategic policy to strengthen families, with particular focus on the coordination of supports to families	Appropriate proposals will be brought forward early in 2006
3 Undertake further analysis of obstacles to employment, with particular reference to lone parents, in the light of the NESC research on the OECD report on family friendly policies	An Inter-Departmental Working Group was set up to examine the obstacles to employment for lone parents A Working Group was also established in the Department of Social and Family Affairs to review the income support arrangements for lone parents The Minister brought the final reports on lone parents to Cabinet to Government and will publish the documents as the basis of a consultation with relevant stakeholders
4 Improve linkages between Departments and Agencies with responsibility for children	Work on mapping the linkages has been completed and will contribute to identification of the gaps and overlaps in policy development in relation to children and service delivery
5 Use the structures established under the NAPS to achieve the NAPS target on child poverty	(i) Meetings of the Social Inclusion Consultative Group focus on progress towards the achievement of NAPS targets, including the target specifically related to Child Poverty Reduction (ii) The second Social Inclusion Forum continues to engage with line Departments on the assessment of progress made under the NAP/Inclusion
6 Progress the Children's Longitudinal Study	The Study has been put out to tender and a preferred bidder has been identified Contract negotiations for the first phase of the study, which is scheduled to last for seven years, are now underway
SOURCE SUSTAINING PROGRESS 2003-2005 FINAL REPORT ON SPECIAL INITIATIVES, 2005	

At a more rhetorical level, over almost two decades, it is possible to identify the negotiation or framing of the relationship between competitiveness and social inclusion. As outlined in Appendix C early documents promote redistribution, protect the income of the poorest (PNR Ireland 1987b) and establish innovative social institutions (PESP, Ireland 1991). The PCW (Ireland 1994b) in particular, reflecting the international context of the OECD Jobs Study (1994) and the national context of the Expert Working Group on the Integration of Taxation and Social Welfare (Ireland 1996a) signalled a strong productivist agenda. The focus on employment as a key driver of competitiveness means policy focuses on promotion of work incentives (reform of child income support, Family Income Supplement, individualisation, downward adjustment of PRSI benefits, income disregards and tapering, taxation of benefits, integration of tax and social welfare, (PCW Ireland 1994b, P2000, Ireland 1997b) and education, training and active labour market measures. The latter also includes distinctive Irish discourse about supportive conditionality and reciprocal obligations and comment about controlling fraud. The debate about income adequacy policy in subsequent documents is dominated by cost containment and work incentive agendas and income targets only commit to tackling consistent poverty (PPF Ireland 2000b). Privatisation, consumer models of service delivery and promotion of the regulatory role of the state feature in *Sustaining Progress* (Ireland 2003b) and *DWS* (NESC 2005). These documents promote a fuller subordination of social policy to the economy where the function of social protection is to enable a life time attachment to the labour force. One key trade union participant observed in an interview with the author how a key role of social partnership was agenda setting but that social partnership's narrow focus on productivist issues meant social partnership was not adequately agenda setting on wider social policy.

Social Partnership by failing to adequately agenda set had missed key issues like housing and childcare. At this stage (in 2002) it is more a block on progress than a wheel of progress – blocking rather than promoting change.

The conclusion that social partnership is as likely to veto as to action change is confirmed in the analysis in the NESC Strategy *People, Productivity, Places* (NESC 2006). Within an overall critical assessment of the policy capacity of Irish public governance NESC reflects on how social partnership processes at times have caused strategic decisions to be delayed or reversed (NESC 2006 14). Perhaps because of this much strategic policy shaping took place outside social partnership. Many major reforms (Dirty Dozen, Savage Sixteen, Budget 2003 Child Benefit and Budget 2006 Childcare Packages, policy relating to migrants workers,

habitual residents and direct provision for asylum seekers, pensions reform, and the most recent proposals to abolish limitation, qualified adults and the one parent family payment) were not negotiated through social partnership. Government, fearing lack of consensus, may have actively kept these policy discussions away from social partnership vetoes. Vetoing change may of course be a positive function. McCashin (2002) attributes the absence of neo-liberal rhetoric in Irish social security discourse to social partnership. One political adviser interviewed by the author stressed, how because the UK didn't have Social Partnership, UK policy makers could make more radical changes.

The UK government had more freedom in terms of what they engaged to do, I think Social Partnership here is one of the reasons politicians are very wary about making any radical changes.

A civil servant interviewed by the author confirmed that the partnership process stops radical changes from happening but that this can also be a good thing.

Sometimes that's bad because it stops positive things happening but sometimes good because it stops something you don't want to happen.

NESC (2006: 13) recognise that this tendency to rule out radical change can produce the 'lowest common denominator'. However the most striking conclusion from a content analysis of social partnership agreements is the scant amount of social security policy relative to the large volume of policy negotiated outside social partnership. This is consistent with observations of Hardiman (1998, 2002) and Cousins (2005a). Many reforms that are negotiated through social partnership tend to reflect already existing Departmental policy priorities, others are constructed as weak commitments, duplicate other reports or are at a high level of generality (McCashin 2002). Over time an increasing number of commitments are in the form of ongoing institutional processes rather than policy outcomes. Civil servants described in interviews with the author how they draft early chapters of the national wage agreement. Cousins (2005a) observed from his time as policy adviser to two different social security Ministers that it was Department policy to hold back on policy changes already agreed at Departmental level so that they could be 'won' in Social Partnership. The large number of commitments to back to work supports and active labour market measures in the mid 1990s and child or adult welfare adequacy in the early 2000s reflect to some degree the dominant voices in the Community and Voluntary Pillar but also well-established policy

debates outside social partnership including the parallel National Anti-Poverty Strategy and Open Method(s) of Coordination. The focus on adequacy within social partnership and its consequent impact on budgetary policy was a significant exception. Community and voluntary sector's participation in partnership strengthened their capacity to make income adequacy a political issue (albeit this was diluted by CORI's over-preoccupation with basic income and less than effective tactical cooperation within the pillar).

The Role and Function of Social Partnership Working Groups

Hood (2004) identified how governments use agency strategies as part of their blame avoidance and blame management strategies. Pierson (2001) hypothesised that governments obfuscate policy decisions by distorting traceability about who and where decisions are made. Heidenheimer et al. (1990:265) reviewed how 'committees of experts' prepared public opinion. While in a general sense Social Partnership working groups distort traceability in the policy making process it is hard to generalise about their function. The different experiences of social partnership working groups make it difficult to identify any dominant rationale informing their establishment. This section reviews whether and how social partnership working groups contribute to social security policy formation. The range of function of social partnership working groups makes such a review difficult. Groups ranged from small and insignificant to major or substantial, the review that follows attempts to capture the general flavour rather than substantially review the full range of social partnership working groups.

Many Social Partnership negotiated social security outputs relate to commitments to establish a number of time limited working groups. P2000 (Ireland 1997b), for example, commits to over 63 institutional processes, 41 of which related to social inclusion and Sustaining Progress, for example, contained no new social security commitments but a commitment to establish the '10 special initiatives' referred to above (Fitzpatrick 2006). Those interviewed by the author noted very different experiences of Working Groups. One social partner ventured in an interview with the author that:

Some groups were practical, straightforward and able to make recommendations (e.g. the rent allowance working group). But I've been to other committees where there is a sense of frustration and dissatisfaction with the process and quality of analysis. This may be deliberate, or it may be a skills issue.

Another social partner acknowledged in an interview with the author the role of civil servants managing working groups

I'm not sure how well-informed the politicians or social partners are about social security – relatively speaking the quality of the civil servant is very impressive, they are the people writing the brief

It depended on who was managing them, the DSW were very good at facilitating and brokering and analysis maybe because they have had a lot of exposure to the process

A community and voluntary sector representative described in an interview with the author how the process of the Administrative Individualisation Working Group reflected patriarchal power dynamics

They were all there at one end of the table, all men representing IBEC, the DOF, the DSFA Chairperson and the Irish Senior Citizen's Parliament It was like they represented a different world

Some Social Partnership working groups play a role in forging consensus, one senior DOF official in an interview with the author noted how

Working groups allow ideas to settle and come to maturity, now we are prepared to do something, whereas five year ago it would have been seen as too radical In the meantime people have got used to the idea, the horns have been knocked off it

A trade union official interviewed by the author confirmed this view

By and large they progress ideas and explore them, there is a good cross section of views If a proposal emerges you can say that by and large it will travel

However other working groups are used to stall policy, a senior civil servant interviewed by the author commented how some groups were manipulated

The political process can stop decision-making by kicking it into touch in partnership committees. It would be naive not to say that there have been working groups set up to stop certain things.

They can, according to one senior civil servant.

Create a smokescreen of activity so government can be seen to be trying to develop social policy. They don't care what's going on or whether something comes out the other end.

A trade union official interviewed by the author stressed this 'policy avoidance' function speaking about the P2000 Basic Income Working Group.

Some ideas are around for 40 years and come up every ten years or so. Well, never do them but we can talk about them in a committee all we like.

Those who participated in such working groups were clear that it was the political system's responsibility to make decisions. Having made recommendations to government, social partners revert back to lobbyists. In the case of the minimum wage, tax credits and Child Benefit policy, more radical changes evolved through the political system than through social partnership. Politicians make policy changes recommended by the social partners in order to achieve different policy objectives to those promoted through Social Partnership.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ The move to tax credits was claimed as a social partnership success by both ICTU and C+V social partners. In reality, there was little consensus and no recommendation from the P2000 Tax Credit Working Group to move to tax credits. Had there been any such recommendation, it would have been to help achieve the policy objective of focusing tax reform at low-paid workers. The political initiative to introduce Tax Credits was taken by the PD's because introducing a tax credit system made it fiscally viable to reach their Programme for Government policy objective of having only 20 per cent of tax payers at the top rate, a completely different policy objective than that being explored by the social partners.

It was noted earlier how the political system does not always consult with social partners about substantial policy decisions (for example the Savage Sixteen social security cutbacks or immigration policy Habitual Residence Rule). Governments also have the comfort zone of falling back on Social Partnership as an excuse if the policy change they implemented proved too controversial. They use Social Partnership to deflect controversy (deferring some Savage Sixteen cutbacks for consideration by social partners or deflecting blame for their own policy paralysis by blaming social partners for failing to develop a policy consensus in childcare). As one civil servant interviewed by the author observed:

Government wheels Social Partnership in and out when social partners are needed to justify the presence or lack of a certain policy position.

The role of the working group in enabling policy learning should not be underestimated. An IBEC staff member observed in an interview with the author how:

Groups were important learning spaces, I sort of developed my knowledge by working in these groups; it works extremely well in terms of an exchange of knowledge and views.

Another senior trade union member reflected in an interview with the author how:

In a Social Partnership process the analysis and arguing and discussing are like tutorials, you had to read the stuff and get into discussions, hear all other points of view and expand your own knowledge.

Some working groups did not attempt to reach consensus but simply made the arguments for and against. They do not agree a recommendation but transfer the thinking and learning to the political or administrative process. One obvious problem is the absence of a wider range of policy actors involved in direct learning particularly politicians.

It is impossible to generalise about the role and function of working groups in Social Partnership except to conclude that increasingly Social Partnership is used as a convenient litmus test for consensus. The quality of each process varies considerably. Some processes contribute to social security policy in that they led to a more systematic and planned approach to policy. Some are frustrating talking shops and others veto change by stalling

progress. While these processes are civil service controlled processes, decision-making is a political prerogative. The working group approach has considerable resource implications for all actors in the social security policy community in terms of time and capacity to participate. This toil on resources is especially important given the general resource deficit in the Irish policy community relative to other countries. While there was at times a considerable learning opportunity, the exclusive membership of the processes diminished the potential to utilise such learning. It is difficult to assess how useful the lesson drawing function of social partnership is when those lessons are only internalised by a small body of individuals, when those individuals are not necessarily the most relevant actors in the policy community and when the organisations do not necessarily have internal structures to propagate such learning (NESF, 1997).

The Role of Social Partnership

If Social Partnership has only a limited policy formation role then what is its role? This section discusses whether Social Partnership plays a social constructivist role in Irish political discourse. The state-led and controlled institutions of Social Partnership (NESDO) and the social partnership process can be differentiated from the individual interests of the social partners. This discussion argues that NESDO provides a shared framework about the desirability of moving from a distributional welfare state to a productivist workfare state? Given the absence of think tanks and the weak contribution of academics to political discourse it seems plausible that Social Partnership is the institutional vehicle through which a competition state, prompted by international political economy, promotes a competitiveness-led neo-liberal ideology.

Blyth (2002) describes how ideas influence change by acting as a sequentially unfolding process whereby ideas reduce uncertainty at a time of crisis and enable collective action. Blyth refers to ideas as weapons in a struggle about institutional change. Cousins (2005a) and Allen (2000) describe how in 1987 the Irish government created Social Partnership. It can be seen in 1987 as a weapon to develop consensus around co-responsibility for fiscal austerity. Hardiman (2002: 17) describes how it 'evolved into a strategy for facilitating steady growth and the continuing inward investment that fuelled it'. Partnership provided a 'blueprint' or a road map described as a shared understanding about the desirability of a low-tax low-spending development trajectory for a small open vulnerable economy. Once the blueprint was accepted social partnership then acted as a 'cognitive' lock ensuring institutional stability. In this way Irish social partnership has been a cognitive lock into a neo

liberal development model stressing key monetarist principles of low inflation and low taxation.

Within the Neo-liberal paradigm Breathnach (2005) identifies three phases of social partnership; the founding phase, dominated by economic management to break the vicious socioeconomic cycle; the expansion phase, with broader complex but fragmented agenda of equality and social policy; and the transition phase, which refocused on economics and sought to move ahead with a more narrow and controlled agenda. She further identified changes in governance where, in the third phase, there is a loss of organisational sovereignty as growth in professionalism of the staff or policy elite, meant that they became the repository of value rather than either institution of social partnership itself. This outcome is a similar concept to the expectation expressed by Cerny et al., (2005) that in the competition state there would be a shift in power to technical policy elites.

The emerging developmental welfare state model (NESC 2003; NESC,2005a,b) illustrates the leadership and social construction role of the NESC as it attempts to reform the relationship between social policy and competition policy within the confines of a neo liberal state. e. The report can be interpreted as an attempt to break the cognitive lock-in created by the neo-liberal idea of an efficiency- equity trade-off, in this context it can be described as an expression of a social investment state (Jensen and Dobnowolsky 2004). On the other hand it can be interpreted in the words of Cerny et al (2005) as 'social-neoliberalism', an attempt to promote more equitable outcomes within the confines of the cognitive lock of neoliberalism. Given the ambiguous nature of the NESC it is possible to read both interpretations from the same report. As a result of this ambiguity each government Department, government party and social partner can see his or her own version of policy reflected, the document itself reflects the ambiguity that is part of the Irish political culture

NESC discourse reflects existing political priorities of the broad state, including civil service controlled agendas, academic analysis (led by ESRI a state funded research agency) and transnational thinking (including OECD, Napsincl, European Employment Strategy). One policy actor interviewed by the author reflected how Social Partnership 'hoovered up' the policy around it and reflected it back to the bigger policy community. The ambiguity in NESC discourse reflected the political mediation of policy priorities and the leadership role the NESC plays as a central co-ordination point in the policy community. The NESC's role appears to be socially constructing a mediated path, by bringing together competing

discourses but discourses that all share the same macro economic analysis and exist within the same 'cognitive lock' (NESF 1997) Breathnach (2005) suggested that this insulated and exclusionary process of groupthink might inhibit critique by those marginalized by the mainstream This is especially so because of the degree of ambiguity needed to maintain the shared understanding Roche's pre partnership conclusion holds firm,

deliberate ambiguity in policy may be an increasing obstacle to an effective anti-poverty policy in Ireland since it satisfies no one' (1984 196)

Certainly this has been the experience of the Community Platform who found it very difficult to articulate an alternative analysis within the confines of social partnership (Murphy 2002, Acheson et al 2004) and who, once they did articulate dissent, suffered in terms of access to policy makers and resources

Social Partnership has directly informed the development and content of only a limited number of social security policies but has vetoed others either at an agenda setting stage or in the process of managing working groups The impact of the veto appears to restrict change to moderate change thus protecting the system from more radical progressive and regressive change The experience of Social Partnership working groups' processes has been largely civil service determined and the experience of such processes has been mixed in terms of both quality of participation and outcomes Decision making is firmly controlled by the political system The exclusive nature of the process limits the effective transfer of learning to the wider policy community Social Partnership has had a narrow economic agenda since its inception The opening up of its membership did not succeed in making social welfare policy more equitable or effective While there appeared to be an expansionary social stage, the inclusion of the Community and Voluntary Pillar did not lead to a more equitable or effective social welfare system and in fact sustained a narrow economic model By far the more strategic role of Social Partnership appears to be ideational to the degree that it functioned as a key institution in which the state developed a new policy regime and subsequently maintained a consensual Rhetoric appears to play a key role in maintaining the 'shared understanding' and there is ample use of various strategic, constructive and deliberative ambiguities

7.6 Chapter Conclusion

There is limited capacity in the Irish policy system to introduce change when it requires a no losers compensatory scenario. This means most significant changes incur financial or political implications. Cross-party consensus on policy direction facilitates decisions while absence of consensus amongst social partners and within the community and voluntary sector militates against decisions. As expected veto pressure is strong and larger parties like Fianna Fail are perceived to be particularly vulnerable to electoral backlash. Smaller political parties with more ideologically defined supporters are less impervious to electoral backlash for making more radical change.

Through the child income support case study one can appreciate the degree to which blame avoidance strategies, electoral considerations and budgetary strategies dominate the direct political mediation of Irish social security policy choices. It also highlighted the extent of strategic ambivalence in policy discourse. The section on women and social security reform reflected on how a patriarchal state is ambiguous in relation to women's labour market participation and how the deficit of women in decision-making is a direct reflection of the lack of gender proofing of policy decisions. The third case study examined the 'exceptions that prove the rule' and how governments do manage the fallout that occurs when they expose themselves to blame. It highlighted the crucial role that presentational strategies, obfuscation and rhetoric play in social security discourse. Social partnership plays a limited, role in social security policy development. Social partnership reinforces rather than alters the power structure and culture of Irish politics and continues a pragmatic political culture that shies away from ideological discourse while embedding policy deeper into a neo-liberal hegemony. Recent attempts to reconceptualise social security and social policy are ambiguous and there is not enough evidence to conclude the cognitive lock of a neo liberal model of development has been opened.

Rummaging through recent struggles in the welfare state to appreciate better the political process and its relationship to collective social choices embedded in social policy (Hecló 1974a 11)

CHAPTER EIGHT

TRACING THE POLICY PROCESS

8.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter Six strong Irish economic and employment growth was a clear driver of change in policy priorities. The early 1990s preoccupation with solving unemployment (NESC, 1993, NESF, 1994) had, only seven years later, shifted to a policy of maximising overall participation in employment:

a full employment society is based on a high employment ratio with a high labour force participation of both men and women and the absence of long-term unemployment' (NESC, 2000 7)

The focus shifted from unemployment to alleviating labour market shortages (NESF, 2000). While economic growth caused this shift of direction it cannot account for the type of policy choices subsequently chosen. Policy choices determined whether activation policy was supportive or punitive and who benefited from increased economic growth and access to employment, income support or public services. How those policy choices were constructed and decided is the focus of this Chapter. The case studies in this chapter differ from the previous chapter in that they focus more on how the policy debate was socially constructed than what factors influenced the final decision making. Hence they analyse more the nature of policy debate than the politics of decision making. Using similar methodology as the previous chapter the chapter traces key moments in debate about the appropriate balance between incentives to work and income adequacy and the appropriate level of participation or conditionality. Particular attention is paid to isolating the initiative behind new policy processes, understanding how international and domestic ideation influenced the social construction of domestic policy discourse and whether changes in governance influenced changes in policy and outcomes.

Section Two reviews the process leading to the publication of the 1996 Expert Working Group Integration of Taxation and Social Welfare Report (Integration Group, Ireland 1996a) Section Three reviews the process of the 2001 PPF Benchmarking and Indexation Working Group (Benchmarking Group, Ireland 2001b) Examining these two processes enables a greater understanding of how the trade-off between income adequacy and work incentives was mediated Section Four reviews the process of mediating conditionality or compulsion and traces Irish policy from the 1987 Job Search to the 2005 NESC Developmental Welfare State and subsequent policy changes in 2006 that could move Ireland considerably closer to the type of conditionality or workfare considered more typical of a liberal welfare regime

8.2 Integrating Tax and Social Welfare (Integration Report, Ireland 1996a)

As discussed in Chapter Four Ireland has always had a tradition of fairly rigorous implementation of conditions concerning availability for and genuinely seeking work (INOUE, 1997, Allen, 1998) Despite high unemployment in the early 1980s, ‘genuinely seeking work’ requirements for unemployment payments were strengthened in 1983, work incentives were emphasised by reductions in Pay Related Benefit (1984) and the introduction of incentives like Family Income Supplement (1984) Unemployment continued to rise and, while employment incentives remained a major consideration, concern about the scale of unemployment and income poverty led to a focus on income adequacy and anti-poverty measures Both the 1987 Programme for Government and the Programme for National Recovery (Ireland 1987a,b) committed to maintaining the real value of the lowest social welfare payments

Initiative of policy process

Work incentive issues became a public policy concern in the early 1990s when, with economic recovery, policy actors voiced fears that higher levels of unemployment payments had dampened the incentive to work The Tax Strategy Group (TSG), initiated by 1992 was a new policy institution initiated by Labour which included Ministers, civil servants and programme managers This process dominated policy making over the 1992-1997 period Maintaining competitiveness was the key policy objective of budgetary policy and the primary focus of maintaining work incentives was seen as a key part of the competitiveness strategy The mood was influenced by the OECD Jobs Study (1994), which dominated international social security policy discourse and to a lesser extent the Delors White Paper on

Competitiveness, Growth and Inclusion (1994) which, as Dostal (2004) argues was itself influenced by the OECD Jobs Study. A key stage in the transition to a competition state came when the 1992-94 FF- Labour coalition government established in July 1993 the Expert Working Group on Integration of Social Welfare and Taxation (Integration Group). The group's terms of reference were (Ireland 1996a 2)

To identify the problems associated with the interaction of the tax and social welfare systems and to identify the steps necessary to achieve greater co-ordination / integration of the two systems, with particular attention to the impact on people's incomes and to the tax code, social welfare system, budgetary and administrative implications

The initiative is largely credited to the then Junior Minister for Poverty, Labour TD Joan Burton. In an interview with the author she attributed her motivation to concern about constituents' experiences of poverty and unemployment traps. A key civil servant interviewed by the author confirmed 'without this political driver we would not have the resources and the full-time worker given to the group'

Policy discourse

This initiative of left leaning Minister for State Joan Burton was however taken over by the Department of Finance who set the dominant tone of the work by controlling the early drafts. Through their influence, a neo-liberal economics epistemology, drawn from the OECD Jobs Study influenced the policy agenda and promoted a focus on Replacement Ratios⁹⁷ (RRs) as the working methodology of the group. Along with the Department of Employment and Enterprise they advocated low Replacement Ratios as the preferred policy solution to maintain work incentives. Some Irish economists unsuccessfully challenged other economists' uncritical acceptance of the economic orthodoxy behind replacement rate theory (Callan et al 1996, INOU 1995,) McCashin (2004 215) observed that

It is striking how official policy debates are conducted in the narrow economic logic of replacement ratios and the potential impact on work incentives with little qualitative analysis on how people perceive and experience social security

⁹⁷ The Replacement Ratio (RR) is the ratio of the wage required to replace the welfare payment set against the welfare payment (Callan 1996)

Alternative policy coalitions (led by the DSFA and supported by the CPA) sought more supportive welfare to work policy and the elimination of poverty traps but found themselves in a defensive position and defending welfare rates against an agenda of reducing replacement ratios. One researcher in a statutory agency interviewed by the author reflected how:

looking back it was all about replacement ratios, pages and pages of them.

This focus on work incentives was artificially or socially constructed. Without doubt the OECD Jobs Study and, to a lesser extent, the Delors White Paper influenced this uncharacteristically intensive and ambitious overview of Irish social security policy. One senior civil servant explained in an interview with the author how:

The study was driven by a general perception in academic, political, administrative and partnership worlds, that a more integrated tax and welfare system would minimise work disincentives.

Challenges to this analysis suggested high replacement rates were not in fact a cause of unemployment. One academic reflected in an interview with the author how:

It was never really plausible that the disincentive effects were fundamental to the high level of unemployment, the jobs study (OECD) was selling a particular line but was quite ideologically driven and exceptionally politicised and used by those who were thinking that way anyway. ... At times of low economic growth and slow job growth there is often preoccupation with the somewhat theoretical question of whether people will be able to take up employment. This preoccupation vanishes in times of high economic growth when people take up employment.

Within the group it became clear that such disincentives were not strong. Members of the group observed in interviews with the author how the working group:

Started off very strongly, and as you got into the nitty-gritty of the arguments about incentives they all seemed to fall away.

Another group member described in an interview with the author

Peeling back fears about disincentives till we realised that
there weren't any

Policy Development

The working group conclusions reflected OECD recommendations. In their final analysis the recommended keeping replacement rates low and maximise the gap between work and welfare. However the focus was on maximising income from work rather than reducing already low welfare payments. This reinforced the 'less eligibility' principle that 'labour market aged' payments be kept relatively low but did not suggest further reductions. The report was influential, one Finance official in an interview with the author described it as

A fundamental mark on the ground about the need for a gap between take home pay and welfare and how we would have been consciously trying to widen that gap, you would need to ensure that in anything you would be doing the incentive to work would not be overlooked

Many recommendations were implemented, including reforms to FIS and CDAs, restructuring of various income disregards and tax reforms to benefit the lower paid. Changes were on a no losers basis and led to significantly improved welfare outcomes. Nonetheless they served the function of commodifying welfare in terms of enabling recipients to gain easier access to open market employment. Overall the dogma of low replacement ratios was reinforced. In the words of one DOF official, 'we would always look at replacement ratios as a fundamental test of what a particular proposal would do'. One of the most enduring legacies was a greater focus on tax policy⁹⁸ as an element of welfare-to-

⁹⁸ Other than taxation of benefit payments the broad thrust tax reform focused on eliminating high marginal taxes and removing the lower paid from the tax net. Over 1997-2002 the marginal tax exemption limits were phased out. Over budgets 1999-2002 taxation reform included reform to a tax credits system and removal of the minimum wage from the tax net (over 40 per cent of tax eligible units were in fact removed from the tax net). These policies widened the gap between welfare and work (INOUE, 1997). It is important however not to over exaggerate these reforms, the vast amount of

work policy however this did not lead to the type of Anglo -Saxon experimentation with taxation mechanisms to subsidise low income workers. The political impact of the policy process can be measured in consensus about tackling disincentives. There was according to Callan, Nolan and O'Donoghue (1996) a major preoccupation of Irish policy makers with replacement rates. McCashin (2004) notes there was virtually no political dissent about the full abolition of Pay Related Benefit (PRB) in 1994 (the only dissent coming from the INOU who walked a symbolic coffin down Kildare Street with a sign 'PRB Rest In Peace' (Allen 1998). Latye and Callan (2001) reflect on this very successful social construction that there is an incentive problem in Irish social security. Noting that the disincentive effects for Unemployment Benefit are relatively small and that none exist for Unemployment Assistance they

question how media, government, and academic attention focused on those who have no disincentive (2001: 125).

Governance

Membership of the group was exclusive, members were invited on the basis of expertise and comprised civil servant and technical elites including the CPA. While senior trade unionist Donal Nevin was Chairman there was no formal social partnership association nor was there any representation of users or people living in poverty. In fact the technical nature of the work of the group was used to deny membership to anti-poverty groups (Allen, 1998).

Social partners and groups representing the poor took part in a parallel less influential NESF working group. This overlapping welfare-to-work discourse, led by the INOU, sought to review social welfare reform since the CSW and focused on recommendations to eliminate various types of employment and poverty traps associated with work disincentives (NESF, 1994a). Subsequent social partnership based processes that reviewed integration (for example NAPS Income Adequacy Working Group (1997), P2000 Basic Income Working Group (Ireland 2002d), P2000 Women's Access to the Labour Market (Ireland 2001a) were all taken less seriously by key policy makers. NESF (2000) highlighted the ongoing complexity of welfare-to-work policy and unemployment and poverty traps and recommended a comprehensive welfare-to-work strategy. While the analysis was broadly

tax expenditure was focused on tax changes which benefited higher paid workers and did nothing to widen the welfare/work gap

endorsed and considered by the Strategy Group on Employment and Unemployment it was defensively received by the DSFA who claimed their DSW Employment Support Unit was a comprehensive welfare-to-work unit (NESF 2001b) In governance terms the Integration Report reflected a highly elitist governance approach which was effective in terms of making a serious policy impact This approach has since been replaced by a more inclusive representative governance system in a range of Social Partnership and related working groups This more fragmented and complex policy system has not had the same degree of policy impact

The Integration Group was a key moment in the journey from a social security system based on passive poverty alleviation to one that was beginning to focus on activation While Irish social security policy had always emphasised incentives to work, the Integration Group embedded a more technical replacement ratio discourse into Irish social security discourse This was done by discursively constructing, with the aid of international discourse, an elite expert based membership to work in a technical policy process dominated by the DOF The report established an epistemological framework for social security policy for some time to come and gave Replacement Ratios an over-dominant place in the policy hierarchy This is consistent with Stephens, Huber and Ray (1999) expectation of link between the rise in hegemony in neo-liberal economics and an environment of retrenchment This type of environment took expansion of entitlement of the agenda and shifted the politics of social policy to defending entitlements

8.3 Benchmarking and Indexation Working Group (BIWG)

A legacy of the analysis reinforced in the Integration Group is acceptance of low replacement rates at the heart of the Irish employment activation Even were generous rate increases considered affordable strategies (and given the budget surpluses it seems they were) they would not, for work incentive reasons, be considered desirable As discussed in Chapter Four, this policy stance led to, in the context of increasing average and median incomes, growing income inequalities and increased relative income poverty (ESRI, 2003) The CSW (Ireland, 1986) adequacy benchmarks influenced social security discourse and were used as campaigning platforms throughout the 1990s Most national agreements contained basic commitments to gradual achievement of first the CSW priority rate (PCW, Ireland 1994a) and then the CSW minimum social welfare rates (P2000, Ireland 1997b) However there was growing awareness that the CSW rates had outlived their usefulness and needed upgrading Minister de Rossa had commissioned the ESRI to review approaches to

rate setting and to produce a range of possible rates of payment. The ESRI, while suggesting a range of payments, advised no method could give an unproblematic objective or scientific way of estimating what level of income would be adequate (Callan et al 1996)

Source of Initiative

The Community and Voluntary Pillar entry into social partnership brought increased urgency to the debate about adequate rates. The INOU and SVP had successfully negotiated for a commitment to CSW minimum rates in P2000. The Community and Voluntary Pillar proceeded to argue, in NESC, for a new analysis that linked rate setting to an established income target linked to average incomes which could be indexed each year. NESC (1999: 55) reflected this debate and recommended a new benchmark for the income adequacy of social welfare payments and a mechanism for indexing payments to improvements in the general living standard be established through the social partnership process. However little progress was made in the subsequent wage negotiations, all IBEC would concede was the establishment of a Social Partnership Working Group on Benchmarking and Indexation of social welfare payments (Ireland 2001a). This illustrates the role of rhetoric in Irish policy discourse where apparent policy consensus is subsequently ignored (almost every NESC strategy, for example, recommends taxing Child Benefit and property).

The terms of reference of this working group stress the focus on economic concerns and the lack of a focus on poverty especially relative poverty which was only inserted into the terms of reference after strenuous argument by the Community and Voluntary pillar (Ireland 2001a: xx).

i) examine the issues involved in developing a benchmark for adult and child social welfare payments including the implications of adopting a specific approach to the ongoing uprating or indexation of payments having regard to their long-term economic, budgetary, PRSI contribution, distributive and incentive implications in light of economic, demographic and labour market patterns, and

ii) examine the issue of relative income poverty

Policy discourse

The Benchmarking Group had arisen in the context of an income adequacy and anti-poverty campaign but, like the Integration Group, the terms of reference and the subsequent work of the group focused much more on work incentive issues and Replacement Ratios than on rates of poverty. In theoretical terms, neo-classical economics again dominated the group's discourse and definitions. Requests from members, during the group's work, to examine experiences of poverty, testimonials from people living in poverty or to request qualitative research were rejected. Nor was there consultation with people living in poverty or requests for submissions from the wider public.

The group can be divided into two fairly distinct advocacy coalitions, with DOF, IBEC and the DETE on one side arguing competitiveness. The DSFA, the DOT, the INOU and the three other social partner pillars accepted competitiveness arguments but emphasized the desirability of an income adequacy benchmark and indexation methodology. Within this adequacy coalition there were a range of opinions. Tactics and judgements about what was achievable through the group differed. These differences of opinion often created tension. While political actors were not directly involved it was evident that at least one group (CORI) had close contact with FF and tactically liaised with a senior civil servant close to FF.

Policy development

The group could not achieve consensus and a majority recommendation for a €150 benchmark was forwarded to the Taoiseach. This recommendation found immediate relevance in the parallel institutional process set up to revise the NAPS but was reworded into a strategically ambivalent income adequacy target (NAPS, Ireland 2002a:10):

The target will be to achieve a rate of €150 per week in 2002 terms for lowest social welfare payment, to be achieved in 2007, and the appropriate equivalence level of basic child income support to be set at 33-35 per cent of the minimum adult social welfare payment.

Nolan (2002) noted that given the drafting skills of those involved this ambivalence was hardly unintentional. Crucially what was left strategically ambivalent in this target was the issue of the indexation formula that would be used to up-rate the 2002 value to 2007 terms.

Without making explicit the indexation formula the target was less meaningful than it might have been. The corresponding child income support target would be to maintain combined child income support at 33-35 per cent of the lowest adult social welfare payment, hence this also had less meaning. This strategically ambiguous target means that the income target, depending on whether it is indexed by inflation or Gross Average Industrial Earnings wages could range from €170 to €185 in 2007 terms with the child income support target varying between €59 and €65 at the 35 per cent end of the range. The issue of examination of relative poverty was largely sidelined and a major effort had to be made by the Community and Voluntary Pillar representatives to have the issue of relative poverty, as outlined in the terms of reference, even cursorily examined.

This process symbolised a debate between the social desirability of an income benchmark and indexation formula against the economic desirability of a flexible approach to fiscal policy and maintenance of work incentives through basic welfare, low PRSI contributions and low taxation. The report can be seen as a key moment where the competition state in an alliance with a centre-right government, the DOF, the DETE and employers consolidated a pro-competition social policy or subordinated social policy to economic policy.

Governance

The expert-based membership base of the previous Integration Group report was replaced, in this instance, with a membership comprised of social partners. This reflected a changing form of governance and a shift in power bases. Expert groups like the CPA were denied access to this group and social partners (including representatives of the people living in poverty) who had not been in the previous group were the dominant membership of this group. Based on social partners' previous experience of civil servants stalling working groups, the CVP sought an independent Chairperson, Prof Kieran Kennedy, a former Chairperson of the ESRI. While this was done for valid reasons, the choice of an economist as the Chairperson meant an economics episteme dominated the group. The target was embedded in the subsequent Programme for Government (Ireland 2002a) and Sustaining Progress (Ireland 2003b). CORI in particular used the ambiguity of the target to good tactical effect by maintaining a lobbying position which, to some degree, constructed a political alliance around a maximum target of 30% GAIE. CORI's close relationship with Fianna Fáil led to a 2004 invitation to address the parliamentary party meeting. They used this opportunity to campaign for the 30% GAIE target. A significant increase in Budget 2005 and 2006 has increased the likelihood of reaching one interpretation of the original NAPS.

Like the Integration Report, the Benchmarking Group subordinated social policy to the needs of the economy. This policy process was channelled through a narrow technical economic-dominated discourse. While governance shifted from experts to social partners, it still occurred in a tightly controlled elitist policy process. The initiative belonged to the Community and Voluntary Pillar and reflects an advocacy coalition's attempt to construct an alternative social discourse. In the event however the discourse was dominated by work incentive and competitiveness concerns. The link between a productivist outcome and a narrow coordinative governance process is not accidental. It is interesting to note that it took electoral politics and old fashioned campaigning to force the implementation of adequacy politics. The role played by CORI illustrates how, while the function of social partnership is agenda setting, the real politics of decision-making is carried out in pluralist power relations. It also highlights a hidden but powerful advocacy coalition of CORI, elements of Fianna Fail and key civil servants.

8.4 Job Search to Job Seekers Allowance

Historically⁹⁹ there has always been a link between income support and job seeking (INOU, 1997) and recent debate about adequacy was always nuanced with references to 'supportive conditionality' (NESC, 1996:201) and 'proactive policies of engagement with people of working age' (Ireland 2001a:61). DSW have been responsible for ensuring unemployed claimants are available for and actively seeking work. Allen (1998) records how the Department was proactive about this surveillance and had no problem publicly humiliating unemployed people and using harsh and demeaning control tactics. The CSW (Ireland 1986)

⁹⁹ The DSW's employment traditional function of national placement service was transferred to DOL in 1966. A placement service review, (IPA 1968) confirmed the separation of employment placement services from the Unemployment Benefit system. DOL established a National Manpower Service (NMS) in 1971, but did not encourage the unemployed to use the new mainstream placement service and transferred employment exchanges back to the DSW (NESC, 1985, 208-9). In 1982 the NMS was redirected to the unemployed but never successfully engaged this group (Cousins 2005:179). The placement focus of the NMS diluted further when the public training agency AnCo, the Youth Employment Service and the NMS joined to form FAS (1987). NESF's (1994) recommendation for specialized local employment services in disadvantaged areas was implemented in 1995. These were brought under the jurisdiction of FAS in 2004.

recommended, in the context of high unemployment, that available for work requirements should not be strictly enforced but relaxed to allow unemployed people engage in education courses. It also reviewed the respective functions and links between the DSW and FAS and recommended continued institutional separation of functions but close co-operation between job placement and income support functions. This path dependency influences options for Irish workfare or compulsory work for welfare benefit. This section tracks the debate about conditionality from Job Search in 1987 to a period when the emphasis was on sensitive activation (1991-1996) to a period when the emphasis moved to 'supportive conditionality' or 'systematic engagement' (1997-2005) and a further period captured by the Developmental Welfare State (NESC 2005a) and DSFA 2006 proposals for a 'Job Seekers Allowance'. The section concludes by reflecting on what drove the increased momentum for change in 2006.

Job Search

While CSW (Ireland, 1986) deliberated about the institutional relationship between FAS and DSW a Department of Labour White Paper on Manpower Policy (1987) proposed a Direct Action Programme for the Long-Term Unemployed which would automatically target those over 12 months unemployed. This was consistent with the then EEC policy on activation and the emerging workfare programmes in other Anglo-Saxon States. Fine Gael Minister for Social Welfare, Gemma Hussey, visited the US in May 1986 to inspect workfare programmes and in September 1986 established a working party to develop a pilot 'Job Search' programme. Following a general election and change of government her replacement FF Minister, Dr Michael Woods, announced a national Job Search Programme in March 1987. Job Search involved a strong element of compulsion, failure to engage led to a review of welfare entitlement. Bond (1988/1999) described 'a massive compulsory interviewing process that is hard to justify in terms of benefit to the unemployed and is better understood as a control measure'. Bond (1988) claimed Job Search functioned as 'an instrument in the political management of unemployment', he reasoned Ministers had to be seen to 'be doing something about unemployment'. Job Search could be seen as a hardening of official attitude and the emergence of an increasingly punitive approach in the official treatment of the unemployed. The Minister may have had an ulterior motivation: a policy activist from that period recalled in an interview with the author that Minister Woods used Job Search in a politically strategic way. By being seen to 'control' the unemployed the Minister was in a stronger position to negotiate budgets to maintain the real incomes of the unemployed. This social construction shows an interesting use of rhetoric in Irish political discourse, talk hard and act soft, use the unemployed as a weapon to fight for the needs of

the unemployed

Sensitive Activation

This ambiguous approach to the plight of the unemployed is evident in broader discourse through the early 1990s. As the scale of Irish unemployment became evident policy makers wrestled with the plight of jobless economic growth. Employers practically resisted job search placing 'No Job Search' signs to warn unemployed people against knocking on their factory or shop door (INOU 1998). A policy consensus emerged that policy discussion about conditionality was premature, it was unreasonable to force claimants to seek work that was not available, unemployed people wanted jobs and would take them if only they were available. The DSW had no practical capacity to follow up on extensive control measures and informally relaxed conditions. The focus was on job creation, a Joint Oireachtas Committee on Employment (1992) discussed large-scale public works programmes and CMRS (1993, now CORI) argued for voluntary socially useful work to be available through public sector bodies. Some changes were introduced to enable people undertake voluntary work whilst in receipt of unemployment payments.

The combination of a concerned DSW, a centre-left government and strong ICTU leadership resulted in positive innovative policy and institutional changes (PESP, Ireland, 1991b). The DSW believed the unemployed would take up jobs in the Irish economy once they were supported to do so. Through all this a senior official described the DSW as 'flying by the seat of their pants' and credited the pragmatic Minister Michael Woods for negotiating, against conventional wisdom at the time, a series of 'home grown' pragmatic supportive policy changes. Through internal administrative changes resourced by savings from a declining live register, DSW established a Jobs Facilitation Unit where Jobs Facilitators used Back to Work Allowances to broker employment for unemployed claimants. Reforms to payment design focused on the simplification of means tests and tapering of income disregards, while service level changes focused on information strategies and welfare to work advice. These changes had a positive impact on material welfare and were less coercive and restrictive than in other countries. Around this time DOF established Revenue Assist, a tax measure to support the long-term unemployed, and the DETE introduced the Employment Incentive Scheme.

The NESF in the process of preparing its Report No 4 'Ending Long-Term Unemployment' deliberated on whether engagement in a Local Employment Service should be compulsory.

and recommended a voluntary service would be more effective. The INOU argued that people would take up 'reasonable' offers of employment (INOUE, 1996; 1997). The NESF (1995) welcomed the targeting of 18 and 19 year olds on the live register with a Youth Progression Programme but noted:

A serious concern is the compulsory element involved for young people who fail to register with FÁS / LES or to complete the progression programme will not face the threat of their Unemployment Assistance being withdrawn....we presented cogent reasons why participation in programmes should be on a voluntary basis (versus the introduction of compulsion) as it eliminates the need to provide a quality product, reduces the value of participation in employer's eyes, creates resistance from the unemployed and turns training into a form of punishment for being unemployed' (NESF,1995:22)

The DSW had initiated employment support services for unemployed people even though the statutory responsibility for employment services lay with the DETE and its statutory body FÁS. This caused considerable institutional tensions between the DSW and the DETE: one Minister described 'a seven year turf war' between the two bodies. One former Minister for Social Welfare reflected how 'the underlying attitude of the DETE to welfare was to see it as a hindrance; their agenda was to slash and burn, to reduce the level of welfare'. This negative relationship and institutional sensitivity may have deterred a common trend in other Anglo Saxon countries to merge Departments providing income supports and employment supports to make it more institutionally feasible to enforce harsher conditionality on claimants. Lack of institutional integration between these initiatives and between income support and employment placement services seems to be part of the story for the slow and inconsistent road to Irish activation. Indecon (2005) recommend greater institutional co-operation and data sharing. However there is little appetite for institutional reform, one senior DSFA official observed to the author 'organisations have a happy knack of preserving difference even after they are combined'.

Supportive Conditionality

When, in the early 1990s, job creation policy began to produce results, the policy challenge took on a different shape. Would the unemployed, over half of whom were very long-term unemployed, be able to or want to return to work? Given that Ireland already had legislative conditionality requirements reactivation of conditionality required no major legal or

structural change. Existing policies which required claimants to have active engagement with the labour market were gradually reactivated through case management strategies in local employment exchanges (DSFCA 2000b). These policy moves happened without any publicly visible policy process and were largely driven from within the Department. Claimant organisations did not actively dissuade the Department from these policies on the grounds that the DSW responses were reasonable and offered support and structure to the unemployed in their search for employment but did urge DSW to proactively ensure people were informed of their rights and obligations.

An alternative policy coalition (including PDs, elements of Fianna Fail, DETE and some employers' organisations) had stronger views about the desirability of conditionality. With the return of employment growth, employer's organisations led debate about a perceived need to enforce conditionality regulations with greater rigour. The debate was fuelled by a 1996 Labour Force Survey, which highlighted a technical discrepancy between the numbers of unemployed claimants and the numbers available for work (CSO 1996)¹⁰⁰. The controversy about this technical decision led into a hysterical and misleading debate about unemployment and fraud (Allen 1998). Public discourse, led by employer's organisations, argued that the unemployed should be 'activated'. Irish Small and Medium Employers Organisation (1996) looked for due emphasis on individual responsibility. The Director of the Central Bank questioned the unemployed and their motivation to work (Allen 1998). A considerable discussion of conditionality was evident in NESC (1996: 55) where IBEC negotiated the following statement in (P2000, Ireland 1997b: 18):

In the context of the focus on unemployment and exclusion, enhancement of the real value of payments to the unemployed is based on the reciprocal obligations of society to provide them with decent incomes and worthwhile support in job seeking for the unemployed and of the unemployed to seek and accept reasonable employment development and training opportunities.

This statement about reciprocal obligations was fiercely resisted by claimant organisations (INOUE, 1997) who feared it would lead to more punitive and conditional measures. The political battle being fought out between the unemployed and employers' organisations

¹⁰⁰ This debate was triggered by a decision from Eurostat (the EU Statistical Division) to move away from 'live register' unemployment measurement to Labour Force Survey measurement

reflected ideological attitudes to welfare. The debate was taken up in Dail Eireann where the Select Committee on Finance and General Affairs (Ireland 1996f) noted their concern that a significant number falsely claiming unemployment payments meant an ‘unduly negative picture of economic well being’ and recommended that DSW antifraud measures should be independently monitored by the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General. One policy maker in an interview with the author reflected on how the debate was a social construction.

Policy did not need to focus on conditionality, with unemployment going down like the clappers why would you bother trying to really tighten the screws on the unemployed

Systematic engagement

Since 1998 relations between the DSW and the DETE have developed through the institutional linkage required of them by the EU Open Method of Co-ordination which requires the development of a National Employment Action Plan (NEAP, DETE various)¹⁰¹. It is a feature of the many EU national governments to blame Brussels for unpopular reforms (Pierson, 1996). The procedural shifts in governance and policy making required of the OMC offered the opportunity to introduce a more proactive conditionality in Ireland and a different discourse about unemployment in social security policy debate. Unemployed organisations critiqued the NEAP’s dependence on ‘punitive policing approaches to unemployment, including a form of harder activation of the unemployed’ (O’Sullivan and Allen, 1999). An INOU (1998: 4) document attacked an attitude of ‘threatening and abusing people for not rushing into the first job that appears’. One interviewee commented in an interview with the author that

Perhaps Irish policy makers feel braver using European policy makers to do what they wouldn’t achieve through the Irish policy process

¹⁰¹ The NEAP sets the employment and labour market framework for the period ahead. The NEAP includes a preventive strategy under the requirements of EU Employment Guidelines, of engaging systematically with persons at an early stage of unemployment. By 2006 all unemployed claimants of all ages are required to voluntarily engage with FAS. Failure to do so could lead to payment review (see Chapter Four for further detail).

However, even under cover of the NEAP, Irish politicians and policy makers were still hesitant to venture into political debate about conditionality, only PD, Mary Harney, was prepared to publicly state that welfare should be cut (Irish Times 19/06/98). The combination of high economic growth, job creation and the type of rhetoric associated with 'systematic engagement' was sufficient to trigger substantial exit from the live register. While the formal evaluation (Murphy 2002: 116) concludes the preventative strategy had a profound effect, no evaluation has been able to isolate the specific impact of systematic engagement in a very fluid and buoyant labour market. FAS, happy with the present harmonious relationship with the unemployed, refused to cooperate in information sharing with the DSFA. Without resolving this institutional stalemate it was in fact difficult to progress to more meaningful forms of 'supportive' conditionality (Indecon 2005). Nonetheless the desired activation outcome has been achieved in terms of numbers exiting the live register and maintenance of low levels of unemployment. Murphy (2002: 116) notes the NEAP disciplined the policy world and achieved a level of co-operation between the Irish social welfare and labour market systems but notes the limited use of targets in the Irish strategy. She attributes this reluctance to 'the open nature of the Irish economy, the likelihood of unexpected external shocks impacting on the economy and labour market which would render such targets meaningless' (ibid 2002: 111). Once again globalisation requires a flexible approach unhindered by targets.

Job Seekers Allowance

Throughout the early 2000s a number of parallel policy processes debated policy relating to participation, activation and extension of conditionality. O'Connor A. (2005) argues that NESF (2000), Forum on the Future of the Workplace (2005), NAPS (Ireland 2002a) and NAPsincl (Ireland 2003a), NEAP Annual Reports (1998-2005) and the National Competitiveness Council (2003), all stressed the need for greater activation and mobilisation of the workforce. FAS (2003, 2004, 2005), noting how the rise in lone parent and disability payments was outstripping decreased unemployment identified activation as a key response to labour market shortages. DSFA strategy statements, annual reports and internal policy work (O'Connor A, 2005 and Bohan, 2005), lone parent and disability expenditure reviews (DSFCA 2000e, DSFA 2003b) all stressed participation and activation. Non-government organisations, the NWCI (Murphy 2003), INOU (1999b) and EAPN (2006) also debated and discussed the need for active social policy. EU employment guidelines promoted activation and OECD analysts Pearson (2003) and Grubb (2004) argued low Irish unemployment afforded a political opportunity to introduce more activation in the Irish labour market.

Grubb (2004) recommended restricting inflows into or introducing work requirements for lone parent and disability benefits. This debate reflects both international discourse (EU 2006) and discourse in other countries.

The NESC DWS (2005) reflects these social security and social policy agendas. NESC is not developing policy or new ideas, rather it is an ideational vehicle used to socially construct a narrative to justify a more productivist social security model. The narrative begins 'Ireland is being called by its economic success to accelerate the development of its social supports across their entire spectrum but in a manner that is aligned with the characteristics of the economy' (NESC 2005a 6). While NESC still uses the rhetorical, inconsistent and ambiguous language 'supportive conditionality' (NESF 1994, NESC 1999) and 'sensitive activation' (NESC 2003, 2005a) there are clearer signposts as to what such language might mean. NESC (2005a 173) calls for 'greater attention to be given to the conditions, supports and assumptions surrounding income transfers to people of working age'. NESC (2005a 179) suggests 'contact with the welfare system provokes the formulation of personal plans and forward movement'. Central to the concept is the development of a participation income for all working aged adults (NESC 2005a 204) where

Public authorities periodically review the extent to which recipients' best interests are being facilitated by the arrangements governing access to their income' (NESC 2005a 221).

Sweeney (2005) acknowledges that NESC (2005a) is an attempt to socially construct debate about reinventing Irish social policy. The analysis in NESC describes residualisation and high levels of benefit dependency. However these problems were not new and existed right through the 1990's. The fact that NESC now highlights them suggests a social construction of a problem. Strong neoliberal epistemic assumptions are asserted. They identify the problem 'social policy as a whole is not sufficiently aligned with the economic policies being pursued by the state'. NESC (2005a ix-xiii) signals the need to 'recast the debate' so social policy is 'capable of supporting our aspiration to be an inclusive society based on a high participation, high skilled and high performance economy'. NESC (2005a 1) makes clear that 'the social dividend of strong economic performance must however take forms that are supportive of the country's ongoing ability to trade advantageously in the world'.

economy'. This language not only reflects but is part of the process of making social policy subordinate to economic policy and valuing efficiency over equity.¹⁰²

NESC (2005a) is very clear that the DWS report is not a blueprint or roadmap for change. How will its ideas be used to formulate policy and what type of institutional changes are likely? In 2006 two policy initiatives were launched by DSFA, the first renames unemployment payments as 'job seekers' payments. Legislation may also introduce tighter conditionality alongside the name change (INOUE 2006). The second proposal DSFA 2006 is to abolish the One-Parent Family Payment and the concept of qualified adult and to replace these with a means tested parental allowance for those caring for children under the age of eight and means tested conditional job seekers allowance for those with children over the age of seven. If implemented, these proposals will bring Irish social security policy to a higher plateau of commodification. These policy changes were introduced outside social partnership structures but social partnership processes played an ideational role in creating a shared understanding about the desirability of such change.

This section concludes by discussing the momentum behind the Irish journey to a more commodified social security system. The journey began with a sensitive articulation of policy in the CSW (Ireland 1986) and moved to a more hostile rhetoric in the Job Search programme in 1987. The early 1990s was a story of more sensitive activation while over the last decade the tone has changed from supportive conditionality to systematic engagement and finally an emerging Anglo-Saxon model of Job Seekers Allowance.

In terms of outcomes or policy development, the real shift in policy has been subtle. Up to 1996 Irish policy, compared to the UK's New Deal policy or similar US, NZ or Australian policy, was less focused on conditionality or sanctions and more focused on financial and other supports back to employment. Post-1996 the NEAP brought more systematic engagement and the language changed to a more supportive conditionality. Up to 2006 Irish institutions treaded carefully regarding greater activation and invited international institutions to justify activation policy positions. There was very little momentum to Irish conditionality. One senior policy adviser interviewed by the author reflected:

¹⁰² The document does acknowledge that a society is more than its economy and that there are legitimate objectives for social policy independent of fostering productivity (NESC 2005a: xiv) but stresses how social policy should contribute to the economy.

I think we didn't go far enough, I think we didn't try to, its not that we did it badly or anything but we didn't move sufficiently in terms of trying to move people along. You need to be pushing a much more ambitious policy agenda.

Even though it was recognised that the social welfare system was dysfunctional in the way it worked to 'entrench the detachment of people from the world of work and undermine the work ethic' the concept of a punitive social welfare regime that would coerce the unemployed into the labour market or off the live register was never a serious political option (Boyle 2005:59). Even though there is a growing emphasis on 'desert' and a reconceptualisation of welfare in classical values (Powell, 1997:212) Irish policy makers shied away from harder measures and chose not to apply compulsion to those on lone parents or disability payments. Why was this?

In the early 1990s local social welfare service offices had a grounded relationship with local claimants. They empathised with their experience and understood that claimants did not need greater enforcement of conditionality to get back to work¹⁰³. The combination of a local service delivery structure, a small population and the fact that unemployment touched many families in areas with relatively high levels of social cohesion pushed policy towards a distinctively Irish style of implementing 'conditionality'. One civil servant quoted the old Irish proverb in an interview with the author:

It's a small country, we live in each others shadow, many workers would have been uncomfortable imposing conditionality or payment sanctions on people they knew.

The lack of an ambitious policy agenda can also be attributed to aspects of the political environment and, in particular, the veto culture of blame avoidance. Local clientalistic politicians are vulnerable to hostile reaction to a full-scale implementation of obligation-to-work policy. Because activation policy requires a significant change in behaviour its impact is easily observable and impossible to hide, fudge or obfuscate. In a majoritarian political

¹⁰³ Despite significant cross party antifraud rhetoric relatively high levels of informal economic activity was tolerated in the knowledge that low welfare payments required some form of financial top-up. Such informal work supported the structure of rural agricultural activity.

regime the government can decide to simply accept 'blame' and do without the votes of the claimant group experiencing conditionality. In the consensus regime with PRSTV the government has to anticipate the impact on vote transfers and so has a wider, more complex political risk to consider. Lijphard (1999:300) associated consensus governments with 'kind and gentle' policy. As one policy actor reflected in an interview with the author:

It would have been hard for the Irish political system to impose conditionality – I don't think our political system makes it easy for our government to do hard things; it's hard to radically restructure or create significant numbers of losers.

From 1997 the combination of labour market shortages and the window of opportunity offered by the NEAP have brought about a subtle change in rhetoric. However such change has not brought about a significant policy shift. Availability of labour through inward migration softened employers' attitudes, politicians feared the veto power of a strong and well organized unemployed organisation, the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed. Civil service remained institutionally divided and less effective because of an 'institutional turf war' between the DSFA and DETE.

Why then in 2006 did a radical shift occur in the shape of DSFA (2006) proposals? What caused this radical departure from a more incremental and secretive style of policy making? At least two things had changed. A populist Fianna Fáil, in particular, treated social security policy as an income transfer policy and had little analysis of the relationship between economic and social policy. In a blame avoidance political culture it allocated the DSFA as a junior ministry to new inexperienced Ministers who were encouraged to play safe and focus on efficient delivery. However in a cabinet reshuffle Taoiseach Bertie Ahern was compromised into allocating the social security ministry to an ambitious and experienced politician, Seamus Brennan, who quickly made Cabinet colleagues anxious by resolving to implement ambitious reforms. A second consideration in moving forward proposals for a job seeker allowance was that Minister Brennan faced a considerably weakened community and voluntary sector and could move forward without strong vetoes. Previously the INOU was seen as an effective veto on such change. As one public servant observed in an interview with the author:

They had a good effective representative organisation in the INOU, the most well organised and vocal unemployed movement in Europe. The very presence

of the INOU meant that the trade union movement also had to be seen to be protecting the interests of unemployed workers.

In 2006 the INOU was no longer considered a formidable veto player. They engaged in a consultation process with Minister Brennan and informally and formally signalled consensus with both the NESC DWS and DSFA proposals for a Job Seekers Allowance. Indeed, instead of fighting such reforms, the INOU actually suggested the name change to DSFA. Brennan's carefully constructed engagement with lone parent groups is evidence that they still have veto power over his proposals and that he will not succeed without their approval.

8.5 Rationale for decision making and constraints on decision making

What changed about Irish governance that enabled Irish social security policy to shift to a more productivist discourse? What impact does a more complex, fragmented and multilevel governance have on policy development? This section identifies whether sources of pressure and initiatives for policy change originate from individual policy actors or policy coalitions. It reflects on the nature of discourse and how change is socially constructed and where international discourse influences the nature or type of Irish discourse. It reviews how governance and decision making shifted over this time and concludes change is carefully managed through political rhetoric.

Policy Coalitions as sources of initiative?

It is possible to see trends in policy coalitions. However these should not be overstated. The individual orientation of the civil servant or social partner can be an important factor in determining the organisations tactical position. But above all it can be seen that politics matter. The period began with a Fine Gael centre-right political agenda influenced by the US workfare approach and shifted to a more populist agenda under Fianna Fáil. From 1992 to 1996 a time of little job growth, social democratic and EU social policy agenda marked a period of 'sensitive activation'. From 1992 to 1997 a combination of the DSFA and a sympathetic left-of-centre government and strong community and voluntary sector leadership supported a pragmatic and offensive approach to conditionality. Post 1996 and in a time of job growth a more active EU social policy coincided with a right-of-centre government and a shift to more 'supportive conditionality' and under EU guidance to 'systematic engagement' under the NEAP. In 1999 CORI lobbied for a long-term strategic review and won a PPF (Ireland 2000b) commitment to develop a ten year strategic review of

the social welfare and tax systems. The end result, the Developmental Welfare State, was an ideational vehicle for a more commodified social security policy or welfare state. A FF neoliberal Minister, Seamus Brennan, oversaw the relatively radical proposals concerning extending conditionality to women with childcare responsibilities in 2006. The DSFA, DOT, CVP, ICTU, IFA and ESRI can all be loosely identified as a part of a 'social democratic coalition' more likely to support increases in social welfare rates and offensive activation policy. IBEC, the DETE and the DOF are often grouped together in minority reports seem more likely to promote competitiveness at the expense of social inclusion related objectives. The size of any policy coalition does not reflect power. Some policy coalitions are characterised by 'voice without influence' (Lister, 2005) while others, especially the DOF and IBEC have influence without necessarily having to use voice (Hardiman 1998).

Sources of pressure for change

Cousins (2005a) argued there was in fact little pressure on social security over the last two decades. Economic growth alleviated some of the pressures felt in other countries experiencing slower growth. The combination of Irish political culture and weak policy community meant little drive for change. However various actors did act as pressures or drivers for change. CORI, for example, stood out in the drive for a focus on relative income poverty and income adequacy. The CPA was behind the drives to develop a Child Poverty Advocacy Coalition to make child poverty a political priority (WRC, 2001). The INOU stood out for influencing delivery issues and defensively protecting the interests of the unemployed in an increasingly hostile environment. The NWCI stood out in (largely unsuccessfully) efforts to promote gender equality issues. Ability to influence agenda setting should not however be confused with ability to influence the end policy. IBEC who did little to agenda set perhaps exerted most pressure by vetoing change.

Discursive Construction of Policy Discourse

Torring (1999: 5) identified the process of the political mediation of policy as the key variable in determining whether the style and content of a country's welfare / workfare policy is offensive or defensive and stressed the need to examine the construction of policy discourse. The three largest policy initiatives reviewed in this chapter (Integration Report Ireland 1996a, Benchmarking Report Ireland 2001b) and NESC (2005a) were all left-of-centre initiatives which were subsequently controlled by either civil servants or policy elites and pushed in a neoliberal epistemic policy direction. There is significant evidence of the

social construction of problems. The discourse is distinctly Irish and rhetoric appears to play a very important role. Minister Woods used rhetoric associated with Job Search to argue for maintenance of the real value of social welfare payments. The OECD jobs study was used in Ireland to politically construct a problem of work incentives that in reality only impacted on a small number in the labour force. The NESF discourse on compulsion did not reflect the rights and responsibilities discourse of the US and the UK but a practical pragmatic engagement with the issue of compulsion and an attempt to forge a consensus path towards 'sensitive activation'. Controversy about measuring unemployment and labour shortages occasioned reconstruction of discourse towards a more hostile but still ambiguous rhetoric towards the unemployed. This led to a shift in policy and language symbolised by the phrase 'supportive conditionality' (NESC: 1996). Rhetoric associated with 'systematic engagement' in the NEAP played some part in live register exit and the related increase in the number of working poor. The NESC Developmental Welfare State was a clear attempt to 'reinvent' Irish social policy and create urgency around a problem that is still not necessarily seen as a political problem. In the latest shift the move to ensure greater labour market attachment of lone parents and women in the home has been carefully packaged as 'enlightened' social policy (DSFA 2006).

International Influence

International influences have direct and indirect impact. Different domestic policy coalitions look in different international directions for policy influence. International influence seems selectively determined by key policy actors. In interviews both politicians and civil servants tended to claim in the earlier part of the period examined that they were not influenced by Europe but that the influence was the other way around, with Irish changes promoted as best practice in international policy forums. The international political economy context for social security policy is referred to throughout all major policy reports. Sources of initiatives for activation and conditionality policy ebb and flow with economic conditions. A strong neoliberal policy monopoly supported by EU and OECD policy discourse rests alongside a weaker policy discourse (aided by OMC NAPsincl and UN international rights discourse). The OECD Jobs Study had a clear influence on the Integration Group and some initiatives and drive for change probably came from EU discourse (the Green Paper on Social Policy and the Delors White Paper). EMU and the Stability Pact are important indirect influences on policy debate. A more direct influence was the impact of the Essen Employment Strategy and OMC through NEAPs. This clearly influenced the pace and type of development of policies relating to activation and conditionality in Ireland. The future development of

poverty indicators through the NAPs incl OMC makes it likely that Ireland will have to accept targets in relation to persistent and relative income inequalities

It is also clear that this productivist development model is framed in the context of the LISBON agenda and its preoccupation with, or at least a steady focus on, maintaining high employment growth NESDO's struggling at a conceptual and analytical level to understand the interconnectedness of economic growth and social protection in the light of the transformation of the economy into knowledge-based innovative flexible and adaptable society mirrors EU shifts in language and the 2005 Hampton Court meetings (McCarthy 2006) Such thinking also reflects the EU Minimum Income Recommendation (EU 2006) The NAPS analysis reflected Danish and Dutch policy transfer and Nordic models and Minister Brennan cited Swedish models as an influence on his 2006 reform proposals The most obvious influence however was clearly the UK as is evidenced by adoption of the 'job seekers' language in 2006 some ten years after it was first used in the UK Mainly English speaking liberal regimes (Australia, US and UK) as well as Netherlands are referenced in the DSFA 2006 proposals However citation of international policy examples is more a case of selective amplification, international examples are cited not to learn from but because they support a particular policy agenda This is consistent with the mantra that responses to globalisation have to be found in domestic institutions (McCarthy 2006)

Governance

Governance has changed substantially since the starting point of this overview of social security policy The 1986 CSW process was a once-off group of government-appointed experts with no civil servants, no social partners or politicians A significant amount of social security policy is now developed in the Social Partnership arena, this reflected the evolving ideational role of Social Partnership institutions which have evolved a consensus role developing a social security reform consensus This meant a shift in power away from certain government agencies and towards others The CPA, for example, was represented on the Integration Report but not on the Benchmarking Group or other social partnership processes

The emphasis has always been on elitist forms of coordinative governance However these have shifted, from civil service led processes to Social Partnership led processes Institutions and processes like NESF and NAPs were used to develop this policy in a slightly more communicative form of policy making than usual However these decreased in importance as

NESC's coordinative style of policy making assumed a more strategic role and as NESCs own internal governance has also changed Within social partnership, the shift has been, with establishment of NESDO, to a more elite secretariat or professional staff influenced processes Breathnach (2005) described professionalisation of social partnership where power and functions evolve to the technical policy elite

The 2005a NESC DWS report was produced by a policy elite (the secretariat staff of the NESC) and considered and debated only by the membership of the NESC comprising social partners, civil servants and experts The NESC secretariat (male civil servants) were the key authors Most social partners with little direct expertise ensured their specific narrow interests were protected or developed The lack of analysis about gender or race related social security reflects the totally inadequate representation of women and ethnic minority groups in NESC and in the social partnership Pillars It also suggests that governance tools to increase equality outcomes such as gender proofing and equality processes were not used (Callan 2004, McGauran 2005) Direct participation from political actors was limited to communication through the secretary generals of key Departments There was little evidence of any form of communicative discourse

Decision Makers

Within the policy community the DOF influence can be seen in many ways including the overall political culture of cautious approaches to public expenditure, to its direct drafting of papers in the Integration Report, its vetoing of benchmarks for working aged and pension payments and its strong pressure on Ministers to produce direct current expenditure cuts The analysis of the role of the DOT in the income adequacy debate in the Benchmarking Report (Ireland, 2001b), the process of reviewing NAPS and the DSFA proposals provides evidence that the DOT is an important policy actor in any policy coalition and is perhaps the only policy actor with sufficient influence to counteract the DOF Civil servants, even though they drive key policy processes, must revert back to political masters No key decisions were taken by the Integration Group but their analysis clearly influenced discussion at TSG meetings which, in turn, reflected the political priority afforded to issues and eventual political decisions made about child income support and tax reform In the Benchmarking process the DOT with the full authority of the Taoiseach could override the DOF and press for an income adequacy target, albeit one couched in considerable ambiguity

Table 8 illustrates that when it comes to making policy decisions, as seen in the previous

Chapter, the more powerful social partner secretariat and the social partners were not in the governance loop. The radical DSFA 2006 proposals were for example channelled through a senior officials committee of the Department of Finance, an Taoiseach and Social and Family Affairs, and a Cabinet Social Inclusion Sub-Committee. Consultation about these proposals is being processed in wider communicative fora than social partnership. This suggests in governance terms that, no matter what consensus exists in the policy community about the desirability of a particular policy proposal, politicians are more wary of the veto that comes from pluralist lobbying groups and their influence on the electorate than about appeasing Social Partners. This confirms that the political system is making decisions. The NESC DWS recommendation that social assistance payments be transformed into a more conditional participation income will require a strong and ambitious Minister to take on controversial reform in the Irish electoral system.

8.6 Conclusion

As Cerny et al., (2005) expected there have been significant changes in governance as the welfare state changed to the competition state, the role of Social Partnership has evolved and the policy community is more fragmented and complex. The political system retains a prime decision-making role and short-term political considerations rather than policy analysis dominate decision-making. While space between domestic and international institutions has fused the domestic policy agenda remains dominant and civil servants and politicians tend to selectively amplify the international policy advice they wish to promote at domestic level (Smith 2005). The EU OMC required more systematic linkage between FAS and the DSFA than had been possible to otherwise create. Ideological debate has not played a large role in the 'pragmatic' evolution of Irish social security discourse but rhetoric is used in political debate and within shared understandings to reinforce the inevitability of a competition driven state which is strongly associated with neo-liberal ideological values and policy. The approach can be summed up in the comment of a senior official who explained in an interview with the author that

The system is too soft and that it needed hardening up, but that the hardening needed to be done in a soft way

As hypothesised in Chapter Five the consensus-driven, blame-avoidance, no-losers political culture appears to be the dominant force behind the slow pace and muted type of change to the Irish social security regime (Swank 2002)

Table 8 1 Influences on key policy decisions

Indicators	EWGITSW	NEAP	BIWG	NESC DSW
Policy problem	Perceptions about disincentives undermine competitiveness Work incentives	Perceived lack of activation of the unemployed	Needs of competitiveness versus high relative poverty	High benefit dependency, inequality
Source of the problem	Socially constructed argument	Socially constructed argument Labour shortages and analysis of statistical data	Policy coalitions win political argument Rates lagging behind growth	Politically constructed debate Need to further subordinate social policy to competition state
Source initiative	Joan Burton Minister of State, Labour Party	EU and DETE but resisted by FAS	CVP but taken over by the DOF	CORI but taken over by the NESC
Membership	Expert, trade union chaired	Civil service	Social partners	Social partners and key civil servants
Policy coalitions	FF / Labour	DETE / Employers / DSFA, INOU / unions	DOF / DETE / IBEC, CVP, Farmers, ICTU DSFA / DOT	Within NESC, CVP and academic vs IBEC and civil service
Key documents	OECD Jobs Study, DOF and DETE briefing papers	Essen Employment Strategy, Labour Force Survey	ESRI	Academic sourced Dutch and Danish influence
Key proposals	FIS, Tax reform towards lower paid, child income support reform	More decisive definition of systematic engagement	Keep welfare payments low to ensure work incentives and competitiveness	Flexicurity Participation Income Greater conditionality

Indicators	EWGITSW	NEAP	BIWG	NESC DSW
International influences	OECD Jobs Study, Delors EU White Paper	OMC, OECD	None, some UK and academic work ignored	EU social models Danish policy Academic sourced
SP	No direct link but personnel overlap	EU requirement social partners participation DETE resisted	Full participation but no say in final conclusion	Full participation but nature of process difficult, implementation unclear
Discourse	Technical economic driven episteme	Technical coordinative – some emotive fraud discourse	Technical RRs and refusal to consult and widen discourse	Mixed discourse Conceptual mixed with factual – clear epistemological position
Outcomes	FIS reform, tax policy, CDA reform	Systematic engagement and shift in resources to short term unemployed	NAPS income adequacy target No relative poverty target	Clear consensus No implementation process but likely to open door to conditionality
Decisive Factors	DOF led drafting process, epistemological starting point	EU support, PD Minister policy position	DOF, Role of DOT, Contact with FF	Stand alone review Costing a major obstacle of implementation
Pressure	IBEC, DETE, OECD	IBEC, DETE, OECD	CVP, DSFA	CORI, Policy Elite

Indicators	Child Dependant Allowances	Child Benefit	Women	Cutbacks
Policy problem	Perceptions about disincentives	Child Poverty, Childcare	Equality, LM shortages	Fiscal pressure. Work Incentives
Source of the problem	OECD Jobs Study. Socially constructed	C+ V campaigning, Social Partners	Employer feedback. C+V campaigning – Sign On campaign	EMU, Global Recession
Source of initiative	NESC, Gradual approach speeded up by DL	CPA, NWCI	NWCI	Finance
Membership	Expert, trade union chaired	NESC	Social partners	Key civil servants
Policy coalitions	Social partners and politicians for, C+V against	DETE / Employers / unions; C+V / DSFA; Women in the Home	C+V internally divided, C+V and unions divided	40 strong group including unions
Key documents	OECD Jobs Study; Finance briefing papers	ESRI	ESRI	C+V press statements

Indicators	Child Dependant Allowances	Child Benefit	Women	Cutbacks
Key proposals	FIS, tax reform towards lower paid, child income support reform	Targeted tax relief vs universal support	Extending access and individualisation	Restoring the most penury of cutbacks
International influences	OECD Jobs Study, Delors EU White Paper	International comparisons with Nordic States	International comparisons with Nordic States	EMU, Global economy
Social partnership	NESC analysis ignored	NESC recommendations ignored	Social partnership working groups	None
Discourse	Technical economic driven episteme	More communicative some emotive fraud discourse	Technical – path dependence of social security rules against	Open campaigning
Outcomes	CDA frozen for ten years	Ambiguous function of Child Benefit	Little change	Significant restoration McCreedy blamed
Decisive Factors	Political consensus Hit poorest CB could compensate	Women in the Home electoral considerations Patriarchy	Male civil service No consensus Male claimants as losers	Public reaction – electoral considerations

It should be widely realised that there are people in high positions in the state who are convinced that an expansive social policy is a danger to economic development Kiam-Caudle (1967 104)

CHAPTER NINE

DOMESTIC CONSTRAINTS ON CHOICE IN COMPETITION STATES

9 1 Introduction

As outlined in Chapter One, this research aimed to analyse what happened Irish social security policy over the two decades 1986-2006, to understand how such policy was mediated and the rationale for particular policy changes In particular the research aimed to elucidate two key variables, how reform has been domestically managed and how the international political economy influences Irish social security reform The objectives were to understand

- what changed in relation to Irish social security policy,
- the domestic and international process through which change was mediated
- the domestic and international rationale for the specific Irish change trajectory

The thesis had a central puzzle Why, given the national stress on competitiveness, the economic potential of the Irish social security system remains underdeveloped and why Irish social security has been slower to adapt to global competitive demands than both other liberal regimes and other small open economies The thesis argued that, given Ireland's status as one of the world's most globalised nations and the emphasis on competitiveness in national policy discourse, a competition state theoretical framework (Cerny et al , 2005) was most suited to examine the experience of Irish social security policy reform The examination, however, found that recent Irish social security reform, while consistent with many characteristics identified by Competition State theory, did not fully conform to what might be expected in a Competition state Our central research question sought to understand why this might be the case and to understand, in the Irish context, how domestic constraints limit policy choices even in highly globalised competition states The research objectives were operationalised by examining the key themes summarised in Table 9 1

Table 9.1 Summary of key questions examined in the thesis

Hypotheses	Indicators
Whay happened	Recommodification
Regulation	State as regulator; Privatisation; New Public Management – customer focus
Retrenchment	Cost cutting; Cost containment; Cost avoidance (failure to expand or to meet new risks)
Residualisation	Targeted payments; Increased relative poverty; Non labour-market participants are poorer
Activation / Conditionality	Active Spending; Conditionality; Activation of lone-parents and/or disability claimants
Defamiliarisation	Individualisation; Women’s Access to Education and Training; Market provision of childcare.
How policy is mediated	Transforming governance
Iron Triangle to Golden Pentagon	Presence of international policy elite; Multilevel governance
Fragmented and Complex	More actors; More institutional spaces
Power shifts to capital	Shifts in power between institutions; Regulation
Rationale for why changes happened	Conservative consensus policy community
Conservative values	The PR electoral system; Catholic Church values; Patriarchal power structures
Weak policy community	Under resourced policy community; Role of social partnership,; Civil society role underdeveloped
Lack of policy discourse	Coordinative problem-solving discourse; Pragmatic rejection of ideological input; Insular and dominated by EU discourse

The next section of this Chapter reflects on this analysis and reminds the reader of key conclusions from Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6. Remaining sections conclude the analysis of the case studies in Chapters 7 and 8 in order to achieve the final thesis objective of understanding the causal factors driving Irish social security policy. Sections three, four and five sketch separately and examine the causal influence of Irish institutions, political parties and ideas. Section Six takes the analysis a step further by examining how these institutions, actors and ideas related and interacted within the policy community over the last two decades. Section Seven offers some final reflections on how the thesis has contributed to societal knowledge and learning.

9.2 Overview of thesis

The literature review in Chapter Two offered theoretical concepts from which were derived

the thesis theoretical framework, methodology and methods. The thesis is founded on a theoretical assumption that globalisation is a transformative agent. The relationship between globalisation and transforming governance is a key concern of Competition State theory. The thesis hypothesised that Irish inconsistencies in a competition state-style social security system can be explained by the national factors that influence how such policy is politically mediated.

Chapter Four investigated what happened to Irish social security and confirmed the original suspicion that, while Irish social security reform was broadly consistent with competition state hypotheses, key important characteristics were less consistent. The chapter forwarded substantial evidence of movement from a redistributive welfare state to a productivist reordering of social policy to meet economic needs. The development of Irish social security is characterised by new regulations including privatisation of pensions and new public management-inspired changes in social security delivery. There is scant evidence of significant retrenchment but substantial evidence (consistent with other countries) of avoiding indexation policy to contain ongoing cost and avoiding new costs by ignoring emerging social needs including care needs and migrants. With no change in high reliance on means testing or residualisation, there is evidence of significant and growing inequality and a shift in the risk of poverty towards the non labour market poor. There is recommodification in the form of increased use of activation and conditionality of unemployed claimants. However given significant demand for Irish labour there is less focus on welfare-to-work strategies than might have been expected. Specifically there has been little progress relating to women's access to employment, less upgrading of income disregards and tackling of unemployment traps, less conditionality and less extension of conditionality to groups outside the formal live register, than one might expect. Sweeney and O'Donnell (2003: 33) conclude that 'despite the emphasis on employment the Irish welfare system does not reflect this (employment) perspective'. In seeking to understand why elements of Irish change contain features somewhat uncharacteristic of a Competition State, the thesis observed that path dependence has some explanatory power. The high number of contingency payments inherited from the past makes restructuring quite complex, limits the scope and pace of social security reform options and enables those resisting reform to hide behind the complexity of the reform. Change is rendered less urgent because the Irish social security system is 'lean and mean' and its employment orientation already broadly consistent with a liberal market economy.

Chapters Five and Six traced a transforming system of governance and identified how domestic institutions become more complex and fragmented, power shifting to business, more multilevel governance and the emergence of a new transnational policy elite. While there is some evidence of Cerny's (2002a) expectation of multi-level governance and an emerging policy elite, the analysis of the domestic policy community in Chapter Five concluded that the Irish domestic social security policy community remains relatively insular. It is dominated by a domestic political culture of multiple veto points, consensus politics, problem solving and pragmatic co-coordinative policy discourse. This leads to a limited and conservative menu of policy options. Tselblis (2002) and Lijphart (1999) highlight the difference between these Irish consensus institutional features and those found in majoritarian liberal welfare regimes (UK, US, NZ, Canada and Australia). None of the other liberal regimes have this combination of PR electoral system, coalition government or corporatist governance. This institutional combination is a strong causal factor accounting for Irish path departure from the stronger activation models found in Anglo-Saxon or liberal welfare regimes. At the same time the type of low tax constraints associated with neo liberal economic models and the lack of commitment to the core value of equality differentiates Ireland from other consensus oriented regimes that place a higher premium on equality outcomes and achieve a greater equilibrium between social and economic objectives (NL and Nordic countries). We return to these domestic features in later sections of this Chapter.

Chapter Six concluded that economic and political aspects of the international political economy do impact on Irish social security. The economic impact of globalisation played a key role in shaping the development of Irish social security policy and had both positive and negative impacts. Positive impacts include how Irish interaction with the world economy produced such high levels of job growth enabling social security expenditure to reduce as a percentage of GDP / GNP without significant recourse to cutbacks and retrenchment and reducing pressure on social security expenditure. It is unlikely the ratio of social security expenditure to GNP or GDP would have declined to the degree it did without such strong economic growth. Negatively, the relationship between Irish social security change and macro-economic structural outcomes is filtered through the Irish policy of low taxation. The potential revenue capacity of high economic growth was never fully realized resulting in what Alder and Standing (2000) describe as 'arrested development'. The level of Irish social security expenditure is inconsistent with countries with comparable levels of economic growth or per capita income (NESC 200a, 113) and competitive pressure to reduce PRSI rates meant loss of capacity to expand or improve PRSI benefits. The policy focus on

economic and industrial policy, foreign direct investment and job creation meant over focus on economic growth as a solution to social problems. Shared understanding only applied to social policy problems that that could be solved by job creation or access to employment. The national discourse about globalisation was socially constructed so that policy choices like low taxation were understood as economic inevitabilities and alternative policy choices were unavailable to Irish policy makers. Incompatible policy alternatives including national targets to reduce income inequality were rejected. An 'if it's not broke, don't fix it' approach towards social security policy meant substantial reforms of a male bread winner social security system were not entertained. Economic growth fixed unemployment, other pathologies including high levels of inequality, child poverty and low levels of employment participation were not on the policy agenda.

How did international political institutions influence this domestic political debate? Did they reinforce the dominant policy episteme or offer policy alternatives? Political globalisation refers to the direct and indirect impact of international political institutions on domestic social security change. Chapter Five concluded that international political institutions, while a potentially strong influence on the social construction of change, are still only an emerging influence. The domestic policy community remains heavily focused on delivery and implementation issues and somewhat 'oblivious' to international discourse. Attempts to strengthen the domestic policy community capacity to interact with the international policy community (opening of a Brussels desk by the Department of Social Welfare, engagement with the EU Open Method of Coordination processes and establishing the Office for Social Inclusion) have however enabled a new trans-national policy elite to emerge in Ireland. These policy entrepreneurs transfer and diffuse international policy discourse to a more complex and fragmented domestic policy community. However the degree to which EU and other international institutions' policy agendas are brought into domestic political discourse depends to a large degree on the strategies and tactics of domestic political actors and whether they chose to selectively amplify particular policy arguments made by international institutions. Different domestic policy actors choose different international sources of influence. They make conscious choices about whether to develop policy coalitions with international actors or whether to selectively amplify the policy agenda of particular international institutions. This is especially the case in relation to rights approaches and gender related policy where traditional patriarchal cultures seem to screen out gender related learning.

Where key power holders look to for international ideas plays a role in the social construction of Irish social security policy. The cultural familiarity with other English-speaking countries (especially the UK) remains a key factor in determining where people look towards for policy inspiration. Non-ideological populist parties remain more insular and less likely to look towards international policy debates. Neo-liberal parties turn towards more market-led practices, the OECD, IMF and US policy. Irish social democratic political parties and trade unions are more likely to focus on social democratic practice elsewhere and / or EU dialogue. This differentiates Irish social democrats from their counterparts in the UK who looked more readily to the US (albeit US influence is mediated through the UK and a social security network of six English speaking countries). The chapter concludes that Irish policy makers are becoming more exposed to international discourse and that given the increased use of Open Method of Co-ordination they are more increasingly likely to be exposed to a social market EU than neo-liberal discourse. However who is in power domestically is a key factor determining which international ideas will be relevant.

9.3 Rationales for policy changes?

In Chapters Seven and Eight the thesis analysed case studies of political mediation and the social construction of social security policies¹⁰⁴. By further reflecting and analysing these experiences the thesis now seeks to elaborate how institutions, political interests and policy discourse matter in the domestic mediation of policy. The question is not which of the three variables (institutions, political interests and discourse) offer the most powerful explanation but how the interaction of the three variables might account for 'Irish style commodification'. First each of the three variables are examined in turn.

¹⁰⁴ Chapter Seven examined Child Income Support, Gender, Cutbacks and Irish Social Partnership, Chapter Eight reviewed the Expert Working Groups on Integration of Tax and Social Welfare, the P2000 Working Group on Benchmarking and Indexation and various stages of policy mediation concerning activation and conditionality including Job Search, the NESF Report No 4 Ending Long Term Unemployment, the National Employment Action Plan and the NESC Developmental Welfare State.

9.4 Institutions matter

Irish institutions matter most in the way they limit potential policy choices rather than determining which one is actually chosen. This is not unusual (Burton, 2001: 213), but Irish institutional vetoes, in particular the proportional representational electoral system, have a particularly strong limiting impact. There are four key ways that institutions limit policy choices, the key values of institutions, the stress of consensus, insularity and key personality traits of government departments.

How core values influence key actors within the state is an important starting point in understanding how Irish culture relates to social security policy. In particular the conservative approach to policy explains the slow and cautious pace of social security change. Cousins (2005a) highlights how polls show significantly more Irish support for a welfare state than support found in other liberal regimes and other small open economies. However high levels of inequality are tolerated in a state dominated by a form of Catholic social teaching which focused, in the early years of the state, on more absolutist forms of poverty reduction and charity (Acheson et al 2004, McMahon 1987, McLaughlin 2002). As discussed in Chapter Two addressing equality has never been a core objective of Irish social security policy. This leads to political acceptance of a 'solidarity without equality' (O'Riain and O'Connell 2000: 39). The impact of a shift to more individual values associated with neo-liberalism is likely to have further eroded societal support for equality. The patriarchal nature of the state explains its marked ambivalence to women's employment and this is reinforced by unequal gender participation in decision-making matters.

Shifts in governance have tended to reinforce the high number of vetoes and consensus politics. The electoral system and non-ideological political party division produced a conservative and consensus driven policy culture, which operates within a 'no losers' policy blame-avoidance framework. The significant number of Irish veto points steadily increased when coalition government and social partnership became a permanent feature of Irish political life. These vetoes cause Irish policy 'paralysis' and limit policy choices to a

restricted policy menu¹⁰⁵ The institutional role of social partnership has developed beyond co-ordination of national wage policy towards a more ideational role promoting a particular model of development Social partners are used by the state as an institutional ‘litmus test’ for consensus¹⁰⁶

Interaction with the international political economy is mediated through Irish political culture While international institutions have become more relevant the domestic policy agenda remains dominant Both civil servants and politicians selectively amplify international policy advice they wish to promote at domestic level The EU Open Method of Co-ordination promoted more systematic linkage between FAS and DSFA and a more pronounced form of activation and employment-focused regime than had been previously possible to create There is evidence of an emerging professional and technical social security policy elite or entrepreneur who transfers policy to and from this international policy community

Different Departmental values influence policy outcomes as does the drive and influence of particular civil servants Relations with the Department of Finance dominate all Departments’ policy agendas The Department of Finance aversion to expenditure is both practical and ideological and was reinforced by the 1980s fiscal crisis and international discourse relating to EMU and the Stability and Growth Pact This financial conservatism is a major obstacle not only to new policy requiring additional expenditure but also to more general policy innovation involving no additional expenditure (Lee, 1989, Kiam-Caudle, 1967) The lack of policy resources and weak policy capacity of DSFA is a key explanatory variable for the time lag and slow pace of Irish social security policy development In DSFA the brokerage political culture reinforces an emphasis on payment delivery and controls, and a lack of capacity regarding activation policy This was reinforced by significant

¹⁰⁵ This is borne out in the words of a policy actor interviewed by the author who contended that ‘consensus is really a fudge, the political system has a fair gravitation to fudge, there is a significant bloc against change, I’m not convinced that bad times would have brought more changes, the system wouldn’t allow it We never seemed to take on those sharper edges like the US and UK ’

¹⁰⁶ The contrast between the elitist ‘expert’ process leading to the 1986 CSW report and the ‘elitist’ social partnership led process leading to the 2005 NESC DWS illuminates how governance changed over that time and shifted towards social partnership and away from certain government agencies

administrative challenges and failures during the 1980s. Where DSFA is exposed to international policy discourse it focuses on policy implementation at the expense of policy analysis. The institutional relationship between the key government Departments (DSFA, DETE and DES) impedes innovative policy development. In particular the historical institutional separation of job placement in FÁS from income supports in DSFA impedes more ambitious implementation of activation and conditionality.

This section concludes that institutions matter. The figuration of the domestic community has a significant impact on the range of possible policies open to Irish social security policy in that it limits 'radical' policy choices and confines policy choices to apparent 'no loser' options. Any significant change is therefore costly and takes a considerable amount of time to incrementally achieve. The institutional complexity of the Irish social security policy community is evolving over time. There are more complex and fragmented institutional relationships and interaction with international institutions is becoming more influential. This transforming governance also involves shifts in institutional power and policy functions. Within the civil service power is shifting from Departmental based civil servants towards a newly emerging policy elite. The next section examines power and whether politics matters.

9.5 Politics matters

Even though Irish social security does not have the power to infuse the Irish electorate to the degree that pensions issues, for example, infuse the French electorate¹⁰⁷, Irish politicians are careful to avoid blame associated with social security changes that incur losers. Fianna Fáil, being the most populist, is more cautious than other parties about negative changes, more likely to engage in short term electoral budget cycles and less likely to have a planned approach to policy. Political parties are not the only form of political or interest group representation. Murphy (2002) identifies three coexisting principal patterns of organised interests, pluralism, corporatism and elitism. This section reflects on such interests and examines whether political parties or corporatist, pluralist or elitist forms of power have explanatory potential to account for the style of Irish social security reform.

¹⁰⁷ One policy maker observed in an interview with the author: 'You would never have people out on the street for Child Benefit like you had on the tax marches, you could fiddle and tweak with pensions as much as you would want and no one would notice'.

Party Politics

The period can be divided into three political periods 1987-1992, 1992-1997 and 1997-2002. It matters that Fianna Fail held the social security ministry for 18 of the 20 years under consideration. The stop-start nature of Irish activation strategies (programmes are often based on pilots and experience periodic retrenchment) can be explained by inconsistent policy across these stages. This suggests variations in political commitment to a fully developed welfare-to-work strategy and different degrees of emphasis on the degree to which policy should be offensive and supportive and defensive and punitive. From 1987-1992 centre or centre-right governments held power. In this period of fiscal rectitude Fianna Fail government had little social security ambition but understood the political expediency of protecting the incomes of the poorest. They readily accepted the consensus and expert analysis of the Labour Party initiated CSW (Ireland 1986) and gained consensus of social partners in the Programme for National Recovery (Ireland 1997a) to maintain the real value of social security.

In the second period, 1992-1997, a centre-left coalition¹⁰⁸ government engaged with social democratic EU and UN dialogue in a reforming period marked by more ambitious policy processes including the Tax Strategy Group, the Expert Working Group on Integration of Tax and Social Welfare and a National Anti Poverty Strategy (NAPS). Labour's influence in government increased the pace and volume of policy debate about reform, but resources for reform were limited. From 1994 to 1997 a non Fianna Fail Minister from a small left wing Democratic Left Party, Minister de Rossa, held the social security welfare ministry. He appeared more willing to expose his party to electoral risk and was more ideologically orientated towards gender reform and a more rigorous but offensive activation model. Actively engaging with the international policy community the socialist Minister looked to the EU social model and launched NAPS under the auspices of the UN Summit on Social Development in 1995.

From 1997 – 2005 a centre-right government engaged with a more neo-liberal OECD-inspired rhetoric. The availability of resources and institutional capacity was not matched with political ambition for social security reform. The period was a missed opportunity characterised by active resistance by the DOF to developing anti-poverty and income

¹⁰⁸ A Rainbow Coalition of Labour, Fine Gael and Democratic Left followed a Labour-Fianna Fáil coalition

adequacy strategies under NAPS (Johnston 2002, Hanan 20002) The second half of this period was marked by fewer resources and a period of robust retrenchment under a more pronounced neo-liberal PD-FF coalition There is evidence of again a smaller party (Progressive Democrats) leading social security policy discourse in relation to non-nationals, conditionality and lone parents This is again consistent with smaller parties advocating more radical policy agendas However towards the end of this period there was a distinctive softening of rhetoric by Fianna Fail This change of attitude to social security, reflected in higher rate increases in subsequent budgets was attributed to electoral losses in the 2004 local elections Politics is needed to force implementation of income adequacy targets

Corporatism

Corporatism has been influential (Hardiman, 2002) Breathnach (2005) identified that social partnership evolved, over this period, from a crisis model to an expansionary social model and back to a narrower economic model These stages roughly overlap with the political stages outlined above Over time social partnership institutions developed into the National Economic and Social Development Office, an influential government controlled think-tank which overviews a wide range of policy debate This was state-led but social partnership-populated institution plays a powerful ideational role in developing and maintaining a consensual framework around a specific socio-economic model that subordinates social policy goals to the needs of the economy and employers Individual social partners directly inform some social security policy but with limited expertise, analysis and ambition such influence is significantly limited in scale and scope (Hardiman, 1998, Cousins 2005a) Trade union input in the first two national programmes was significant but by 1996 trade unions had begun to limit their input to issues directly impacting on members Business representatives work at a more macro level vetoing increased social expenditure and promoting work incentives Farmers combine traditional lobbying tactics and social partnership negotiation to promote agricultural or rural policy issues As Hardiman (1998 141) concludes in evaluating the Community and Voluntary Pillar's impact 'the input of organisations representing the most disadvantaged is likely to be treated as 'residual category' confined to securing whatever is left after over after established interests have their say'

Pluralism

Trade unions primarily seek to influence through social partnership but farmers are more pragmatic about influencing tactics and tend to use various pluralist methods to influence

government. Broader civil society or the Community and Voluntary sector's engagement with social security policy predates social partnership and most organisations continue to influence through pluralist relations. The Community and Voluntary sector includes a wide array of organisations operating from different power bases. It includes Catholic Church-based organisations operating from quite powerful but declining power bases Schmitt (1998:217). The sector inputs through the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, local development structures, pre-budget forums and traditional forms of direct lobbying and campaigning. Much of its discourse has been 'voice without influence' (Lister 2004) but CORI,¹⁰⁹ SVP, INOU and NWCI have influences agenda-setting, delivery issues and income adequacy. The growing consultative voice of the sector within and outside formal social partnership 'has not proved enough to change policy priorities' (Hardiman, 1998:142) and the sector does not have the policy-influencing power of a well organised vested interest. The community and voluntary sector's most powerful role is as a veto player, the potential electoral power of for example Women in the Home, pensioners and lone parent's groups can act as breaks on more regressive and progressive ambitious change agendas.

Whitley and Winyard (1987) and Lister (1988) observed the ease with which governments consciously play groups off against each other and the importance of members of the British anti-poverty sector acting as a single unified lobby. Irish advocacy coalitions (1996 National Campaign for Welfare Reform, the Community Platform, the Community and Voluntary pillar or ad hoc campaigns against the Dirty Dozen and Savage Sixteen or the late 1990's Open Your Eyes to Child Poverty Initiative) were effective in the short term goals they set themselves. The challenge is increasing the capacity to organise into a more proactive strong vested interest on a longer time scale (Coleman, 2006). Acheson et al (2004:197) argue the state plays a key role 'in structuring the civic space in which voluntary action occurs' and that 'interaction of state drivers with cultural and ideological forces' shape voluntary action and development. This sector's capacity to be an effective driver of change has been curtailed both by state (or Fianna Fáil) strategies to control or limit the development of the sector (McCashin 2004) and by the sector's own failure to act cohesively (Acheson et al 2004).

¹⁰⁹ One policy actor interviewed by the author reflected that CORI strategy works because over a long time scale they have been influencing and changing ideas. Others argue that CORI wasted their power to influence on irrelevant policy agendas including basic income and the *Part-Time Job Opportunities Programme*.

Elitism

Competition state theorists expect the business elite to be increasingly influential. Hardiman (1998) reflects how business elites enjoy the advantage of seeking to influence governments fully committed to a national model of development that promotes competitiveness over social policy and that accord business interests more priority than redistribution. Raj and McMahon (2003) found elites influenced the Irish privatisation policy process. In the case of social security policy, pensions industry participation on the Pensions Board signified a governance shift which resulted in a partial privatisation of pensions. Domestic private industry has traditionally impacted on PRSI rate setting, interests representing foreign direct investors have more recently influenced PRSI policy, while the Turkish construction company GAMA successfully lobbied for PRSI legislative changes. Employer lobbies have also influenced Irish labour market-led immigration policy. The most powerful influence of the business elite is unlikely to be visible in policy institutions but to happen through personal and social networking (Schmitt, 1998). Byrne (2005) and Hardiman (1998: 140) argue that as long as governments rely heavily on corporate donations for their funding there will always be a systematic bias in political decisions.

This section concludes that politics and who is in government matters. Fianna Fail has clearly dominated the last two decades and their populist approach to policy development is a strong causal factor for the underdevelopment of various aspects of Irish social security policy. It is also clear that the personal characteristics of the individual power holders matter. Within Fianna Fail, for example, urban Ministers and urban Taoisigh are more sensitive to the electoral impact of social security reform. Key individual trade union and community and voluntary sector leaders have had ideational influence and individual civil servants have been immensely powerful in either progressing or blocking the passage of policy or in furthering the agendas of certain lobby groups. In a small policy community relations between those in power also matter. Corporatist, pluralist and elitist power models also have explanatory potential. The Irish political system advantages groups able to organise and promote their interests (Coleman, 2006, Hardiman, 1998). Groups with material and other resources to both organise members and to articulate their interests have been more influential. Conversely the least organised and disadvantaged are residual and are least likely to voice their concerns in a way that influences the policy process and policy outcomes.

9 6 Discourse and debate matter

Frazer (1992 3) argues ‘that public support for the social welfare system is cultivated by open debate and political leadership’ Cerny et al (2005) and Torping (1999) stress the political construction of ideas as important causal factors with explanatory power to explain social security change The dominance of pragmatism and consensus in modern Irish political culture suggests an absence of, or at least a non-articulation of, ideology or ideas Media discourse is often trivialised or individualised There is no discourse about social security at the level in which it takes place in the quality British broadsheet media Nonetheless, ideas do play a powerful role in the social construction of Irish social security discourse Rhetoric and construction of sensitive and ambiguous language play an important role particularly in relation to conditionality, activation and gender¹¹⁰ One civil servant described in an interview with the author how policy makers are sensitive to the use of language

These things were sold softly by people who might have had harder agendas, we have ‘get the scrounger’ mentality wrapped up in the ‘helping hand’ culture of the Department

The ideational influence of international policy actors (OECD and EU in employment policy, EU in social inclusion policy and World Bank in pensions policy) is evident in Irish discourse There is for example consistency and overlap between the NESC (2005a) and the European Commission’s communication ‘Concerning a consultation on action at EU level to promote the active inclusion of the people furthest from the labour market’ (European Commission 2006) Irish policy entrepreneurs¹¹¹ have opened up new reform agendas, transferred policy and influenced the pace and type of development of policies relating to activation and conditionality in Ireland However this thesis argues that domestic political institutions and populist political culture make Ireland more immune to ‘radical’ policy

¹¹⁰ Minister Woods for example ‘talked hard’ about punitive Job Search while arguing simultaneously in Cabinet that the real value of unemployment payments needed to be maintained The ambiguous rhetoric of ‘systematic engagement’ in the National Employment Action Plan convinced many to leave the live register The NESC DWS can be read as an opportunity for empowerment or as a threat of more punitive sanctions for unemployed people

¹¹¹ Cassells, Frazer, Farrell, Mangan, Nolan and Sweeney

prescriptions than other liberal regimes and that this can account for example to the more limited approach to activation and conditionality in Irish social security policy.. Evidence from the elite interviews supports one observer interviewed by the author who linked the lack of ambition to the Proportional Representation (PR) electoral system:

There is a much clearer policy direction in the UK; you have the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Minister saying work, work, work, work, work, work. It's bound to percolate down a lot more than where you have a less clear message. The main reason for the unclear Irish message is fear of electoral loss of votes: in Ireland this fear is far more intense because of Proportional Representation.

Scarphf (2000) identified that more substantive change occurs when ideas are processed in wide communicative political discourse that enable social learning and attitudinal change. A key feature of the Irish social security policy community is the degree to which debate happens among a narrow sub group of policy actors in a tightly controlled coordinative technical discourse (often within social partnership but also in expert groups and inter-Departmental committees). Tightly controlled coordinative technical discourse discourages ideological discussion by limiting policy change to 'problem solving' with existing policy, existing macro analysis and existing resources. Groups find it difficult to progress issues that cannot be mediated through consensus based change and controversy is often agenda managed into 'working groups'. Irish discourse can be communicative but such public discourse (as in the case of conditionality, gender and equality) is often 'defensive' in nature. Gillespie (IT 24.09.05) notes 'glimmerings of debate are visible' from some trade union and voluntary sector organisations.

It is possible to identify how three stages of changes in government impact on Irish policy debate. The first stage 1987-1992 was when a paradigmatic national political consensus was developed around a monetarist and increasingly neo liberal focus on fiscal rectitude and competitiveness. This concept was used in *communicative* discourse to the nation at a time of social and economic crisis with political leadership identifying a clear vision of social partnership based on the NESC(1986) policy blueprint which became cognitively locked into neoliberal policy agenda based on the primacy of competitiveness and a low tax model of development. The availability, in 1987, of a social democratic-leaning consensus based Commission on Social Welfare report was an important starting point in developing a

consensus framework among social partners about the social security policy prescription for national recovery. This decisive ideational influence led Irish social security regime change in a qualitatively different direction than the neo-liberal-leaning Fowler Report of the same period in the UK (Lister, 1988).

The second stage was when strong centre-left political leadership promoted equality and poverty policy to try, within the constraints of the cognitive lock, to shape a policy agenda for a more equal society. The agenda identified the need for new institutional structures that sought to overcome the limitations of Irish political culture by enabling new actors to engage in wider *communicative discourse* in bodies such as NESF and NAPS and campaign for innovative offensive activation policies. The third stage, dominated by centre-right government refers to the reversal back to a more neo-liberal *coordinative discourse* where a statistical and technical discourse reinforces the cognitive lock by prioritising global competitiveness. Alternatives are actively discouraged. Not only is there little engagement with new institutional structures like NAPS but also attempts to dissolve alternative policy coalitions and *prevent more communicative discourse* are evident. Whether one views the DWS as a social investment state or a social neo-liberalism it is clear that the cognitive lock of a low tax and ungenerous social security system has not been altered significantly.

This section concludes that the particular Irish style coordinative discourse is a key variable that maintains a narrow problem-solving approach to policy making at the expense of more value-led popular discourse that might create social attitudinal change. Controversy is avoided by careful and ambiguous use of rhetorical language.

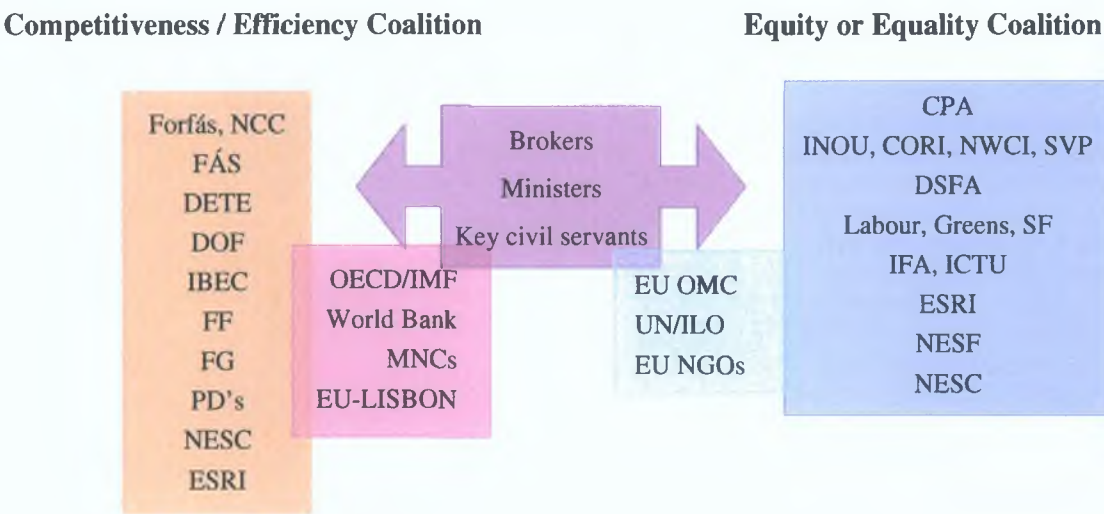
9.7 The interaction of Institutions, Politics and Discourse

Brewer and DeLeon (1983) advise not to seek too much parsimony in the policy system. However, to understand why decisions were made, it is necessary to move from mono causal explanations and to probe the relationship between institutions, actors and discourse. This is done by using an advocacy coalition framework. Within any one institution individual actors or discrete Departments will belong to different advocacy coalitions identified with different policy discourses (Sabatier, 1999; Boyle 2005:19). Policy brokers mediate between competing coalitions of policy actors, policy decisions are the outcomes of power struggles between the competing coalitions. In Ireland it is possible to identify a strong neo liberal competitiveness policy monopoly (supported by EU and OECD policy discourse) and a weak social inclusion and redistributive policy discourse (supported by the EU social

inclusion OMC (NAPsincl) and international rights discourse of the UN).

These coalitions co-exist in the same Irish political culture, which stresses consensus and pragmatism; hence no advocacy coalition is likely to be extreme. Members of each coalition interact informally to reinforce particular policy arguments and to argue for particular policy changes. They draw on sympathetic analysis in international organisations and may sometimes work together formally on joint campaigns. Chapter Seven referred to two coalitions competing in the process of negotiating the Benchmarking and Indexation Working Group. These coalitions are diagrammatically outlined below.

Figure 9.2 Advocacy Coalitions in the Irish Social Security Policy Community








Circular interdependent relations

The advocacy coalition approach usefully offers a cross sectional view of a policy community and helps analyse relations between different actors and coalitions, 'new interactions alter both the way policy is made and outcomes of the policy process' (Cerny, 2002a:3). However it tells us little about which coalition has power and why or how power shifts between coalitions. An alternative mechanism to achieve more in-depth understanding of the inter-relationship between discourse, institutions and interests is to chart the circular

relationship between the three variables (John, 1998:168) and analyse how this has evolved over domestic and international economic and political cycles. In the three stages or cycles (1987-1992, 1992-1997 and 1997-2005) different advocacy coalitions are more powerful at any one time. While political and institutional vetoes will limit change regardless of which advocacy coalition is in power it should still be possible to identify what combination of international and domestic discourse, institutions and actors influence policy change. Figure 9.3 represents the interaction of different elements including political power, policy processes, policy ideas, types of discourse, international policy influence, stage of evolution of the social partnership process and the economic environment.

Figure 9.3

Interaction of international and domestic ideas, interests and institutions

- 1  Policy ideas influence (type of policy ideas and source of policy ideas)
- 2  Institutional influence (partnership and civil service)
- 3  Political influence (political power and political discourse)
- 4  International policy influence
- 5  International economic influence (Crisis, Growth, Competition)

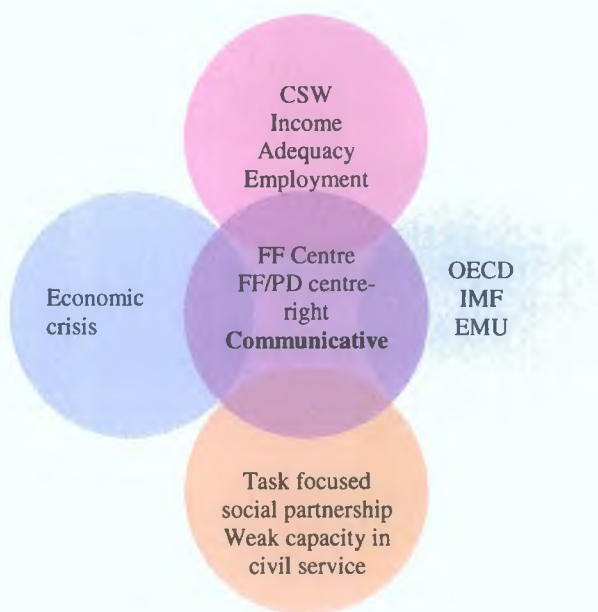


Figure 9.3a
1987-1992, Growth Coalition



Figure 9.3b
1992-1997 Equity Coalition

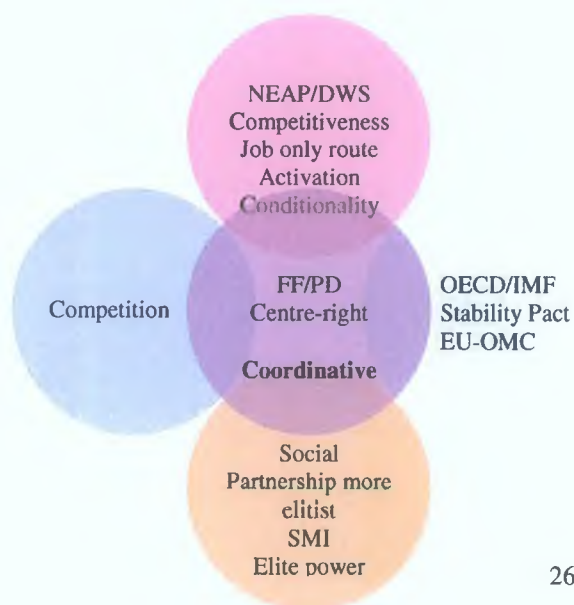


Figure 9.3c
1997-2006 Competition Coalition

Figures 9.3 a,b,c above illustrates how policy discourse, interests and institutions all played a formative factor in determining social security choices. The relationship between the variables is circular and reinforcing. The relationship between political parties, openness to ideas, where in the international political economy they were willing to source ideas and how much they were willing to institutionally promote communicative debate seem key factors in determining the climate and appetite for change. Who had political power was a key factor differentiating the periods in question, the relative strength of advocacy coalitions, the degree of and type of exposure to international political ideas and the amount of communicative discourse.

Membership of advocacy coalitions remain more or less constant over the relevant years. Their potential impact is conditioned and limited because the institutions they exist in are oriented towards technical problem solving and promote discourse that is consensus based, co-coordinative, limited and hidden from the public. The limited number of players and the limited type of discourse mean policy is only discussed and explored from a limited number of perspectives and there is less concern with problems outside the institutions or life experience or experienced by the policy actors inside the advocacy coalitions. Various equality-proofing tools have been developed to overcome this limitation but are rarely used to good effect (McGauran, 2005). Over the time period of this thesis, policy institutions and social partnership structures evolved into more elitist technocratic institutions using more co-coordinative discourse between small groups of elites. This reinforces existing policy monopolies, promotes the status quo and limits both policy change and effectiveness.

9.8 Chapter Conclusion

O'Riain (2004: 18) held that competition state theory obscures 'the existence of a political space for struggles within and through existing institutions over how development could and should be structured'. However this thesis illustrates that a competition state theoretical framework exposes how institutional and political struggle about policy matters hugely. An important and ongoing site of struggle between communicative and coordinative debate is the emerging tension over the role of civil society and the community and voluntary sector. This space is vital as it is from here that Polanyi's (2001) 'double movement' or societal

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reaction to commodification is likely to emerge¹¹² It is of no surprise then to find that the Irish state has proactively by way of funding, regulation and institutional reform attempted to orientate the Community and Voluntary sector (and hence civil society) towards a particular development model where an umbrella group 'The Wheel' advocates for service delivery and charity models of civic engagement (Acheson et al , 2004 189) This shift in power has been at the expense of the Community Platform and a social justice alternative policy agenda The shift illustrates how the Irish competition state has attempted to manage domestic political tensions and mitigate societal reaction as it subordinates social policy to the needs of the economy

All of this means societal power and political energy is more constrained Without more communicative discourse it is difficult to release the transformational power associated with Polanyi's (2001) powerful concept of the double movement where society responds to the increased pressures and vulnerabilities of globalisation Where such political movement does occur the state's response is to limit such discourse and find a pragmatic short-term consensus-based 'solution' which often involves a partial reversal of policy Irish political culture promotes a non-ideological approach to political debate where political decisions about redistribution are reduced into technical statistical debates (Veit-Wilson, 1998) A value-led debate in a more communicative discourse is needed to change priorities at a political level and identify alternative policy agendas

The most successful countries have coherent co-ordinative and communicative discourse The original establishment of the NESF and the NAPS was an attempt to create more communicative discourse Minister Brennan's method of consulting widely about DSFA 2006 proposal indicates an awareness of the need for communicative discourse capable of generating a change in values that can lead to a public support for a more radical form of change The key to unlocking a positive reform agenda, however, is a more communicative and inclusive discourse and a discourse that is lead, not by a compromised state, but by civil society The key conclusion arising from this thesis is that strengthening the capacity of the social security policy community and broader civil society will enable more communicative

¹¹² Polanyi (2001) anticipated that following a 'movement' towards commodification, society, sensing a diminution of human welfare, will respond in a 'double movement' by pressing the state to protect commodified labour from the excesses of market greed Society would press the state to decommodify labour Polanyi clearly differentiates civil society from the state

discourse. The fragmentation and territorial division of the community and voluntary sector currently limits the transformative capacity of that sector (Acheson et al., 2004)¹¹³. This thesis argued that applying competition state theory to the study of Irish social security would be theoretically useful. This has been the case; the thesis made a contribution to societal knowledge about why Irish social security developed in its distinctive fashion and how domestic factors constrain the impact of globalisation. The fact that Ireland is one of the world's most globalised states adds to the potency of the above research findings. This thesis, as a successful practical application of competition state theory to an area of social policy, overcomes Phillips' (2005) argument that competition state theory had little empirical application or testing nor little relevance outside functionalist economic areas. The thesis made a further theoretical contribution by developing a set of five indicators to enable theoretical examination of how competition states impact on social policy¹¹⁴. This framework can be applied to other policy areas such as housing, health, or education and be developed as a framework to enable cross policy and cross-country comparison. The thesis explored methodological issues related to defining and measuring commodification, concluded Esping Andersen's (1990) concept of decommodification fails to account for conditionality or work obligations and developed a commodification indicator to account for changes in work obligations. More can be done to further theoretically and methodologically develop this line of enquiry. This thesis also contributed a gender dimension to the theoretical framework and highlighted the need, within political economy literature, to examine the links between the globalisation, commodification of women and care and the gender composition of governance institutions.

The thesis findings also offers an interesting interpretation of Swanks (2002) work. The thesis provides a case study of a country with liberal programmatic structuring but without a majoritarian electoral system found other liberal systems. It is consistent with Swanks framework to find that Irish impulses towards more liberalism are held in check by more inclusive Irish electoral and corporate institutions. The conventionally hypothesised globalisation dynamics (Swank 2002:279) are not absent in Ireland but they are certainly muted. To quote Swank:

¹¹³ Appendix E outlines recommendations to strengthen the policy community

¹¹⁴ This framework was based on five indicators of recommodification; activation / conditionality; retrenchment; residualisation, regulation and defamiliarisation.

Central features of domestic institutions shape ---- promote or impede configurations of norms, values and behaviours embodied in national policy making routines that favour or disfavour slow adaptation to the pressures of globalisation and the inclusion of all interests in that process (2002 285)

Schmidt (2000 306) concluded that countries manage adjustment to the external economy

‘not only because of their greater or lesser economic viability, their greater or lesser institutional capacities and better or worse policy responses but also because of their more or less convincing legitimating discourse’

The thesis concludes that Irish institutional capacities and style of policy discourse mitigate both negative and positive reform and produce a frozen landscape of policy reform

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Appendix A Interview Schedule

Interview Number	Interview Type	Time period
1	Senior Trade Unionist	Spring 2003
2	Principal Officer Department of Social Welfare	Spring 2003
3	Principal Officer Department of Finance	Spring 2003
4	Senior consultant (Academic)	Spring 2003
5	CEO - Statutory Agency	Spring 2003
6	Former Department of Social Welfare Junior Minister	Spring 2003
7	Senior Academic – UCD	Spring 2003
8	Former Department of Social Welfare Minister	Spring 2003
9	Former Chairperson, Commission on Social Welfare	Spring 2003
10	CEO - Social Partnership Think Tank	Spring 2003
11	Former Employer/Social Partnership	Spring 2003
12	Journalist	Spring 2003
13	Political Adviser in Department of Social Welfare	Spring 2003
14	Former Department of Social Welfare Minister	Spring 2003
15	Former Department of Finance and Department of Labour Minister	Spring 2003
16	Social security legal expert / academic	Spring 2003
17	Employer Representative/Social Partner	Spring 2003
18	Farmer Representative/Social Partner	Spring 2003
19	Former CEO Non Government Organisation/social partner	Autumn 2005
20	Policy worker - Non government organisation/former social partner	Autumn 2005
21	Assistant Secretary – DSFA	Autumn 2005
22	Assistant Principal DSFA	Autumn 2005
23	Former Department of an Taoiseach Junior Minister	Autumn 2005
24	Former Secretary General Department of Social Welfare	Autumn 2005
25	Social Policy Academic – TCD	Autumn 2005

Appendix B Review of Competition State Theorists

Cerny

Cerny believes globalisation is with us for good or evil (1999:149) and is a primarily political construct which places international competitiveness as the main criterion for policy success. He theorises about a move from the industrial welfare state to the competition state which prioritises the role of the market. Cerny's competition state focuses on competitiveness and the creation of a favourable investment environment for international investment. It seeks a low-inflation stable economic environment anchored by wage moderation and low-taxation. Because it has less macroeconomic capacity it focuses on micro-level supply-side interventions. These include switching expenditure from public welfare to enterprise innovation and learning and to de-regulation and re-regulation of private industry. Low tax policy means cuts in welfare budgets and limited capacity to fund social security. The state moves away from redistribution and the provision of public goods. Public services previously thought to be outside the market are increasingly commodified. This 'privatisation of the public sphere' means privatisation of public services or organising them around profit criteria so they are more consumer-driven and less based on citizenship rights (Cerny 1999:155). Public goods are more circumscribed and those that enhance capital or create flexible labour markets are favoured.

He is clear that none of these outcomes are predetermined, 'the future will be shaped by historical accidents, conjunctural events and a wide range of social economic and political agents' (Cerny 1999:159). Competition state theory stresses *politicking* and the role played by different agency including domestic institutions and practices, national and international interest groups and the evolving relationship between the public and private in determining policy choices. Common to all states is an over-determination of neoliberalism:

There is a process of the internalisation of neo-liberal globalisation, of complex adaptation, of policy experimentation, of the break up and rebuilding of political coalitions, of the increasing salience of transnational linkages and networks in a more open world, and of changing public attitudes toward the new disciplines of competitiveness and change (Cerny, Menz and Soederberg et al 2005:21).

Standing and Alber

Standing and Alber (2000) also argue that the welfare state becomes a competition state when, in order to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), governments adapt their social and labour policies to conform to an international norm. Political agendas become more cautious in order to curtail capital flight, more powerful capital markets exert direct and indirect pressure on governments obliging them to roll back social spending and social legislation. National tax levels are constrained and there is pressure to cut public sector deficits. Governments are goaded into making social protection systems more selective and targeted and to adapt and modify labour systems to be more competitive. There is a shift from universal to selective public spending and from social protection / services to training measures for the workforce. The end result is new and multiple forms of inequality with the weakest suffering most from this adaptation. This is a result of the logic of commodification which throws people back to the market for social protection: those furthest from those labour market are least able to secure that social protection.

Standing and Alber's quantitative analysis defines commodification as a trend in lower social spending relative to a given level of wealth (2000:107) and proves that this trend exists in countries of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). This trend also exists in Ireland (Timenon, 2003). Standing and Alber (2000) also focus on qualitative assessment of change and their in-depth qualitative analysis shows remarkable

country-specific heterogeneity. This leads them to conclude that if functional imperatives with regard to globalisation exist, nation-specific structures and politics mediate them. However they highlight how the ideas and interests of national actors and institutions are influenced by the interests and ideas of supranational actors.

Jessop

Jessop (2002) theorises about a Schumpeterian Welfare State (SWS), a version of the competition state focused on recommodifying land, money, labour, power and knowledge. He identifies a shift from a full employment focused Keynesian Welfare State to an innovation-focused SWS geared towards competitiveness. Social policy is subordinated to the discursively constructed needs of the economy. He accepts there are many national variations of his ideal type state but identifies common characteristics: the promotion of permanent innovation and flexibility through the supply of social policy measures and a knowledge-based economy, the rearticulation of earlier social policy objectives to meet economic objectives and a focus on the present and future working populations. He uses the concept of 'workfare' to describe the economic reorientation and downward pressure of welfare policy. This process, 'where redistributive welfare rights take second place to a productivist reordering of social policy to meet the needs of the economy' (2002: 23), is similar to what Cerny terms as recommodification.

Torfinn

Torfinn (1999) locates his work in Jessop's SWS and introduces a key additional conceptual tool to differentiate between national approaches to what Jessop describes as 'workfare'. Torfinn identifies a more contingent productivist welfare policy with more active provisions based on either supportive 'welfare to work' policies which act as springboards to enable claimants return to work or more conditional obligations to seek and accept employment. The shift from redistributive welfare policies to workfare policies is connected to a shift from macroeconomic policies to a focus on structural supply-side economics. He classifies some supportive labour market activation policy as 'offensive' neo-statist social policy (the Dutch and Danish), which he distinguishes from more punitive 'negative' defensive neo-liberal welfare to work strategies (the UK and the US). The former offensive type will not produce a new underclass of working poor that he anticipates is a clear outcome of the more defensive strategy. Torfinn identifies the process of the political mediation of policy as the key variable in determining whether a country's welfare / workfare policy is offensive or defensive and stresses the need to examine the discursive construction of policy discourse (1999: 5).

Appendix C Details of amendments to Savage sixteen

Details of both Dirty Dozen and Savage Sixteen are included in the main body of the thesis. The following is a more detailed account of how government obscured what happened the Savage Sixteen. Each savage sixteen cut is first outlined, the text in **bold** refers to the language used in DSFA's briefing document announcing the easing of nine cuts on 4-12-2004 and the italicised text relates to comments by the opposition party and lobby groups and used on national radio on 5-12-2004.

- 1 2004 The qualifying period for Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) will be increased from 6 to 15 months in respect of the Third Level Option
 2005 Amended Qualifying period reduced from 15 to 12 months. In addition, cost of Education Allowance increased 58 per cent from €146 to €400
 The latter is insufficient compensation as it is meaningless to the person excluded from participation
- 2 2004 The transitional half-rate payment for lone parents is to be discontinued where a recipient of One Parent Family Payment takes up employment where earnings are in excess of the upper threshold of €293 per week
 2005 Amended One Parent Family Payment recipients to receive transitional half-rate payment for 6 months, where income exceeds €293 per week
 The cut is only 50 per cent reversed
- 3 2004 The minimum contribution all recipients of Supplementary Welfare Allowance Rent / Mortgage Supplement are required to make towards their accommodation will be increased by €1 per week to €13 per week
 2005 No change and no further increase. Measure to be kept under ongoing review
- 4 2004 SWA is not payable to people in full-time employment. In future, if one of a couple is in full time employment, both are excluded from claiming rent / mortgage supplement
 2005 No change. Referred for review to the Social Partners. A diversionary tactic
- 5 2004 To receive Rent Supplement the tenant must be in need of accommodation and unable to provide for it from his own resources. For the most part, Health Boards decide whether an applicant for Rent Supplement is in need of accommodation without reference to the local authority. In future claimants for Rent Supplement will be referred to the Local Authority for an assessment of housing needs in a more systematic manner
 2005 Amended subject to consultations with the Department of Environment and Local Government. This measure was needed mainly to ensure that Rent Supplements are paid in appropriate circumstances, in accordance with established policy and taking account of the objectives of the SWA scheme, which focuses on meeting immediate, short-term need, rather than long-term housing needs. Particular care is taken to ensure that the interests of vulnerable groups, such as the homeless, the elderly, people with disabilities and those on UB were fully protected in the course of implementing these measures.
 Diversion and Obfuscation'

6. 2004: Health Boards will be given the power to refuse Rent Supplement in cases where the applicant has not already been renting for a period of six months, with provisions for exceptions in relation to people who are homeless or where there are other compelling reasons.
2005: Amended. The six-month and other criteria to ensure that people who have a short-term income need, such as people who become ill or unemployed, or are assessed by a local authority as having a housing need are not disadvantaged.
Partial change in policy but original principle to restrict Rent Supplement to new renters is intact.
7. 2004: Rent Supplement will no longer be paid to people who refuse offers of local authority accommodation or to people who leave local authority accommodation without reasonable cause.
2005: Amended. Rent Supplement to continue in payment unless third offer of local authority accommodation refused.
No change just clarification of original intention and how it will be implemented.
8. 2004: A supplement given to recipients of SWA who have been supported by the MABS in brokering a deal with creditors will be discontinued.
2005: Replaced. Allocation of special funding of €700,000 to MABS to develop additional and innovative services to directly tackle over- indebtedness and the financial and emotional stress it causes families.
This remains a cutback and has not been reversed, the €700,000 is about an entirely different scheme and is intended to distract.
9. 2004: As a result of state expenditure on crèche care and increased CB payments, the Crèche Supplement will be discontinued.
2005: Amended. Continuation of funding for existing Crèche Supplement recipients and their community crèches, and funding of new cases referred by Health Sector Personal Social Services Professionals.
This change does not restore the previous status quo but maintains a narrower focus and more restrictive eligibility than old payment.
10. 2004: The Diet Supplement, which has become outdated in the context of increases in welfare payments in the past number of years, is being phased out over a number of years.
2005: Amended. Restore payments on basis of new revised diet costs. Report on adequacy and application of Diet Supplement by the Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute has been commissioned by the Department.
This is playing for time. The commissioned report is likely to lead to reduced diet supplements. (P.S. In 2006 this turned out to be the case)
11. 2004: The entitlement to half-rate CDA in respect of UB and DB claims will be discontinued where the claimant's spouse / partner has gross weekly income in excess of €300. This measure directs the current resources towards families at the lower income level.
2005: Amended. Increase the income threshold for entitlement to half-rate CDA with UB, DB, Injury Benefit and Health & Safety Benefit by €50 to €350 per week.

Not reversed slight improvement by increasing cut off point by €50 but the original intention to means test a social insurance payment remains intact

- 12 2004 The current weekly earnings threshold for the purposes of payment of reduced rates of DB and UB are being increased from €88.88 to €150. The present thresholds have not been updated since 1993 and consequently now represent a serious disincentive to employment

2005 No change at present Will remain under review

Cuts remain

- 13 2004 Entitlement for new claimants to half-rate payment of DB and UB where recipient is already in receipt of Widow / Widowers Pensions or One Parent Family Payments will be discontinued

2005 Already amended

Restored due to campaign by widows and lone parents

- 14 2004 Increase the underlying number of paid contributions required from 39 since first entering insurance to 52 for entitlement to DB and UB and Health and Safety Benefit. This measure is designed to more closely relate the contribution conditions for those benefits to the level and duration of the benefits being provided

2005 No change This was designed to ensure that entitlement to DB and UB requires a reasonable degree of attachment to the workforce Will continue to be reviewed

Cuts remain and Minister tries a justification strategy to convince her audience of the merits of such cuts

- 15 2004 An increase in the period where claims for UB and DB are linked with a previous claim from 13 weeks to 26 weeks

2005 No change Will continue to remain under review A key component of the administration of the benefit system is the concept of continuity in a claim and the notion of linked claims is a key component of how this operates in practice. Currently, where a person makes a UB or DB claim within 26 weeks of the end of a previous claim, both claims may be linked

Cuts remain and text tries to justify them

- 16 2004 The maximum duration of UB will be reduced from 390 days to 312 days where a person has less than 260 PRSI contributions paid since first entering employment. This measure recognises a longer, sustained employment record by more favourable treatment in terms of subsequent entitlements

2005 No change at present Will remain under review The effect of this measure was to restrict payment of UB to 312 days (one year) where the person has less than 260 (five years) paid PRSI contributions. In terms of short-term Social Insurance cover, this provision recognises a longer, sustained employment record by more favourable treatment in terms of subsequent entitlements. In qualified cases, UA may be available

Cuts remain and text tries to justify them

Appendix D

Social Security Content of Six National Wage Agreements

The following more detailed synopsis of national agreement social security is included to illustrate that partnership agreements have only a weak influence on Irish social security policy. Note the number of vague commitments, commitments to further review and consultation, the number of commitments not implemented and so repeated in subsequent agreements and the number of commitments which are already agreed government commitments in other policy documents or in Programmes for Government.

Content has been edited for the purposes of brevity.

Programme for National Recovery (1987)
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- iv.2 Maintain overall value of social welfare and consider special provision for greater increases for those receiving lowest payments
- iv.3 Introduce PRSI for farmers and self employed in 1988
- iv.4 Consider changes in Social Welfare Appeals system
- iv.5 Undertake a detailed study on Family Income Supplement
- iv.6 Measures will be taken to ensure close liaison with voluntary service providers

Programme for Economic and Social Progress (1991)

- 4.11a Continue to protect social welfare payments against inflation
- 4.11b Move by 1993 to CSW priority rates SC
- 4.11c Further increases as resources allow
- 4.12 Social insurance coverage to be extended on an appropriate basis to part time worker as a matter of priority
- 4.13 Carry out a fundamental review of pension coverage and conditions of entitlement
- 4.14 Removal of anomalies (concerning full rate and modified rate) for entitlement to social insurance payments
- 4.15 £69m in 1990 terms over ten years to implement Child Income Support measures in CSW
- 4.16 FIS increases in income limit for eligibility and maximum payment
- 4.17 Discuss review of Household Review Group with appropriate interests
- 4.18 Greater integration of SWA into mainstream social welfare

- 4 19 Improve range of opportunities and incentives for unemployed, lone parents and other social welfare recipient
- 4 20/22 Improve occupational and sick pay schemes
- 4 23/24 Commit to draw up Charter for Voluntary Organisations
- 4 25 Develop self sufficient information service
- 4 26 Regulation to control fraud/abuse and move RSI number assignment from Revenue to DSW
- 4 27 Modernise and improve accommodation

Programme for Competitiveness and Work (1994)

- 6 6a Continue to maintain real income position
- 6 6 b Further progress towards CSW main recommended rates
- 6 6c Maintenance of social insurance system including contributory principle
- 6 7 Identifying and minimising factors which create obstacle to gainful employment
- 6 8 Special attention will be devoted to the reform and development of child Income Support
- 6 9 Further consideration to developing FIS and particular regard to interaction with tax system
- 6 10 Care to ensure while in employment is sufficiently above income when unemployed
- 6 11 Concept of dependency will be examined in the context of overall welfare reform
- 6 12 Detailed consultations on Expert Working Group Report on Integrating Tax and Social Welfare
- 6 13 Urgent consideration to streamlining and standardising means tests
- 6 14 Examine recommendations in the National Pension Board Report
- 6 15 Examine further income disregards for lone parents
- 6 16 White Paper on Voluntary Sector by 1994
- 6 17 Establishment of Customer Advisory Groups
- 6 18 Promote and Develop Back to Work and Education Allowances
- 6 19 Action on fraud and abuse and monitor employers compliance with social welfare code

Partnership 2000 (1996)

- 3 12 Efforts to combat abuse in all areas of public expenditure
- 4 18 The Expert Group on the Integration of Tax and Social Welfare identified significant unemployment and poverty traps associated with child income support. In the 1995 and 1996 Budgets, Child Benefit was significantly increased in the context of a strategy to move towards a more integrated child income support system.
- 4 19 Priority will be given to the Family Income Supplement (FIS) system reform so as to be calculated on a net income basis, rather than on gross wages, as at present.
- 4 21 Specific consideration will be given to alleviating the SWA Rent Supplement unemployment trap, through the introduction of an appropriate tapering arrangement. The Government will consider this issue within the first year of this Partnership, in consultation with the Social Partners.
- 4 31 It is agreed that the minimum rates recommended by the Commission on Social Welfare will be implemented before the end of this Partnership.
- 4 32 The impact of the £60 earnings ceiling on the payment of adult dependant allowances and child dependant allowances creates poverty traps, particularly for low-paid workers. Measures to alleviate those poverty traps will be considered, in consultation with the Social Partners.
- 4 34 The reform and development of the Social Insurance System will be continued over the course of this Partnership.
- 4 35 A further independent appraisal of the concept of, and the full implications of introducing a basic income payment for all citizens will be undertaken.
- 4 36 The application of the Revenue Commissioners regulations on pensions will be reviewed in the light of the National Pensions Initiative.
- 4 37 The Minister for Social Welfare will also request the Pensions Board to examine abolition of front-end loading commissions, indexation of pensions in payment, offering a choice of a fixed pension or a lower indexed pension to all annuity recipients and defined contribution scheme recipients, and provision of a Certificate of Reasonable Expectation by the providers of defined contribution schemes.

Programme for Prosperity and Fairness 1999
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- 3 2 2 Target of 100pw for the lowest social welfare rate
- 3 2 3 Benchmarking and indexation Working Group

- 3 2 4 Child Benefit to be substantially increased with a priority focus towards £100 per month for the third and subsequent child
- 3 2 5 Child Dependant Allowances for all social welfare payment when child under 22 is in full time education
- 3 2 6 Rate increases a high priority in event of economic growth
- 3 2 7 Working Group on Administrative Individualisation
Working Group on Fully Inclusive Social Insurance model
- 3 2 8 Examine social insurance fund board
- 3 2 9 Implementation of the Carers Benefit previously announced in budget
- 3 2 10 SWA Guidelines to be published
- 3 2 11 Issue of SWA clawbacks to be examined in ongoing SWA review
- 3 2 12 Legislative amendment so that all eligible claimants can chose most

Sustaining Progress 2003

2 7 1 Combating Long-Term Unemployment Special Initiative

The preventative strategy outlined in the National Employment Action Plan will be extended to all persons on the Live Register for longer than 6 months on a phased basis starting in the Dublin region. Government will continue to seek to address any barriers or disincentives to taking up employment.

2 12 3 Child Poverty Special Initiative

Importance of Child Income Support arrangements including examining the effectiveness of, for example, merging the Child Dependant Allowance and Family Income Supplement.

5 1 3 Income Adequacy

It remains Government policy to meet the target for the lowest social welfare rates and appropriate child equivalence levels as set out in the revised NAPS by 2007, on the basis set out in the Strategy. During the period of the Agreement, increases in the rates will be made in order to achieve this target.

The final phase of the planned multi-annual increases in Child Benefit rates will be completed in 2004 and 2005.

5 1 4 Pensions

The Government has decided, having regard to the recommendations in the National Pensions Policy Initiative (NPPI) Report to increase social welfare pensions over a 5-10 year period to 34% of average industrial earnings, that the level of social welfare pension *will be improved* to reach a target level of 200 euro by 2007 in line with the commitment in the Programme for Government

Progress will also be made towards implementing the commitments to implementation of improvements in Widow(er)'s Pensions and to increase the level of qualified adult allowance for pensioner spouses to the level of the old age (non-contributory) pension

A review of the qualifying conditions for Old Age (Contributory) and Retirement Pensions, incorporating proposals for the development of the existing Homemaker's Scheme, will be published in 2003

Appendix E Recommendations

The key recommendation arising from this thesis focus on the need to strengthen the social security policy community capacity to engage in stronger social analysis (NESC 2005a,b) and to promote and enable more ideational communicative discourse (Little 2002). Before detailing these recommendations one observation can be made. It is striking throughout the thesis how reference is made to the degree to which one Irish institution, the Proportional Representation electoral system, dominates and influences the political culture and policy system.

While recommendations about the Irish electoral system are not in the scope of this thesis it does seem worthwhile to at least examine the potential for reform of this electoral system to a Proportional Representation and combined lists systems as recommended by Laver (1998) and Barry (2005). The recommendations that follow are more specific to the Irish social security policy community.

Government Departments and Agencies

DSFA: The DSFA policy role is unclear and underdeveloped. The 'Aireacht' with responsibility for policy making is presently very under-resourced and pressurised. There is a clear need for more social security focused policy resources. Within the Department opinion is mixed as to whether the DSFA should lead social security policy debate and have a clear resourced policy role. The delivery focused Department appears to have limited aspiration for a more ambitious role in policy development. In the context of such ambivalence additional policy resources may not be used to optimum advantage.

Rather, it may be more useful to revisit the CSW (1986) recommendations for a National Social Security Agency, which would take a strategic overview about how medium term social security policy should evolve. Forfás, which provides good quality proactive analysis to the enterprise policy community, might be a useful model. Any such agency could make proactive use of various statutory agencies that have an unclear and under utilised policy role including the Pensions Board, Comhairle and the Family Support Agency as well as the potential social security function of the Equality Authority and National Disability Authority.

CPA: A review of CPA (1996:91) concluded 'areas where insufficient resources were seen to be deployed were long term strategic issues in relation to social welfare developments'. The direct social security policy advisory potential of Combat Poverty Agency remains underdeveloped and under-utilised and is over focused on annual budgetary policy rather than long-term structural policy. In order to have a more consistent approach to policy analysis and to be more strategic in its role CPA should employ a specific social security policy analyst to develop capacity to input into strategic and long-term policy debate.

Community development approaches are a clear strength of CPA. While Comhairle have social policy feedback system among Citizen Information Centres this focuses on delivery type anomalies. There is potential for CPA and Comhairle to initiate more developmental type social policy work in CIC's and with other local and national welfare advice organisations. This could have a dual role of developing policy but also developing advocacy and strengthening and widening the social security policy community.

DETE/FÁS: The pro-enterprise culture of DETE dominates the social policy function of the department. DETE still need to develop a more strategic understanding of their role in social policy. Indecon (2005) conclude that the Employment Action Plan can not cope with logistical and administrative arrangements. Lone parents groups and women's groups have identified serious doubts that the lack of capacity of FÁS to gender proof delivery of training and active labour market programmes is a serious obstacle to the implementation of DSFA

2006 proposals (OPEN 2006). While (Torping 1999) advises that it is in the best interests of emancipatory activation policy that FÁS and DSFA remain institutionally separate an information and systems protocol and data sharing strategy is required to ensure that more effective co-operation and outcomes is achieved between the two agencies (Indecon 2005).

Political system and political parties

The lack of ambition for social security reform from within the political system is evident in the absence of detailed social security proposals in political manifestos. Political discourse is dominated by anecdotes from constituency clinics and the electoral system renders policy development overly sensitive. Ministers with the social security brief appear to benefit from a programme manager or policy adviser. The political system needs to be supported by well-resourced civil servants with the appropriate policy expertise.

Social security policy, given its impacts are individually experienced, immediate and transparent is particularly sensitive to PR and the emphasis on consensus in Irish political culture. Greater and more effective use could be made of cross-party work in Oireachtas Committees to develop policy in contentious area such as lone parents and activation. However these committees need significant policy resources to support the work of Oireachtas members.

Social partnership

Larragy (1997) argues that redistributive political decisions are better kept for the publicly accountable representative political system. Social partnership is often inappropriately used to develop social security policy and to replace the role of civil servants, politics and civil society in political dialogue about social security reform. This has the consequence of in some instances in the words of a civil servant interviewed by the author 'half baked stuff coming down for us to implement'. It also means less societal level learning. It is not clear, for example, why such a technical exercise as an examination of policy to merge CDA and FIS payments into a second tier child income support payment, should come under the remit of a body whose function is long term strategic policy.

Politics can be assisted but not resolved through policy consultation (Davis, 1997). Where social partnership is considered to have a consultative role in policy making, the appropriate forum should include as wide a set of relevant people directly impacted by the policy, including those directly involved in service delivery and service users as well as people living in poverty, women and migrants. Other wider forms of civic debate such as those originally envisaged in NAPS should be promoted.

Academic community

The Irish social security academic community is small and has already begun to network more coherently through the Irish Social Policy Association. A social security sub-committee would be a useful development for this association. The DSFA could develop expertise by diverting some consultancy budget away from the major consultancy firms (including ESRI) and by diverting work from social partnership institutions and moving towards using smaller university-based consultancies. One outcome of this might be more diverse voices and greater capacity to tackle policy monopolies.

Trade Union Community

The evidence shows that the trade union movement can play a key leadership role in social security discourse. To do so they need, like CPA, to invest in consistent expertise. Globalisation has impacted strongly on PRSI rate setting and some PRSI restructuring has

been negotiated directly by business interests. Trade Union interest in protecting the PRSI system would be most usefully advanced through the establishment of a National Pay Related Social Insurance Board. The stronger governance implied in such a board would make business interests more transparent and social insurance easier to defend.

Business community

In this thesis it was observed that the shared understanding underpinning Ireland's national development strategy is limited in its capacity to theorise the relationship between competitiveness and forms of social policy unrelated to the labour market. This leads to, even given the constraints of the international political economy, greater subordination of social policy to economic policy than is necessary. The business community in particular must move from vetoing social expenditure to playing a role in developing a more sustainable national development strategy which maximizes both efficiency and equity (Sapir 2005).

Community and Voluntary Sector

It is clear that, despite its size, the role of the community and voluntary sector is not as influential as it might be (Acheson et al 2004, Hardiman, 1998). The diversity of voices within the sector appears to confuse policy makers (WRC, 2001). The evidence also shows that when the C+V present or lobby for conflicting approaches governments manipulate the 'palpable' differences between organisations as an excuse for doing nothing (Cousins, 1995a 114). The sectors work is most influential when they work through larger advocacy coalitions. It seems that it would be more useful, where possible, to engage in joint policy development work across organisations in the sector so that the sector maximises its power as a vested interest capable of influencing electoral outcomes (Coleman, 2006). There is a case to be made for a national campaign for welfare reform which would be a more permanent coalition of the up to 40 groups who have a recognized interest in social security reform.

The C+V is dominated by ineffective short-term pre-budget submissions at the expense of individual, personal engagement between lobbyists and civil servants (Acheson et al 2004 101). Interviews with policy makers suggests that where it has produced more analytical policy based material (INOUE, 1996, Murphy 2003, Loftus, 2005) this has had some impact on policy. Given the overall weakness of the Irish social security policy community this kind of more detailed policy analysis is likely to have more significant impact. More long-term proactive policy proposals and deeper relations with policy makers would be a more strategic use of what are often significant resources.

Proofing Tools

There is also a clear democratic deficit to the degree that the life experience and priorities of end users is not captured in any constituent part of the policy-making system. A wide range of policy tools and processes have been developed (including poverty proofing, equality proofing, budget impact assessment, gender mainstreaming) but are not being used to good effect (Callan, 2004, McGauran, 2004). Legislation is needed to statutorily require that these tools be used as appropriate during key stages of the policy cycle. Danish policy makers also have a statutory obligation to ensure that the process of policy development and implementation includes consultation with end-users of policy (Van Aerschoot 2003). A similar statutory obligation could be considered in the context to a move to a more active social policy envisaged in the Developmental Welfare State.

There are clear democratic deficits in relation to representation of women and other groups experiencing inequality in the social security policy community. Existing government policy regarding 40/60 gender quotas is simply ignored (NWC 2004). Such a requirement needs to be made a statutory obligation.

Open Method of Coordination

O'Cinneide (2005) distinguishes between the prescriptive obligations and the indirect persuasive influence of the EU. It is likely that, over the coming years, the Open Method of Coordination will bed down more into the domestic policy community and process of governance. This presents potential opportunities for those wishing to promote a more balanced model of development. A key strategy for those seeking greater equity should be the continued development of transnational and multilevel advocacy coalitions to promote global and EU visions of more equitable developmental paradigms, models and policies.