The Ruling Trinity Transformed:

Negotiating Power and Local Leadership in Ireland

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any other university of institution of tertiary education. The research herein is entirely my own work.

Signature Date

Abstract

This thesis examines power relations in the political, economic and religious spheres in local society in Ireland, so as to assess the contribution being made by a local leadership to a contemporary Irish social power order. The contemporary evidence gathered as part of a case study approach is compared to the configuration of a dominant class leadership extant in the 1970s and associated with a historically privileged Catholic-nationalism described by Chris Eipper (1986). Representing class society as a field of force in his work, Eipper argued that an interdependent ruling bloc at the local and national levels, structured between the economic, religious and political spheres, critically reproduced the ordering logics of an Irish class system (1986, p.3). Based on his local fieldwork in Bantry, Co. Cork, Eipper concluded that in the event of a deconstruction of the ideological and material bases upon which the Irish power system he identified depended, the dominant pattern of leadership would be reshaped, if not dismantled. Two such potential resolutions were an end to the Northern Ireland conflict and an increased co-ordination by the European Union.

The research undertaken for this study firstly finds that a transformed local leadership matters, contrasting with hypotheses both of the hegemonic effects of the international economy in Ireland since the late 1980s and of assumptions implying the *un*importance of local power dynamics in this context. In Blessington & District, the contemporary pattern of local leadership and power observed is rooted in the continuing social salience of personalistic power relations. Where collective decision-making provided a novel source of social power in local society, I found variable outcomes for the local influence of individual members of the ruling bloc and indeed, changes within the bloc itself. Nonetheless, the structural pattern of leadership altered only as much as was permitted by a translation of these observed changes in a broader lived experience of Irish power relations and that remained culturally valid. In sum, the local version of the ruling bloc successfully reinforced its interests by means of novel forms of governance. Since negotiation via collective action at the local level represented a novel structural arrangement of personal power relations in this case, I concluded that changing material and ideological factors in Ireland have not yet supplanted the dominant Irish social power system prevailing since the post-colonial era, even if they have altered the mode of authority available to a contemporary local leadership.

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The completion of this study is firstly due the people of Blessington & District, who spoke frankly about the local structures and relations of power that shaped their lives. They offered me an unfettered view of the mechanics of decision-making in civil society and blithely went about their business under close observation. In particular, I would like to thank the membership of the Blessington & District Forum for granting me full access to their meetings from late 2009 to mid-2012.

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For their love and patience, I dedicate this thesis to my mother, my sister, my partner and in particular, to my son, who grew up with this study and whose monumental eye rolling at key points kept me sane or at least, made me laugh, which is the same thing.

Writing on the relations and structures of power is a formidable, if rewarding, task. I owe Chris Eipper a huge debt in following in his wake, nearly 40 years after his original and still highly relevant research was completed. His insights offered me a reliable towline I could return to when, as frequently happened, I swam too far out of my depth. Finally, I want to thank my supervisors Chris Curtin and Tony Varley for their intellectual rigour, whose professional task was to always ask 'why?' And for making light of the journey, which personal commitment insisted 'why not?'

Ruth Pritchard
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Abbreviations

BAD	Blessington Area Development
BCC	Blessington & District Community Council
B&DF	Blessington & District Forum
BEA	Baltinglass Electoral Area
BWG	Blessington Women's Group
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CE	Community Employment (Scheme)
Co.	County
CRH	Cement Roadstone Holdings
CSO	Central Statistics Office
EC	European Commission
ECB	European Central Bank
ED	Electoral Division
EEC	European Economic Community
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute

EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FF	Fianna Fáil
FG	Fine Gael
GAA	Gaelic Athletics Association
GP	Green Party
HSE	Health Services Executive
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
IFSC	International Financial Services Centre
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITGWU	Irish Transport and General Workers Union
LAP	Local Area Plan
LEA	Local Electoral Area
LEADER	Liaisons entre Actions de Developpement de l'Economie Rurale
PNER	Programme for National Economic Recovery
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers Ireland

SF	Sinn Féin
SPC	Strategic Policy Committee
T.D.	Teachta Dála
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
WCC	Wicklow County Council
WWDA	West Wicklow Development Association

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PART I: The Ruling Trinity in Context

Chapter 1

The Ruling Trinity Transformed: Negotiating Power and Local Leadership in Ireland - An Overview

1.1 Introduction

The most fundamental rationale for a study of leadership and power asserts that what counts as power and being powerful matters (Lukes, 2005a). This truth underpins a substantial and ongoing research focus on the organisation of power and leadership at national and international levels. A tendency to view global economic power as opaque, or deterministic and hegemonic (Kay, 2006; Hayward and Lukes, 2008; Cerny, 2000c, p. 435), has obscured the value of local studies of situated power and leadership. Associated conceptual assumptions have claimed the declining relevance of personalistic social power relations, relative to global realities configured by impersonal and invisible forces of economic power (Varley and Curtin, 2002). As a consequence, contemporary empirical studies of societal power relations have more typically addressed the question of 'distant happenings shaping local events' (Giddens, 1990, p. 64) or addressed the local as a discrete power system framed within a narrow prescription of territorial traits (Nash, 2002, p. 242). Instead it is argued, the local is revelatory of power processes more generally (see also Silverman and Gulliver, 1992).

Such conceptual lacunae that contribute to a lack of empirical studies of local power processes constitute a rationale for this study. My task will be to investigate observed changes at the local level in the contemporary Irish power order. This will involve addressing the connections between local, national and international levels (Tucker, 1994, p. 201).

The value of focusing on the configuration and authority of Irish social power and leadership is predicated upon a significant body of research attesting to the evolution of a conservative leadership in Ireland from Independence, structured between the political, economic and religious spheres (Curtin and Varley, 2002, pp. 12 - 13). Long held to rely on personalistic bonds, this leadership gradually emerged in a post-colonial context exhibiting a 'calcified congruence of Irishness, Catholicism and Republicanism' (Foster, 2007b, p. 65), up to the late 1980s at least. Local Irish studies have proved sufficiently illuminative of social and political processes more generally, to be recognised by the literature focusing on social transformation more often in exemplary or 'trouble' cases rather than in comparative terms (Hall, 2002, p. 82; Vincent, 1990, p. 58; p. 252).

One study conducted in the late 1970's in Co. Cork stands as an exemplar of the explanatory potential of research on local power relations and leadership (Wilson and Donnan, 2006, p. 164). Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Bantry, Co. Cork in the mid-1970s, Chris Eipper (1986) laid bare a set of exploitative processes, which he argued contributed to a recognisable pattern of power and wealth in wider Irish society.[1] Eipper placed the forms of power and consciousness he observed at the core of a broad analysis that focused specifically on class as a social relation, 'in its social habitat' (1986 p. 10). In exploring the extant pattern of leadership, Eipper reasoned that post-colonial processes of development helped to explain the genesis of the dominant power bloc he termed *The Ruling Trinity*. The result of these processes is a contemporary nexus of church, state and business, which fostered and was dependent upon an ideological commitment to:

> a) economic development and the provision of a better standard of living; b) the nationalist heritage and electoral representation through the dispensation of

[1] The ethnographic fieldwork which Chris Eipper drew on in his publication, *The Ruling Trinity: A Community Study of Church, State and Business in Ireland*, published in 1986 was conducted in Bantry in the period from 1975-1977.

> patronage; and c) an integralist Catholicism preoccupied with hierocratically safeguarding the spiritual and secular welfare of the nation. (Eipper, 1986, p. 8)

Central to his thesis was the idea that local influentials in Bantry, Co. Cork acted in concert to reproduce a 'Catholic–nationalist capitalism in Ireland' within a mutually reinforcing, inter-dependent power system (Eipper, 1986, p. 8). The institutionalisation of this 'nexus' of power resulted in local business people, politicians and the clergy carving out distinct but overlapping spheres of influence in social life. Eipper's fieldwork therefore established a vital and connective framework built on insights from a rich post-colonial literature on Irish social transformation. In his conclusions, Eipper predicted that a 'profound reshaping' of Irish social relations was likely to follow if 'the key ideological supports of the ruling bloc: religion and nationalism' were undermined in the event of a 'thorough incorporation of Eire into the EEC or a reuniting of the North with the South' (1986, p. 203). Given key changes in each of these ideological domains, how reliably this prediction has stood the test of time over the intervening 30 – 40 years will be one of the central issues this thesis will address.

Ireland has seen remarkable social, economic and political transformation since the late 1980s and some common but delinked themes have emerged in the literature, which collectively suggest important challenges to a conservative authority. Irish society is said to be 'less governable by the old methods of command and obedience' (McInerney and Adshead, 2010, p. 17). A failure of Catholic moral authority is noted in particular (Inglis, 1998), as part of a general diminution in 'the authoritarian strain' in Irish culture (Whyte, 1980, p. 21). Party politics have become substantially more dealigned and national and local politics more decoupled (Marsh et al., 2008). Inglis (2008) documented the newly individualist values he attributed to such socio-economic transformation.

He claimed that the Irish have moved from being 'quiet, poor Catholic Church mice embodying a discourse and practice of piety and humility, to becoming busy, productive, self-indulgent rats searching for the next stimulation' (2008, pp. 189 - 190).

In sum, a wide variety of evidence hinted at the potential for 'fundamentally dissimilar' (Cerny, 2000b, p. 150) power relations in Ireland in the contemporary period, simultaneous with or attendant upon the rapid advance of the international economy in the country from the late 1980s. The collective features of this shift towards a global, individualised and secular social power order then implied a weakening of the ideological and material bases of an Irish Catholic-nationalist leadership of just the type Eipper anticipated. Nonetheless, national scale research asserting the relevance of personalistic social relations in promoting new alliances between political and economic actors at all levels, hinted at their continuing importance to a contemporary Irish power order (see Byrne, 2012; Hardiman, 2012). In addition, an uneven changing pattern of local power and leadership only has also been noted. The proliferation and diffusion of collective, negotiative community actors across the Irish polity signals structural ambiguities in the Irish experience of economic and political transformation (Curtin and Varley, 2002, p. 25; Taylor, 2005, p. 4).

The impact of new power structures and processes, capable of challenging the existing Catholic-nationalist leadership is therefore worthy of additional scholarly attention. In summary, this study will aim to contribute to a broader debate about power in Irish society on the basis of a contemporary empirical examination of situated local leadership and power. More specifically, the research is organised as a direct comparison with Eipper's original fieldwork in the late 1970s, interpreting the then extant social power order and positing the critical importance of the local organisation of leadership in this context.

Eipper's baseline correlates empirically with the rapid incursion of the world economy in Ireland from the 1980s and with the establishment of new power processes in the Irish polity that challenged this leadership. Eipper argued that the institutional forms assumed by the class system he identified, had its corollary:

> '…in the part played by owners and managers of businesses, politicians and civil servants, and the clergy and lay functionaries, in mediating the hegemonic deployment of power locally as well as nationally' (Eipper, 1986, p. 8).

In addition to this introductory section, the remainder of this chapter will present a brief overview of the ground to be covered in the thesis. Section 1.2 will introduce the key terms in question and provide an overview of the conceptual basis for the research. The following section 1.3 will elaborate upon the empirical basis for the study that may be associated both with this broad debate and the comparison being made. In section 1.4, I will summarise the rationale for the case study approach, describe the research design and represent the case study selection as a suitable comparator. In the concluding, section 1.5, I will set out how the discussion is to be organised, summarise the main findings of constituent chapters of the thesis and provide an overview of the study's conclusions.

1.2 Power and leadership; the terms of the debate

An important rationale for this study contends that something vital has been lost in contemporary theorisations of political and social power, as a result of a tendency to assimilate or to reduce separable concepts such as power, agency and consciousness to more binary questions of power and powerlessness. Haugaard (2002) argued that there is no single concept of power, in the sense of no meaningful way to reduce power to a single concept, because 'each usage takes place within local, tacit or explicit, theoretical systems' (2002, p. 2).

The fact that this study will enter the power debate from a comparative, empirical perspective implies a need to elaborate upon the terms of this debate that are relevant to this comparison and to discuss the different 'power tools', as Haugaard (2002, p. 2) puts it, that will be useful in the contemporary context. This exposition will underpin an argument asserting the value of Eipper's framework for a contemporary community power study, and also, will nominate its limits. The following section 1.3 will take up this latter point again when detailing the rationale for an empirical comparison between Eipper's case and my own. In this section, however, I will present a partial outline only of some aspects of the extensive power literature that are relevant to my comparison in theoretical terms.

The conceptualisation of power discussed by Eipper can be positioned generally as a class analysis, amongst a broader, majoritarian literature in which power implies the exercise of domination (Weber and Grossein, 2005, p. 949; see Haugaard, 2012). One strand of this tradition valorised cultural expressions of class relations as revelatory of both the evolution and stability of class power systems over time. This tradition included Eipper, who followed the academic and historical materialist E.P. Thompson ([1978] 1995) in his work. In more general terms, class analysis focused on ideology so as to better understand 'how the mental processes come about, by which it is possible that tensions between social classes, which feel compelled towards conflict because of the economic situation, can remain latent?' Horkheimer ([1932] 1968, p. 21).[2] This core pillar of class theory, which asserted the necessity for ideological struggle in and over consciousness in any class system, came to the fore in Eipper's theoretical and empirical scheme.

[2] Max Horkheimer was actually conceiving of mental processes within a Freudian paradigm, nevertheless, considerations of question of (a lack of) class consciousness preoccupied Marxists of the period.

Eipper employed a community study to frame his research, while differentiating his approach from that of similar previous studies. From the 1950s, community-based power studies became popular as proxies for questions of decision-making and leadership in capitalist democracies. Famous examples of these addressed the question of whether a ruling elite dominated American politics or not (see Dahl, 1971). The community power canon, arguably, reached its apotheosis in Lukes' (1974) closely argued and radical theorisation of power, which is often referred and debated amongst power theorists. Although not itself a study of community power, Lukes (2005, p. 1) readily acknowledged this heritage. The 'third face of power' Lukes (2005; 1974) proposed, offered a radical explanation for the vexed and perennial problem of how acquiescence to domination was achieved. In summary, Lukes (2005) asserted that 'power is at its most effective when least observable' (2005a, p. 1). His model suggested that where the first and second dimensions of power represented the active and overt exercise of domination, as already well-rehearsed in the existing literature, the third dimension of power he proposed internalised perceptions and preferences.

The result of such a shaping of preferences meant that the subordinated failed to be aware of their true interests and consented to their domination as willing subjects (2005, p. 11; p. 109). Critics argued that this conclusion was at odds with a conception of conscious agency, to the extent that it denied the possibility of the individual ever perceiving and resisting their domination. As Clegg (2000) stated 'Any act of resistance requires some degree of framed knowledge… To be a reflexive subject is to be someone who knows enough about who he or she is and what he or she could, and should be, that one chooses to make a stand' (2000, p. 86). In rebuttal, Lukes (2005) reflected upon James Scott's (1990) ethnographic research on domination and resistance, which cautioned against any assumption that resistance is not being routinely offered by the subordinated, albeit in covert ways (Lukes, 2005, p. 146; see also Hayward and Lukes, 2008).

Nonetheless and notwithstanding Scott's (1990) important insights, which he recognised, Lukes' (2005) proposition contributed to an impasse, even as he insisted that participatory democratic practice represented a route to revealing true interests (2005, p. 146). A more general devaluing of consciousness in his theory represented a critical loss to understanding social processes of change, including changes in power relations over time.

Eipper dealt in a different way with the same question of acquiescence considered by Lukes (2005). Eipper's theoretical contribution was based on an understanding that class relations were continuously negotiated *both* as an encounter and a condition. When social experience conflicted sufficiently with the prevailing social order, domination was revealed and could be resisted (see also Milliband, 1987, p. 328). This perspective privileged the social experience as a locus of conflicts and therefore, social change (Thompson [1978] 1995). Eipper insisted, for example, that the power system he observed in Ireland represented 'an ongoing, systematically patterned, but contingent and ever-changing, reproduction of social forms' (1986, p. 10). While his account showed how consciousness was captured, constrained and compromised (owing something to Gramsci's concept of hegemony in this regard), the people of Bantry were always alive to their situation. They simply compromised relative to the choices available. In sum, Eipper conceived of a continuous dialectic between power and consciousness, in which ideological constructs were always at issue.

An argument for the revival of an emphasis on leadership's struggle in, over and for consciousness is even more compelling when more recent perspectives on power in a context of globalisation are considered. In the contemporary period, questions of powerlessness are considered in the light of global capitalism, where scholars perceive globalisation as making for more complex power relations at all levels, producing 'messy webs of power' and a governance gap (Cerny, 2000a, p. 152).

An emphasis on powerlessness associated with a globalisation thesis conflated the two. Under globalisation, power was somehow essentially ubiquitous, hidden, resolved into social norms and internalised beyond epistemological reach (Bourdieu, 1985, Foucault, 2002, Lukes, 2005).

> …additional players, new roles, new resources, unfamiliar rules and new contradictions and conflicts appear on the scene. In the old game, each playing piece made one move only. This is no longer true of the new nameless game for power and domination (Beck, 2005, p. 4).

Finally, in his conclusions, Eipper avoided a determinist position, suggesting instead that old forms of consciousness may re-emerge within the institutions and power processes of a new leadership. Even if the thrust of Eipper's work was to show how consciousness was shaped by a ruling bloc, there was nothing essential or 'teleologically pre-determined' (1986, p. 5) about either the reproduction of these processes or the potential for either their dissolution or reconfiguration under different ideological or material conditions. It is this insight which grounds this study empirically, in the light of a literature stressing continuity through change in Irish social power relations and given the potential for novel forms of governance to interrupt the power processes upon which a Catholic-nationalist leadership depended (Curtin and Varley, 2002).

1.3 The power of negotiation

Eipper argued that 'leadership and domination are intimately related aspects of class. Although leadership relies upon the agency of specific people to be realized, it is always vested in some form of social organization' (1986, p. 147). There are then clear parallels in this framework for a contemporary examination of consensus and partnership based, collective leadership at the local level. Especially, when it is possible to conceive these as representing a new kind of class compromise or consciousness (Wright, 2015, p. 195).

The extent to which the emergence of novel forms of governance represented a changing pattern of authority and leadership in local society remains relatively untheorised (but see Curtin and Varley, 2002). Eipper neglected to consider civil society as a discrete sphere of influence. This study will extend Eipper's own hypothesis by conceiving of civil society as a distinct sphere of influence, using partnership and concertation as a new power process.

A major challenge in the recent Irish experience is to account for a leadership shaped by the form of negotiative, collective decision-making that accompanied the social and political accommodations in the contemporary period of economic transformation. It has been suggested that a new pattern of authority and leadership centred in collective negotiation and consensus is observable in Ireland, at least partly as a result of the Programme for National Economic Recovery (PNER) and its successors. These social pacts established a new relationship between labour and capital for the purposes of pay bargaining in 1987 and later, in pursuit of a wide ranging concertation in the Irish polity (Ryan, 2007; Hardiman, 2012). Larragy (2014, p. 3) argued that simple wage bargaining and other negotiative arrangements existed in the Irish polity prior to the late 1980s and were even described in Hardiman's (1988) key study as a national strategy of neo-corporatism from the 1970s (2014, p. 21).

Indeed, Townshend (1988) alluded to a national experience of consensus gained in the same period by public civil servants and politicians skilfully handling peace negotiations in Northern Ireland. However, from 1987 negotiation takes a much more sophisticated turn, in adopting a novel structural form to determine the 'labour contract' at the national level (Adshead, 2012, p. 174). Fostered by a Fianna Fáil leadership in response to deep economic crisis, this turn was led first by political concertation between Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil announced as the 'Tallaght Strategy' in 1987.

Allen (1997) noted that this political concertation included the Labour Party. He cites the ‘extraordinary close relationship’ between the leadership of the ITGWU and the leader of Fianna Fáil, Charles J. Haughey (1997, p. 183), as a necessary pre-condition for the genesis of social partnership. Social partnership thus began as a mechanism for agreeing wage demands with labour in the desperate economic conditions extant in 1987, but emerged as a democratic project of political concertation guaranteeing socially inclusive economic growth in the Celtic Tiger era to 2007 (Kirby, 2010, p. 93). In short, it was successfully embedded as a collective and distributive auxiliary to political power and appeared to offer a special way of dealing with international capital (O'Donnell, 2001).

During this period, according to the OECD (1996), the distinctively Irish features of the ‘master idea’ of the social partnership model accomplished in Ireland what, in their view, other OECD countries had failed to do - reform and connect ‘economic development and welfare provision’ (Sabel, 1996, p. 13; see also Lehmbruch, 1982, pp. 26 - 27). Walsh (2001) argued that the the concertation model developed in Ireland thus represented ‘an experimental new localism’ (2001, p. 111) in applying labour market remedies to transforming a failing economy at the level of local society (Turok, 2001, p. 137). As the progenitor of new sources and forms of political action, partnership centred governance even appeared to draw positive attention to an Irish legacy of personal social relations as a prerequisite for successful social partnerships (Adshead, 2006, p. 323; Hardiman, 2006, p. 344).

By 2005, Taylor (2005) argued that negotiated governance was embedded as a new power process ‘firmly in the Irish political psyche’ (2005, p. 190). Governance thus theorised, was not merely as a new arrangement for public policy decision-making - how specific decisions are made (Piattoni, 2010, p. 228) but a structural expression of new power relations in the Irish polity (Curtin, 1996, pp. 249 - 250).

For Curtin (1996), what was ‘novel’ was official recognition of the community actor by the state and a reliance on the key concepts of ‘partnership’ and ‘participation’ governing the organisation of relations between communities and state agencies (1996, pp. 248). The authors’ analytical model drew upon conceptualisations of the relationship between ‘power over’ as domination and ‘power to’ as empowerment in the sense of the collective power to act in concert and which apprehended the former as a subset of the latter (see Goehler, 2000, pp. 42-45). This conception of power or ‘power tool’ in Haugaard’s (2002, p. 1) terms, may be revelatory of social partnership as a more democratic impulse capable of disrupting the dominance of the Catholic-nationalist ruling bloc.

1.4 Research approach and case selection

The approach taken to the case study research is, in a similar manner to Eipper and for the same reasons, primarily empirical. Thompson had argued that a ‘materialist examination of values must situate itself, not by idealist propositions, but in the face of culture’s material abode: the people’s way of life, and, above all, their product and familial relationships’ ([1978] 1995, p. 237). In following Thompson’s work, Eipper translated this insight as a call to research social relations empirically, the ‘social being with lived experience’ or class as a specific encounter (1986, p. 14) in Ireland. Silverman (2001, p. 8) noted that much of this experience remained largely unrecorded, passing unseen into the contemporary period as a consequence of the same processes of domination which Eipper documents.

What we find in Eipper’s framework is a rich topography of power mapping a ‘symbiotic processual unity’ (1986, p. 3) centred in an empirical investigation of the Irish case via a local study. Stated in simple terms, Eipper argued that not only being powerful mattered in the Ireland of the late 1970s, but also that what counted as *local* power mattered in the Irish case.

Since a Catholic-nationalist social order was not only reproduced by, but also typified local relations of power, the geographic boundaries of the local area were neither impermeable to nor enclosed by the organisation of power relations at a macro scale (see also Chapter 6). As part of a focus on uncovering power processes by means of a case study which incorporated concepts of peripherality, dependency and rurality, Eipper laid claim to 'reinterpret the parameters of community studies' (1986, p. 1) as a specific conceptual outcome of his approach.

As a result, *'The Ruling Trinity'* comprised an exemplar for the empiricism of local studies as productive of general interpretive conclusions (Silverman, 2001, p. 9). Together with a focus on Irish power processes glimpsed on the cusp of transformation in the 1980s, Eipper's original fieldwork is particularly relevant as a baseline comparator for a contemporary study of seemingly transformative contemporary power processes (see also Curtin and Varley, 2002, p. 12). As outlined in this chapter, such changes have arguably produced neither an observable impersonal social order characterised by an excess of egoistic individualism (Etzioni, 1995), nor a rejection by Irish citizens of the authority of its key institutions. The conceptual starting point for this study then includes an understanding that 'modern power principles may reinscribe a traditional leadership' (Haugaard and Clegg, 2012, Volume 1, p. x). In short, the research question being addressed in comparative terms in this thesis asks:

> What contribution does a Catholic-nationalist local leadership make to a contemporary Irish power order?

In order to answer this question, the research study has been designed as a study of a single, exemplary case under the interpretive paradigm.
Its purpose is to investigate local power and leadership, making specific reference to the influence of the *Ruling Trinity* membership in light of mixed evidence of a changing pattern of authority in the contemporary period (Curtin and Varley, 2002).

The basic assumption being made is that contemporary aspects of power processes may be revealed through observation framed within a case study, in a manner which reduces the dangers highlighted by the behavioural critique (see also Lukes, 2005, p. 29).

Famously, Kuhn (1977) argued for the importance of 'an arsenal of exemplars' producing tipping points in theoretical perspectives (1977, p. 307). Kuhn's reasoning drew attention to the aggregate value of cases and also to their empirical utility. Further to an analysis of the development of his own successful local power study, Flyvbjerg (1998) concluded that case studies are uniquely organised to encompass the reality of research questions as a dynamic encounter between researcher and research subject. In opposition to a contemporary, narrow view of the explanatory potential of case studies, Flyvbjerg (2011, p. 314) drew on his own experience as well as a rich canon of community case studies to extend Kuhn's perspective for the social sciences. He provided a theoretical argument that case studies perform on a wide conceptual stage, principally, as a consequence of their depth. The rich interpretation presented in Eipper's ethnography is a respected case in point and it is intended this study will extend the insights revealed by Eipper.

A further rationale for case studies of contextual depth is an understanding, illustrated by comprehensive ethnographic research in County Kilkenny that the present 'on its own' fails to make sense (Gulliver and Silverman, 1992, p. 3). The authors offered a strong argument for an ethnographic case rooted in a rich historical analysis and which incorporated a diverse methodology centred in fieldwork, including formal participant observation and informal, unstructured interviews as public or political conversations in social settings.

Hunter (1993) elaborated on the research opportunities in local studies, which had proved crucial to the hard questions of power and leadership; understanding the lived experience of social power relations and the ideological processes involved when leadership acts to win 'hearts and minds' (Lukes, 2005b, p. 254).

> It is at the level of community that the myriad institutions of social life may be seen in their interdependent and contextual complexity. Ethnographic accounts of local community elites are especially adept at capturing this institutional complexity and the embedded community context of community power (Hunter, 1993, p. 55).

It is important to state here that no claim of direct parity between the two studies is being made. It is Eipper's specific insight that local and national power relations constitute a well-integrated, hegemonic system of dominance that provides the background to my comparative study. In conceiving of class society as a field of force operating at both the national and the local levels, Eipper extended the scope of community studies by formulating an alternative to a reductive schematic of macro power effects exerting downwards from the national level only. My research question focuses on the continuing salience of the local version of the ruling bloc in the contemporary period. The study then is more limited in its scope in comparison to Eipper's own work, which offered a close analysis of the evolution of catholic-nationalist capitalism and suggested the possible conditions for its dissolution or metamorphosis. My study is, however, expanded by an exploration of the effects of national economic dependence on an internationally funded runaway property market and by an emphasis on the social and political salience of collective decision-making institutions.

Moreover, as part of his approach, Eipper conceived of community flexibly, in terms of its ideological character, 'i.e. by the way people become conscious of their conflicts and fight them out' (1986, p. 6).

This study will similarly consider a community self-identified in ideological terms, as a political territory shaped in specific ways by an interplay of interlocked macro and micro processes from the late 1980s. In conclusion, a foundational basis for the comparison lies in three theory-centred principles that may be associated directly with Eipper. Firstly, the assertion of economic objectives as a key ordering logic of capitalist democracies. Secondly, the relevance of this logic for the organisation of power relations in local society. Thirdly, a conception of the important interplay between ideological and material conditions as expressed in the evolution of institutions, structures and dynamics of power over time. In summary, there are two kinds of empirical encounters being researched and compared; between Eipper's 'then' in the late 1970s with the contemporary 'now' of Blessington & District, as well as a Blessington 'then' and 'now'. In 2009, a small number of locales were initially examined, but only one proved to be suitable for the research purpose.

Blessington in Co. Wicklow represented a territory where the challenges presented to a local economic, religious and political leadership and the establishment of a collective actor to negotiate for local development, suggested a unique arrangement of 'local reasoning and situated agency' (Bevir and Trentmann, 2007, p. 186). The area selected for the case study is the wider environs of Blessington, Co. Wicklow, located to the extreme north-west of County Wicklow and approximately 30km from Dublin. At the time when Eipper was working in Bantry, Co. Cork in the 1970s, Blessington was demonstrably rural in terms of its socio-economic profile, 'a sleepy village' in the words of one study participant, with a population of fewer than 3,000 persons.

In consequence of a landed estate history and the development of a locally monopolistic extractive industry, the area was generally characterised by an exceptionally stable rural working and farming class commitment to the Roadstone company and to commercial farming.

From 1990, these local class commitments began to collapse under pressure from a large inflow population of urban incomers. A decade of deep conflict and radical protest followed, which played out locally in a bitter rivalry between pro- and anti-Roadstone factions, involving informal and temporary alliances between politicians and civil society leaders on both sides.

In this context, a new pattern of local leadership and power emerged slowly from reconciliation efforts brokered initially unsuccessfully by the leadership of both main local churches, gaining momentum only when a 'property developer' formally proposed the large-scale re-development and expansion of Blessington Town at the end of the decade.[3] From 2003, a single, collective decision-making organisation was established to negotiate for local development. The success of the 'Blessington & District Forum' civil society group in being accepted by the state as a *de-facto* political sphere of authority and influence was unprecedented in the local experience. The Forum engaged in a wide range of partnerships for educational, civic and local development projects over the next decade. Thus, the study area encompassed a new leadership centred in a novel form of negotiative local governance for a population of some 8,000 by the time this study was being conducted.

In Blessington & District, a Catholic-nationalist leadership bore unique witness to the transformative effects of new social relations and new power processes stemming from a new phase of economic expansion in Ireland from the late 1980s.

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[3] The 'property developer' character personalised in Irish discourse, was typically in fact a property development company, comprising several Company Directors and a greater number of investors, many of whom are unidentified. Often, as in this case, just a few of these Directors were the visible, lead representatives of the company. Cookehill Development Ltd. was one such, whose lead representatives included a leadership team fronted by the main developer and the company's financial director in Blessington. For the remainder of this thesis, I will largely follow the local habit of identifying the company 'Cookehill', but where locals will name the lead champion, I will refer to him throughout as often occurred in Irish public discourse by his function, as the 'property developer'.

In this context, the creation of a locally imagined, geo-political governance area 'Blessington & District' enabled consideration of a community power study based on what Appadurai (2002, p. 275) urged ought to be 'process' geographies, in particular, in this case, the interplay between the *Ruling Trinity* leadership and emergent, impersonal forms of power institutions and processes in the contemporary period. In sum, the development features of the case study territory contributed to the central preoccupation of this thesis.

The author spent extended periods working daily in the case study territory, and actually resided in the wider West Wicklow area during the main period when the research was being undertaken, from late 2009 to late 2011. The author was known in reputational terms to a minor degree only in the area, having worked previously as a development worker in County Wicklow. Such a reputation was considered unlikely to result in a study bias, given that little externally-driven community development activity had taken place in the area and local influentials were then perhaps atypically neutral in this regard (see also Chapter 2).

Participants were informed of the subject of the research and were assured that their individual comments would be directly quoted in the thesis on an anonymised basis. An assurance of anonymity was given to manage the potential risk of participation for interviewees. Such potential risk arose in light of anticipated sensitivities in seeking views on local power from its decision-making leadership. More specifically, a series of local controversies attracted significant and negative national attention to the organisation of local leadership and power in the area over the previous two decades. For the same reasons, recordings were not made and instead the author took detailed notes. These were typed up shortly after the interview, coded and password protected on the study laptop.

In addition, a decision was reached between the author and her supervisors early in the research, to withhold consultation access to the thesis for a standard 4-year period, in order to balance the identified relevant issues of participant risk, research veracity and interpretive integrity.

The ethnographic method used relied heavily on an iterative process of examining and comparing findings from the field against equivalent scholarly work and 'with an attention to the historical and political forces that frame the experiences of informant and fieldworker alike' (Wilson and Donnan, 2006, p. 183). In this case, the iterative process underpinned the case study as a core principle, since it is inherent in a direct case comparison and frames the organisation and content of the document itself. In addition, evidence provided directly by participants was triangulated with a deep and historically wide range of available qualitative and quantitative data. In the final analysis, however, it is acknowledged that, as Silverman and Gulliver (1992) accepted, the author explored and managed the tension between 'locality, holism and narrative sequence' (1992, p. 34) as best she could in order to make comparison with Eipper's work.

For extended periods over more than two years between late 2009 and 2011, the author worked daily in the local public library or in an office in the local VEC technical school. Public houses, cafés and people's homes or, on occasions, workplaces, provided suitable locales for open-ended, semi-structured interviews. In addition, the author observed the widest possible range of local social, political and economic events and her analysis is informed by the full breadth of these observations, including the numerous unstructured, social conversations she had while present. Such events included a deliberately broad set of formal and informal meetings relevant to the economic, religious and political spheres. Theatre performances, official local government meetings, Local Area Plan (LAP) meetings, heritage events, local political meetings, civil society group meetings and public events planning or promoting proposed local development projects.

In order to assess the contemporary salience of leadership by the local version of the *Ruling Trinity* membership, Part II of the thesis is organised to provide a contemporary account of the three spheres of influence and leadership identified by Eipper, the economic, religious and the political. The data presented and interpreted in each of the constituent chapters of Part II of the thesis will draw on two main primary sources. Firstly, I made minor contributions to the design of a local survey conducted in 2010, adding a question seeking perceptions of local political representatives, and advising on the formulation of a small number of other questions. The resultant dataset provided an important baseline to understanding local perceptions amongst the Blessington & District population, including attitudes towards the role of local political, religious and civil society leadership.

In addition, 70 open-ended, semi-structured interviews were conducted with influential local leaders concerning development activity in the area from the late 1980s, as well as the views of these participants as to the leadership figures and power processes involved.[4] Interviewees were selected by means of three distinct methods; in consequence of their current leadership position in local society, influence over key local issues, or for the role they played in local decision-making over time within each of the distinct sphere of influence.[5] Early on, it became clear that development professionals constituted a discrete category of influentials with decision-making power over development issues and events, whether county council staff members, health professionals or local development workers. An additional category was therefore added (see Appendix III for a typology of these study participants).

[4] A small number of interviewees were interviewed more than once, 70 individuals were interviewed in total, see Appendix III.

[5] One third of these study participants were members of the Blessington & District Forum group.

Each interviewee provided basic information on their personal history and was then invited to speak broadly to their own experience of leadership, to contribute views on key development events and to offer perceptions of the role played by local politicians, the new collective decision-making body, the 'Blessington & District Forum' (Forum) and economic and religious leaders. These discussions were transcribed typically that same day, coded and ordered by theme and by issue. Each interview was read multiple times and quotations included in the document represent those comments, which were sufficiently representative to stand as exemplars and could be supported by cross-referential evidence where they related to development events. In support of the stated aims of the research, not all of this leadership was based in the study territory. However, every participant had directly contributed to decision-making that had local development outcomes.

A second element of the research design focused on negotiative leadership as expressed politically by new modes of governance in Irish society. I traced the genesis and development of the collective governance group, the Forum, and explored its influence over development events for more than a decade. In order to capture the social relations and discourse which shaped the group's decision-making, I attended 14 meetings of the representative Forum over an 18 month period and transcribed, coded and ordered this data as part of a relational approach to analysing the narrative.[6]
The data gathered as part of this element of the research design, contributed to a view of the relationship between a transformed local leadership advanced by the state and a changing economy and civil society. Finally, the factual elements of information provided by study participants was cross-referenced with a diverse corpus of secondary data.

[6] In Blessington & District, this group was known colloquially as 'the Forum' or 'the Forum group'. For the remainder of this thesis, the local practice of calling the group 'the Forum' will be followed.

This included; official and other publications, national demographic and property datasets, local newspaper accounts and both official (for example, County Council planning files) and unofficial archival records and files (for example, development group or personal files), as well as community group membership data.

1.5 Format and thesis summary

Part I of the thesis, which includes this chapter, will present a rationale for a contemporary local ethnography as a comparison with Eipper's (1986) study. In sum, it places the *Ruling Trinity* in context and argues for the value of the contemporary research in conceptual and empirical terms. In Chapter 2, I will argue for the relevance of the selected case, in the light of evidence for the advance of new economic power relations in Ireland from the late 1980s. The local consequences included a fundamental reconfiguration of local civil society organisation from 1990 and the acceptance of a new consciousness of partnership. Two specific features of this case warranted its selection. The first was the failure of the traditional dominance of the town's economic patron, the nationalist Roadstone company as a result of popular challenge. The second was the establishment of a local governance territory for the purposes of negotiation with a property developer from about 2000. Each of these periods suggested key shifts in the social power of the local representation of the ruling bloc.

Part II: The Ruling Trinity in Decline? Each of the three chapters that will comprise Part II of the thesis describe changes in the material and ideological conditions of the leadership of the local representation of the *Ruling Trinity* membership from 1987 and will interpret the evidence of their impacts. The chapters will open with a brief conceptual map, which situates the contemporary evidence from Blessington & District in a context of wide-ranging structural changes since the late 1980s. These changes were relevant to nationalist economic development, clerical authority in a context of church state relations and clientelist political relations at the local level.

The main sections of the chapters will then describe and analyse ethnographic research data gathered during fieldwork, conducted largely between late 2009 and late 2011, so as to compare the observed local power relations and processes with those described by Eipper in the 1970s. The chapters will collectively answer a core comparison question of the research study – do clergy, local business people and politicians still collectively dominate local interests?

Chapter 3 – An Economic Politics of Land and Labour. The central subject of this chapter will be changes in the local economic sphere from the late 1980s and it follows closely upon the evidence provided in Chapter 2. The chapter will open with a discussion of the contemporary scholarly debate on the character of national economic growth from the late 1980s. I will then describe the decline of the economic patronage of Roadstone as an effect of social transformation and will then assess the activity and influence of the property development company, Cookehill Development Ltd. Based on the local evidence in Blessington, I will suggest the scope of influence enjoyed by the property developer in his relations with the state and with civil society is suggestive of an extension or adaptation of economic nationalism under conditions of Irish globalisation, rather than a wholesale subordination to it.

In sum, an ideology of partnership mediated existing business relationships with the state and focused finance capital on property speculation. In the light of the evidence of the observed impact of business interests and the state in fostering consensus for local development decision-making, I will conclude that the pattern of change in the economic sphere accords with a defensive conception of the class compromise effected in the Irish polity from the late 1980s and that were accompanied by a new accommodation between labour and capital.

Chapter 4: Catholic Culture and Moral Persuasion. The religious sphere will provide the central focus for this chapter, with particular reference being made to how Catholic clerical control over local civic affairs contributes to a Catholic culture in the contemporary experience.
In Chapter 2, I will describe how a strong Protestant culture thrived locally under Catholic-nationalism. The early sections of this chapter will compare perspectives exploring the declining moral authority of the Irish Catholic Church, with earlier characterisations of clerical leadership as a fundamental bulwark of an exceptional Catholic social power. In the Blessington Parish, I will observe a persuasive parish priest playing a key role in the reconfiguration of civil society, while at the same time containing the threats to Catholic education provision as the motive force for the reproduction of Catholic social power. I will argue that this role was authorised by a more morally autonomous population whose consciousness remains shaped by a promise of upward social mobility through education. Even as corporate Catholic Church power has diminished, the legitimacy of local clerical leadership found powerful expression in new forms of governance that resonated with Catholic social values of co-operation and consensus.

Chapter 5 – *Political Personalism and Impersonal Governance*. The focus of this chapter will be changes in leadership in the local political sphere that included the diffusion of participatory democratic practice in governance arrangements throughout the state. In the first sections of the chapter, I describe the relevance of clientelist party factionalism to local democratic practice over time. In the main section of the chapter, I will address the negative effect of a reassertion of Catholic leadership on local elected representation in the case study territory, as part of a collapsing of local democracy into the civic sphere and the apparent paradox of a reinforced personalism as the key mechanism for local political practice. I will conclude that personalism continued to structure access to political decision-making, even as the influence of local politicians has diminished.

Moreover, while clientelism continued to exert an ideological pressure on local political consciousness, the alliance between local politicians and business leaders strengthened. In the final sections of the chapter, I will interpret the novel reproduction of local political personalism within local governance and relate this to the diminishing influence of local political representation in this case.

Part III: The Ruling Trinity Transformed: Negotiating Power and Local Leadership in Ireland will comprise two chapters, Chapters 6 and 7. Each of the three chapters in Part II will highlight the continuing salience of the key power processes to which the local version of the Ruling Trinity membership was dedicated in Eipper's study, but will also signal the intermediation of a novel power process of collective negotiation. The role of the new collective actor in Blessington & District offered a new basis for social power locally, distinguishing this case from that of Eipper. The two chapters which comprise Part III will account for this contemporary pattern of local leadership and will interpret this pattern relative to that extant in Blessington prior to the 1990s.

Chapter 6 - *Negotiating Power and Civil Society Leadership.* This chapter will describe the resolution of structural changes faced by the local civil society leadership by means of its reconfiguration for collective political action. It will offer an insight into the organisation of a class leadership in collective negotiative arrangements, contributing to conceptual insights of power processes unknown to Eipper's work in the late 1970s. The chapter will first trace conceptualisations of civil society to situate the development of partnership-centred local governance. I will then describe the turbulent socio-economic changes that led to the genesis of the Blessington & District area as a political territory. I will analyse the ordering of social power relations within the Blessington & District Forum and will discuss its representation and discursive processes relative to the main spheres of traditional influence of the local ruling bloc.

Finally, I will argue that the evolution of the Blessington & District Forum and its subsequent influence over civil society from 2000 onwards constituted a unique reconfiguration of the personal power of local leadership, in a context where the social power of this leadership was threatened by wider processes of ideological and material change.

Chapter 7 – *Conclusions – The Ruling Trinity Transformed.* The purpose of this chapter will be to assess the contribution that the local version of the *Ruling Trinity* makes to a contemporary Irish power order. Arising from the evidence presented in the previous chapters of this thesis, the concluding chapter will reassert some basic assumptions, will summarise the main findings and will note future avenues for research. Taken as a whole, the thesis will argue that the experience of the Blessington & District governance territory suggests that the social power of Catholic-nationalist relations remains relevant in Ireland.

I will interpret the evidence from the study, presenting a case of a local leadership structured between the political, economic and religious spheres successfully prevailing over local interests and reinforcing its dominance. In sum, I will not observe in Blessington & District, either a total failure of Catholic-nationalist power processes in local society or a failure of the underlying personalistic power relations that characterised them. Instead, I will argue that the lived experience of Blessington & District residents was still shaped by clericalism, nationalist businessmen and clientelist politics, because the key underpinning consciousness upon which these power capacities were constructed has not yet failed.

These conclusions will not be equated with any inertia in the contemporary power system at play. In Blessington & District, transitions in civil society organisation, including the establishment of concertation and the credibility achieved by civil society leadership in representing the community for economic development, constituted the most significant difference between this case and that explored by Eipper.

Local consent to the new authority of concertation critically relied upon an underlying expectation of a predictable trajectory of social mobility and the continuing salience of nationalism, relative to a weaker Europeanisation up to 2010. The basis for the social power of partnership relied on this underpinning consciousness, reinforcing the leadership of the local version of the *Ruling Trinity* unevenly only and accommodating changes in the institutional configuration of the national ruling bloc as a whole. Finally, while the influence of the Blessington & District Forum appeared to be exceptional, it nonetheless validated Eipper's underlying contention of the necessity to model the interplay between macro level and micro-level power dynamics over time, since it was nonetheless the outcome of the historical processes which contributed to an exceptional stability in local power relations from Independence up to the late 1980s.

Chapter 2

Locating a Changing Pattern of Local Leadership

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will situate the development trajectory of the selected governance case, Blessington & District in Co. Wicklow for the purposes of comparison with the Bantry Rural District, where Eipper's (1986) ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in the mid-1970s. In sum, the chapter aims to introduce the reader to Blessington & District as the site of the subsequent intensive social, economic and political change and its impact on the eponymous *Ruling Trinity* leadership to be considered in Part II. To this end, this chapter will adopt a historical perspective, drawing on a wide variety of primary and secondary sources to consider the development of local social power relations in the territory from the landed estate era up to the 1980s. In the concluding sections of the chapter, I will explicitly relate the selection of the Blessington & District governance territory as a comparative case of contemporary leadership to Eipper's original ethnography and offer an empirical and a conceptual argument for its relevance to the contemporary research question being addressed.

2.2 Overview of study territory

> *Blessington was a very lucky town. It had the sand and the gravel and the 65 bus to Dublin. (Study participant, 2009).*

The Wicklow uplands cleave County Wicklow in two from north to south and are implicated in the uneven human settlement pattern in evidence between the more affluent eastern part of the county and its poorer, western neighbour, West Wicklow.

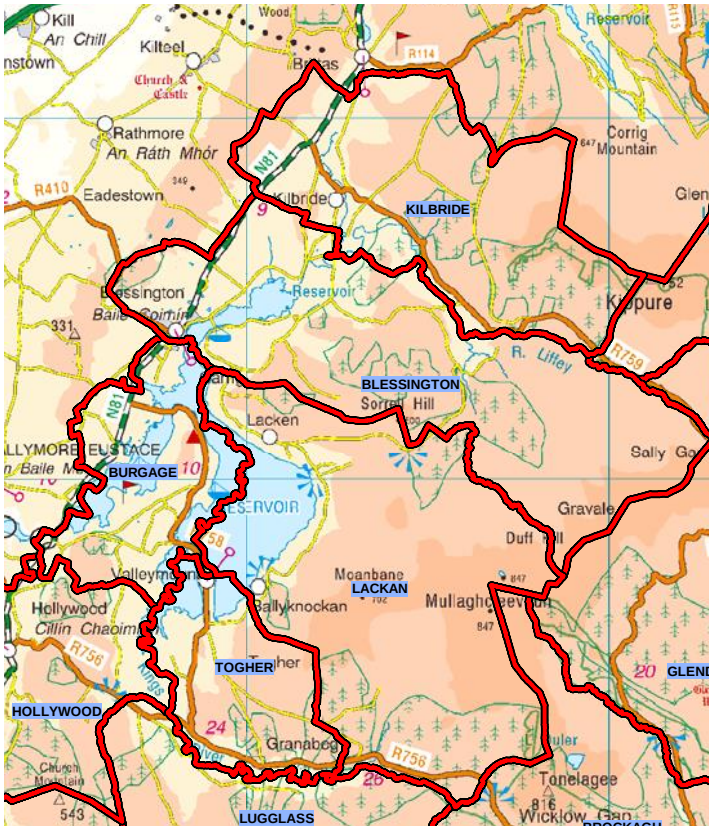
All of the major towns in County Wicklow lie along the narrow eastern corridor radiating from the county's primary infrastructural artery; the M11/N11 extends through the county from south county Dublin to Rosslare in County Wexford. County Wicklow forms part of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) region in planning terms. In 2010, the GDA was home to 1.8 million people, so that 39 per cent of the state's population was living on just 10 per cent of its landmass (Hughes, 2010). The significant urban population centres of Bray, Greystones, Wicklow and Arklow on the east coast of Co. Wicklow collectively accounted for 65,904 persons or almost half of the local population of 136,448 persons. The county's population was more than 60 per cent urban by 2011 (CSO, 2012, *Profile One, Town and Country*). By contrast, Blessington was the largest urban settlement in West Wicklow with a population of just 5,010 people. Figure 2.1 below locates Blessington & District in its socio-economic geographical context.

Figure 2.1 Socio-economic situation of Blessington Town

Source: Wicklow County Council, 2011

In 2011, the self-defined local governance territory of Blessington & District encompassed a population of 8,290 people or just over one-third of the population of rural western Wicklow, residing on a total land area of some 20,681 ha. Just 30 years earlier, the population of the study territory stood at just 3,395 persons. This territory includes the four electoral divisions of Blessington, Burgage, Lackan, and Kilbride in 2011, part of the Baltinglass Electoral Area, known colloquially as 'West Wicklow'. In addition, 371 persons lived within the Blessington Town border, but formed part of the Naas Rural Electoral Division in Co. Kildare. Fully three-quarters of the housing stock in Blessington Town was constructed between 1991 and 2011. Figure 2.2 below shows the four electoral divisions included in the study territory.

Figure 2.2 Map showing locations of Kilbride ED, Blessington ED, Lackan ED and Burgage ED.



Source: Wicklow County Council, 2009.

Table 2.1 Population in study area by Electoral Division and land area (2011)

Electoral Division	Population	Land Area (ha.)
Blessington	4,394	6,384
Burgage	1,787	2,413
Kilbride	975	4,713
Lackan	963	7,171
* *Blessington Town*	*5,010*	-
Total:	****8,290**	**20,681**

Source: CSO, Census of Population, 2011 (Small Area Data) and Census of Agriculture, 2010

* In 2011, the total for Blessington Town's population included 2,898 persons counted in Blessington ED, 1,125 people counted in Burgage ED and an additional 371 townspeople counted, part of the Naas Rural ED, Co. Kildare.

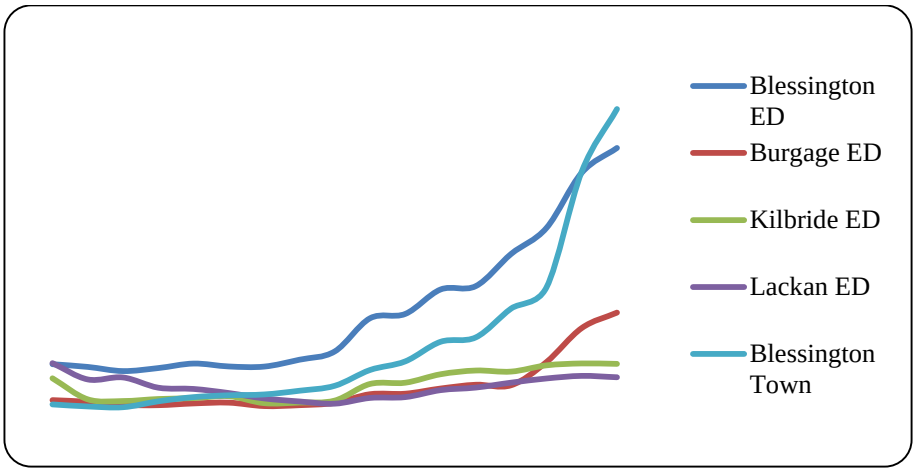
** The total figure for the study territory in 2011 includes the population of all four Electoral Divisions, plus 371 Blessington Town residents, counted in the Naas Rural Electoral Division in Co. Kildare.

The largest settlement in West Wicklow in 2011 was Blessington Town, which grew by a quarter in the inter-censal period from 2006 and had a total population of 5,010 persons by 2011 (CSO, Census 2011, *Population Classified by Area*). Blessington Town was established in the late 17th century to serve the Blessington Estate. Located just 30km distance from the capital, the majority of the extant population of Blessington Town settled in Blessington from Dublin City, in particular from the urban conurbations of South and West Dublin. By 2011 then, two-thirds of the study population lived within 2km of Blessington Town's Main Street. Beyond the urban population core of Blessington Town lay four small satellite rural village: Lackan, Manor Kilbride, Ballyknockan and Valleymount.

One of these, Manor Kilbride, had a population of 281 persons and was the largest of the four villages in 2011 (CSO, Census 2011, *Population by Area*). Commensurate with the double-digit percentage growth in population of the Blessington (10 per cent) and Burgage EDs (16 per cent), both the predominantly rural Kilbride and Lackan EDs contracted slightly between 2006 and 2011, by 0.7 per cent and 2.6 per cent respectively. The remaining three villages encircled the Poulaphouca Reservoir, more commonly known as Blessington Lake, situated on the western border of Blessington Town.

Figure 2.3 overleaf graphically illustrates the 'flat' pattern of percentage population change in the four electoral divisions included in the study prior to the mid 1960s, to be followed by vigorous population growth over this and the following decades. From 1971, the graph of population growth shows in particular, that the fortunes of Blessington Town and the Blessington ED can now be separated from those of the surrounding rural hinterland by an upward trajectory. This trajectory demonstrates clearly the growing influence of towns. The most dramatic rise in absolute numbers of population growth in the territory occurred between 1996 and 2006, largely in the Blessington ED, which incorporated Blessington Town. The growth of population in the Burgage ED from 1996 was also directly attributable to the development of the adjoining Blessington Town. In 2011, approximately two-thirds of the population of both Burgage ED and Blessington ED lived within the borders of Blessington Town.

Figure 2.3 Demographic change in case study territory (1911 – 2011)



Source: CSO, Census of Population, Volume 1, various censes 1911 - 2011. Adapted by thesis author.

Land use

Agriculture accounted for more than one-third of the total land area in the study territory in 2000 (36 per cent) and was farmed by 178 farm households. The average farm size across the district was then slightly lower than that of the county as a whole, standing at 41.2 ha. in the district compared with 42.4 ha. for the county. However, these averages masked significant variations in agricultural productivity within the study territory. In the more marginal Lackan ED, where a proportion of the land area was submerged beneath the Poulaphouca Reservoir, less than one fifth of the total land area was farmed and farm sizes here averaged 23 hectares – 68 per cent of farms were in fact, less than 20 hectares in size. By contrast, in the Burgage, Blessington and Kilbride EDs, up to half of the total land area was farmed and farm sizes here averaged 35 hectares, 50 hectares and 54 hectares, respectively (CSO, Census of Agriculture, 2000). In a context of a predominantly pastoral agriculture, farm enterprise similarly differed widely according to electoral division.

On 40 per cent of farms in the Kilbride ED, for example, milk production was the significant economic enterprise, while an equivalent proportion of farms were generally categorised as mixed grazing and livestock enterprises. In Lackan ED where no farm had an economically significant dairy enterprise, two-thirds of farms instead derived their income primarily from sheep farming (Crowley et al., 2008).

2.3 The colonial genesis of leadership and power

The genesis of one form of contemporary influence on the study territory stemmed directly from the colonial legacy of the landed estate system in Ireland. Ireland offered untrammelled opportunities for social mobility to ambitious English settlers on the fringes of the class system in England in the late 17th century (Ohlmeyer, 2012), including the founders of the Blessington Estate, the Boyle family. By the 18th century, Blessington & District was ruled by an aristocratic landowning leadership forming 'a hegemony that protected their interests in all walks of life' (Trant, 2004, p. 20) and whose primary seat and further estates were located in the north. At the administrative and commercial core of the territory, Blessington Town was built to serve the 16,000 acre Blessington Estate, including its dominant buildings; the courthouse, the Land Agent's house, inn, Market House, Church of Ireland church, retail premises and a central monument dedicated to an heir of the Downshire family.

General policies of farm consolidation and a preferential endowment of significant leaseholds and tenancies to Protestants on the more fertile lowlands, contributed to the establishment of a complex religious and class-based settlement pattern in the territory. Minor gentry, farmers and peasantry diffused spatially in descending order of class from the richer agricultural lowlands to the impoverished uplands parts of the estate (Maguire, 1972, p. 123; Trant, 2004).

In his comprehensive study of the management practices of landlords of the Blessington Estate, Maguire (1972) concluded that the corrosive effects of the classic 'middlemen' practices of exploiting stacked tenancies for surplus profit, were more effectively managed on the Blessington Estate than was typical. In 1829, there were just 292 direct tenants on ca. 15,000 acres and tenancies were larger, at an average of 100 statute acres, than was typical elsewhere (Maguire, 1972, p. 222). Moreover, Maguire (1972) suggested that on the Blessington Estate, middlemen tended to be larger farmers rather than 'true middlemen' and a deliberate policy pursued of providing under-tenants with leases as middlemen leases ran out (1972, p. 224).

Nonetheless, rent arrears were already rising in the years prior to the 'Great Hunger'. To explain these rent arrears, Maguire (1972) argued that a general period of rent setting on the Blessington Estate at a time of high agricultural land values in the period to 1815, proved unsustainable following the steep fall in prices for crops and meat in the economically depressed post-Napoleonic period (see also Larkin, 1975, p. 1246). In addition, an endemic lack of financial return from agriculture was not relieved by the availability of other forms of employment. By contrast, alternative employment opportunities, unrestricted tenancy rights and the availability of improving capital continued to support rental income on the northern estates. The Famine represented a clear structural break in the organisation of the national economy, involving an abrupt transition from tillage to pasture farming and provoking a steep, long-term decline in agricultural labour (O'Rourke, 1991, p. 20). The proximate availability of employment opportunities in Dublin, the establishment of a local extraction industry following the opening of the first granite seam at Ballyknockan in 1824, together with the active management practices of the landlords over much of the territory, combined to mitigate the worst affects of Famine in the Blessington district.[7]

[7] Per records held by the Blessington Local and Family History Society and reported to the thesis author by its Chairperson during a discussion held on 13th April, 2010.

Nolan (1994) noted, for example, that estate records showed that the Crosscoolharbour townland at the heart of the Blessington Estate contained 12 Protestant houses on 826 acres in 1841 and all 12 remained after the Famine, in 1851. Families whose descendants would figure amongst Blessington's leadership for the next 150 years, such as the Boothman family, tenant this townland. However, the effects of the Famine in the territory were similarly influenced by religion. From the nearby Oldcourt townland, of a similar area (size) to Crosscoolharbour, but predominantly Catholic and on marginal land, 40 per cent of the cabins disappeared in the period (Nolan, 1994, p. 678).

Irish landlordism failed progressively from 1850 as a legitimate organising system for the Irish agricultural economy; agricultural depression followed bad harvests, prices fell and a structured resistance developed amongst a newly enfranchised Irish tenant farmer-class in the late 1870s. In 1881, the income from rent accruing annually to the Blessington Estate was £6,836, but by the turn of the 20th century this figure was £5,574. Moreover, appeals for downward rent review now made to the new Land Commission by tenants of the estate were frequently successful, further destabilising the dominance of the landlord over his tenants (Trant, 2004). The Marquis of Downshire began to sell Blessington Estate lands to tenants under the provisions of the 1885 Land Act in the first decade of the 20th century and progressively under the favourable provisions of the 1903 Wyndham Land Act (per Property Registration Authority of Ireland folio records). By the date of a public auction of the remaining estate lands held in 1921, the landed estate era at Blessington effectively came to an end.

2.4 The legacy of landed estate power

The 17th century settlers who established the Blessington Estate were engaged in an overarching project of making Ireland English (Ohlmeyer, 2012).

Land underpinned their status as cultural, economic and political brokers and provided the wealth needed to sustain them as an aristocratic class. The demise of these landed estates in turn exemplified a dichotomy in post-Famine Ireland – a contrast between 'profound population change on the one hand and continuity in land tenure on the other' (Stout, 1996, p. 34). In West Wicklow, pre-existing policies of land consolidation together with losses in the local population meant that the largest farms (in excess of 100 acres) at the emergence of the new Irish state were all at the fertile core of previous landed estates, just as they had been in 1830. In Blessington Town, a small number of Protestant farming families, Boothmans, Darkers and Egars continued to dominate amongst large landowners, mirroring a national picture where the number of Protestant farmers actually increased in absolute terms between 1911 and 1926 (see Coakley, 1998, pp. 92 - 93). In addition to being farmers, the Boothman family owned the local shop and Post Office in Blessington Town up the early 1900s, before retreating back into commercial farming as part of a more general transition from Protestant to Catholic retail premises that progressed only gradually in Blessington Town up to the 1970s.

Religious settlement patterns correlated with land values. In 1936, 17 per cent of the population of Kilbride recorded their Protestant affiliation following a significant loss of population generally from this electoral division in the previous two decades, while in the Lackan ED in that year just 0.5 per cent of the population recorded the Protestant faith in the Census form (CSO, Census 1936, Volume 3, Table 12, pp. 56 - 57). In the Blessington ED, land was three times more valuable per acre and in Kilbride ED was two and a half times more valuable than land in the Lackan ED (CSO, Census 1936, Volume 1). By the 1950s, one-tenth of farmers with holdings of 100 acres or more accounted for nearly one-quarter of family income in Ireland (O'Grada, 2008, p. 12).

Even in 1981, 87 per cent of farmers in the Kilbride ED were farming more than 50 acres, while just 36 per cent of farmers in Lackan ED had farms of equivalent size. Land ownership in the study territory then, remained sharply divided along class and religious lines predetermined by its landed estate history, as was characteristic of County Wicklow as a whole. Now engaged in the project of making Ireland Irish, the economic development policies of the new Irish state did not necessarily favour the conditions of poorer Catholic farmers locally. Marginal, small farms tenanted by predominantly Catholic families near Blessington were submerged to create the Poulaphouca Reservoir in 1939, as the largest development project in terms of landmass (5,500 acres), extant in the state. The compensation paid to local farmers was based on land values set during the so-called Economic War with Britain. From 1932 and until its resolution in 1938, the Irish state refused to continue paying land annuities due to the British exchequer under the provisions of 19th century Land Acts as part of new Fianna Fáil protectionist measures. The values set in the 1930s were therefore much lower than the land values prevailing just ten years previously (Corlett, 2008, p. 4). Unable to purchase land elsewhere, poorer farmers left the area, a historic injustice that was recalled bitterly by native families at commemorative events held locally in 2009.

The fate of one totemic land bloc at the heart of the Blessington Estate, traced the emergence of Catholic-nationalist power in the new state, replacing the land-centred, familial power structures of colonial Ireland (Eipper, 1986, p. 18). In 1921, Catholic Daniel O'Leary from Macroom in Co. Cork, later an influential member of Cumann na nGaedhael, purchased a core 604 acres of core estate lands from the Marquis of Downshire for a price of £10,010 (Records Office, Department of Agriculture & Science). The lands consisted of two parcels, one comprising 264 acres including a substantial house on the Main Street of Blessington Town and an adjoining bloc comprising 340 acres, part of the original deer park of the estate.

In 1927, Daniel O'Leary sold the entire of the lands to the Land Commission and then re-purchased the second bloc of 264 acres at a price of £4,600, payable over half yearly instalments at an annuity of ca. £213 per annum (Property Registration Authority, Folio 4558).

Completed at a time when Cumann na nGaedhael's '…allegiance to the promotion of the native bourgeoisie was unshakeable' (Powell, 1992, p. 166), Daniel received the equivalent cash value of the lands at a time when land prices were relatively buoyant and established what amounted to a long-term mortgage on his re-purchased bloc, repayable at a favourable interest rate. The deal enabled Daniel to invest in in modernising his farm. The subsequent sale of this same land bloc by Daniel's grandson to a property development company in 1999 for a price of €19.5 million, co-incidentally, the same year in which the Land Commission was formally dissolved, wound this tale forward from the demise of landlordism and the birth of the state into the dawn of a new politics of land in Ireland in the 21st century (see Appendix I, see also Chapter 3).

The recent only construction of the first Catholic Church and school buildings in Blessington Town represented a further legacy of the dominance of the landed estate class locally. A small Catholic primary school was established in Blessington Town in 1882. However, a Catholic Church was only built on the Main Street in 1946 under the leadership of a recently appointed parish priest, Fr. Joseph Union, replacing the original parish church established some three miles distant at Crosschapel.[8] A protestant member of the Local and Family History Society in Blessington related her understanding, gleaned from archival research, of the challenges faced by the Catholic Church in the town during construction.

[8] Fr. Union was parish priest at Blessington from 1945 to 1953 and is remembered by a local who knew him as: 'A very progressive type, very nice. On a Sunday, he'd park his car, have his walk, then come up to Hennessey's, come up the stairs and call 'any chance of a cup of tea'?' (Participant A31).

> The Church of Ireland resisted – there was lots of toing and froing. It [the church] was built with voluntary labour – all the farmers lent their carts to bring the stone from Ballyknockan. But it wasn't locals that paid for the church because the people here were too poor. It was families from the Kildare side of the wider Blessington Parish, as far as Naas, Kill, Eadestown and Punchestown farmers (Participant A31).

The new Catholic Church and a primary school, which replaced a previous small Catholic school built on the same Blessington Town site in 1882, were further developed in the early 1970s. Unusually, a vocational, rather than second level education provision was established in the study territory. Up to the mid-1960s, half of the children in the state left school at age 13 and a 'reforming zeal' had taken hold in the state, connecting European economic performance with educational performance (Bielenberg and Ryan, 2013, p. 23). In 1963, a technical school was built in Blessington Town under the aegis of the local authority led Vocational Educational Committee and said to have been strongly promoted by the locally influential Cllr. Jimmy Miley. The Mileys were originally Catholic subsistence farmers, forcibly transplanted to County Kildare from lands dedicated to the Poulaphouca Reservoir and Cllr. Miley returned in the area in the 1940s to work as a barman and later, as a self-employed publican and local elected representative (see also Section 2.5 below and Chapter 5).

The programmes of the technical school provided day school and evening skills training centred on skilled manual trades, farming (boys) and clerical (girls) occupations.[9] While these schools were purportedly non-denominational, Powell (1992) points out that 'Catholic clergy exercised very considerable power on the Vocational Education Committees' (1992, p. 164).

[9] In 1966, or 3 years after the establishment of the Blessington Technical School, a total of 39 students had left to take up employment, including 18 girls and 21 boys. Of the given occupations of the girls, 10 were working as 'clerk/typists', 2 were working in the 'hotel industry', 1 was a 'factory worker' and 2 had 'home duties'. Of the given occupations of the boys, 10 were 'skilled trade apprentices', 10 had returned to 'family farms' and 1 was a 'despatch clerk'. Report of the annual meeting of the Blessington Technical School (*Wicklow People*, 09/04/1966).

In this case, both Protestant and Catholic clergy were founding members of the vocational school committee. A two-year group certificate award only was available to vocational school students in the 1960s. Public secondary schools offered the intermediate and the leaving certificate awards, which were gateways to third-level education (Ferriter, 2012a, p. 631). As a result, social mobility depended on Blessington & District families of either religion sending their children to denominational second level schools in Naas or Dublin. No child of an influential member of either of the two main development groups in the mid-1960s attended the vocational school. Further to the abandonment of a Catholic secondary school development project mooted by the Congregation of Christian Brothers in 1970, both churches retained control of primary level education only in the territory, which sharply differentiated it from similar sized Catholic parishes elsewhere.

Between 1978 and 1991, the existing vocational education committee sought a site for a new second level school building in Blessington. The development project commenced in 1983 and received the necessary planning approval in 1987, but financial issues prevented construction until 1991 (*Wicklow People*, *26/04/1991*, p. 6). In spite of significant growth in the local population, low completion and third level progression rates at the modern Blessington Community College were noted both by individual study participants and by the new principal appointed in 2011 as a nagging problem (Forum meeting, *10/05/2010*). Meanwhile, middle class families in Blessington & District continued to send their children to preferred denominational schools outside of the area as they had always done.

2.5 Reorienting leadership and influence in West Wicklow from south to north

By the end of the first half of the 20th century, Blessington & District manifested the same declining socio-economic conditions that were typical nationally when GDP per capita was just one and a half times higher than in 1922 (Bielenberg and Ryan, 2013, p. 189). Between 1926 and 1966, West Wicklow experienced a 19 per cent loss of population, largely the result of outmigration rather than a move to the towns from the rural hinterlands. The rural population of West Wicklow fell by 22 per cent in the period, while the towns grew by just 3 per cent up to the early 1960s (Aalen et al., 1966, p. 206). Net emigration for one intercensal period, 1956 – 1961, was 1,430 people from West Wicklow, mirroring a national demographic picture of emigration. Population loss in the 1950s was by no means uniform. Villages and rural hinterlands in the territory lost up to 35 per cent of the total population. This included the small local village of Ballyknockan, which suffered a sharp decline in local employment in traditional granite stone working as a consequence of modern building methods.

An important socio-economic study completed by Aalen et al (1966) in West Wicklow at the time records that Baltinglass lost 12 per cent of its population, while Blessington experienced a small, positive increase in population in intercensal period to 1961 (1966, p. 206). Social imbalances followed closely upon rural decline. By 1961, nearly 37 per cent of men aged 55 – 64 were unmarried in West Wicklow. However, the 1960s heralded a period of differential prosperity, especially for the towns of the north of West Wicklow and Aalen et al (1966) reported that by the time the study was being completed in the mid-1960s, Blessington was the 'healthiest of the towns of West Wicklow in economic terms' (1966, p. 209).

2.5.1 Restructuring the agricultural economy

In the study territory as a whole, a largely pasture-based agricultural economy remained the single biggest employment sector in the 1960s. Mixed livestock (dairy, cattle and sheep) production was the norm, as it was throughout West Wicklow (Aalen et al., 1966). Over half of the population (56 per cent in 1961) of the West Wicklow Rural District was reliant on farming income (Aalen et al., 1966, p. 67). Agricultural enterprise, meanwhile, was radically altered first by mechanisation and then by a dramatic transition to commercial milk production. One study participant, himself a local historian, described the fears of agricultural labourers as mechanisation changed the nature of farming labour.

> My mother was invited to attend a Young Farmers Club meeting in 1951 - to a presentation on '*Toil Versus Oil'* funded by Irish Shell. Darker, Boothman and O'Leary all bought tractors, causing panic in the town. Previously, the AIB site on the main street was the hiring corner. In fact, the work changed, but tractors needed more people than ever (Participant A6).

In West Wicklow, the cow population rose by 42.1 per cent between 1926 and 1960, while it rose by just 8.4 per cent in the country as a whole for the same period. A rapid expansion of the cow population occurred in particular between 1960 and 1965. Distinctions already existing between smaller, marginal holdings and larger, fertile lowland holdings since the colonial period, sharpened still further under the modernisation of farm enterprise in the study territory from the 1960s. The rural hinterland and villages of Lackan, Ballyknockan and Valleymount in the district, for example, experienced the extreme rural decline that was typical even in the 1960s of the West Wicklow area and never recovered (Wicklow County Council, 1970).

Proximity to Dublin and access to transport routes reinforced the uneven economic benefits of existing land tenure patterns so that, for example, liquid milk suppliers were concentrated to the north of West Wicklow, specifically, in Blessington and in Kilbride by the late 1960s. Commercial dairying and the more lucrative advanced cattle stock rearing became strongly associated with lowland large farms such as those in Kilbride ED, while an absence of dairy and the rearing of young stock was typical in the more marginal, small farm agriculture of Lackan ED, which instead retained an high dependence on marginal sheep farming.

In Blessington ED and Kilbride EDs, however, dairy cows still represented just one quarter of all livestock units in 1965 (Aalen et al., 1966, p. 177). The population of Blessington Town rose by 2.7 per cent in the critical period for emigration in Ireland from 1956 to 1961. Meanwhile, in the Lackan ED where small farms dominated, a countervailing population loss of 17 per cent occurred in the same intercensal period (Aalen et al., 1966, pp. 169 - 170). This pattern of a sharpening differentiation by class progressed even during the record population growth levels experienced nationally in the 1970s (see also Hannan, 1979, p. 201). Recorded in the 1981 Census, the population of the Lackan ED experienced twice the unemployment level of other study territory EDs, at close to 19 per cent of the labour force (CSO, Small Area Population Statistics, 1981).

The economic role of Blessington Town, however, remained essentially that of trading centre for the farmers of the town and its hinterland. This period coincided with the local expansion of the nationalist Roadstone company.[10]

[10] The Roadstone company was originally founded by two Dublin brothers from Inchicore who began making blocks from clinker and sand in 1932, sourced by the company in the mid-1930s from pits in Kill, Co. Kildare. By 1945, Castle Sand and Gravel was formally established, as a partnership between the Roche men, a firm of local accountants, two Dublin publicans and a large Kill based landowner. The expansion of the company was greatly facilitated by national investment in a primary road network from the late 1940s and the Irish State's active relationship with the company dates from this period (Share, 1999). The company became Roadstone Dublin Ltd. in 1949 and eventually, various operations merged into Cement Roadstone Holdings in 1970. By the end of the recessionary year 2011, Cement Roadstone Holdings was the largest Multi-national Company headquartered in Ireland, making a profit of €711 million from an annual

Roadstone benefited from a transition from construction in stone to construction in cement in Ireland from the 1960s, the development of a new national road network as a policy objective of successive Fianna Fáil governments and funding made available under EEC regional development and cohesion policies from the 1970s. The company was politically connected to Fianna Fáil from its earliest days. The first Chairman of the expanded Cement Roadstone Holdings was Sean Lemass. Another controversial Fianna Fáil leadership figure, Des Traynor, later held the same office. In Blessington, the company expanded by means of the gradual purchase of unproductive agricultural land and by buying out existing small quarrying companies from the early 1950s. In the mid-1960s the company employed approximately 45 local men at its quarries in Blessington Town, extracting sand and gravel for removal to Belgard near Tallaght, Co. Dublin for processing.

Roadstone was an important client of small local businessmen, either directly, in the case of hardware businesses such as Hennessy's, or indirectly, in consequence of the purchasing power of Roadstone's labour force.[11] Local business also served the local agricultural economy and benefited from Blessington's proximity to Dublin markets. The Doyle family established an agricultural mart in Blessington in the 1950s, which grew in importance over the decades, bringing farmers and trade into the village and into the town's six public houses. Newly owned by returned builder L.M. Byrne from Dublin in 1959, the Downshire Hotel fostered a decade of growth in tourism from Dublin and from Britain. The hotel employed up to 50 full and part-time staff by 1966 and catered largely for British tourists (Aalen et al., 1966, p. 158).[12]

turnover of €18.1 billion in that year and employed a labour force of 76,433 employees in 36 countries (2011, Companies Registration Office). Blessington & District residents continue to name the company they knew colloquially as 'Roadstone' to the present day and this practice is followed throughout this thesis.

11 Per. Comm. Roadstone manager, 2010.

12 The authors report that 61.2 per cent of the visitors to the hotel in 1966 were British.

The Dublin Metropolitan Regatta and other events held on Blessington Lake in the period, all contributed to a significant economic boost from tourism in the 1960s.

Published in 1970, the first Wicklow County Development Plan noted with regard to Blessington that the 'local rural economy remained limited and local people not employed in farming or in the employment alternatives available in the Town travelled to Dublin for work' (Wicklow County Council, 1970, p. 46). Nevertheless, it was clear that, relative to the wider West Wicklow area, there were signs that Blessington Town had experienced a surge of economic growth led by the local establishment of light manufacturing and employment in the extractive industry throughout the 1960s. The Blessington local employment office, for example, was the only office in the Irish Republic at which no unemployment benefit was paid in 1965 (Aalen et al., 1966, p. 68).

2.5.2 Reconfiguring rural interests

The abandonment of economic protectionist policies (O'Grada, 2008), provided the context for an ideological crisis in rural society that was mirrored in West Wicklow. A brief review of the local newspaper, '*The Wicklow People*' in the 1950s revealed both the heat of political fervour generated in the economically and socially turbulent 1950s and also its class character. From 1947, the Rural Workers Federation was active in County Wicklow and local meetings were routinely reported at length. Ratepayers and farmers interests in West Wicklow combined to form a national organisation in 1955, severally represented by larger Church of Ireland farmers in West Wicklow at local elections. In 1955, the National Farmers Association was established. At the same time, the population of County Wicklow was exhorted via the local media to fulfil a religious life and reminded of the moral obligations of Catholic belief and practice.

Frequent articles were dedicated to spelling out Catholic social teaching to young Wicklow men and women.

In response to rural crisis, local development organisations defended what they perceived as a nationally relevant rural way of life in decline. Branches of Muintir na Tíre were established in West Wicklow from 1950, including in the villages of Grange Con and Stratford on Slaney. These villages were described in contemporaneous newspaper accounts as 'ghost villages' fallen into a state of 'crumbling desolation' as a result of extraordinary levels of emigration (*The Wicklow People*, 1/07/1950). Faced with desolation, the local guilds desperately railed against the 'fallacies' of a better life in the city by laying claim to a specifically rural vision for '… the preservation of Irish customs, manners and traditions, of the Irish faith and the civilisation deriving from that faith – in a word, the preservation of the Irish way of life'. An enumeration of these fallacies was offered in a speech made by the same Grange Con Branch member during the launch of the Stratford on Slaney branch, as follows.

> 1. Lack of remunerative employment. 2. The higher wages obtaining in city areas. 3. The widespread belief that work in town is less laborious and more respectable. 4. That working hours are numerically fewer in towns and that holidays are longer. 5. The tedium of after work hours in the country. 6. The loneliness and general drabness of country life in contrast with the companionship, the amusements and the lights of the city. 7. The desire for change of environment and of occupation. 8. The difficulty of creating rural industries whose products can compete in price, finish and quality with the products of the costly and extensive plants in the city industries. 9. The encouragement to emigrate given by relatives who have settled down in foreign lands. 10. The superior opportunities of education in the large centres of population etc. etc. 11. The belief that only governments and corporations can do anything for anyone and these are centred in cities. (*The Wicklow People*, 1/07/1950).

In the 1920s and 1930s, the interests of farmers dominated local elections in West Wicklow.

Of 12 local election candidates in 1934, for example, 6 candidates represented the interests of farmers who opposed the payment of rates. Five of these 'Farmers and Ratepayers' candidates were Church of Ireland farmers. None were elected. Throughout the 1950s, a gradual consolidation of interests within party political representation and a simultaneous harnessing of sectional interests within national organisations external to the state is in evidence in West Wicklow politics.

The 1955 local election serves to illustrate this shift, in a period also marked by the 'intense centralisation' of Irish local government organisation (Weeks and Quinlivan, 2009, p. 20). In West Wicklow, 13 candidates sought election to a total of 4 local seats. A majority of these candidates came from the south of the county, notably from Baltinglass. All but two of the candidates were employers or landowners in West Wicklow in 1955, ensuring a dominance of local political representation by a rural elite that was repeated in the 1960 and 1967 local elections.[13] In contrast to the typology of candidates in earlier local elections, seven of the candidates were primarily small business owners described as victuallers, grocers, publicans or merchants. Three of these businessmen were also farmers. A further four candidates were larger farmers. Just two candidates came from other social classes, including a clerk from Baltinglass and a carpenter from Donard.

The decisions that political actors in the 1950s and 1960s took were made in tandem with religious actors, just as their positional status relied upon clerical support. Clergymen of both of the main churches in West Wicklow were leading figures on the multi-denominational Vocational Educational Committees.

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13 In 1960, 5 of 9 local election candidates were small businessmen, 3 of these were also farmers. A further 2 candidates were farmers and the remaining one candidate, a woman, was the widow of a previous businessman candidate. (*The Wicklow People*, 20/06/1960). In 1967, there were 3 small businessmen candidates, of whom 1 was also a farmer and a further 2 candidates were farmers. The remaining candidate in 1967 was listed as a retired 'merchant' (*The Wicklow People*, 10/06/1967).

However, the names of individual Catholic clergy in particular, appeared in all aspects of civil society decision-making, alongside political representatives. Catholic clergy dealt directly with the local authority on development matters, representing Blessington on a wide variety of local issues, including housing development and for public services such as the establishment of local water schemes.[14] The relationship between local elected representatives and Catholic clergy crosscut personal as well as professional interests. The long-standing and powerful local Fianna Fáil councillor, a publican, saw his daughter take her first religious vows and his eldest son enter the priesthood on the same day in 1966 (*The Wicklow People*, 18/06/1966). A second daughter later followed the first into religious life.

Unlike Church of Ireland clergy, members of the Catholic clergy typically proposed candidates to local elections, as the moral guarantors of political aspirants. In 1955, for example, Catholic clergymen proposed 5 of the 13 local candidates and their preferred candidates secured 2 of the 4 local seats in West Wicklow, both of these Fianna Fáil candidates and both publicans. Two doctors and 2 businessmen proposed the remaining two successful candidates, a Church of Ireland farmer and a Catholic merchant from Baltinglass, respectively. All four elected local representatives in 1955 belonged to political parties – the outcome split the Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael share of the local vote into equal proportions. This result was repeated in 1960 and 1967 as Fianna Fáil in particular, but also Fine Gael, increased their share of the vote in the electoral areas as they encompassed and overtook the landowner and farm labourer interests that had provided a political challenge up the 1950s.

[14] In 1967, it was reported of a priest in a village in the study territory that 'He organised the people… and won their fullest approval to the co-operative method, so much so that when the scheme was completed… more than 40 houses had already been supplied with running water' (*Wicklow People*, 1/71967). Paul-Dubois (1908) records that in 1904 there were already 778 Co-Operative Associations with 85,000 members (1908, p. 447).

The reorientation of political influence from the traditional capital of West Wicklow, Baltinglass, to the tiny northern village of Blessington reflected a new politics of industrialisation from the 1960s (Murphy, 2003, p. 155) and the more favourable location of Blessington with respect to Dublin. From 1955 to 1974 – four men; a publican small farmer (Fianna Fáil, Blessington), a publican and farmer (Fianna Fáil, Baltinglass), a large Church of Ireland farmer (Fine Gael, Dunlavin) and a merchant (Fianna Fáil, Baltinglass) represented West Wicklow in local government. Fine Gael party politics was particularly enshrined as a dynastic local political culture in the rural south. One family based in Baltinglass Town came to dominate local and national political representation in south West Wicklow in an almost unbroken line from 1934 to 2014.[15] Meanwhile, in the more economically diverse northern part of the Electoral Area, a Fianna Fáil businessman dominated local politics from the 1950s and for the following 30 years.

2.5.3 Local development organisation in Blessington & District

In contrast to the self-help organisations of the 1950s, a decade later the structures and activities of West Wicklow development organisation progressed industrial development goals determined by modernising towns and notably, for the first time, led by Blessington. Two development organisations were established in Blessington Town in the early 1960s; the Blessington Development Association and the West Wicklow Development Association. Businessmen, local traders and the clergy of both churches governed both organisations.

[15] The exception is the 1945 local election. Michael Timmons (FG) was a candidate for local election from 1934 and was elected to the Council in 1942. His son Godfrey (FG) was an extremely influential local politician, first elected in 1950. Godfrey was succeeded after 45 years as a politician serving in local and national government by his son Billy Timmons (FG) in 1999, who later also became a Dáil Deputy and by a second son, Edward (FG), who replaced his brother Billy Timmons on Wicklow County Council following the abolition of the dual mandate in 2003. Billy Timmons left the Fianna Gael party and lost his Independent seat in the national election of 2016. His brother, Edward, continues to serve as a County Councillor, having retained his seat in 2014.

The former organisation was established in 1963 and its two Presidents were the Catholic parish priest and the Church of Ireland rector. Dominated by professional men, a governing committee included 11 Catholic and protestant businessmen and professionals. Several of its members also figured on the second of the two local development associations and the greater success of this latter, industrially oriented group overshadowed and limited the remit of the Blessington Development Association to that of organising tourism and social events.

The first development organisation with a remit to encourage the industrialisation of the wider West Wicklow area was founded in 1965.[16] The objective of the West Wicklow Development Association (WWDA) was the development of the West Wicklow area as a distinct sub-county development region in economic terms. The WWDA was, first and foremost, the brainchild of a local commercial landowner, then farming to the immediate and fertile north of Blessington Town. Its membership included Catholic clergymen, local landowners, local retail traders, as well as nationalist businessmen notably, including the local hotelier, the owner of the Downshire Hotel, L.M. Byrne. Having recently retired from a career as a prominent builder in Dublin, this latter influential was a leading member of the Fianna Fáil party and said to be a close confidant of the new Fianna Fáil Minister for Finance, Charles J. Haughey.[17] A network of fourteen local branches complemented and replicated this Committee membership amongst clergy, local businessmen and farmers throughout West Wicklow.

The first act of the WWDA was to commission a detailed rural survey of the West Wicklow area, one of the first of its kind and undertaken by geographers at Trinity College, Dublin in 1966 (see also Commins, 1968).

16 Per files of West Wicklow Development Association made available to the thesis author in 2011.
17 Personal communication study participant E8 (12/03/2012).

The occasionally reproving tone of the report reflected an urban and expert-led narrative of rural social and economic backwardness, where 'deep rooted social attitudes' are 'resistant to change' (Aalen et al., 1966, p. 192). The report disapproved strongly of an air of 'decadence and stagnation' (1966, p. 207) in local towns and of 'unfortunate attitudes' to farming, which constrains educational attainment and inhibits modern agricultural practices (1966, p. 201). Rural decline was described in personal terms, as a local matter: 'much of the blame must be attributed to local people for an almost complete lack of interest in utilising the attractions of the area for the benefit of the community' (1966, p. 161). In its conclusions, the report contributed a negative view of the potential for West Wicklow growth in the light of regional economic development policy.

> Inevitably, the future status of West Wicklow towns will be that of peripheral localities, probably within the orbit of several different growth regions focussed on Dublin and other centres in neighbouring counties. (Aalen et al., 1966, p. 227)

The report's recommendations were presented formally to the Fianna Fáil Minister for Finance, Mr. Charles J. Haughey in 1967, who attended a launch event held in Blessington. Considering the likelihood remote that the area could attract manufacturing business of any significant scale, the report concluded that the main thrust of policy should be towards agricultural modernisation efforts, combined with tourism activity and the promotion of light industry. While initiatives for co-operative purchase of agricultural machinery, the development of a hill sheep research facility and other social initiatives were all proposed in the report, its conclusions were primarily employed by the WWDA to campaign via their political connections, for the appointment of a nationally funded Development Officer to encourage the establishment of local light industry.[18]

[18] The files of the WWDA confirm that the funding granted was for a four-year appointment, established in 1967 at an annual salary of £4,000.

A former commandant in the Irish army, this Development Officer forged relationships between the Industrial Development Authority, Wicklow County Council and international businesses wishing to relocate to Ireland. The WWDA utilised the new national Small Industries Scheme to encourage the establishment of a small number of manufacturing companies locally and persuaded Wicklow County Council to purchase several acres of land for the construction of a dedicated industrial estate in the area. Taken together, these initiatives had a significantly positive impact on the employment profile of the District from the mid 1960s, especially, relative to that of West Wicklow as a whole. The group claimed that a total of 300 jobs were created in a handful of light industrial companies during the organisation's most active period between 1965 and 1972. One study participant recalled companies like Wilson's Bakery employing 'fifty or sixty' workers in the 1970s (Participant A20).

Given that, even by the mid-1960s, it was clear that a new focus on regional growth centres would effectively exclude rural West Wicklow from national economic development initiatives, the industrial success of the WWDA between 1967 and 1972 was considerable. Moreover, its achievements were inversely proportional to the failure of a second development organisation led by local Catholic clergy to secure their goals, including a swimming pool for the town. The success of the WWDA, by contrast, was directly attributable to the personal relationships that existed between local Fianna Fáil party members in the business community and nationalist politicians. The hotelier and his wife, the Chairman of the WWDA, the parish priest and the local Fianna Fáil elected representative were identified as authoritarian local leaders in the early 1970s by many of the study participants who knew them.

By 1976, the main export-oriented clothing manufacturers established in Blessington in the early 1960s closed its local factory with a loss of 110 jobs, citing the availability of cheaper imports from the Far East in its main UK market as the reason for the closure.[19] As the ambitions of the WWDA faded, the organisation had no further significant activity, funding for the Development Officer's salary was rescinded and questions as to the subsequent use of the organisation's factory assets by its founding chairman gave rise to considerable local acrimony. In spite of its broad ambitions, the success of the WWDA decisively proved that the interests of the Blessington district had, in fact, separated from those of rural southwest Wicklow. For the next twenty years, no single organisation would pursue the development of north and south West Wicklow conjointly. By the mid-1980s, however, a failure of local manufacturing and rising unemployment levels presented a new challenge to the area, highlighting once again the dependency of Blessington & district on a traditional employment profile.

2.6 Modernity and rural quiescence

West Wicklow people struggled throughout the 1950s in desperate social and economic conditions. By the 1960s, the ideological conflicts of the 1950s had been quieted, overtaken by changes in the political economy shaped by the implementation of the first and subsequent national Programmes for Economic Expansion published in 1958 and 1963. These changes were reflected in the character and scope of reporting in local newspapers. As part of this study, an impressionistic, representative review of the most popular local newspaper, *The Wicklow People* between the 1950s and the 1980s demonstrated a clear dividing line between the 1950s and subsequent decades. The review showed that the newspaper becomes both less ambitious and more insular in its scope over the period. Prior to the 1960s, the nature of reports reflected national debates and issues.

[19] The Janelle company. (1976) Dáil Eireann Debate *Vol. 287 No. 4.*

From the 1960s, the same newspaper devoted more column space to local social events, it contained more advertisements and more product images than in the previous decade and generally the political issues of national debate were significantly reduced and largely disappeared by the 1980s.

Just as the rural south of the electoral area continued its equal and opposite decline, the development of Blessington & District was shaped in the 1960s by a new economic leadership centred in the town, which adapted to a modernising, industrially oriented Irish economy (Breen et al., 1990, p. 4). Political and economic leadership now diffused from north to south in West Wicklow. Even by 1961, almost half of the manufacturing employment in the West Wicklow area was based in the study territory and the WWDA could claim in the late 1960s that suitable land was difficult to secure for the factories that were attracted into Blessington.[20] This change was mapped in political affiliations in the period. Fine Gael largely (although not exclusively) dominated the politics of south rural West Wicklow, to the extent that the Baltinglass Electoral Area maintained a stronger proportional share of the vote than any other Wicklow constituency from 1926 in successive local elections.[21] The successfully modernising north, however, would benefit from a strong Fianna Fáil local representation amongst its leadership from the 1950s. Centred in the Town, this local representation epitomised the pragmatic appeal of Fianna Fáil's developing and expansionary economic policies from this period.

Despite its champions and their allies, the success of the WWDA offered civil society a fleeting influence only over local economic development. Two important potential sources of local wealth were labour and minerals and both continued to be extracted from the study territory for productive use elsewhere.

[20] Per correspondence in WWDA archive.

[21] Source of data is www.irishelectionliterature.org.

New headquarters were established by Roadstone at Tallaght in the late 1960s and sand and gravel from Blessington were transported there for processing (Share, 1999). Mechanisation reduced the need for local labour for extraction, as it did for agriculture from the 1950s onwards. The transfer of a County Council seat from west to east Wicklow in 1974 offered a telling indicator of a reduced political influence in West Wicklow. This loss was marked 'with very little fuss' in the area, just another step in a progressive loss of local political representation in West Wicklow since the 1930s, according to one local elected representative.[22]

In tandem with this decline, the 1970s represented a period of relative stagnation, with the notable exception of the establishment of a Credit Union locally and Church sponsored capital projects. The Catholic Church progressed a significant and controversial development of primary school and church buildings (see Chapter 4) in the period and the Church of Ireland completed construction of the first modern, multi-functional community hall in the mid-1980s. Both projects benefited from Roadstone donations. No longer connected to the rural vision for West Wicklow espoused by the WWDA, yet also disconnected from urban-centric economic development policies, Blessington then demonstrated the local effects of a transitional economic period in the latter half of the 1970s, as EU membership began to shift nationalist leadership objectives in favour of European political integration (Murphy, 2003). One of the early settlers arriving in Blessington Town in 1973 from Dublin, described a sleepy village with little prosperity and less hope, just a short decade after the excitement of C.J. Haughey's visit to reanimate local industry in the mid-1960s (Participant A1).

[22] Cllr. Jim Ruttle from Manor Kilbride, as reported in *The Wicklow People*, Thursday, 26th June 2008.

Most forms of community development type activity failed progressively from the late 1970s, so that even by the latter half of the 1990s, Blessington Town could still be described as a village in a community plan document (Wicklow Rural Partnership Ltd., 1997). Recessionary crises in the 1970s and 1980s however, catalysed two new forms of social resistance in Blessington, centred in class and in gender politics. In the first case, the local Sinn Féin (SF) aspirant led a brief period of organised resistance against issues of water charges and estate management in the two local authority housing estates. In the second, the flourishing of a radical consciousness amongst local women was part of a new wave of women challenging both church state relations and a conservative welfare and healthcare provision based on dynamics of 'respectability, social class and deservingness' (Lucey, 2015, p. 193; see also Foster, 2007a, p. 425).

While class-based social resistance was short-lived, the Blessington Women's Group (BWG) established in 1987 was noteworthy for its national success in the period from 1987 to the mid-1990s. The group maintained a strong focus on national women's issues throughout the period and its leadership showed much less interest in wider issues of local structural or socio-economic development concern. The failure of class and gender based challenge from the 1980s and the subsequent reconfiguration of civil society organisations for partnership in the 1990s will be addressed again in Chapter 6 (see also O'Connor, 2000). However, here I note that these two examples marked out key boundaries, the first testified to transitions in the economic sphere that heralded a wholesale invitation to global capital into Ireland and the second marked a key transition in European cohesion, as women turned to European Union legislation for social policy change.

2.7 Distinguishing the Bantry and Blessington & District cases

The previous sections in this chapter demonstrated that, in significant ways up to the 1950s, Blessington & District reflected wider socio-economic trends, directly comparable to those of the Bantry Rural District.
From the 1960s, the development of Blessington Town dominated within West Wicklow, as a successfully modernising town along the two dimensions of agricultural commerce and rural industrialisation. Within the study territory, larger commercial farmers of either religion wielded significant social power up to the 1970s. Nationalist industrialists in the 1960s allied with these farmers and their decline in the late 1970s left a vacuum only partially filled by Roadstone's weak patronage of civil society and local business. Influence associated with land ownership and religion combined, persisted with a particularly potent force. However, up to the 1970s, only local Catholic clergy were closely affiliated with Fianna Fáil local representation and, in turn, Fianna Fáil membership was specifically associated with national industrialisation.[23]

A landed estate legacy differentiated the Blessington area in key respects that are relevant to the scope of this comparative study. A Protestant social power was retained for longer in the study territory than is typical and which constituted a conservative class of local landowner. Protestants were differentiated by surname, by location in the territory, by an interest in local history and even by the bank they used. Coakley (1998, pp. 102 - 104) has argued that these represent what he termed ethnographic rather than ethnic differences. The evidence in Blessington & District suggested, however, that the class character of local Protestants guaranteed their greater social integration. In particular, Protestant class affiliation to the agricultural economy served to maintain local Protestant leadership and social power.

[23] The political profile of the Baltinglass Electoral Area would change radically in the mid-1980s, see also Chapter 5.

Religion constrained the local exploitation of land for capitalist development until the 1990s. However, the commercialisation of the agricultural economy from the 1960s onwards meant that co-operative relations between larger farmers of either religion tended to stabilise as their economic interests coincided, merging religion and class around the economic and social influence of the modern 'productivist' farmer supported by the CAP (see also Crowley, 2006, pp. 27 - 28). In summary, although culturally distinct, Protestant religious identities in Blessington enjoyed no separate structural articulation under Catholic-nationalism, since their class interests were met during the period. Thus, integration in a context of the agricultural economy also contributed to an absence in Blessington of what Elliott (2009) suggested was a latent 'social resentment' against Protestants in post-colonial Ireland (2009, p. 227). In fact, Protestants from Blessington & District achieved prominence for their national leadership roles to contemporary times (see also Chapter 4).

It is important to note that in tandem with a trend towards part-time farming, the numbers of landholders remained stable overall and farming and Roadstone employment retained a social status strongly associated with a traditional land ownership and a rural working class. A symbiosis of interests was understood to exist between the Roadstone company and the local community as part of a shared culture (see Bourdieu, 1985, p. 737). As a native senior staff member said 'Roadstone feel they have to support the local community. I'd be told, look after anyone who comes near you [sic]' (Participant E4). [24] In Blessington & District, by contrast with Bantry, Roadstone's economic relationship with the town was culturally defined, as a specifically rural relationship with small farmer labour and Roadstone remained essentially a nationalist local economic actor throughout the period.

[24] In 2010, the longstanding local manager of Roadstone's quarries at Blessington, claimed that in the 1990s, Roadstone purchased IR£35,000 of a monthly bill of IR£128,000 (27 per cent) directly from local traders, as part of a conscious policy of supporting local traders.

In turn, a rural class linkage to particular skilled manual occupations was causally linked to the local prominence of a vocational education provision.

The Technical School established in the early 1960s provided a practical curriculum to children who had left primary school at age 14 and was specifically attuned to 'the habit among rural families of encouraging their brighter sons to learn a trade' (Aalen et al., 1966, p. 200). Whyte (1974) has noted the dominance of middle class aspirations in Ireland in the mid-1970s, when just one seventh of all farmers identified themselves as working class (1974, p. 635). What further differentiated the study territory then, was a clear disadvantage in terms of access to second-level education as a passport to social mobility (Hout, 1989, p. 219). In the absence of a second level school to 'bridge the gap between socioeconomic origins and destinations' (Hout, 1989, p. 193), a distinction between a local, working class vocational education and a non-local, Catholic middle class education enshrined and insulated both local class distinctions and local employment patterns. The lack of a local second level school under Catholic Church patronage, in particular, had important, long-term effects. In 1981, for example, 46 per cent of the Lackan population progressed from education to work before the age of 15, while the equivalent proportion was just 32 per cent for the Kilbride ED. Correlating with educational attainment, 18.8 per cent of the population of Lackan ED was unemployed in 1981, while just 6.7 per cent of the Kilbride ED population was unemployed.

Following modest or even negative growth from the establishment of the state, the 1970s saw the first significant expansion of the study territory population. A first wave of migrants were attracted in particular to the Blessington ED and to Kilbride EDs, which grew by 45 per cent and 67 per cent, respectively, on the strength of a small wave of largely middle class settlers attracted to individual rural or lakeside homes within commuting distance of Dublin.

Figure 2.4 describes two peaks in the traditional occupational profile of the territory, relating to its historical class character, but also showing the tentative first phase of urbanisation visible in the proportions of professionals and employer/managers living in the area.

Figure 2.4 Comparative socio-economic profile – Wicklow, Dublin and Study Territory (1981)

Source: CSO, Small Area Population statistics (1981)

In addition, although the processes that led to rural immiseration described by Eipper (1986) were seen in the diverging interests of the rural hinterland of the study territory with that of the urban core; even prior to the 1980s, the development of Blessington & District could not be wholly characterised by reference to isolating rural conditions. Eipper (1986) described Bantry as 'one of Ireland's remoter communities' (1986, p. 1).

This was clearly not true of Blessington & District, which enjoyed a close proximity to Dublin markets and was a well-established tourism town associated with Blessington Lake. At the same time, the town suffered from its doubly peripheral location on the north-western border of County Wicklow and on the border both with County Kildare and with County Dublin.

The disadvantages of this location negatively impacted on retailers in the town in particular, delimited by the preferential development of adjoining towns such as Naas, Newbridge and Tallaght from the 1970s, as well as the distance from the rapidly developing towns on the eastern coast of the county. While a Blessington Chamber of Commerce was established locally in the early to mid 1980s, local retailers remained dependent upon the diminishing returns represented by a combination of Roadstone's patronage and trade from the farming hinterland. Just as Eipper (1986, p. 163) found in Bantry, the collective development efforts of town traders failed to thrive. At the same time, the modernisation and specialisation of Roadstone's wider operations relegated Blessington's plant value to extraction only, so that Roadstone's local presence contributed little sustainability to the local employment base in terms of either improving local skills or adding to the diversity of local employment.

A depressed local retail sector remained a visible feature of Blessington Town until the late 1990s and beyond. The townscape in Blessington & District reflected a lack of long-term investment and although small shopkeepers consistently numbered amongst the memberships of local development organisation, their interests were subordinate to commercial farmers, to the clergy and to the buying power of the local Roadstone manager (see also Chapter 6 for the contemporary period). This finding is qualified by the fact that, as in Bantry, clergy and local politicians were often drawn from the ranks of small business owners.

In his account of contemporary Ireland early in the 20th century, the French sociologist Paul-Dubois (1908) notes 'the social power that the publican – Bung, or King Bung as he is popularly called – wields in public affairs' (Paul-Dubois and Kettle, 1908, p. 363). Although this colloquialism has been lost, publicans continued to be foremost in the business pantheon and thus in West Wicklow nationalist politics. Their economic success meant that they often operated a second and a third business, typically, a farm and a grocer's premises.[25] Indeed, this period was distinguished by a strongly influential Fianna Fáil party representation in the town, led by a publican and ideologically aligned with Roadstone's influence over the town's labour force.

2.7 Implications for Blessington & District as a comparison case

By the late 1970s, social power relations in Bantry were already subject to the transformative effects of the multinational company, Gulf Oil. The dismantling or reconfiguration of the national, specific configuration of class by capital organised on a world scale, was catalysed by the double bind to which small, rural and peripheral communities such as Bantry, Co. Cork were subject. This double bind constituted a system of domination, since, in order to enjoy any kind of prosperity, the community was forced into a dependent relationship with multinational companies, following the national example. By contrast, Blessington & District in the mid-1970s remained a rural village dependent upon a nationalist economic actor and the agricultural economy. A significant class differentiation was masked by; the economic prosperity attributable to the legacy of landed class advantages, the effective harnessing of rural working class consciousness by Roadstone and the company's patronage of local development projects, as well as the capacity of local people to migrate for work opportunities or to pursue social mobility via denominational second level education elsewhere.

[25] Typically, a grocery premises was attached to the public house.

As Hout (1989, p. 326) found for the national picture, in spite of a substantial period of economic development, Blessington was no more 'open' in the mid 1970s, than it had been two decades earlier.

In Eipper's (1986) own terms and accounting for the particular development history of the Blessington area as described above, the prevailing social power order amounted to what has been characterised as a strong local version of the Catholic-nationalist ruling bloc. This is not to say that the Blessington area merely lagged behind the transformation envisioned in the activities of Gulf Oil in Bantry and its reconfiguring power effects on the local leadership. Blessington & District was, by contrast, both open to and largely bypassed by, macro level processes of national and regional economic development, in critical ways that reinforced social power relations structured more by the ownership and exploitation of land than was the case in the Bantry Rural District.

As one example, EU budgetary transfers for transport and for agriculture to Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s in particular, actively supported a balance of local economic interests between primary extraction and agriculture, so that none of the multinationals in the industrial estates gained an influence in local decision-making. As another example, unlike the western case examined by Curtin and Varley (2002, p. 29), European style local development effort failed to gain a foothold in the territory, so that development experts hardly figured in local affairs up to the 2000s. Nonetheless, these local features of the economic sphere represented wider forces of change, which offered a temporary protection only to Blessington's ruling elite.

Situated in the shadow of Dublin, the social pressures generated by a new orientation of the national political economy in favour of foreign owned finance combined with a rising inequality, contributed to an inflow of urban workers from Tallaght into Blessington.

From 1990, this urban middle class was employed in the new forms of service sector work available and in the construction sector. It is precisely because Blessington evinced a strongly insular rural class stasis up to the late 1980s, that the subsequent conflicts in civil society had such a traumatic effect on the organisation of local leadership in the 1990s. The challenge they faced was led by this wave of urban settlers from Dublin, whose identities and economic interests bore little resemblance to those described heretofore in this chapter. The structuration of challenge along pro and anti-Roadstone lines therefore exemplified the class nature of the national political economic transformation that began in 1987.

2.8 Social transformation and the case study rationale

Wicklow is a stupid county to be honest.
We'd be much better off in Kildare. (Participant E7)

In the preceding sections of this chapter, for utility purposes the Blessington & District was described largely, as if it formed a single community. However, the preceding text makes it clear that Blessington was identified geographically and socially in different ways at different times, as a result of the powerful forces with which it grappled and which redrew the boundaries of leadership and power over time. For example, the West Wicklow Development Association was founded in Blessington Town and yet, identified itself as representing a potentially powerful, industrial West Wicklow rural area. By the 1980s, however, local civil society leadership had retreated from an overarching vision for West Wicklow.

From the late 1980s, the development discourse in rural County Wicklow increasingly referred to a powerful 'urban shadow' cast by Dublin; in terms of a spatial pattern of in-migration of an expanded middle-class Dublin population, evenly on the accessible east of the Wicklow uplands range from north to south but in the West, only as far as Blessington town and its hinterland. Initially, this served to 'shrink' local power and leadership to Blessington as the largest population centre for a diminished rural territory.

West Wicklow's settlement poles effectively 'flipped' from south to north, as Blessington's population overtook that of the longstanding rural capital of West Wicklow, Baltinglass. From this period, Baltinglass became home to a new population of rural poor, located in local authority and working class housing estates built in the town. In addition, a local identity in Blessington Town more closely linked to growth in Dublin and its suburbs, now more clearly delineated the urban core from the remainder of the rural territory. As part of the greater reliance of Blessington town on Dublin's economic development, the social power of the accountant, the pharmacist, the estate agent rose, while leadership by local publicans and other small retail business owners reduced in significance. One local politician indirectly represented the social distance between the two areas as a new political geography, with Dublin as the implicitly powerful, unnamed source of influence: 'Blessington people think that Baltinglass is further away than Baltinglass people think that Blessington is.' (Participant B2).

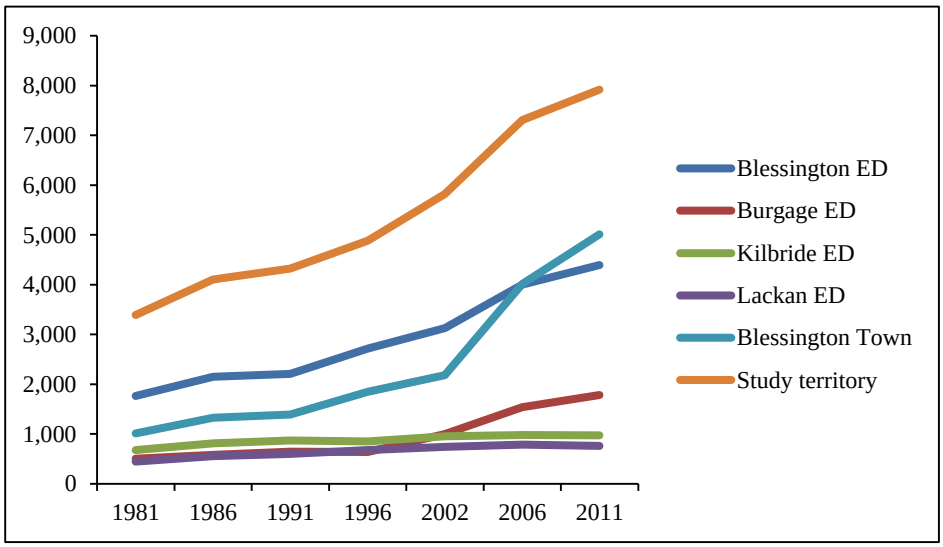
Blessington & District's development trajectory can therefore be defined from the 1980s by a positive, albeit subordinate, relationship with Dublin. Simultaneously, the development of the remainder of West Wicklow would increasingly be characterised by the rural disadvantage that was captured in the features of Eipper's (1986) ethnography of the Bantry Rural District. An attendant resentment persistently featured within the cultural narrative of West Wicklow, given expression amongst study participants as a self-narrative of a weak political representation and unequal public service treatment relative to the east of the county.[26] Blessington's view of itself remained truculent until the late 1980s and only altered as the activity of the Blessington & District Forum reasserted local power and influence (see also Chapter 6).

[26] A perceived disproportionately low level of local employment in the local authority was adverted as a casual factor in this differential treatment by several Blessington & District study participants. One local politician stated: 'One difference is definitely the physical remoteness. There's no Town Council. Even the networking can't happen. People in West Wicklow don't work on the Council.' (Participant B1).

As Dublin expanded, its labour force moved to newly constructed Blessington housing estates, either because workers' skills enabled upward social mobility from the working class estates of south west Dublin that were increasingly challenged by social problems or later, as a more general outcome of the hyper-inflation of Dublin house prices from the mid-1990s. The intensification of local social stratification implied in these two differing causes was manifest in two construction waves in the 1980s and early 1990s. According to local estate agents, few early settlers were 'first time buyers' (Participant E8). The first urban neighbourhoods built comprised small numbers of larger houses built for middle class settlers looking for a rural retreat within commuting distance of Dublin.

The second peak represented the converse, larger numbers of smaller houses purchased by Dublin workers displaced from estates in south Dublin in particular. Census data demonstrated the rapid urbanisation of the case study territory as a result of in-migration of Dublin based workers. In 1981, 30 per cent of the predominantly rural population of the case study area lived in Blessington Town. By 2011, 63 per cent of the territory's population lived in urban estates in Blessington Town and the majority of this population settled in the area after 2000. Figure 2.5 draws on Census data to demonstrate the scale and nature of urbanisation in the case study territory from 1981. Blessington Town's growth overshadowed that of its parent Electoral Division from 2006 as the last completed phase of the housing development negotiated between Cookehill and the community was sold and Blessington Town housing spilled over into the adjoining Burgage ED. Meanwhile, the rural EDs of Kilbride and Lackan experienced almost no demographic growth.

Figure 2.5 Urbanisation in Blessington & District (1981 – 2011)



Source: CSO, Census of Population, Volume 1, various censes reports 1981 - 2011. Adapted by thesis author.

From the late 1980s, an untrammelled logic of property development shaped Blessington's economic, political and social development. In practice in Ireland, the construction industry and financial services overtook productive multinationals as generators of wealth from the mid-1990s. Two features of this change in Blessington were similarly reflective of iterative and disruptive phases of economic change in Ireland discussed also by Eipper; land transfer and urbanisation. As so often is the case in Irish history, social change meant social translocation along class lines. Fully three-quarters of the housing stock in Blessington Town was constructed between 1991 and 2011, the period reflective of a movement of a particular class population from Tallaght and other parts of west and south Dublin to Blessington Town.

The equivalence between Blessington and Bantry as case studies then lay in the fact that both Blessington and Bantry were communities on the cusp of social and economic transformation as a result of macro level changes heralded in the 1980s.

However, where Bantry was transformed by its relationship to multinational capital, Blessington was subject to a very different economic transformation, as international finance pump-primed land transfer for property development, resulting in an inflated property market and unsustainable homeowner mortgage debt.

2.9 A new mode of governance and the case study rationale

This chapter demonstrated that the local conditions that pertained in Blessington and that persisted up to the 1980s broadly reflected the class power system that evolved in the post-colonial, Catholic-nationalist era, as described by Eipper. Notwithstanding important historical differences between conditions in the two areas being compared, I showed that a comparison with Eipper's own fieldwork was relevant to the research question being addressed in this thesis, because I could similarly demonstrate the development of a dominant leadership structured between the economic, political and religious spheres. Indeed, in the earlier sections of this chapter, I described a particular and strong local version of the *Ruling Trinity* leadership in Blessington up to the mid-1980s.

However, the comparative ethnographic approach adopted in this study both delimited the research question and extended it for the contemporary experience. Eipper's local case suggested what might occur in Ireland in the event that key changes occurred in the material and ideological conditions underpinning the social power of the *Ruling Trinity* came to pass. In my case, the study will be balanced empirically on the fulcrum of the late 1980s, before which Eipper's prior conditions were relevant to the reproduction of the social power of the ruling elite he characterised and after which they were not. More specifically, the intriguing Irish institutional accommodation to international finance in the contemporary period suggested a role for novel forms of governance in helping to socialise new economic relations.

This research consideration then privileged the selection of Blessington as the appropriate empirical case for the study (Curtin and Varley, 2002). In summary, European convergence was restrained through the 1970s and into the 1980s (Bielenberg and Ryan, 2013, p. 190; Lee, 1989, pp. 539-540). The deep recession experienced by the late 1980s and a new culture amongst an Irish political leadership provided both a rationale for and a political commitment to radical new economic policies. However, an extensive Irish social partnership, proved key to facilitating the institutionalisation of these economic policies, even while failing to deliver on growth with equality (O'Riain, 2006, pp. 312-313; Kristal, 2010). Exceptional Irish social partnership arrangements expressed the new authority of negotiated consensus and famously relied on communitarian Irish social power relations (Sabel et al., 1996).

The implementation of the PNER by the Irish Government in 1987, therefore marked a boundary between a Catholic-nationalist social power order in the sense in which Eipper means it and a new leadership, which encompassed a fundamentally altered relationship between labour and capital, so that, for example, an equivalent shift occurred which strengthened the alliance between an Irish political and business elite (see Byrne, 2012). However, it was the diffusion of this 'distinctive mode of governance' at the local level, which constituted a rationale for the selection of a contemporary case of governance as part of this study. In Blessington & District, the year 1990 represented the year in which a related and decisive turn against the authoritative certainties of the local version of the ruling bloc occurred. The decade began with allegations of illegal land purchase and dumping activity made against Roadstone, eventually occasioning a sundering of the existing power status quo and the retreat of the company from the area. It would end with the arrival of a new economic patron, a property developer, promising to deliver substantial local developments on a partnership basis.

From this period onwards, a conservative authority was challenged just as it was in transformed and transforming communities across Ireland (Inglis, 2008). This challenge was resolved by the establishment of a unique, consensus oriented mode of governance for local economic development. This democratic initiative suggested the potential for a new, impersonal basis for leadership at the local level, which, in tandem with the national commitment to social partnership arrangements, represented a potential to disrupt the personal relations that were the hallmark of the local version of the ruling bloc.

2.10 Part I conclusions

A reconfiguration of the relationship between the representatives of capital and labour accompanied economic transformation in Ireland since the late 1980s and challenged the domination of an existing local leadership (Curtin and Varley, 2002, p. 21). This reorganisation of leadership followed upon a shift in Irish political culture from nationalist party 'populism to social partnership' (Allen, 1997, p. 181). In Part I of this thesis, I highlighted the salience of new, impersonal power relations centred in an ideology of collective negotiation for economic development and which could be distinguished from Catholic-nationalist authority. I further argued that the role of social partnership as a distinct mode of governance at the local level had been little researched (O'Riain, 2006, but see Curtin and Varley, 2002).

In the light of material and ideological changes in the economic, religious and political spheres since 1987, Part I of this thesis presented an argument for the value of a comparative local study of power relations in Ireland in both conceptual and empirical terms. In Chapter 2, I noted the special features of the Blessington & District territory, which sustained the economic salience and balanced this against the industrial capital of a predominantly rural working class.

I provided a historical analysis of a changing pattern of leadership from the late 1980s that was linked to common social processes operating at the level of local society. The relationship between contemporary power relations and a Catholic-nationalist local leadership then served as both the evolving context for, and the comparative subjects of, the chapters that will constitute Part II of the thesis. Part II will consider the effect of contemporary power processes on the social relations reproduced by a Catholic-nationalist local leadership; nationalist economic development, integralist Catholicism and clientelist party politics. Its constituent chapters aim to answer the question - is the leadership of the local representation of the *Ruling Trinity* in decline?

PART II : The Ruling Trinity in Decline?

Chapter 3

An Economic Politics of Land and Labour

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, I provided a historical case comparison relevant to Eipper's overall thesis of the development of Catholic-nationalism in the post-colonial period. The point of analytical departure for Chapter 3 will be a key transition in the economic sphere from a period dated by many scholars to 1987, when the Fianna Fáil party led a decisively market-oriented shift of the Irish political economy in favour of the expansion of internationalised production and finance (see Smith, 2005). The chapter will first focus on exploring the contemporary changes in the Irish political economy which were relevant to the local economy and which evidence highlighted ambiguities in the Irish experience of globalisation. In Blessington, these complex interactions involved a rapid process of urbanisation and the substitution of the nationalist economic patron Roadstone, for that of a property developer, Cookehill Development Ltd. In response, local leadership was reconfigured for partnership, mediating the impacts of global finance capital in reducing the social power of a Catholic-nationalist ruling elite. The chapter will conclude by interpreting this local evidence relative to Eipper's findings in Bantry, Co. Cork.

3.2 Nationalist economic leadership and a class analysis

As briefly referred in Chapter 1, Eipper's theoretical framework emphasised the dynamics of power, seen in struggles in, for and over consciousness. The empirical case studies explored the entanglement of these to demonstrate how a class leadership manifested itself and the extent to which class dominance prevailed. Eipper detailed and interpreted the progress of Catholic-nationalist economic development in Ireland over time, which was dominated by the transfer of land to capital in the immediate post-Independence era and involved the reshaping of traditional rural life (see also Chapter 2). Land consolidated into fewer, more commercially profitable farms, facilitated by multi-faceted processes of rural social decline, including state subvention of small farms and mechanisation. The influence of the town increased at the expense of the rural hinterland and community realigned 'around larger centres' (Eipper, 1986, p. 23). The eastern commercial cattle farming class gained in social power, at the same time as smaller-scale, non-commercial farmers dominating in the west saw their influence decline, largely, as a consequence, Eipper argued, of being outcompeted by the market forces which enabled the concentration of capital in the east (1986, p. 21).

Even by the 1950s, Eipper suggested that Ireland was 'caught in the classic double-bind of a developing country: in order to increase its prosperity, it had to increase its financial dependence' (1986, p. 41). In fact, this was a central feature of the concept of class hegemony – when dealing with macro economic development issues Ireland simply had no choice but to treat with foreign capital. As a consequence, the general economic situation of the rural district of Bantry, Co. Cork mirrored twin aspects of modernisation in the post-Independence period; peripheralisation and dependency. For these reasons, the town of Bantry, Co. Cork became dependent on the multinational company, Gulf Oil in the 1960s. Gulf Oil was similar to Roadstone in some respects.

In consequence of a dependence on natural resources, for example, primary extractive and industrial companies were physically dependent on the communities in which their activities were based and similarly reliant on dominating key relationships with state and civil society leadership to secure resources and labour.

However, unlike my analysis of Roadstone's long-standing relationship with Blessington, Eipper emphasised the transitory as well as the transformative effects of Gulf Oil's influence. A foreign-owned, multinational company in his framework was fundamentally exploitative since it was not bound in any meaningful way to the area in which it was sited. In Bantry, the arrival of Gulf Oil heralded a new economic actor capable of overwhelming the existing local power system, with little risk to itself. This conceptualisation of the economic dependency of peripheral communities, echoed the theoretical preoccupations of scholars in the 1970s. The economic relations that emerged from the further phase of Irish global economic development from 1987 were of a different character than those represented by the multi-national extractive company Gulf Oil in the 1970s or by those represented in Blessington by Roadstone. From the 1980s, an explosion of finance capital occurred at a global scale (Bellamy Foster, 2013). In Ireland, an incursion of international finance capital was dealt with in different ways. For this thesis, one important way was the establishment of new national social partnership institutions for economic development.

3.3 New relations between capital and labour

The evidence presented in Blessington & District in Chapter 2, demonstrated how the nationalist companies that successfully allied with the modernising state from the 1960s leveraged multinational growth following the entrance of Ireland into the European Economic Community's (EEC) 'Common Market' in 1973.

By the late 1970s, however, unemployment followed the repatriation of profits from multi-national employment in manufacturing, at the same time as indigenous industry stalled and then fell sharply (O'Malley, 1990, pp. 34 - 35). The impact of oil crises in the global economy and a national period of economic recession in the 1980s were reflected in a peak in Irish emigration patterns in 1987. This was the year in which Fianna Fáil returned to power following the withdrawal of the Labour Party from the Fine Gael-led government, supported by the political concertation with Fine Gael which became known as the Tallaght Strategy.

The development of Tallaght followed the translocations of entire working class populations from the inner city centre to new urban suburbs, such as Crumlin and Greenhills and built around Catholic institutional campuses comprising key elements of church, schools, hospitals and convents. By contrast with these earlier developments, Tallaght was initially planned as a self-sustaining, new town development conceptualised by influential British planning consultant, Myles Wright (1967). The abolition of local authority residential rates in the 1970s and 'profit maximisation' (McLaren and Punch, 2004, p. 37) by private property developers (Keogh and McCarthy, 2007, pp. 117-120) ensured that Wright's initial concept of mixed public and private development would never be achieved. However, the concept of mono-functional approaches to land zonings, incorporating areas for retail, business, residential and recreational spaces surrounded by 'virtually functionless open spaces' (McLaren and Punch, 2004, p. 27) proved to have an enduring influence in the development of towns like Blessington.

Tallaght thus became a powerful political totem exemplifying new, modern forms of area-based social disadvantage and the location for the famous announcement of the so-called 'Tallaght Strategy' by the then leader of Fine Gael, Alan Dukes, T.D. in 1987. In 1987, the first of a series of seven national pay agreements, the Programme for National Recovery, was agreed between trade unions, employers and the Irish Government.

Pay bargaining was incentivised politically by the overwhelming level of national debt, high emigration and unemployment and evolved as 'neo-corporatism' in some perspectives, defined in terms of the concertation of labour and capital (see Hardiman, 1988). For its proponents in the National Economic and Social Council, the necessary purpose of social partnership was distributional in a context of an open, small democracy and aimed for a 'negotiated determination of incomes' (O'Donnell, 2001, p. 357) in a context of the growing importance of international capital.

A further feature of the changing relationship between labour and capital saw the privatisation of public utilities in the period. The 1980s heralded a wave of privatisation of state-owned enterprises, many incorporating cross-class coalitions on privatised corporate boards. Beginning in Ireland with the sale of the Sugar Company in 1991, Palcic and Reeves (2011) attributed a surge in privatisation activity in Europe from the 1990s to the convergence criteria prescribed by the terms of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. The authors argued that privatisation failed to achieve sought after improvements in quality or efficiency in the Irish case (2011, p. 230). They concluded that the 'intellectual origins' of privatisation were consistent with European consumption – public choice and property rights. For O'Leary (2015) rent-seeking amongst docile trade unions also facilitated privatisation.

A combination of weak national commitment to regional development policy, together with the liberalisation of privatised companies further exacerbated the challenge for the state in developing core infrastructure such as that required by a strongly rural population in European terms (Moylan, 2011; Palcic and Reeves, 2011). Centralised pay bargaining relationships, together with liberalisation signalled by low levels of regulation of key economic institutions and low level of co-ordination at the level of the firm weakened the power of Irish labour to negotiate (Hall and Thelen, 2009, p. 266).

The power of trade unions as social partnership members, for example, appeared to have little purchase on either the rising rate of privatisation in Ireland or on labour's drastically declining share of Irish national income relative to capital's increasing share since the 1980s (Kristal, 2010). For some, this was the consequence of an acquiescent and locked-in trade union movement (Foster, 2007a, p. 422; see also Allen, 1997).

These arguments were contextualised by the depth and nature of the most recent recessionary period in Ireland, as the outcomes of social pacts in the economic sphere suggested an ambiguous parentage for collective decision-making in the political sphere (Bernhagen and Chari, 2013; Byrne, 2012). This question will be addressed again below, but here it is important to note that from 1987, a majoritarian political view comprehended negotiative decision-making between labour and capital as a key policy building block in the transformation of the Irish political economy in favour of international capital (Taylor, 2005). Moreover, the emergence of the Irish form of social partnership was identified with distributional solutions to social problems of urban development in places like Tallaght.

Distributional solutions were linked in turn to more personally profitable relations between nationalist politicians and businessmen and a weakening of the earlier post-civil war conservative political culture. At the same time as underlying issues of inequality were submerged, politics remained 'conservative' (Ferriter, 2010, p. 286). In fact, these features were inter-dependent. A concentration of wealth in the agricultural industry on specific sectors such as beef and in land use on a complex organisation of property companies, became politically linked via the structures of social partnership to attendant public policies of 'monetary restriction, containment of state funding and industrial and labour market restructuring' (Larragy, 2014, p. 3).

A post-Independence preoccupation with private land and homeownership provided the basis also for developing relationship between labour and capital in a context of a new dependence on international finance for economic development. This cultural preoccupation was expressed in the diffusion of concertation from national social partnership arrangements to the establishment of area based partnership institutions and, finally, the diffusion of political consensual arrangements to local level governance.

3.4 A discourse of globalisation

The question of the extent and scope of the international economy in Ireland is relevant to Eipper's (1986, p. 202) view of the threat that might be posed to the ruling bloc, has been keenly debated by scholars. Table 3.1 will offer a partial glimpse only into the transformation of the Irish economy in the period from 1947 to 2009.

Table 3.1 Composition of net domestic product (NDP) at current factor prices, reference years 1947, 1971, 1992 and 2009.

Reference Year	Agriculture as % of NDP	Industry as % of NDP	Services as % of NDP
1947	32.3	21.2	46.5
1971	16.4	36.1	48.8
1992	9.0	37.2	59.7
2007	2.3	35.8	62.9

Source: Adapted from Bielenberg and Ryan (2013, p. 192)

In the conclusion to her work, Smith (2005) argued bluntly that there was 'simply no evidence' that Ireland had become globalised in economic terms (2005, p. 197) and instead, she emphasised the importance of greater European integration for the Irish economy after the 1970s and the predominance of a *discourse* of globalisation.

By contrast, O'Sullivan (2006) accepted a globalisation thesis, while arguing for the relevance of external factors favouring Foreign Direct Investment and against an overly positive view of Irish economic development policies and institutions (2006, p. 163). Kirby (2010, p. 49) pointed out, however, that an emphasis on external factors, also suggested a lack of national control over economic development. A further question raised relates to the indices used to assess Ireland's success up to 2008. Kirby (2010, p. 8) was explicit in this regard, consistently arguing that measurement of the Irish economy and a framing of the debate in terms of globalisation was itself a political act, diverting attention away from a deepening of social inequalities occurring during the period from the 1990s. An absence of discourse may have had a similar effect. Ferriter (2010) noted that electoral discourse by 1997 presented narrow political arguments as to which political party would manage wealth better (2010, p. 287).

Notwithstanding the above, in a recent publication Bielenberg and Ryan (2013) concluded that, considered over the longer term, 'the most striking feature of the economic history of independent Ireland has been the general rise in living standards since the 1920s' as the primary fact of this period (2013, p. 189). With regard to this study, the question of the extent to which Ireland was economically globalised and therefore, in Kirby's conceptual use of the term, vulnerable (2010, p. 166) will be treated empirically and partially only, on the basis of local evidence. The foregoing discussion served firstly to explain the form of negotiation catalysed in Blessington in the absence of prescribed civil society forms of governance and its normalisation as both a power process and a new basis for social power. The national realignment found local expression in the establishment of a new form of governance for economic development.

The features of a changing relationship between labour and capital experienced locally followed the failure of organised civil society resistance in the 1980s and the moral failure of the authority of the traditional economic patron, Roadstone. This experience in the 1990s collectively emphasised the weakness of local political leadership in particular (see also Chapter 4). From 1999, the establishment of new consensual decision-making institutions at the local level was heralded by access to foreign finance capital and its integration into the Irish political economy, fostering unregulated property speculation. This establishment also acknowledgement that local labour was no longer linked to local industry or with local farming and was instead connected to the economic sphere via externally financed property development and private property ownership.

However, in Blessington a complex inter-play between nationalist politicians and businessmen developing home-grown multi-national corporations existed. In addition, as has been noted already in Chapter 2, influence in Blessington Town accrued to local retail business and in particular, to native retailers on the main street. The economic sphere was still dominated by agriculture-related business and land use for extraction or for agriculture still determined the influence of the small town relative to its wider rural hinterland more generally. The remainder of this chapter will chart the economic sphere in this wider contemporary environment and will focus on the transitions in local leadership that accompanied changes in the alliance between political and business leaders in the period after 1987.

3.5 Economic patronage and the decline of Roadstone

In the late 1980s, European investment in Irish infrastructure as part of regional development policies fostered the construction of a new road network in Ireland, the famous ‘Roadstone carpets’ (Moriarty, 2006; Share, 1999).

In the decade between 1989 and 1999, 54 per cent of European infrastructural investment in Ireland was allocated to transport development and 84 per cent of this investment was used to construct roads in Ireland capable of transporting international goods and people. Roadstone was already the most significant extraction company nationally by the late 1960s and also locally, as a result of a combination of a series of buy-outs of existing quarry companies and land acquisitions. Local legend has it that a Roadstone land agent completed early land deals in the early 1950s with local farmers anonymously, at agricultural land values rather than at the higher extraction land values (Participant A29). By the 1990s, local land purchases were also made directly via the state (Share, 1999; Moriarty, 2006). In 2008, the global corporation CRH (Cement Roadstone Holdings) was the top-ranked company in Ireland in an *Irish Times* poll and formed part of an elite 'golden circle' of Irish companies with special access to government decision-making and enjoying inter-locking directorships with banking institutions (Clancy et al., 2010, p. 34).

In Blessington & District, the patronage of the Roadstone company boosted the trade of the same families that had traditionally served the agricultural economy - multi-purpose small grocery retailers, hardware retailers and builders suppliers. A vocational education provision, aimed at providing a young rural working class with a trade followed upon these conditions (see Chapter 2). Eventually, Roadstone possessed a total of approximately 600 acres of land in blocs that virtually encircled the town to the north and west, where the Poulaphouca Reservoir bounded the town to the east (the spatial extent of the extractive industry in Blessington & District may be seen in the map provided at Appendix II). The company contributed a significant figure to the local public coffers, paying nearly €1 million in commercial rates by the 2000s, so that its economic interests were politically represented at both national and local levels (Participant E4).

By 1981, employment in Roadstone was largely only important to the more rural parts of the territory, such as the Lackan and Kilbride electoral divisions, where 8.3 per cent and 5 per cent of the labour force, respectively, was employed in the mining industry (compared with just over 1 per cent nationally and for the county as a whole). Reliance on Roadstone was more entrenched where unemployment and a reliance on agriculture was highest, for example, in the Lackan ED where 19 per cent of the population was unemployed in 1981 and where 23 per cent of the labour force relied on agricultural employment (CSO, 1981, *Small Area Population Statistics*).[27] On the basis that Roadstone gave employment to local small farmers and to lower skilled workers for whom local alternatives outside of agriculture were not available, a strong rural hinterland loyalty to the company therefore persisted as a characteristically rural feature of the employment culture in the wider Blessington area.

A more general low-level but consistent and indiscriminate patronage of the town's economic and social development further strengthened existing loyalties, by means of materials donated to small local projects. As a result, the influence enjoyed locally by Roadstone was deeply embedded in the town's cultural identity. As one participant said, 'The town looked to Roadstone. If there was £50 wanted or a load of sand or gravel they always gave' and the Roadstone local Manager, was pivotal as: 'the first person you went to when something needed doing' (Participant A20). A Roadstone document issued in 1995 in support of one of a series of Blessington development plans, claimed that the company employed 'approximately 40 people directly and 35 people indirectly at our Blessington operation' (Roadstone Ltd., 1995).

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[27] There are several methods of calculating unemployment rates. For ease of comparison, this study applies the simplest CSO definition using data available from Small Area Population Statistics, viz: unemployed (looking for first regular job + having lost or given up previous job) x 100 / labour force (at work + looking for first regular job + having lost or given up previous job). It excludes those not considered to be in the labour force; students, those looking after the home, retired persons, those unable to work due to illness or disability and those who record 'other' for this question on the Census form. This calculation gives a higher figure for unemployment than other methods – e.g. the Standardised Unemployment Rate calculation.

Patronage by Roadstone was thus successfully presented in personal familial terms while the company expanded its local land ownership and its global reach, simultaneously.

Although the company gave little direction as to the nature of projects to be supported, the more typical donation of materials favoured capital projects, while small cash sums only supported general community or other social projects. A culture of donating materials to capital projects generally shaped a preference in the town for this type of small-scale community project over other kinds of longer term capital or community development activity and simultaneously, constrained a transition to the first participative European-led development approaches.[28] Roadstone also maintained a conscious policy of engaging in minor trade with small retail, hardware and other service business. The cost to Roadstone was negligible relative to the company's rapidly growing profits from road construction under state partnerships, co-funded under European cohesion programmes. It was particularly important, therefore, that the long-serving local company manager, a native of Blessington & District from a working class family personalised this loyalty. The local manager was able to draw on a local culture of skilled and manual employment and to broker a relationship with the town as the company's local man.

Prior to the late 1980s, a precarious balance had therefore emerged in the economic sphere between the descendants of landed estate power and nationalist industrialists. The influence of a pre-existing largely Protestant commercial farming class constrained land tenure change. The progressive expansion of the nationalist Roadstone company was ideologically committed to a patronage relationship with a lower skilled and skilled manual labour force that remained bound to primary production and agriculture.

[28] The study author was a development officer employed by the LEADER company from 2005 – 2007. Within the company, the relative lack of development proposals from Blessington was a key concern, which was, however, never illuminated by this finding.

The tension between these two economic forces, combined with the outmigration of workers and some broader industrialisation effort, contributed to an economic *status quo*. This was dominated locally by the interests of clergy, large farmers, many of whom were Church of Ireland members, Roadstone and the Fianna Fáil local politician in the political sphere. Arising from a preferential access to EU transfers for agriculture and for transport from the mid-1970s, the strength of this local social power system was maintained through the 1980s.

In the early 1990s, a new resident to one of Blessington Town's early housing estate developments brought the conditions of the sale of a parcel of 147 acres of state-owned land to Roadstone to national attention, as part of a protest against the company's proposal to extract on this land near a site of archaeological relevance at Glen Ding. A lawyer, lecturer and leading environmental activist, this influential national figure first joined the Blessington & District Community Council and subsequently established a new anti-Roadstone group, the Blessington Heritage Trust. He also formed a highly effective political alliance with a local elected representative from Baltinglass, a radical Labour Party politician (see also Chapter 5). During the most bitter phase of this initial controversy from the early 1990s to about 1997, four separate High Court actions revolving around the zoning of Roadstone lands for quarrying were taken variously by the state, the Roadstone company and anti-Roadstone group, the Blessington Heritage Trust. Eventually, the land sale would be investigated as part of the national Moriarty Tribunal into payments made to politicians on the basis of the claim that the state had given preferential treatment to Roadstone. No improper dealings were proven (Moriarty, 2006).

It is impossible to overstate the local trauma that was caused by these events, since it fundamentally deconstructed the traditional local labour relationship with Roadstone. Long-standing Blessington natives tended to support Roadstone, while newer 'blow-ins' did not.

For the man who led the campaigns, Blessington was a ‘company town’ under Roadstone’s patronage (Participant A7). This highly effective new community leader established a series of short-lived groups and forged alliances with new Residents Associations, holding public meetings locally and nationally. In consequence, the existing development group the Blessington & District Community Council fragmented into opposing groups, with the ousted pro-Roadstone group threatening legal action against those remaining members.

The local elected representative who lived in the area supported Roadstone, while the local politician from Baltinglass pinned his successful political career to the protest (see also Chapter 5). Roadstone sought planning permission in the interim and Wicklow County Council first supported the company, but later also joined in legal action against Roadstone as extraction from the Glen Ding site was initiated in 1993. Zoning meetings held at Wicklow County Council in 1996 led to a further court case, amid claims that it had entered into secret deals with the company. I have already argued that the character of the Roadstone company in Blessington remained close to its own genesis in primary extraction, up to 1990. Its local failure in Blessington echoed the ideological challenge to Catholic-nationalist economic power relations. Foster (2007b, p. 68) has argued that the end-game of a particular type of nationalist leadership was writ large in the politics of the late 1980s. The substitution of Roadstone’s influence in Blessington with that of Cookehill Development Ltd. was similarly indicative of this transition. Local resistance to Roadstone grew out of the challenge offered by a new, urban labour force to the existing status quo.

> The politics of land were, in the late nineteenth century, intimately connected with the politics of nationalism. In the era of Haughey, an interest in land took over from a commitment to nationalism (2007b, p. 68).

This challenge, which eventually threw over the domination of Roadstone locally, also radically altered the ideological conditions that translated local domination by a Catholic-nationalist leadership into local cultural identity in and by civil society. Such processes would collectively transform civil society in Blessington over a decade. The development of these critical events in civil society and the character of negotiative governance in accommodating a changing pattern of economic leadership will be considered separately in Chapter 6 and is only briefly referenced here. In this chapter, a brief description of the scale of social transformation in Blessington will be relevant to the following discussion of the new economic leadership of a property developer, Cookehill Development Ltd., who arrived in Blessington in the late 1990s.

3.6 Transforming Blessington

A first wave of incomers from Dublin to the study territory in the 1970s, was typically comprised of middle class professionals moving to a one-off rural home.[29] This small size of this first wave of migrants did little to alter the socio-economic profile of the study territory. A comparison of census data on employment patterns in the relevant study period between 1986 to 2011, however, demonstrates the scale of the demographic transformation that occurred in the intervening period. In 1986, the population of the study territory was 4,108 persons and just one third of this population (32 per cent) lived in Blessington town. By 2011, two-thirds of the territory's population (67 per cent) was living in Blessington town. In 1986, the most important local industries were 'commerce and trade' (22 per cent), 'manufacturing' (21 per cent) and 'agriculture' (14 per cent), followed closely by 'professional services' (13 per cent).

[29] Per interviews conducted as part of the study and in particular, the views expressed by a local Estate Agent.

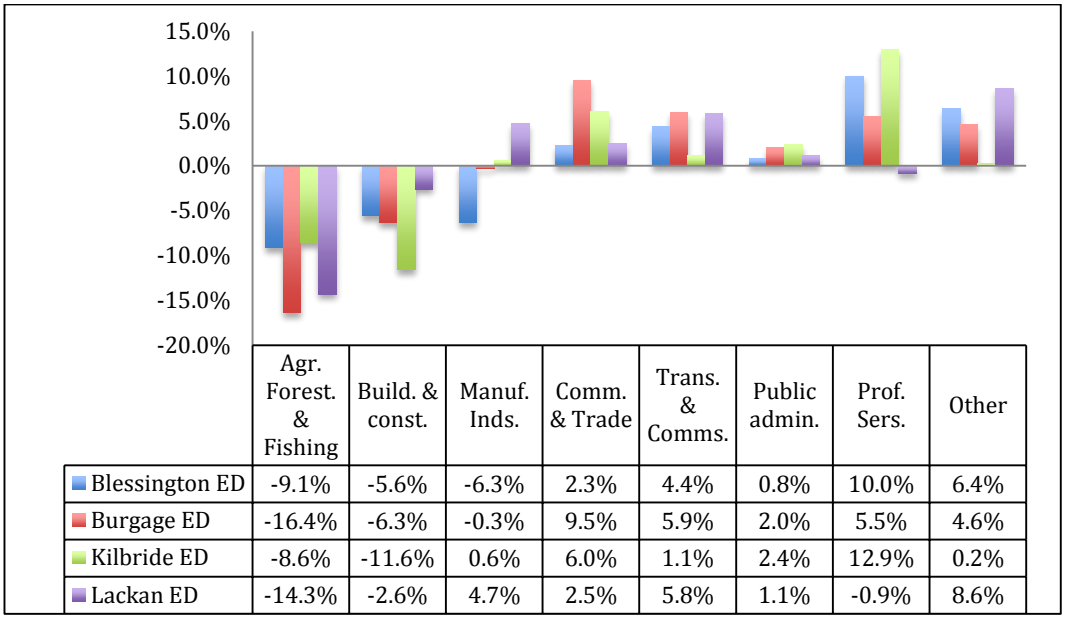
Figure 3.1 below demonstrates the change in employment by industry between 1986 and 2011, according to CSO Census data. Both of these census waves bookend peaks of economic crisis and associated high levels of unemployment. In 1986, 15 per cent of the study territory population was unemployed, while in 2011 this figure stood at 16 per cent for a population that was now double that of 1986.

The data shows the general trend away from agriculture and the growth of Blessington town as an urban centre anticipates the depth of this trend. From the 1980s employment patterns reflected the rise of a wage-earning class reflecting the merging of lower middle class groups into a wider, but more insecurely employed, middle class. An alignment in employment types, social class and education levels with Dublin similarly emphasised the migration of labour from the suburbs of Dublin. Within the territory, the EDs that had been most dependent on agriculture in 1986 saw the largest fall in this kind of employment amongst the labour force, but also the lowest increase in population in the period to 2011 as the trend off the land accelerated amongst poorer farmers.[30]

Relatively speaking, the labour force in the study territory still relied (at 8 per cent) more strongly on 'building and construction' type employment despite an unemployment rate of 46 per cent nationally for this sector in 2011 (CSO, Census 2011, *Profile 3: At Work*). More generally, the most significant industries for the local labour force in 2011 were 'commerce and trade' (27 per cent), followed closely by 'professional services' (21 per cent). Both of these sectors had advanced rapidly in the period and 'manufacturing' (16 per cent), by contrast had languished.

[30] For example, employment in agriculture in the Lackan ED dropped by 15 per cent from 1986 to 2011, while its population rose by 32 per cent (compared with 100 per cent for the study territory as a whole).

Figure 3.1 Change in percentage of labour force in main industries by type of main industry, study territory (1986 – 2011)

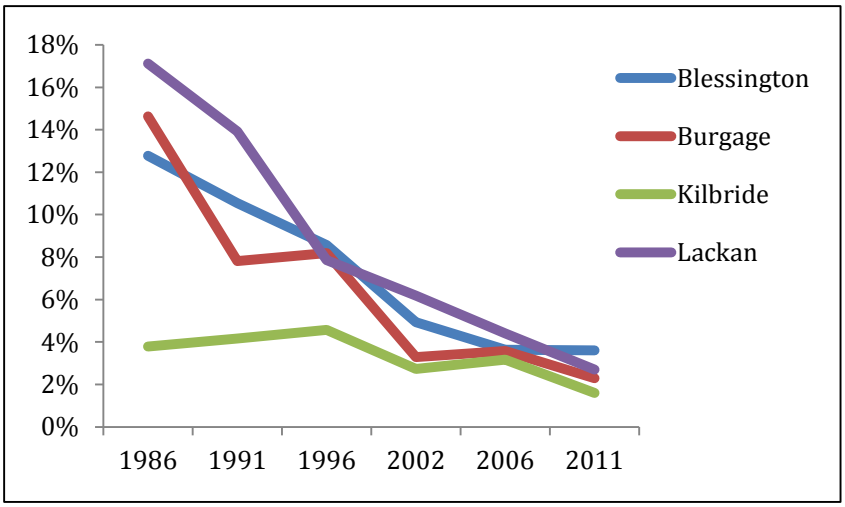


	Agr. Forest. & Fishing	Build. & const.	Manuf. Inds.	Comm. & Trade	Trans. & Comms.	Public admin.	Prof. Sers.	Other
Blessington ED	-9.1%	-5.6%	-6.3%	2.3%	4.4%	0.8%	10.0%	6.4%
Burgage ED	-16.4%	-6.3%	-0.3%	9.5%	5.9%	2.0%	5.5%	4.6%
Kilbride ED	-8.6%	-11.6%	0.6%	6.0%	1.1%	2.4%	12.9%	0.2%
Lackan ED	-14.3%	-2.6%	4.7%	2.5%	5.8%	1.1%	-0.9%	8.6%

Source: Adapted from CSO Census data, various Census reports.

Analysis of available census data also demonstrated a more nuanced class differentiation by employment type and by housing estate in the rapidly growing Blessington area, which now included Burgage ED on its periphery. The following Figures 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 will demonstrate the changing social profile of the study territory from 1986, commensurate in general terms with a rising middle class, but with internal class differences in social class apparent. Figure 3.2 will show a rise in education levels, with the proportions of 'unskilled manual' labourers plummeting between 1986 and 2011, especially evident in the Burgage and Blessington electoral divisions in the inter-censal period 1996 – 2002.

Figure 3.2 Change in proportion of 'unskilled manual' labour as per cent of overall population in study territory (1986 – 2011)

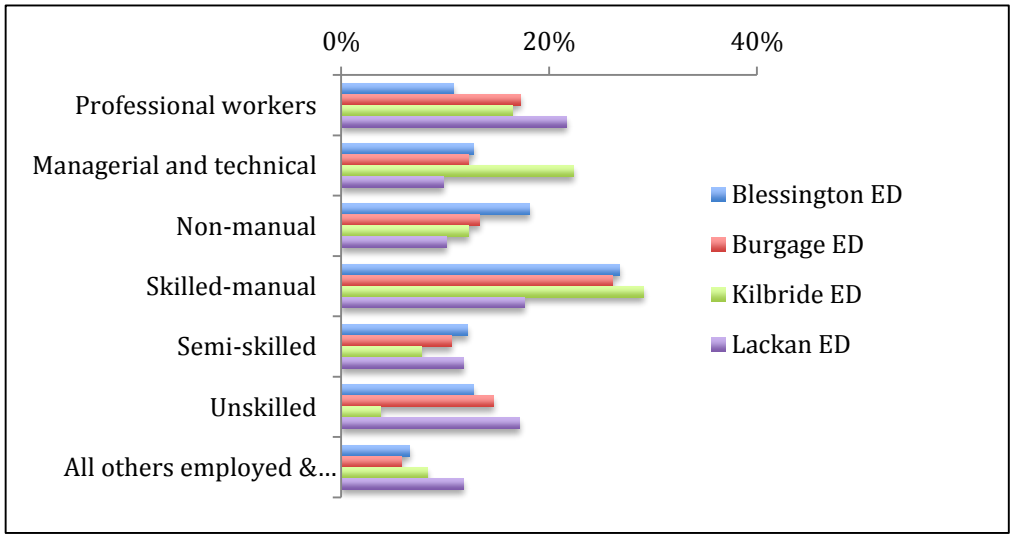


Source: Adapted from CSO Census data, various censes reports.

Figures 3.3. and 3.4 illuminate key social structural changes in the study territory over the twenty-five year period from 1986 to 2011. A comparison between the two charts demonstrated an effect of convergence in the social classes within the study territory. However, there was one exception to this general trend. The social class profile of the newly urban Blessington Town was somewhat lower than that of the study territory as a whole in 2011, with a smaller representation of 'professional' and 'managerial and technical' workers, when compared to the remaining electoral districts in the territory. However, more generally, an upward trend in social class reflected a national trend. This affect was attributable to the establishment of new technological and service type employment in Dublin together with a commensurate decline in manufacturing or construction type employment. The third key feature of social class change in the contemporary period was an effect of polarisation at either end of the social spectrum, visible in the proportional distance between 'unskilled' and 'semi skilled' workers relative to the two highest social classes.

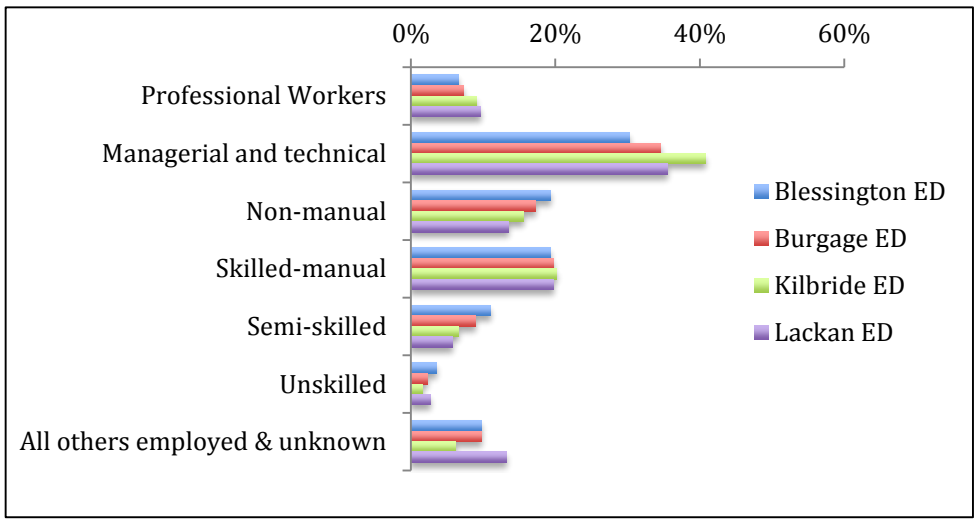
In addition, a dramatic increase in the number of women working outside of the home contributed to a rising consciousness, initially mobilised for issues such as the availability of early childhood education and care. In 1986, nearly 30 per cent of women in the study territory were working in the home. In 2011, this figure was 9 per cent, with evidence also of convergence within the territory in this trend. This social transformation can be associated with the only evidence of a structured leadership role amongst women in civil society in Blessington & District in the period between 1987 and 2011 (see also Chapter 6). Finally, the effect of luxury one-off housing construction around the shores of Blessington Lake was seen in upward change in the social class profile of the Lackan ED in particular. A completely different land use pattern followed from an almost 50 per cent drop in the proportion of farmers between 1986 and 2011 (from 10.4 per cent to 4.9 per cent) in the Lackan ED. This was only the largest in a context of decreasing numbers of farmers in all the electoral divisions studied in the contemporary period.

Figure 3.3 Population of study territory by social class (1986)



Source: CSO, 1986 Census data

Figure 3.4 Population of study territory by social class (2011)



Source: CSO, 2011 Census data

In conclusion, the new population of the study territory was wholly different from that which preceded it and these changes provide evidence also of the rising dominance of Blessington Town in a context of the shadow cast by Dublin's flourishing labour market on the one hand and rising house prices in Dublin on the other. I have also suggested that an effect of rising inequality was visible in the flow of population out of the Tallaght area into Blessington as a longer-range trend. Blessington Town spilled over into the neighbouring Burgage ED from this period. The profile of new housing estates reflected a rising prosperity and shifts in employment, including in type and in rate of participation in the labour market. In addition, as the property market became a focal point for capital investment from the early 2000s, a stratified development of housing estates in Blessington Town etched a new social gradient reflected in a micro-geography of neighbourhood type across the townscape (see also Silverman, 1993, p. 209).

In Blessington Town, local authority housing estates were built in less favoured locations. The Woodleigh estate was built closest to the Roadstone quarry and experienced the greatest problems with water quality from illegally buried untreated waste. Glen Ding, another infamous local authority built housing estate completed in 2009, was built on a well-known flood plain. Persistent problems with flooding and associated water damage to the houses continued to generate protest until 2014, in the absence of remediation works. In the newer Burgage estates built in the mid-2000s, a large housing estate comprising relatively modest houses was constructed just outside the town boundary and further away from town shops and services. More middle class estates tend to be smaller and of more sizeable and aesthetic construction type, built closer to the centre of the town.[31] Finally, the most luxurious housing was built by professionals and wealthier farming families on land outside of the town, in the countryside surrounding Blessington Lake and in particular in the previously poor Lackan ED.

These trends mirrored national trends of population growth and of population change. In 1999, Daniel O'Leary's grandson broke a lengthy tradition of local land tenure stability (see also Chapter 2). As the property and credit bubble heightened and developers competed over a limited number of sites in Dublin, the owners of Cookehill Development Ltd. (Cookehill) purchased a large land bloc of ca. 230 acres in the centre of Blessington Town from a local Catholic farmer for €19.5 million.[32] The following sections of this chapter will discuss and interpret the scope of influence and leadership that this economic actor wielded in Blessington from 1999.

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31 For example, these houses were typically constructed of the more favoured and expensive red-brick, in contrast to the more typical and cheaper 9-inch cavity block finished in a cement render with emulsion waterproof finish.

32 The O'Leary landholding sold to Cookehill Development Ltd. will be shown at Appendix I. The reported number of acres sold to Cookehill ranges from ca.175 acres to ca. 230 acres. However, 230 acres represented an equivalent landholding size to that listed in the Property Registration Authority records as being owned by Daniel O'Leary from the 1920s.

3.7 The influence of Cookehill Development Ltd.

> It's funny – O'Leary in the early 1990s wanted his land zoning [sic] as farming to be retained he said 'I'm staying in farming'. When the money came, he changed his mind (Participant D9)

Cookehill Development Ltd. was founded by three men; a construction project manager, a former estate agent and a chartered accountant specialising in corporate mergers still working for the multi-national professional services company PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) in 2004.[33] The company was just one of a number of legal vehicles operated by the partnership as part of a portfolio of companies established to manage financial investment in property development in the Greater Dublin Area from 1998. Cookehill Development Ltd. was managed by Cova Property Management and owned by the same men that formed part of Cova Property Holdings. Cova Property Holdings was an investment vehicle described in the *Irish Times* in 2007 as managing €500 million in financial and capital assets.[34] Cova provided a protective incorporation interlocking the interests of financial investment with directly managed construction development. For example, one of Cova's main investment vehicles was Ardawn Development Ltd., which was 95 per cent owned by NCB Stockbrokers and 5 per cent owned by Cova Property Holdings and provided an overarching legal personality for a multiple of similar individual development projects such as Cookehill Development Ltd. An apparent governance complexity therefore masked a network of more straightforward personal inter-relationships.

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[33] In 2014, PwC was the fifth largest privately owned multi-national organisation in the United States.

[34] NCB Stockbrokers was established by Irish financier, Mr. Dermot Desmond in 1981 and subsequently sold to an Irish bank in 1994. It was again sold as part of a management buy-out deal backed by Mr. Desmond in 2003, to a consortium of Irish businessmen. Mr. Desmond subsequently sold his stake in the company to the Quinn Group. In 2013, following the failure of one of its key shareholders, the Quinn Group, NCB was again sold to a South African financial services company and rebranded as Investec (see http://www.independent.ie/business/irish/investec-dumps-ncb-name-in-major-revamp-of-staff-and-hq-29267314.html, downloaded on 09 January 2015).

In fact, it was clear that just a small number of politically and financially well-connected men were behind all of these legal personalities. Moreover, these businessmen were connected by means of personal and professional relationships with a counterpart civil society leadership in Blessington. The local Accountant who was entrusted with leading negotiations on behalf of the community with Cookehill was a previous colleague of Cookehill's founding Chief Executive, for example.[35] Cookehill Development Ltd. benefited from low interest rates and a politically weak financial regulatory system. Its leadership depended on unsustainable lending by Irish banks with ready access to international financial credit (O'Riain, 2014). In sum, the company was primarily a broker for elite Irish investors, many of whom were themselves associated with Irish banks or with a small number of leading Irish companies (Clancy et al., 2010). These investors depended upon a much larger cohort of individual investors, including pension fund managers as well as international corporate investors. In this complex of financial arrangements the risk seemed minimal to capital investors in the midst of a booming, poorly regulated property market. As one participant put it:

> Cookehill needed 1.7 million for a deposit on the O'Leary land. 17 people gave 100K each. If planning goes through, they have an option on 10 houses, if not, then it's a tax write-off (Participant E4).

Kantola (2011) observed a positive correlation between a rise in charismatic authority styles and 'market society' (2011, p. 424). Unlike Roadstone who depended upon the local, native manager - a single charismatic champion of this property development complex emerged as the dominant economic actor in Blessington from 2000. The property developer, typically known simply by his surname was synonymous with the property development company and took a primary role in all negotiations.

[35] Byrne (2012) has highlighted the relationship between nationalist politicians and property developers, which contributed to a toxic credit and property bubble in Ireland up to 2007.

The local community comprehended their relationship with Cookehill as a direct and personal one, even if they also intuited that the influence of the property developer was resourced by anonymous investors.

Cookehill Development Ltd. first submitted an application immediately following the purchase of the O'Leary landholding in 1999. Wicklow County Council planning files recorded the detail of this application, proposing the construction of 498 houses and an inner relief road in Blessington Town. An anecdote told by the most prominent contemporary civil society leader in Blessington described an accidental meeting in 1998 or early 1999 with one of the Cookehill founders that disclosed the scale of the proposed development content and generated an agreement between the two men that a negotiated process would be needed to placate the community. This meeting provided the genesis of the Blessington & District Forum as a new basis for social power and leadership in Blessington. At least partly on the basis of this conversation, the original planning application was rescinded and a new group established specifically to mediate between local interests and the property developer (see section 3.8 below).

The narrative described the social relationships that overlaid economic interests centred in the potential profit to be made by both men in the development of Blessington. However, in fact, the original planning permission sought was a tactical 'wedge' made strategically to pre-empt a subsequent more substantial plan, since the integration of a Town Centre retail and public services complex was always a key focus for the development. The rationale for the relationship included the developer's understanding that consultation with the community served as a proxy for the state's interests as part of the planning process. In other words, negotiation with the community leveraged state compliance.
As he said: 'Like, this was a big one for us. At one stage, we had 21 different planning consultants working on it.'

Early planning applications included an initial project of 598 houses, schools, a hotel, leisure centre, a 400,000 sq.ft. Town Centre and a 360,000 sq.ft. Business Park. In July 2001, Cookehill issued a list of the benefits and amenities planned as part of the 'Cookehill scheme' to Wicklow County Council. These included all of the requests originally made by the community at an early public meeting held to discuss the planning application and comprised three individual planning applications submitted by 2002. According to the town planning consultants recruited by Cookehill, 'over and above the construction employment provided, it [the development] will create an estimated 740 jobs in retail and commercial activity':

- The construction of an inner relief road;
- a dedicated theatre;
- a new town square – granite paved with designer sculpture centre piece;
- a nursing home and 2 crèches;
- modern shopping with covered street;
- underground car-park for town;
- leisure centre with 25 metre pool (as part of hotel);
- c. 40 acres landscaped amenity/heritage park;
- tennis courts with car-parking;
- bowling green;
- sites for St. Mary's National and C of I schools;
- 20 acres new G.A.A. playing fields and headquarters;
- 6 acres junior pitch and putt course;
- 2 other playing pitches;
- business and e-commerce park;
- enterprise units;
- home and business units;
- tourist facilities and hotel;
- civic building;

- quality housing for families of all sizes (598 houses in main residential application and 147 apartments in town centre).

In a letter to Wicklow County Council issued in 2002, the O'Leary Development Group summarised the community projects agreed with Cookehill from their perspective and ratified at a public meeting held in February that year, as follows:

- Tennis courts / bowling green with ancillary facilities including clubhouse.
- Playing pitches (non G.A.A. club and pitch and putt.
- Heritage park (on site of demesne gardens).
- Swimming pool (25 metre) as part of hotel.
- Theatre.

Collectively, these projects formed the basis for all future negotiations between Cookehill and the community and were approved by the local authority in March 2002, subject to a myriad of planning conditions enforceable by Wicklow County Council.

3.8 The rational state and local consensus

In all, Cookehill Development Ltd. lodged approximately 56 distinct but linked planning applications or applications for changes to planning between 2000 and 2014.[36] In County Wicklow, as elsewhere, land zoning processes were routinely subject to lobbying by developers or their agents in the period (Participant A16).

[36] This number is likely to be an underestimation. The author received access to planning files in 2010, which were still being compiled. In addition, planning files follow a complex hierarchy of individual, but linked, applications and nested applications for changes to approved developments. This hierarchy created significant difficulties for locals in attempting to track the progress of planning conditions set at the highest level of approval.

The relationship between developers and politicians devolved to the local democratic level but was there mediated by the division of authority between local elected representatives and county council officials (but see also Chapter 5). A logic of shared economic interests shaped the changing pattern of economic leadership locally and was reflected in alliances between local politicians and property developers, as was amply demonstrated elsewhere. Cookehill's influence was intermediated by a planning system managed by county council planning staff. However, Council officials relied on local objections to buttress their regulatory roles in the face of the general preferment amongst local political representatives for local population expansion. Such consent as could be given by the local community as part of a weak planning system was, in turn, both reduced by a lack of representation and rendered toothless by the complex, rapidly evolving development process itself. Still, the property developer himself viewed the planning system as inherently risky and unpredictable. This ensured that each deal struck by the developer locally guaranteed and bypassed the formal planning system, justifying the significant investment the property developer devoted to local negotiation.

> There was no real planned development of Blessington. You've heard of the phrase 'excremental planning'? [sic] Development follows the effluent. That's what happened (Participant D9).

In a context of tension between the professional views of local authority officials, many of whom were neither architects nor professionally qualified planners and the shared interests of local elected representatives, many of whom where themselves landowners and developers, the state relied on private citizens and civil society groups to agree property developments. This is precisely what happened in Blessington, when it became known that an application for planning permission on the O'Leary landholding had been submitted to Wicklow County Council by Cookehill Development Ltd. In summary, state planning regulations incorporated a process of negotiation between property developers and civil society.

However, this commitment to the inclusion of civil society in development decisions operated in practice as a mechanism to *limit* the potential for objections to planning applications. The main economic interest of the local authority was realised by enforcing those guarantees secured against payment by the developer of the required development levy, so that local public services could be delivered in the county. A senior planning official believed that the development company's engagement with local interests was linked to the number of 'side' deals his development plan required, in other words, to its overall scale. It still evoked surprise amongst the planners:

> He [the property developer] was the first to do it. He could have got his permission without going to the community. Maybe he wanted to maximise what he got for the land – he got everything he wanted at the same time. Also, Blessington needed a relief road. Community agreement wasn't crucial, but it was helpful (Participant D9).

Community agreement was helpful rather than crucial, because in the absence of rates on agricultural land and domestic dwellings and given the elimination of water charges, local authorities depended on commercial rates for the bulk of their discretionary income (O'Broin and Waters, 2007). The loss of Roadstone commercial rates was, for example, substantial. The company had been paying nearly €1 million per annum in rates, according to its local manager. In 2010, the Council sought €500,000 from the company, who were no longer fully operating the quarry and refused to pay. In addition, local small shopkeepers were inclined to see the overall development of Blessington in positive terms, swayed by the potential for a trickling down of business to them as part of an overall enlargement of the town's population. However, one story from a local retailer was revelatory of how the property developer overwhelmed local economic interests in favour of, in this case, the large multiple Dunne Stores in conjunction with the local authority.

> I got a call one morning from the Area Engineer and he told me that O'Leary's land had been sold… I met [names the property developer] on numerous occasions. Then he contacted me and said, 'I need your permission to put in planning permission.' The road was to cut through my site [a field] in two places. I said, 'All I want is a supermarket in it.' He said, 'you're the man, you were here first.' You've seen the original application? It has the applicants [names himself], O'Leary, Cookehill and so on. So, I stopped talking to the Council and I had a Heads of Agreement with Cookehill. They were to buy my field as part of the deal…The deal was €9 million and €1 million for my site. I sold my other businesses, for €8 million. Then I got a call from [names estate agent] the day before the deal was to be signed saying the money has now gone to €14 million overnight. I got the money, but no deal… I went to the [Wicklow] County Manager and I said, 'I've been trying to get a supermarket' and I hinted that I wouldn't play ball with the developer. He said 'if you don't give them what they want, you will get no planning on that site'. I went to court with Cookehill. On the steps of the high court they said, 'let's be reasonable' and offered me €100,000 for the land. Eventually, they offered me €500,000 for the two corners that they needed… I used it [the money] to double my shop size (Participant E5).

The local authority interest was also bound centrally to the deals the property developer was anxious to broker downstream of the planning application, further eroding its role as a planning adjudicator. In two instances in particular in Blessington & District, the local authority was also a potential client of economic actors and able to broker deals *via* the local elected representatives to the exclusion of an alternative community perspective. In the case study territory, such deals included the proposal to lease a portion of the town centre building as the location of a public library and also the subsequent proposal to site a discount grocery retailer within the town. In order to advance this last project, a complicated and inter-connected chronology of deals was brokered behind the scenes. First, the developer bought a parcel of land on the Main Street from the Church of Ireland, granting the Church of Ireland a site for a new national school and commencing discussions with discount retailer, ALDI.

Next, the Council sold an adjoining parcel of land directly to ALDI to facilitate the development. Discussions with the community were only held when both parcels of land were combined and when the framing of economic decisions and conditions had been completed. Prior consultation with the community was not required formally, since the proposal to sell Council land to ALDI and the subsequent planning application for construction of the supermarket were enforced by two of the three local area elected representatives jointly under the terms of a 'Section 140' instrument. However, the issue was discussed in the Forum through 2010 and the objections raised by Supervalu noted and dismissed. As one participant said 'more business will bring more people into the town' (Forum meeting, June 2010).

In this case, it was alleged that planning staff would not have raised an objection given the existence of an explicit county policy encouraging discount store development in town centres and the use of the Section 140 instrument was an agreed approach to achieving the inter-dependent economic interests of the local elected representatives, the Church of Ireland, the property developer, the council officials and ALDI. As a client of the developer, the existence of a county level strategy that specifically encouraged competition from multinational, low cost retailers underpinned the rationale for a partnership between councillors and planning staff. The negative local employment outcomes that were likely to ensue as a result of ALDI's low cost business model and the consequent reduction in existing local retail businesses, held no weight in an employment neutral development approach that prioritised commercial rates and an argument of lower prices for consumers.

The most likely objector to the plans raised was the owner of the existing and smaller scale retail affiliate 'Supervalu' located close to the proposed ALDI development.

Crucially, the supermarket owner was discouraged from objecting to the ALDI development when word reached him that his objections would be viewed negatively by the local governance organisation, the Blessington & District Forum. In 2012, this same retailer purchased a site from the Catholic Church for his own expansion plans and the Catholic parish priest achieved a significant portion of the finances he needed to develop part of the original primary school site as a parish centre in 2014. A community member circulated an email to Blessington & District Forum members in 2010:

> We keep on hearing, from both councillors and [County Council] officials, that local groups will have to wait until the Local Area Plan is finalised, before they know if land is to be made available to them for public football pitches etc.; well, they didn't keep ALDI waiting for the LAP [Local Area Plan] (Participant A16).

In conclusion, local authority planning officials had the power to refuse planning permission, to set specific conditions in line with the planning application documentation and to sanction the development company when any such conditions were not met. Their limited regulatory role was dictated by the fact that ultimately the council needed to transfer land to housing in the county to help pay for basic services to citizens. The council bought and sold land in the area for development and brokered land swop deals with the developer, which even obviated the responsibility to ensure adequate provision of social and affordable housing for local people.

More generally, planning regulations that allowed for all of the social commitments of the developer (excepting the development levy, which did not necessarily benefit the locale directly) to be repeatedly extended to final phases of the overall development plan ensured that community projects remained tantalisingly just out of reach. The rational and apparently impersonal rules of the planning process masked the dominance of state and economic actors over local planning decisions since a lack of regulation minimised or even subverted community participation.

3.9 The local logic of partnership

> We set a precedent. That a community can organise itself to negotiate with a big property developer and get a basket together and agreed (Participant A23).

> Cookehill can do whatever they like. They hire the best, WCC hire the worst. I was involved in the GAA, with the development committee. In conversations with them, Cookehill, everything was like, yeah, we can do that, it was like he was running the Council. He told the GAA he could get planning, he told them what to do, what to say. They went for planning for 50 housing units. They got 700K and 20 acres of land and Cookehill put in road and sewage for them. Cookehill then sold the land for €9M. Whatever he says he can do, that's what'll happen (Participant E4).

The evidence from local records showed that a representative group was formed in 1999 to negotiate with Cookehill Development Ltd., this being the very earliest opportunity following the arrival of Cookehill in Blessington. The tale of the accidental meeting between the local influential accountant and a founding director of Cookehill has already been recounted. However, the correspondence recorded the fact that the groundwork had already been laid by the efforts of the Catholic parish priest and the local Church of Ireland rector to facilitate a reconciliation between a divided local community leadership. The membership of the new O'Leary Development group was primarily drawn therefore from an existing representation consisting of core members of just four local groups from either side of the Roadstone conflict, together with the accountant whose central interest lay in the Cookehill plan.

Local commercial interests in the town dominated the newly formed O'Leary Development Group's leadership. The chairperson from 1999 to 2004 was the businessman who progressed to the chair of the Blessington & District Forum in 2004 and key members attending early meetings with Cookehill included a local national school principal and a longstanding native, small businessman. The group also included a further five members who represented wider community and social interests. Two of the original membership represented 'youth/aged/disabled' interests, both women. In contrast to the contemporary visibility of the remaining men on the group, neither of the two women are recorded in further correspondence and nor did they play a role in contemporary decision-making in the town during the period of the study.

Between 1999 and 2002, discussions between the group and Cookehill 'progressed very amicably' according to the letter submitted to An Bord Pleanala in April, 2002. The letter records that a group of 'eight people have had nine meetings with the developer, three meetings with Wicklow County Council, two meetings with Duchas and thirty-six representative [the remaining four community groups] group meetings'. Although specifically mandated to progress a wide-range of projects by a public meeting held in July 1999, a report of the public discussions written in August 1999 lists these projects (see Section 3.6) and then stated that just 'two issues were paramount to the overall development' namely, the location of the relief road and the location of the school.

The first project was preferred by the interest of the local authority and Cookehill and the second by the interest of the Catholic Church and Cookehill. This early admission of the key interests which would be served between 1999 and 2006 signalled the low priority actually being accorded to the much longer list of social and public amenities agreed through public consultation.

In fact, of the lengthy list of social, tourism and amenity projects proposed in July 1999, just three were completed before Cookehill Development Ltd. finally entered receivership in 2012. These three projects represented the core interests of the state / local authority, the Catholic Church and a traditional rural leadership in partnership with the new economic actor:

- Public library - located above Dunnes Shopping Centre.
- Theatre – located in the gym of the national school and under a shared management arrangement with the Catholic national school.
- A dedicated G.A.A. building.

The promise of partnership was premised upon the pre-eminence of economic relations, so that partnership with the property developer offered only a promise of something rather than nothing. The following quote expresses this view.

> But, it starts at a business and ends with a business. I'd like it to start at the village. Money is the key factor. Key issues will still be dictated by money people… We think we're making decisions. We think we're involved. You get something through. Better to be there, because you'll get something (Participant A34).

By the 2000s, the most successful of the organisations in Blessington & District, in terms of membership and capital development, were those that were not only willing to negotiate with the developer, but which were also adopting a more pragmatic approach to aligning economic values with local associational life. The following quote is from a leader of the successful soccer club.

> The club will have to take a more business-like approach. When we have our ground up and running, we'll have a more commercial reality. We'll move away from the typical stuff, race nights etc. Right now we buy water for 27c and sell it for 55c to the shops locally and they sell [the water] on for €1. It brings us a couple of grand a year and gives us branding. We also do our own soccer balls, leisure wear etc. That generates revenue (Participant A30).

However, neither the rising membership of the entrepreneurial soccer club amongst a new local population, nor its notable success in sporting terms were sufficient to secure the grounds the group needed.[37] Attempts at developing a partnership with Wicklow County Council and with Cookehill to secure and develop grounds failed, while the embedded local GAA leadership successfully completed their own project (see also Chapter 6). The property developer remained primarily concerned to secure the support of a small and influential elite local leadership.

3.10 A changing pattern of economic leadership

The new and more aggressive capitalism of the 1970s began to impact on the Blessington area in the late 1980s and was heralded by an inflow of labour from Dublin. Eipper argued that in the 1970s, an influential leadership at the core still represented a conjoining of economic and political leadership just as heretofore (1986, p. 127). The Gulf Oil intervention, however, contributed to the establishment of a new leadership group, characterised as younger, better educated and centred on the upwardly mobile and immigrant sections of the bourgeoisie' (1986, p. 144). Nevertheless, 'a small number of people continued to possess and exercise a preponderant amount of influence' so that the participatory capacity of the majority in local development decision-making was minimal (1986, p. 146).

Small traders, larger farmers and the clergy predominated in the leadership of Blessington's development groups up to the 1990s. These were increasingly joined by the influence of educated professional men in the following two decades. However, it was clear that a changing class profile in the town meant that a native economic leadership was represented by professional men and landowners, retail owners and larger farmers.

[37] By 2014, the Football Club had 20 teams and was the largest of all sport associations locally. Most of its management committee were incomers, excepting one, of whom it was said by one committee member when referring to the lack of influence enjoyed by the football club, that 'and sure, he comes from Lackan – so no power there' (Participant A16).

An exception was the local, non-native owner of the small supermarket in the town. It was notable the key influential leader of civil society was a native professional man who maintained offices and homes in both Blessington and in Dublin. While it was said by a study participant that 'old shops oppose the new shops' (Participant A1), the biggest retail employer in the town, a small supermarket owner who self-reported a labour force of 40 locals in 2011 had almost no influence in contemporary town affairs. He struggled to compete in an increasingly uncompetitive and contracting local retail market by 2014.

However, his lack of success was not indicative of the fortunes of other native shopkeepers. New retailers failed in the new Town Centre development but existing small retailers hung on in the Main Street; not prospering but also not going out of business as the town's development progressed. One example was Hennessy's small DIY shop on the Main St., which had been in the same location without any significant upgrading works since the 1930s. This was explained as a small, steady stream of native customers who patronised these shops as a matter of local custom. The Hennessy family enjoyed a particular status in the town, playing a role in several local sporting and business groups. This family and similar small native traders, such as the local pharmacist had enhanced their professional credentials over time and were founding members of the Blessington & District Forum. It was noteworthy that just one native shopkeeper elected to move from the main street to the Town Centre and was the only local, native retailer to fail in the period.

The rising leadership of the local accountant who was himself the son of a Roadstone worker, exemplified the rising social status of professionals brokering the development of land. This actor's existing economic and social capital was significantly enhanced by his personal connection to the property developer, since they had both worked at the same financial services firm in Dublin at one time.

His personal economic interests were served by the fact that many of the existing and new traders were his clients, so that the proposed development of the town centre's retail and other business units would increase his client base. However, he still had to bring the larger local farmers and the small business traders with him. Old money locally meant commercial farming money, mainly held by a Church of Ireland membership.

> Did you never hear that one? The 'old money' is the Ulster Bank and the 'new money' is the AIB. Sure, the Ulster Bank has been here a long time, the AIB bank has opened since, but the Ulster Bank is where the old money is and there's a lot more of that (Participant attending a Joint Policing Committee meeting, 20/05/2010).

In summary, the effect of a resurging interest in the development of land ensured that certain economic leaders accrued prestige and influence. These included landowners in the centre of the town and construction related professionals such as estate agents and accountants. However, small retailers on the main street failed to prosper in an era of relative prosperity, for the same reasons that the newer retailers of unsustainable pound-shops, fast food and greeting card shops in the new Town Centre did not. The in-migration of a large, new working population did little to change the fortunes of the smaller business owners, whose fate had already been decided prior to the 1980s when economic policies favoured the concentration of capital in larger towns and in large-scale retailing. The wider economic picture included large retail outlets as the primary beneficiaries of land development. Certainly, these businesses in Blessington, including Dunnes Stores and Aldi, had no personal connections to local politicians, religious or other business leaders. Both shops struggled through the recessionary period up to 2014.

By the late 1980s, there was no organisation of small business interests in Blessington. The Chamber of Commerce had largely disappeared by this time, under the weight of a failure to make any progress in its main objective of increasing tourism to the town.

National industrialisation policy focused solely on attracting foreign direct investment to initially, designated rural areas and then, more simply, to larger towns and cities. This included a decision to centre economic growth in Naas, County Kildare, 6 miles from Blessington, along transport routes funded under European cost-sharing programmes (Convery, 1999). 'Old shops' held on with lower profits and little investment in either shop fronts or products.

They generally owned the premises in which they operated and occupied central positions on the Main Street. The traders who took leases in the town centre premises were at a considerable disadvantage, generally having short-term leases and higher rents. Small-scale local economic interests certainly expressed their frustration in the face of the economic might of the property developer, but this more often reflected their secondary associations. Other economic actors were of a sufficient scale to benefit from the establishment of the Blessington & District Forum from 2004 as clients of the Forum's activities. The Avon Ri Hotel for example, was owned by the founder of a national roadwork company and this man was closely associated with a small number of Forum projects, notably including the development of a nationally funded walking trail project brokered by the Forum from 2011 (see also Chapter 6).

Professional incomers were often the first to lead local groups, such as the new Theatre Company or the consciously entrepreneurial soccer club (see also Chapter 6) but these groups generally did least well from partnership projects with the property developer. Long-standing, smaller scale economic actors, including native retail, professional men and landowners would eventually be organised within the Blessington & District Forum, the successor to the O'Leary Development Group. Their influence here was shaped by processes of partnership negotiation with the state and with the property developer and will be described further in Chapter 6.

3.11 Conclusions

The first part of this chapter focused on Eipper's treatment of the historical development of Ireland's economy, with particular reference paid to the relationship between political and economic leadership and the structuring effects of the ruling bloc alliance. Eipper suggested that in Ireland by the early 1970s, 'foreign capital became the ultimate arbiter of economic development' (1986, p. 41). One outcome was that 'that type of industrial activity attracted to Ireland tended to be assembly and processing operation', copperfastened foreign dependence (1986, p. 41). The Bantry case gave an insight into the possible ways in which local and national institutions and power dynamics would more and more get subsumed by international capital. In Bantry, existing social power relations in local society were essentially altered, characterised by seemingly autonomous structural changes 'in which the key variable has been the accumulation and movement of capital monopolized on a global scale' (1986, p. 58).

The description of Blessington's economic development and the analysis of the contemporary economic sphere provided in this chapter were both similar to and contrasted with Eipper's findings in the 1970s. The evidence of changes in the local economic sphere in Blessington suggested that finance-centred forms of world capitalism involved quite different power dynamics to those of the multinational corporations Eipper observed in the 1970s. The local case revealed the nuanced dynamics at play and highlighted the deep connections between the traditional ideological bases of personalistic Catholic-nationalist relations and the institutional forms and processes adopted in the Irish political economy in consequence of access to international finance capital. Once again, this evidence demonstrated in the economic sphere the theoretical value of Eipper's emphasis on the interplay between ideological and material conditions for the evolution of the ruling bloc alliance.

The influence of Cookehill was born a long way from Blessington in the speculation of international banks and financial investors in Ireland's property bubble. However, it was also the logical conclusion of a transfer of land from primary production to housing development nationally, combined with a concentration of labour in the construction sector and the benefits that accrued to a closely aligned national political and business leadership. Foster (2007b) argued that Ireland's economic development represented a case of a politics of land trumping a politics of economic nationalism. The ultimate effects were described by one study participant, who illuminated the local rationalities that underpinned the debt crisis in Ireland:

> My son queued for 15 days and nights in Blessington to buy his house. He worked for [names national construction company]. In January 2007 he paid a deposit of €5,000. The house came up for sale in May. He went and enquired and was handed back his cheque. He thought he was to pay €335,000 for it. The first 10 houses sold for €410,000 on the Saturday morning. One hour later, the second 10 houses went for €420,000. They bought in at that price, then she lost her job in 2009 and he lost his in September of that year. They're in their late 20s, with a mortgage of €2,070 per month. €1,100 of that is interest. They're getting €335 per week on the dole. (Participant E4).

In this chapter, I argued that national social partnership structures mediated the incursion of the world economy into Ireland from the mid-1990s, weakening labour relative to capital. I further suggested a complex social translation of new economic relations in Ireland at the local level. As the case of Blessington made clear, these economic actors remained highly personalistic in the local context. The evidence given in this chapter showed the importance of the property developer's charismatic style to setting the agenda for negotiative practice, but also highlighted the social and political constraints that he and his company operated under.

In Blessington & District a linked consciousness of the positive benefits of local economic development with the positive benefits of partnership to manage such developments, leveraged a higher degree of community consensus than had ever been achieved locally heretofore. The real interests of the wider Blessington community, in the sense in which Lukes (2005) understands 'best interests' (2005, p. 148) were not in fact met by partnership. The contemporary experience in Blessington demonstrated the effectiveness of partnership-centred governance arrangements in securing traditional local interests and simultaneously structured the social power of Cookehill. Such interests specifically excluded those of the working population living in newly constructed housing estates in the town, except, for example, when it was considered that the development of the theatre in the national school, hinted at an enduring logic of social mobility guaranteed by a denominational Irish education system.

Chapter 4

Catholic Culture and Moral Persuasion

4.1 Introduction

According to Taylor (1995), religion in Ireland has long stood for a 'powerful organization of meaning, and a meaningful organization of power' (1995, p. 242). In this context, a conservative local clerical leadership provided an essential bulwark for an exceptional relationship between church and state. This chapter, however, will interpret the influence of local religious leadership during a contemporary era characterised by 'godlessness and growth' (Toíbín, 2008, p. 16) and when the Irish Catholic Church has experienced perhaps the greatest crisis of legitimacy of any Irish institution since the 1980s (Inglis, 2007). The first part of the chapter will revisit conceptualisations of church state relations over time, will clarify Eipper's contribution to this debate and will conclude with a summary of contemporary perspectives of Catholic influence. The central sections of the chapter will then examine the strong influence of Catholic clergy over civil society in Blessington & District in light of the evidence provided in Chapter 3. In the concluding section, I will interpret my observations of a morally persuasive Catholic clerical leadership, actively restructuring civil society for negotiation with new economic actors relative to Eipper's hypothesis.

4.2 Anchoring Catholicism in clericalism

A central theme in the literature on Irish post-colonial development charted an extraordinary 100-year flourishing of the power of a distinctively clerical Irish Catholic Church in the period from the 1850s (Inglis, 1998).

For many scholars, the Famine marked a turning point in Irish Catholicism, with religion anchored deep within social as well as religious life in its wake (Boyce, 1990; Inglis, 2005; see also Ferriter, 2012b, p. 19). Famously elaborated by Larkin (1972), a 'devotional revolution' led to a rise in mass attendance. An estimated 33 per cent of the Catholic population regularly attended mass in the 1830s, rising to a 90 per cent attendance rate in 1870, which level is then maintained for a further century (Larkin, 1972; Taylor, 1995, p. 703). In a context of a burgeoning Catholic belief only weakly as yet institutionalised under British rule, scholars agreed that leadership by a more hierocratic Catholic clergy acquired a particular significance in specifically cultural terms (Larkin, 1975; McCabe, 2013, p. 20). The French sociologist Paul-Dubois (1908) elucidated what was clearly already perceived as an unusually powerful priestly leadership in Ireland at the onset of the 20th century.

> The Irish priest is not merely the spiritual shepherd, he is the guide and counsellor in temporal affairs. The facts of history have made him a leader, and often the sole leader, of his people (1908, p. 495).

One of the few scholars to specifically address the genesis of an exceptional *local* clericalism in these facts of history, was Taylor (1985). Taylor (1985) applied anthropological perspectives to argue that parish priests entered the fractious arena of late 19th century nationalist politics in response to threats on two fronts, from a new class consciousness expressed by the Land League on the one hand and from an impersonal, 'contractual' view of landed estate relations being promoted by local land agents on the other (1985, p. 710). As favoured tenants on landed estates, parish priests had much to lose from both positions. By contrast, local clergy had much to gain from a strategic alliance with a farming class engaged in a defensive process of cultural legitimation as part of a transition from British to nationalist rule and whose first priority was land transfer (Inglis, 1998, p. 183; see also Garvin, 2011, p. 165).

Taylor (1985) concluded that the priest's actions did not simply reproduce the local social power system, but rather manipulated and adapted pre-existing categories and relationships' (1985, p. 699), especially, shaping new cultural myths congruent with nationalist economic development (see also Donald, 1991, p. 214). In his hypothesis, a Catholic discourse then became an important carrier of class meaning, offering evidence both of its evolving character and of local resistance to these shifts. Forged 'in the crucible of Anglo-Irish politics' (Taylor, 1995, p. 138), Irish clergy were thus conceived as the moral guarantors of a nascent and still vulnerable middle class. The subsequent effectiveness of the Catholic hierarchy in consolidating the Irish Catholic Church as a system of belief, values and rules (Fuller, 2005) was therefore *predicated* upon clericalism in a majoritarian view and, in particular, a local clergy centrally involved in shaping the self-narrative of a new, independent Irish farming class.

> The Catholic success in surmounting a prototypical local class consciousness may owe as much to such local clerics as Magroarty as to the machinations of Cardinal Cullen and his bishops. (Taylor, 1985, p. 711).

Some one hundred years after the Famine, Biever (1976) reported a nationalist Catholic clergy expressing a self-fulfilling meaning that still resonated with a deep consciousness of separation and loss. The trauma of repetitive cycles of emigration represented a further cultural echo of the Famine, rationalising clerical leadership under nationalism (Fuller, 2005, p. 45).

> I look at Ireland and I ask myself: "Who else could lead?" The Politicians are new at the game; we have few economists, our professional people leave. Who stays? We do. (Biever, 1976 cited in Girvin, 2008, p. 76).

Where Paul-Dubois (1908) anticipated the substitution of clerical dominance by the leadership of an emergent Irish middle class, scholarly explanations for why this did not occur referred to a merging of religious, political and social roles in the public sphere, together with the institutionalisation of church state relations within the polity (see also Berger, 1981, p. 10). Many scholars highlighted the cultural conditions, which underpinned the salience of Catholic power to the class relations fostered in the developing nationalist state. Blanchard (1963), for example, noted the role played by an integralist Catholicism in suborning class dissent. He argued that Irish workers were 'steeped' in Catholicism, so that: 'The [Irish] worker spontaneously puts his nationalism before the defence of his class interests.' (1963, p. 30). Garvin (2011) also asserted a logic of exploitation as a class basis for church state relations, claiming the Catholic Church's role in the provision of welfare was gratefully repaid by an impoverished electorate in the form of 'the poor man's payment; political and even electoral support' to Catholic approved political leaders (2011, p. 157).

Sociological perspectives included Earner-Byrne's (2008) thesis that a cultural 'veneration' of the family understood in orthodox Catholic moral terms overlaid punitive class-based welfare policies, mitigating the responsibilities of the state in regard to the poor, to unmarried women and to children (2008, p. 363). Inglis (1998) was more specific, arguing that an alliance between local Catholic clergy and women in the home was the source of Catholic Church power. The main architect of the 'Grey book' T.K. Whitaker explicated in hindsight the tacit connection assumed between the 'civilising' influence of a Catholic ethos in the 1950s and conversely, the social threat perceived in any loss of the cultural control exerted by the Irish Catholic Church in the Irish state:

> The less favourable developments [of economic growth after 1958] include a higher incidence of crime and drug addiction, reflecting a weakening of the civilising influence of the Ten Commandments. (Whitaker, 2009, p. 18).

To explain an absence of overt dissensus between church and state even in the modern Ireland of the 1970s, Whyte (1980) referred to the fact that churchmen and statesmen are 'educated in the same schools, quite often related to one another' (1980, p. 366). Inglis' (1998) account further illuminated the rational habitus of everyday meaning still ordered by an all pervasive Catholicism; 'being a good Catholic helped get contracts and jobs, be elected, be educated, be well known and liked' (1998, p. 11). Catholic Ireland was not, as Blanshard (1954), warned, 'a place where men can express frank and unorthodox opinions on church and state without penalty' (1954, p. 23). A veto of Catholic power then amounted to a cultural and national hegemony still extant in a new economic era (Clarke, 1985, pp. 241 - 243).

In the second edition of his seminal book on church state relations, written a decade after it first appeared, Whyte (1980) further argued that the Church hierarchy interfered considerably less than was widely believed in state affairs, largely, however, because they didn't have to: 'In a mainly Catholic country, the Catholic hierarchy has a weapon which no other interest possesses: its authority over men's consciences' (1980, p. 368). Nonetheless, the wide ranging influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland was idiosyncratic for a growing number of scholars increasingly interested in the effects of new pluralistic social values in Ireland (Peillon, 1982). The question of the relationship between Catholic Church social leadership and pluralism dominated scholarly analysis for the next twenty years.

4.3 A class analysis of Irish Catholic culture

It was at just this juncture, however, when mass attendance peaks in Ireland, that Eipper (1986) observed and interpreted the social power of local clergy in Bantry, Co. Cork. Eipper firstly agreed with a majoritarian conclusion of an accepted, overt Irish catholicity even in this period.

He argued that a pragmatic corporate church continued to stave off 'the corrosive effects of secularisation and pluralism' (1986, p. 93) and described a routine local religious observance, with Catholicism woven into every aspect of daily life (1986, p. 90). Eipper described the development of the relationship between the state and the church in the post-colonial era and emphasised the dynamic and changing nature of the influence of parish priests. The former led to the establishment of a catholic nation, where politicians saw Ireland as a catholic country run by a secular state.

> The priests were society's guardians not just because they were the spiritual leaders of the overwhelming majority of the population but because they were guarantors of, on the one hand, constitutional government and, on the other, the Catholicity of the nation. (Eipper, 1986, p. 89).

Eipper argued that the development of the significance of the Irish Catholic Church 'had as much to do with the prevailing pattern of social domination as it did with the personal beliefs and customary practices of everyday life' (1986, pp. 106 - 107). In local society, Eipper described the personal power of clergy while acknowledging that the unquestioning obedience prevailing at the height of the integralist period some twenty years previously was no longer characteristic of the period. Eipper interpreted the personal power of clerical leadership over key aspects of civil society decision-making and linked this personal leadership to the church's continuing ideological domination of 'key areas of social thought' (1986, p. 86). By the mid-1970s in Bantry, the pragmatism of the Catholic Church hierarchy was matched by its local clergy. The parish priest typically worked with a younger, more progressive curate, who took active leadership of local development effort. This role represented a sea change in the character of clerical patronage from earlier times and Eipper described this change as a modification of the character and the extent of local clerical influence in the period. In class terms, Eipper argued that the clergy now constituted 'a special category of intellectuals' whose patronage relationship to the rest of society was determined by this intellectualism in the 1970s.

In summary, an analysis of the ideological aspects of the church state relationship since the colonial period contributed to Eipper's conclusion as to their importance to Catholic-nationalism in the 1970s. A Catholic hierarchy guaranteed the economic policies promoted by an entrenched Fianna Fáil party as part of a pragmatic alliance with politicians, which simultaneously ensured the cultural catholicity of the nation. Eipper's empirical work offered key insights into the critical role being played by a local clerical leadership in this context and in particular, the important role of parish priests as 'mediators and lobbyists on behalf of the needy and neglected' (1986, p. 92). Finally, parish priests were mindful of the need to keep the other influentials on their side, the politicians and the business people who dominated public decision-making, contributing to a conservatism of Catholic Church leadership.

In conclusion, Eipper's interpretation of the influence of local clerical leadership in reproducing Catholic cultural power marked a key turn in conceptualisations of the contribution of clericalism to Irish Catholicism. However, a substantial academic focus on the social importance of local clerical leadership from the late 19th century, which included Eipper's contribution in the 1970s, was largely missing from the subsequent literature on a burgeoning Irish secularity. From the 1990s, the clergy would serve as a synecdoche for a hierocratic national church and examinations of the role of local clergy disappeared under the weight of revelations concerning the role of the church in hiding clerical abuse of women and children.[38]

[38] With the notable exception of the significant anthropological research published by Taylor (1995).

4.4 Assessing contemporary clerical leadership

A comparison between the contribution of the clergy to Catholic social power in civil society in the 1970s and today entailed first acknowledging that the basis for Irish Catholic Church influence in the state was understood in increasingly ambiguous terms from this period. The 1980s marked a new academic interest in the impact of pluralism, as an 'aggregate of institutional processes and processes of consciousness' on the leadership of the Catholic Church in the Irish state (Berger, 1981, p. 4; see also Kirby, 1984). Such scholarly interest was concerned to either enumerate the factors likely to contribute to a decline in religiosity or to explain an anomalous continuing *salience* of Irish Catholic culture (Norris and Inglehart, 2004), as proxies for a dominant academic interest in the modernisation thesis.

The evidence presented in accounts that stressed a trend towards religious decline converged in the multi-factorial effects of pluralism on Irish Catholicity and emphasised the alternative perspectives offered by a 'hostile' liberal media (Kenny, 2008, p. x; Horgan, 2003; Donnelly and Inglis, 2009). Amongst the features of this decline were a Catholic Church retreat from direct welfare provision (Barrington, 2003), a dizzying fall in the numbers of Catholic religious vocations and an ageing religious personnel (O'Mahony, 2010). In the context of a modern welfare state, professional experts replaced the role of religious.

> The question of whether Ireland needs religious any longer is unavoidable. If, by the question, one means do we need religious to do the things they always did like teach in schools, nurse in hospitals, organise meals on wheels, etc., the answer is no. Ireland has an excellent body of trained professionals to teach and nurse and a sufficiently buoyant economy to provide social services to the needy when it chooses to do so. (Maxwell, 2001, p. 69).

In addition, a greater freedom of expression amongst women was highlighted, together with a rejection of a traditional role in passing on the faith to the next generation (Inglis, 1998, pp. 178 - 200; Ferriter, 2012a, p. 623).[39] Foster (2007a) noted the impact of a resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict in weakening the ideological relevance of Catholicism to nationalism more generally. In several recent accounts, the emergence of a more private, spiritual form of Irish religiosity was also described as an effect of pluralism (O'Mahony, 2010; Donnelly and Inglis, 2009).

Scholars who argued for the continuing influence or legacy of Catholicity in contemporary times suggested a link between Catholic social teaching and national social inclusion objectives. A further example of Irish exceptionalism in European terms offered was an unusually high level of Irish support for financial contributions to overseas development (Taylor, 2005, p. 4; Fields, 2003). In their comparative study, Norris and Inglehart (2004, p. 223) suggested undefined 'social values' were responsible for the persistence in Irish religiosity unexplained by a secularisation thesis. Fahey (1992) further argued that Catholic social values contributed to social harmony in the face of negative economic change. This link was emphasised once again following the collapse of the Irish banking system, to explain the retention of a deferential, personal political culture as its cause (Byrne, 2012, p. 225). Finally, a social policy vacuum in key areas of marriage, sexuality and family law and the continuing political treatment of social issues including new abortion legislation in 2013, were explored as contemporary examples of the continuing influence of Catholic social teaching over Irish social policy (Keogh, 2007, p. 112; Crowley, 2011, p. 227; Daly, 2012; Collins, 2013).

[39] See also Section 6.4 for the contraindicative experience of the Blessington Women's Group.

The terms of the debate had therefore radically altered by the time this study commenced. Where Larkin's (1975) work offered a theoretical account of the provenance of an integralist Catholic culture as part of Irish social structural change in the 19th century, a modernisation thesis suggested an essentially antithetical relationship between economic growth and a Catholic cultural consciousness (but see Fields, 2003). In addition, and notwithstanding this debate, the shocking findings of a series of media and state-commissioned investigations of cases of clerical sex abuse and harrowing evidence of the systematic abuse of women and children in state-funded homes, debased clerical leadership and clerical moral authority specifically from 1992. For Foster (2007b), the damage done to the Irish Catholic Church's moral authority has been fatal; 'it is not too much to say that by the turn of the twenty-first century the authority of the Catholic Church in Irish civil society has been comprehensively destroyed' (Foster, 2007b, p. 66).

In conclusion, if the proposition that the basis for Catholic moral authority has altered in Irish society was accepted as Catholic beliefs and practices have weakened in the contemporary period, then a concomitant proposition that the basis for *leadership* by a clerical Irish church was no longer well understood can be suggested, as the scope of church state relations narrowed and when moral authority was debased relative to the growth of the rational state. This is exemplified by a famous speech given by An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, T.D. in 2011. Here, the personal relations between clergy and politicians was recast as atavistic upon a rational civic order (Bagehot, 1955, cited in Rose, 1971, p. 418). The statement represented the most clear-cut repudiation of the alliance existing between church and state since Independence ever officially advanced by an Irish political leader.

> This is the Republic of Ireland 2011. A republic of laws, of rights and responsibilities; of proper civic order; where the delinquency and arrogance of a particular version, of a particular kind of 'morality', will no longer be tolerated or ignored. (Kenny, 2011, p. 18).

The next sections of this chapter will examine clerical leadership in the Blessington & District case study territory relative to this wider context, which features a lack of perspectives on the contemporary role and influence of local clergy.

4.5 Overview of the religious profile of Blessington & District

As a consequence of the establishment of the Blessington Estate, the 'meaningful organisation' of religious power in the case study territory was exceptional in Irish terms and also relative to Eipper's own case (Taylor, 1995, p. 242). In Chapter 2, I argued that a landed estate legacy supported the retention of a disproportionate social influence amongst Protestants in the Blessington area, but I further suggested that local Protestant leadership in the area was subordinated to Catholic social power. In other words, as Eipper argued, a pervasive Catholicity underpinned the organisation of social power relations in civil society. When invited to comment on the religious dimensions of the area's development, Catholic study participants insisted that a Church of Ireland religious affiliation had little or no social significance, although typically couched this in terms of a *lack* of social division as a consequence of a strongly Protestant heritage locally. Protestant interviewees referred either not at all or with obvious ease to their religious affiliation, in contrast to the 'self-conscious Protestantism' Crawford (2010, p. 201) reported in a recent study.

In 2011, as a result of the influx of population in the preceding decade, the religious profile of Blessington & District was not untypical of Irish towns in terms of broad religious affiliation, with a Church of Ireland population lower than that of County Wicklow as a whole (see Table 4.1).[40]

[40] The Central Statistics Office does not release data on individual religions, other than Catholic, at the Electoral Division (ED) level. In 1996, it did not release any statistical data on religious affiliation at the ED level.

Table 4.1 Comparison of broad religious affiliation, the State, Co. Wicklow and Blessington & District (2011)

	Catholic Per cent	Other stated Per cent	No religion Per cent	Not stated Per cent
State	84.2	8.4	5.9	1.6
Wicklow	79.6	11.3	7.9	1.2
Blessington	85.5	7.3	6.7	0.5
Burgage	84.6	8.9	5.7	0.8
Manor Kilbride	79.6	10.2	10.3	0.0
Lackan	80.9	7.8	10.0	1.4

In Blessington Town, both churches maintained separate, same function properties. Led by the membership of a Protestant farmer class that successfully transitioned to commercial farming from the 1960s (see also Chapter 2), a Church of Ireland legacy was visible in prominent buildings and monuments located centrally on the town's main street. A modern Church of Ireland community hall[41] and a newly built 8-classroom school catering for 101 national school children physically anchored a contemporary Protestant social power in the town alongside its legacy heritage property, the historic St. Mary's Church.[42] The governance of the Church of Ireland encompassed three select vestries, proposed for amalgamation in 2009.[43] The Blessington Select Vestry undertook an annual election for 16 positions: twelve ordinary members and four officers. In his 40s and a late vocation, the Church of Ireland clergyman appointed in 2008 managed a small number of family-owned retail outlets in the midlands prior to his ordination. This vocation reflected a recent revival in Protestantism and which was relevant to a renewed Church of Ireland membership across West Wicklow more generally.

41 Several participants lamented the perception of St Kevin's Hall as a Protestant hall in spite of its public funding. This appeared to be a product also of a more highly regulated management than was typical of the older Catholic parish hall.

42 The Church of Ireland clergyman stated in 2009 that in his estimation, ca. 70 per cent of these children are Church of Ireland members.

43 Personal communication, Church of Ireland Rector, November, 2009.

Foster (2007a, p. 427) noted that in 2004, twenty Church of Ireland clergymen were ordained, compared with just eight Catholic priests. In 2009, the Church of Ireland clergyman reported the presence of approximately 160 Church of Ireland households in the case study territory. As previously, an embedded Church of Ireland leadership nonetheless contributed to a contemporary Protestant influence in civic affairs that merged with traditional rural interests and in particular, the interests of larger farmers (see Chapter 2). As a result, Church of Ireland members constituted a distinct decision-making bloc promoting overlapping farming interests on the collective community decision-making group (see Chapter 6). The dominance of a Church of Ireland leadership was connected not only to their class in the comments of study participants, but also to a local perception of Protestant conservatism. The very public opposition to the Blessington Women's Group in the 1990s, for example, stemmed from the actions of a protestant VEC Board member, supported by a Church of Ireland minister. One study participant suggested that a 'forward thinking' and unconventional previous Church of Ireland vicar was 'thrown out' of Blessington for his radical activity, including attending at Catholic mass on occasion and for supporting the establishment of the local Gaelscoil in Blessington (Participant A17).

As a further example of integration, individual Protestants from Blessington achieved an unusually high national status in traditional leadership roles. In 2011, prominent local Protestants included the only elected political representative living in the case study area, a former Fianna Fáil Senator personally linked to the most controversial nationalist politician in the 1980s, Charles J. Haughey (see also Chapter 5). Another local Protestant farmer still living and farming in the centre of the town in 2009 was a founding Board Member of the county LEADER company in Co. Wicklow in 1992.

This same farmer was elected as Kildare-West Wicklow IFA County Chairman in 2010.[44] As a final example, a relatively recent national GAA President (1994 – 1997), that organisation's first Protestant President, was a commercial farmer from Blessington. The two latter referred men were descendants of Protestant tenants in the landed estate era.

By contrast, broad Catholic affiliation showed little change in a context of rapid population growth (see Figure 4.1 below). Although the differences were small in proportionate terms, this influx represented an overwhelmingly Catholic religious affiliation and a significant shift in population type, with most new settlers representing younger Dublin families. The Catholic Blessington parish includes a significant and expanding property portfolio. In 2006, this portfolio included 3 churches, the largest of these situated on the main street in Blessington Town and co-located with a temporary parish office building, replaced in 2014 by a newly built dedicated parish centre on the same site. In addition, the Catholic Church was the patron of four Catholic national schools in the case study territory. One of these was constructed under the provisions of a partnership between Cookehill Development Ltd., the state and the Catholic Church in 2007. A small Catholic community hall dating from the 1950s was also located in Blessington Town, incorporating a recently established youth café, renovated by means of a LEADER programme grant between 2006 and 2007.

There was virtually no data publicly available on the financial position of either of the two main churches nationally or locally. However, popular subscriptions given in sealed envelopes at the household level supported denominational capital projects and both churches were principal development partners with Cookehill Development Ltd. from 2000.

[44] Then known as Wicklow Rural Partnership, which operated a range of rural development programmes from 1992. The most significant of these was the programme managed by the European Commission and the Irish Government, the LEADER programme.

One study participant disclosed that in a relatively typical estate built within the last decade in Blessington Town comprising 88 households, some 55 households made a monthly contribution to the Catholic Church; at 63 per cent, this represented a considerable majority of the households in the estate in 2011.[45] A further source of development income arose from what was seen locally as a self-interested decision taken by a famously authoritarian parish priest, Fr. Casey in the 1970s.

> Fr. Casey also pulled a fast one with the Diocese. Fair dos to him. He only handed over every other 'share' collection, which was supposed to go to the Diocese. There was no debt on the building works, he siphoned off the monies to the building fund in the 70s. Just 2 weeks ago [2010], there was a meeting of the Committee to decide whether the 'share' monies should now go to the Diocese (Participant A22).

In 2005, a consultative Parish Pastoral Council group was convened in Blessington Parish in accordance with governance arrangements now mandated by the Catholic Church in consequence of the establishment of child protection policies following a decade of clerical abuse scandals. The colloquially named 'parish council' had 10 members including the parish priest in 2014 and is one of the few community group committees where women predominate (6 members).[46] According to Hoban (1997), parish councils provided a forum that legitimates the prior decisions of the parish priest, who had 'a virtual veto on what is discussed' (1997, p. 409).

In agreement with analyses of the new forms of governance established to encourage participation by laity, the parish council presented little challenge to the interests of the local parish priest on the rare occasion where these differed from those of the parish council (Participant A24; see also Donnelly, 2000, p. 14; Harrington, 1999; Hoban, 1997).

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[45] This participant was the parish collections co-ordinator for the estate and lived there.

[46] There were 18 members of the Council in 2010, according to the Parish Secretary, who noted this drop as a significant problem for the group.

The establishment and role of the Diocesan Building Committee was of greater relevance to changes of governance within the Catholic Church. This group maintained a far tighter regulatory control over the development and use of existing and planned church property, constraining the brokerage role of local clergy with regard to his Bishop.

Archdiocesan clergy tended to be older men when they arrived in the Blessington Parish and served for an average of 10 years, which tenure enabled them to develop meaningful relationships with their parishioners over time. Four parish priests were appointed to the parish between 1970 and 2014. From 1970 to 1985, Fr. Casey, already referred above, spent the final phase of a lengthy career in Blessington, having served in the Crumlin and Mourne Road Parishes in Dublin. Fr. Casey was remembered locally as a conservative and authoritative clerical leader and with admiration, for his 'stroke' in retaining that part of the parish collection fund meant for the Dublin Archdiocese. This parish priest's likes and dislikes, the business people he supported and the local projects he either defended or publicly attacked on the basis of these relationships were keenly recalled as social dramas in the narratives of Blessington natives.[47]

Following Fr. Casey's retirement in 1985, the distinctly quieter tone of Fr. O'Moore, who served in the parish until 1994, meant that he left almost no legacy in local memory. When Fr. O'Moore retired, Fr. Kevin Lyons was appointed to replace him, serving until his own retirement in turn from this position in 2005 and a sinecure as Archdeacon of Glendalough and resident priest at Crosschapel within the parish. As mentioned, the current parish priest in Blessington served as curate to Fr. Lyons from 1995, before being appointed as Blessington parish priest in 2005.[48]

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47 Including an account of an incident where Fr. Casey 'lambasted' an opponent from the pulpit for gainsaying his decision to situate both a school and church development on the same footprint in the early 1970s, in spite of the area available being too small for both (Participant A17). This decision contributed to the need for a second Catholic national school on a different site in the early 2000s.

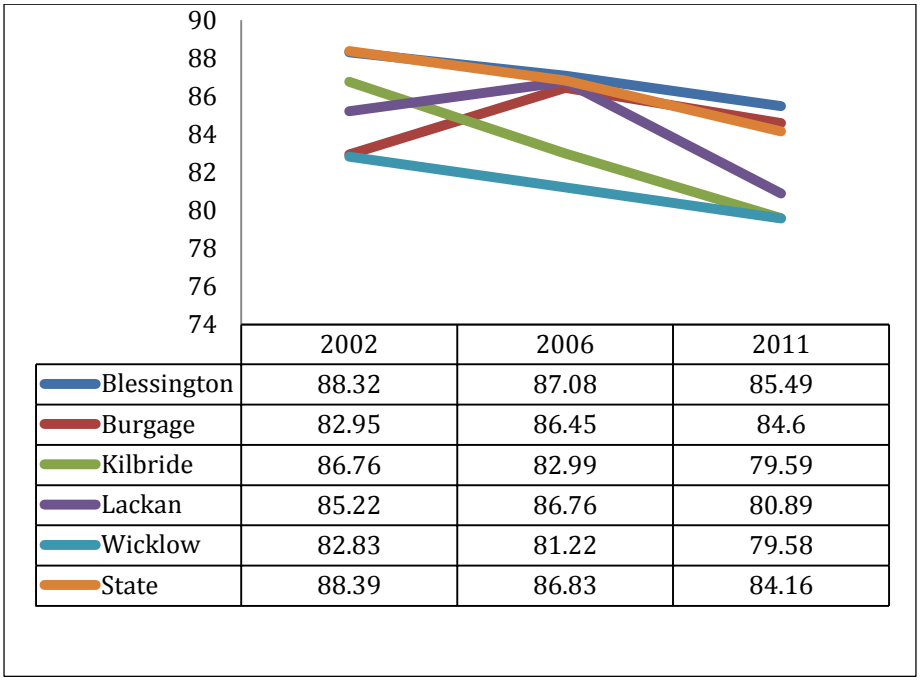
48 This parish priest retired in 2015.

Fr. Lyons was noteworthy as the first objector to the development plans of Cookehill Development Ltd. and the only one to object in broad terms on the basis of his view that the entire development was unsustainable at its proposed scale. The letter he sent to the County Council recording his views was poorly perceived locally and at odds with the pro-development policy of the new local Curate.

Due to the age and health of the previous incumbent, to all intents and purposes Fr. Lyons' curate was the de-facto clerical leader of the parish from the mid-1990s. At age 70 in 2014 he was the youngest of an ageing clerical team. This clergyman managed a team of three other clergy across the wider Catholic area administered from Blessington as part of the Blessington Deanery.[49] The ages of the four local clergy in the Blessington Deanery in 2014, at 70, 73, 75 and 81, respectively, exemplified the threat posed to the Catholic Church by a collapse in vocations within the Archdiocese of Dublin (Gaughan, 2012, p. 405) and represented a significant difference between the role attributed by Eipper to the local clergy as a team and the relatively diminished clerical resources available in Blessington Parish some 30 years later.

[49] Includes churches at Blessington, Manor Kilbride, Crosschapel *with* Valleymount. Following the scandal that surrounds Fr. Naughton's abuse of local boys in the early 1980s, the status of the Valleymount Parish is less clear than the other three, being described as a 'neighbour' of the Blessington Parish on the Blessington Parish website. See www.blessington.info/neighbours/valleymount.php viewed on 10th June 2014.

Figure 4.1 Catholic affiliation as a proportion of the population in study territory Electoral Divisions, County Wicklow and the State, 2002 – 2011 (per cent)



	2002	2006	2011
Blessington	88.32	87.08	85.49
Burgage	82.95	86.45	84.6
Kilbride	86.76	82.99	79.59
Lackan	85.22	86.76	80.89
Wicklow	82.83	81.22	79.58
State	88.39	86.83	84.16

Source: CSO, Small Area Population statistics, various census reports

The Blessington parish priest also had management responsibility for the Valleymount Parish, the subject of a clerical sex abuse investigation in the 1980s and 1990s. Dating from his arrival in Valleymount as curate, Fr. Naughton sexually abused an altar boy over a two year period from 1982 – 1984. Following complaints by local parents, he was facilitated in the abuse of three more boys at two further Dublin parishes by secretive transfers sanctioned by the Dublin Archdiocesan leadership, before he was eventually convicted of his crimes almost two decades later, in 1998. The *Commission of Investigation into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin* examined the Catholic Church's role in Fr. Naughton's crimes and published its findings in 2009.

> 29.59 Fr Naughton's case is symptomatic of the Dublin Archdiocese's attitude to child sexual abuse in the 1980s. Until the problem became so great it could not be hidden, the archdiocesan procedure was to do all in its power to protect the wrongdoer, while almost completely ignoring the effect of this abuse on the victims. (Murphy Report, 2009, p. 468).

4.6 Contemporary religious observance

The abuse inflicted on children in Valleymount by Fr. Naughton represented a shameful and little spoken of local episode of clerical abuse, in spite of its national resonance. The main whistleblower in the Fr. Naughton case was pilloried for publicising his concerns in the early 1980s and was one of just two study participants who mentioned it at all.[50] Yet, there was some evidence that the events may have been recalled in private or hidden local narratives (see also Scott, 1990). One study participant referred indirectly to the case when he mentioned that the current parish priest in Blessington removed himself from the Board of the Parents Association following the publication of the Murphy Report in 2009 (Participant A24). However, just as this and other episodes were excised from the official annals of institutional memory, they were similarly successfully hidden from the population within the Blessington & District boundary. The Valleymount Parish, which includes Lackan, was noted on the parish website as merely a 'neighbour', not one of the core churches in the parish, even though it was, in fact, formally led by the Blessington parish priest from 2008.[51] Moreover, Fr. Naughton's name was missing from the official compendium of Dublin diocesan priests compiled by Gaughan (2012), as are the names of other disgraced Catholic priests.

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50 Personal communication by this study participant. See also http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/man-who-raised-flag-on-priest-was-ostracised-108041.html downloaded on 15th May 2014.

51 Noted in Leinster Leader newspaper, viewed at http://www.leinsterleader.ie/news/local-news/blessington-1-1932100 on 10th June 2014.

As described above, the Catholic Church successfully removed questions of local clerical abuse from parish discourse. A quote from a study participant reflected the rationalisation offered by a Catholic membership, which carefully delineated between the corruptions of institutional Catholic Church power and the personal influence of local Catholic clergymen as effective civil society leaders. In general, an absence of anti-clerical sentiment was notable, even where the institutional power of the Catholic Church was occasionally derided. Applying a religious idiom, a second counter posed quotation from the local parish priest similarly distances corporate and personal Catholic practice, emphasising the bond between local parishioners and local clergy as a personal bond.

> No matter what we think or what views we have, you still look back at the parish priest as the 'go to man', as the fella says. The scandals have put me off the Church, but you can't tar them all with the same brush. Many of them are fantastic. I relate to them as individuals, not as the big Roman Catholic Church (Participant A34).

> I see the institutional, hierarchical Church in disarray. I see the people of God, in the Catholic Church that I work with, as wonderful. When I say Mass on Sunday, so many of them are there and they are so good. People are turning up to a liturgy and very often I think they may have question marks about how we pray, and what's going on, yet they are turning up Sunday after Sunday. (cited in McClean, 2006, p. 27).[52]

These quotations also hinted at a prevailing view that an experience of clerical leadership formed part of a local Catholic perspective ignored by a liberal and Dublin-centric media, and was thus to be defended in the local religious experience represented by the parish.

[52] The current parish priest in Blessington supplied responses to a short series of questions, which were then published as part of a compendium of priests' views in 2006.

Speaking at the launch of the Blessington & District Community Survey in 2011, the invited keynote speaker, an outspoken Irish Catholic and national journalist, argued that 'the gridlock of cars outside Churches on a Sunday morning is not necessarily reflected in the mainstream media, the dominant view.'[53] This further suggested a retrenchment of traditional Catholicism behind the boundary of the parish and the reassertion of Catholic meaning in specifically local terms. Moreover, although it could not be claimed that in Blessington & District in 2011, as in Bantry in the mid-1970s, virtually 'all daily social discourse was expressed in a religious idiom' (Eipper, 1986, p. 95), religious practice amongst a new population continued to reflect a continuing strong adherence to core Catholic rituals, so that a local Catholicity was relevant in local society, underpinning local clerical leadership.

The Blessington Catholic clergyman was usually present at the launch of community projects and civil society events. Just as in the mid-1970s, children passed under a crucifix when entering and leaving the main Catholic primary school. Their Catholic formation was both sponsored by the state and fully integrated into the daily educational routine.[54] Clergy still wore the official clerical garb and in this parish, were always known by the religious title of 'Father'. Over the period of the study, the size of the Catholic community rose in absolute terms and wedding, baptism and communion rituals were all marked socially and economically as important local events. Local social discourse routinely included social and economic issues addressed in moral terms.

53 Keynote speech by Mr. John Waters at the launch of the results of the community survey in 2011.

54 In a curious quirk of the Irish educational patronage system, 70 children attending the inter-denominational Gaelscoil national school newly built outside Blessington Town in 2010, all of whom are Catholic, are taught in the presence of *two* crucifixes, one protestant and one Catholic. 'One with Jesus and one without' (Participant A17). Thus, Irish pluralism effectively doubled the exhibition of religious symbols in the school.

As just one example, the lavishness and high cost of communion dresses and an inability to find window cleaners during communion and confirmation season were, at one and the same time, both real topics of economic interest and self-conscious referents of Irish Catholicism. Moreover, the artfulness of the parish priest and his opposition to or support for other key influentials were discussed as a matter not of religion, but of broad social relevance amongst a civil society leadership.

In this case, the parish was particularly effective in promoting novel means of embedding a Catholic ethos in civil society. The parish website address www.blessington.info laid claim to represent local society as a whole. As the primary source of news and information in the wider area, the website promoted the area in economic terms and recorded its history. All civil society groups, school news, events and local public services, in addition to Catholic parish events and news, were integrated under the Catholic parish banner. It also specifically aimed to address local emigrants overseas, laying claim to 'long distance' Catholics as local civil society members (see also Anderson, 2002, p. 269).[55] As a result, the website provided the single most important social network dedicated to the area. Parish staff, funded under the state-sponsored Community Employment Scheme, routinely maintained the site. Moreover, as the parish priest described it – the 'newsletter section' of the website, which advertised local businesses and employment opportunities also served to align a Catholic ethos with local development.

In sum, the Catholic parish shaped the representation of a virtual, global Blessington civil society. This is an important finding. The parish priest in Blessington was unique amongst local power actors to effectively manage the highly personal *and* global digital communication technologies that have contextualised the radical transformation of global culture.

[55] Anderson (2002) argues that nationalism is revitalised by the ideologies and political practices of what is termed in Ireland, the Diaspora.

In addition, while the Church's dominance over direct or primary health care provision is much reduced in Ireland (see Barrington, 2003), local clergy, nonetheless, maintained a Catholic influence over social care provision where the Irish state still delegated responsibility for significant aspects of social care provision to non-governmental organisations or to voluntary groups, many of which were associated with a Catholic ethos. For example, the KARE organisation in Baltinglass built a new facility in Blessington for people with a disability under a land swop deal brokered by local clergymen in Baltinglass and Blessington. Furthermore, the issue of a day care facility for older people remained a key concern for the parish throughout the period of the fieldwork, as did recreational services for young people.

The facilities and services developed in conjunction with the parish promulgated a visible Catholic ethos and remained under direct control of the Catholic Church for the terms and conditions of their use, in a context of the church's direct ownership of the buildings concerned. Moreover, the parish promoted and led fundraising events for many of the local social care providers and voluntary groups. Direct provision initiatives in local society now resourced Catholic culture to a weaker degree, but they maintained a traditional connection between the church and charitable institutions in modern form. It was notable that long-term charitable groups were generally less valorised amongst the breadth of civil society group type (see also Chapter 6).

State interventions, however, increasingly drew on impersonal principles of competitiveness and rational criteria. With regard to some public welfare projects, particularly those that identified social exclusion as a challenge to economic development, a proscription on the provision of capital funding to churches nominally precluded their funding and development as denominational public services. At the same time, parish priests could surmount this technical challenge.

Social welfare and community employment schemes such as the Community Enterprise (CE) Scheme, resourced and funded by the state offered intermediate vehicles for channelling denominational support through legally established community companies.[56]

In addition, two significant parish-sponsored social projects were completed in Blessington & District under the terms of the European LEADER programme, which again specifically prohibited the granting of such funding to churches. These included the development of a youth café in the parish hall and the development of a controversial theatre in the Catholic national school. The latter project received three separate grants for equipment to fit out the theatre (see also section 4.10 below). In both cases, the funding prohibition was legally side-stepped by means of a lease generated by the Catholic Church on the property to nominally independent management committees.[57] These leases dedicated the project's use for the purpose for which the grant was given for the period of the grant contract. This period was usually 5 years at which point the full beneficial use of the property asset and any capital equipment purchased returned to the discretion of the Archdiocesan Building Committee.

This solution firstly acknowledged the extent to which community property in Ireland is still controlled by the church, but whose legal status was entirely unclear. The redevelopment or rededication of the community facility was often the first local response to a changing social and economic environment. The available resources and commitment of the clergy within the Catholic Church, as part of a building asset policy pursued by the Diocesan Trust, typically directed this development.

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56 In 2014, the Community Employment (CE) programme was administered by the Department of Social Protection. The scheme offers long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged people part-time and temporary placements in jobs based within local communities. It offered a weekly 'top up' payment of €20 to eligible participants over and above an existing Department of Social Protection payment.

57 In the latter case, a sub-company was established by the Forum group to operate the theatre, which in turn secured a lease and constituted the funding applicant.

More than one example was provided in County Wicklow of a parish priest said to have diverted attention from a new or upgraded use of a long-standing community hall with no legal community ownership, by claiming that the Archdiocese wouldn't or didn't agree with the community proposal.[58]

Moreover, since neither Europe nor the state provided any degree of certainty for the ongoing operational funding of these local services and social inclusion initiatives, local clergy would implicitly retain responsibility for promoting and maintaining these services in the traditional manner. Secondly, the projects fostered a narrative of Catholic clerical leadership that associated it with a contemporary discourse of community development, so that the Blessington parish priest readily transformed a debased discourse of charity to that of secular and ultimately, in European terms, economic values of social inclusion, congruent with a Catholic charitable ethos. Finally, there was some evidence that a perception of the arbitrary nature of decision-making on provision of some public services fostered support for the personal leadership of clergy. During the period of the fieldwork conducted for this study and when the Irish recession was deepening, the inability of local politicians to reverse reductions in public services compared unfavourably to the clerical leader's clear success in achieving his goals.

4.7 Contemporary perceptions of the role of the local churches

Against this background, the influential role being played by local clergy in civil society contributed to an overwhelmingly positive perception of the role of the churches in Blessington & District. This was demonstrable in community responses to the community survey conducted in 2010.

[58] Per comments made by participants to a study of the management and governance of Community Halls in County Wicklow, conducted by the thesis author in 2007.

Respondents recorded a 71 per cent satisfaction rate with the role of both the churches in Blessington, the highest approval rating granted to local leadership from a list that also featured a very poor satisfaction rating for local political representatives (see also Chapter 5). Some 325 of 983 respondents (33 per cent) reported a view that the role played by the churches in the local community was 'very good' and a further 37.3 per cent (367) recorded a 'good' response. Just 5.4 per cent and 2.2 per cent of respondents, respectively, had either no opinion or no awareness of the churches role. As might be expected, there is a correlation between age and attitudes: 18 – 24 year olds were less likely to record a 'very good' view of the churches role in the community (28 per cent, compared to 33 per cent for the respondents as a group).[59]

Given the clear dominance in Catholic religious affiliation locally and the fact that the survey was overtly branded and promoted as a Catholic parish survey on the title page, the implication that can be drawn is that Catholic clerical leadership specifically is well perceived in the study territory. Moreover, secondary evidence emerges from analysis of the perceptions of influential study participants, who were invited to nominate a locally influential leadership. In Blessington & District, a personally effective religious leadership is widely agreed to be strongly influential, described in interviews in terms that echo approval of the pragmatic priests described by Eipper nearly 40 years earlier. The effectiveness of a managerial and authoritative local clergyman retained a personalistic salience.

> [names parish priest] will also take short cuts - he's willing to bend the rules to get things done. I mean, fair play to him, he won't let things fall, or not happen because of a rule or a form. If he needs a new tool to fix things, he'll go and find it. He's an advocate of change, but he wants things his way. There's a kind of unwritten rule, the band around the hat, I am the executive, what I say goes…

[59] The number of respondents to the survey aged 18 – 24 is too small to make any significant conclusion here, as the survey targeted households rather than individual level.

> But this does get things done… There have been occasions, where I've seen [him] give a nod and a wink to say, that'll be handled - and it was. (Participant A27).

In all 42 interviews conducted with community leaders, the Catholic clergyman was the foremost nominated local influential for the contemporary period (no list was provided, see Chapter 6).[60] There was no similar evidence of positive perceptions of the Church of Ireland clergyman amongst influential community leaders. In no interview with local influentials did even Church of Ireland study participants ever mention the Church of Ireland Rector. He was not a member of the representative community group, citing a 'misunderstanding' in an absence of follow-up to an original invitation issued to him to join the Forum, and generally he played no role in civil society during the period of the fieldwork. An earlier Church of Ireland minister from the mid-1990s was referenced as an influential leader in local affairs, although only in two interviews.

Prior to his departure and appointment as Dean of St. Finn Barre's Cathedral in County Cork in 2008, this local Church of Ireland clergyman was more personally effective. He played a key role in community reconciliation efforts following the deep schism that following local social and economic transformation in the mid-1990s and was well known to the Catholic clergyman from the Catholic cleric's previous tenure as parish priest for Trinity College Dublin when the Church of Ireland minister was a student. In fact, then, a finding of the comparative weakness of the contemporary Church of Ireland priest is predicated on the transition to collective community bargaining successfully overseen by the Catholic clergyman from the mid-1990s, and the prestige that accrued as a result of his sure and capable leadership of civic affairs in a context of planned property developments in the town from 2000.

[60] These included only those individuals categorised as 'A' type or community member contributors.

4.8 The persuasive turn in clerical authority

While the transformative challenges that contributed to a breakdown in civil society organisations in the case study territory will be discussed in Part III of this thesis, their relevance to this chapter lay in the pivotal role that local clergy played in ordering civil society to achieve consensus as a new economic reality emerged. This breakdown offered the most significant challenge to the influence of the Catholic Church, in an era when the structural power that underpinned local clerical influence was generally weakened. In reconstructing societal decision-making as part of a transformative shift in the local social class system, the local clergy acted swiftly to shore up Catholic social power and to ensure its relevance in civil society.

Shortly after his appointment as a curate to the Blessington parish in 1995, the current parish priest initiated a series of monthly, public parish meetings. Parishioners attending the 'community forum' events were invited to consider community relevant issues, although the conversations largely coalesced on subjects of Catholic Church structures and ceremonies. Just a year later the Catholic and the Church of Ireland clergymen established a joint community reconciliation initiative titled 'Blessington at Home', which involved public presentations of activities by local voluntary and community groups. Later, the parish council prepared and led the first all-community survey in 2002, producing a series of recommendations that contributed to a parallel process of negotiation with Cookehill Development Ltd. Repeated in 2010, the survey served to validate parish interests as broad community interests (see also Chapter 6).

From 1996, the Catholic cleric initiated discussions with the leadership of two of the main warring local development groups at the behest of a local businessman, who invited the parish priest to intervene as a broker. The clergyman reported that these initial discussions with the leadership on either side of the pro and anti-Roadstone divide were fruitless.

The legacy of court battles left a seemingly intractable social schism in its wake. A critical shift in favour of consensus only occurred when awareness of the economic changes heralded by the proposed development of the town emerged: 'With the Cookehill development etc., the sand was shifting beneath them in the town'. From 2002 to 2003, the parish priest secured the employment of a professional reconciliation facilitator and a process of bilateral discussions commenced. These shifting sands, however, overwhelmed progress towards a simple reconciliation or merger between the pro and anti-Roadstone factional groups.

First, a new negotiating group was established. Next, as the extent of the Blessington Town Centre Development Plan being proposed by Cookehill Development Ltd became clear, a loose umbrella group of local organisations was established to help to develop a first response from the community to the proposals. Within a complex framework of bilateral and multilateral meetings, including expert facilitation by a Catholic Accord appointed facilitator funded by the parish and on the strength of the findings of the parish survey, the Catholic priest joined with some local business leaders in arguing for the establishment of a new, single representative community organisation to replace existing discrete organisations.
An argument that the previous conflicts would be submerged in the establishment of a new, larger representative local decision-making body proved crucial to the two previous groups being overtaken by a new local organisation, rather than simply merged. However, for a time, the pre-existing groups continued the campaign against Roadstone, with neither however, achieving a decisive community leadership status.

Thus, in a gradual process, starting in 1996 and given impetus by the Cookehill Development Co. purchase of the O'Leary lands in 1999, the parish priest exerted his influence to radically reconfigure civil society leadership following the catastrophic failure of Roadstone patronage and in the light of the new economic opportunities on offer.

The following quotes demonstrate that it is a pragmatic clergyman broker, which was prized by local society in the aftermath of bitter controversies.

> [names parish priest] has been very much to the fore in bringing the Forum together. It would have descended into chaos without him… [he's] very affable. He gets on with everyone (Participant A41).

> [names parish priest] is a very intelligent, astute man… He sees politics as the science of compromise. His idea was the seed (Participant A23).

Local stories made sense of wider competing ideologies (Taylor, 1995, p. 164). In this context, the stories told about the parish priest legitimised a development discourse centred in negotiation for a changing economic reality, just as in Eipper's account of the appeal to the common good in a context of asymmetric power relations. Crucially, a local Catholic discourse normalised a regime in which negotiation was accepted as the optimal strategy capable of delivering economic gains.

> [the parish priest] was a facilitator, he got people to put personalities aside to get groups to work together. He's very popular in the community… If he hadn't taken up the running, you'd still have 6 or 7 groups (Participant A41).

Moral persuasion actively worked towards a concertation of civil society interests in a manner that differed signally from that observed by Eipper (1986, p. 104) in the 1970s. In Eipper's work, local clerical control relied on the division of interests between equivalent political and economic actors at the local level, even as parish priests attempted a grand social consensus. By contrast, the local Catholic clergyman in Blessington collapsed community interests into a single negotiative development group as the best way to achieve corporate church interests in the light of the opportunities available for partnership decision-making.

Structuring civic interests into a single group was the only strategy that would successfully ensure the local relationship with new retail and property development actors, because it also ensured a continuing relationship with the guarantor of social partnership arrangements, the Irish State. In addition, this kind of consensus ensured a similar kind of social conformity to that which existed in Bantry in the 1970s. Although such a reconfiguration of community leadership required a commensurate (and partial) relinquishment of the parish priest's direct authority in favour of negotiative practice, the evidence from this case suggested it was a compromise worth making. For Cookehill Development Ltd., a clerical discourse promoting reconciliation for collective decision-making provided a moral and social rationale for his economic objectives.

On this basis, it was clear that the arrival of the property developer in Blessington & District reanimated a weakened influence of clergy over civic affairs, as the institutions of church state relations narrowed. As a result of the reconfiguration of community interests in the Blessington & District case, a religious identity remained a significantly important route to achieving social prestige and material political and economic objectives. Moreover, it remained a way of defining a uniquely Irish Catholic community from other religious identities. The arrival of the property development company, Cookehill Development Ltd breathed new life into the Catholic parish. However, as a consequence of the substitution of a moral discourse of obedience for a political discourse of concertation, local Catholic clergy could no longer directly lay direct claim to civil society leadership positions. Instead, they relied more heavily on Catholic intermediaries and on moral persuasion to achieve their objectives. The parish priest allied his persuasive moral authority with that of the local Catholic businessman best suited to lead an equivalent political process of negotiation.

4.9 ‘Gods diplomat’ – Catholic leadership and local governance

The choice of intermediary in new forms of governance promoted by local clergy of both churches was the decisive factor influencing their success. Largely, the Church of Ireland relied on the social power of landowners, who formed an important bloc on the governance group but were of a declining influence with respect to the new building developments in the town itself. As discussed above, Church of Ireland clergy played no leadership role in civil society during the period the fieldwork was conducted for this study. In consequence, Church of Ireland social power was promulgated indirectly only, through the proxy of local commercial farmers. The social power of these farmers was tied to land ownership, which remained latent so long as they were unwilling to sell and to remove themselves from farming. In fact, as was mentioned in Chapter 2, local Church of Ireland farmers tended to be highly conservative in social and economic terms.

The Catholic clergyman’s so called ‘right hand man’ was, by contrast, a polymath of local identities. He was a native, a stalwart of traditional civil society groups such as the GAA, a political activist for the rising fortunes of the Fine Gael party and above all, a Catholic businessman owning his own professional accountancy practice in the town. Described by the property developer as one of ‘God’s diplomats’, he was politically skilled in generating a broad consensus. He enjoyed a social connection to the most powerful economic actors in the area and was trusted by his local clients, amongst whom figured a clear majority of the small business traders in the town. In the absence of the more direct moral authority, the active promotion of a trusted Catholic accountant as a civil society leader by a clerical leadership, shored up Catholic Church economic interests and at the same time reproduced Catholic culture.

Moreover, the new political authority of this new community leader in brokering partnerships with the state strengthened clerical political influence relative to local political representation. Perhaps exceptionally, it happened that none of the local politicians in Blessington & District had either a religious or a social relationship with the Catholic parish (see also Chapter 5). Two of the local politicians saw the clergyman's patronage of the local governance group as competitive with the basis of their own political influence in local personalism. More specifically, the Catholic parish priest was in direct competition with the local politician affiliated to the Church of Ireland, since he was similarly involved in speculations with the property developer on behalf of his church. Notwithstanding these specific conditions, although local elected representatives typically claimed that the parish priest was a very powerful man and never publicly co-operated with him, in practice, their property interests consistently aligned their economic objectives. For example, the capital development goals of the Church of Ireland relied just as much on a relationship with the property developer as did the Catholic Church. The local Church of Ireland political representative, in acting positively on behalf of his Church to sell land and for its development, could not then credibly speak out publicly against similar church projects led by the Catholic parish priest.

Thus, since local religious and political leaders were reliant on property deals to further both their development and their corporate interests, they shared common objectives. To this extent, the position of local religious and political leaders could be likened to that found by Eipper in the 1970s. However, while Taylor (1995, p. 21) quoted Donegal parishioners in the mid-1970s describing the parish priest as 'a very fine businessman', the clergyman in Blessington & District was, by contrast, most often referred to in terms of being a fine politician. In the context of a weakened local political representation and a more diffuse clientelist practice including within governance, the activities of the parish priest blurred the boundaries between the religious and the political spheres.

In summary, the parish priest no longer relied on the direct income that sources such as Roadstone or local parishioners had reliably delivered in the past to advance his projects. Moreover, a weakening of church state relations reduced his opportunities for patronage of welfare and charitable institutions and in this case, the Catholic religious leader lacked a political corollary amongst the local elected representatives. By persuading the community of the moral and economic benefits of negotiation and partnership, the Catholic cleric effectively extended his scope of influence relative to an increasingly bureaucratic and rational state. Nonetheless, the state still required mediators to act between the state and parishioners. In order to broker corporate church interests with economic actors via precepts of partnership guaranteed by the state, the parish priest promoted a trusted Catholic intermediary in civil society. As a patron of community leadership and as a broker for Catholic education provision, the parish priest both secured Irish catholic socialisation and ensured corporate church interests were met.

4.10 New church state economic relations - education

In spite of formal state efforts to deconstruct the primacy of denominational patronage by means of the remit of the *Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector* established in 2011, little or no real progress has been made towards educational pluralism in Ireland, where 96 per cent of all primary schools are under religious patronage. By mid-2014, just 2 of the Irish state's 3,169 primary schools had changed patronage status – one Catholic and one protestant (Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector, 2014, p. 10). In Blessington & District denominational education was the norm and the construction of the Catholic national school was the foremost project actively promoted by the Catholic Blessington clergyman.

Cookehill Development Ltd. invested in partnership over and above a simple client relationship to construct schools, because their profits relied on traditional Irish cultural values favouring the attainment of educational credentials as key mechanism for social mobility (Breen et al., 1990). However, the property developer clearly viewed the establishment of three 2nd level schools in Blessington & District as his personal contribution to the community, 'In fairness to us, we made a huge investment in education in Blessington'. In short, all local actors without question accepted the primacy of educational projects.

The Blessington Parish first entered negotiations with the Department of Education and Science in April 1999, or within months of Cookehill's arrival in the town. Financial and site preparation arrangements between the property developer and the parish were concluded at the end of 2003 and the proposal for Cookehill to build the school advanced in January 2004. Difficulties then emerged when the Department proved reluctant to agree to the financial investment being made by Cookehill on the basis of its novelty and a significant effort was required to persuade the state of the merits of his case. As the property developer remarked:

> They simply didn't believe that we'd contribute €1.5 million. It was outside of their norm. They said 'we'll have to put it up for public tender'. They invited expressions of interest, but when people rang, they were told about the Cookehill contribution. They'd have to match that. No-one tendered (Participant E1).

A further challenge to the project emerged as a result of the criteria now being applied to economic partnerships for educational infrastructure development. These criteria included requirements to demonstrate the added value, innovation and partnership approaches of such developments. In Blessington, the ability of the local Catholic cleric to influence a controversial decision to site a desired community theatre within the new senior national school project, critically enhanced its chances of success and was predicated upon his influence over the Forum.

The original Cookehill plan included the construction of a dedicated local theatre as part of the original planning permission. On the basis of an argument that the theatre was financial unviable as a stand-alone project, the developer reclaimed the originally designated site and proposed that the theatre should instead be located within the school.

At a hastily called emergency meeting of the Forum in November 2004, the parish priest argued that the school would not be approved by the state if the Forum did not agree to support the revised plan for the theatre. In a memo circulated to the Blessington & District Forum membership by the Catholic clergyman, he noted that negotiations with Cookehill and the Department of Education on an agreement reached in 2003 to construct a Catholic primary school had 'more or less broken down' by late 2004. He emphasised that agreement on the build could only be assured if the theatre was incorporated, since 'Cookehill's proposal to build School and Theatre was warmly received by the Dept.' The parish priest enumerated the problems for each of the theatre and school projects if agreement was not reached at the meeting and listed the clear advantages to both projects if conjoined.

> Finally, the question we now have to answer is: "By seeking the best possible facilities for our children now, are we doing what is right for the Blessington of the future"?[61]

Following a lively debate, the Forum agreed to the proposed project and Cookehill's plan was agreed with the state on this basis, as a new economic arrangement between church and state for the development of denominational educational facilities.[62]

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61 Signed memo dated November 2004 issued to Blessington & District Forum group in advance of special meeting held 01/12/2004.

62 The construction of the second Catholic primary school in Blessington was not completed under the formal terms of a Public Private Partnership (PPP). However, it is clear that PPP type criteria and social partnership arrangements proved critical to 'locking in' the project as a relationship between Cookehill Development Ltd., the state and the community and it was clearly viewed as a model, described by key political actors, incorrectly, as the 'first PPP of its kind' (Participant B3). The parish priest notes in the memo circulated in November 2004 that 'The officials of the Dept. of Education have had to deal with ideas outside the normal method of providing primary education in the Cookehill proposal.' Clearly, the involvement of both Cookehill and the Forum was considered a distinctive partnership model by all concerned.

The community theatre would now have a distinctly sectarian character, a fact not lost on locals. This project elicited a number of negative comments from local influentials during the period of the study.

> I object to the site given to the theatre, it's now built in a Catholic School… If you're the Church of Ireland, you have to ask for permission to use the theatre. (Participant E4).

Co-financed on three separate occasions under the European sponsored National Rural Development Programme (LEADER), the construction of the theatre within the Catholic primary school placed its organising committee under an obligation to consciously establish the right to use the school gym as a theatre on each occasion and in the knowledge that the routine frequency of use was under the control of the school principal, who had little concern for its alternative purpose. In addition, the unsustainably high level of voluntarism required to install and to remove the theatre fixtures for each performance militated against frequency of use.[63] As a result, the community theatre company experienced consistent problems with scheduling performances.

The threat that the representative community group was too deeply invested in a negotiation process with the developer to avail of the right to object also proved decisive when it came to the position of the school entrance. Two alternative access points were available; via a housing estate to the Blessington Main Street, the preferred option of local people, or via the shopping centre, the preferred option of the property developer. Once again, the parish priest presented a persuasive argument at a meeting of the Forum. Finally, he claimed that the desired development of the national school would not be sanctioned by the state if his wishes, following those of the property developer, were not met. The national school and town centre development projects were duly linked.

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[63] The theatre group, established as a sub-company of the Blessington & District Forum (see also chapter 7) had a committee of approximately 10 – all of whom were required to work for approximately 6 hours each time the theatre was used, since all dedicated theatre seating and other fittings were manually installed on each occasion and removed after each performance.

The project to construct a national school in Blessington would compete with similar primary education projects being established by other local non-church affiliated groups – notably the Educate Together School and the Gaelscoil. In all, four national schools were established in Blessington in the period, three of these on the basis of negotiative relationships with the property developer, bringing the total number of national schools locally to 8 for a population of ca. 8,000 persons.[64] At least two of the national schools built by means of land swop deals completed with the developer were significantly underutilised as a projected population growth failed to materialise. The newly built 16-classroom Catholic senior national school had just eight classrooms occupied four years after its completion, as just over one-quarter of the planned housing under the Cookehill plan was constructed in advance of the collapse of the Irish property market in 2008.

Moreover, all other social projects included in the community wishlist persistently failed to materialise, *de facto* removed from the agenda of the Forum to prioritise the construction of a second Catholic primary school and later, other national schools. A national relationship with the Irish state as a patron of education enabled and promoted the primacy of the Irish Catholic Church's project over others. From the point of view of the Catholic Church, education provision guaranteed Catholic social power on the one hand and secured the approval of a morally autonomous population on the other, where education was the much-vaunted contributor to global economic success and a pathway to social mobility. The Catholic parish priest was plainly aware, however, of having to compete and to pursue his project at a pace.

[64] Blessington may well be unusual in this respect and if so, the strategies and actions of all 4 new local educational patrons (Educate Together, Gaelscoil, the Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland) were remarkable. Hearne (2011) points out that in 2008, or precisely during the period when several new primary schools were being developed in the area, Ireland had 'one of the lowest levels of [educational] investment in the developed world' with temporary portacabins and fundraising by parents for basic operational costs considered quite normal.' (2011, p. 238)

Both Catholic and Church of Ireland clergymen had to actively exercise religious interests by means of locally and nationally expressed disapproval for alternatives advocated by multi-denominational or inter-denominational groups. They did so, for example, in negative written opinions issued to the (then named) Department of Education and Science as part of the latter Educate Together and Gaelscoil school development consultation process in 2006. But this overt influence could be challenged and by being challenged revealed that clerical influence had limits. In the press release issued by the Department of Education and Science on behalf of Fianna Fáil Minister Mary Hanafin in June, 2006, which confirmed the decision taken to fund both an Educate Together school and a Gaelscoil in Blessington, a warning implicit in the text appeared to suggest that provision would in future be shared by interests beyond the patronage and control of the churches.

> …additional accommodation being planned for the existing [Catholic national and Church of Ireland] schools needs to be examined with a view to configuring it in such a way that permits economic and efficient usage options in terms of ultimately meeting the permanent accommodation needs of one or other of the new schools (if they prove viability and gain permanent recognition) and also takes account of providing specialist accommodation for children with special needs and members of the travelling community in the region. (Press Released issued by Minister for Education and Science, Ms. Mary Hanafin T.D., June 2006)

These warnings were made in a national context of attempts to delimit the relationship between church and state with regard to education. By 2011, the Department of Education and Science was requesting the Catholic Church patron of the two Catholic national schools in Blessington to consider abolishing one of its Principal posts, a proposition that was vigorously opposed by the parish priest, in spite of some agreement by individual members of the Board of Management. Nonetheless, in 2014, all four newly built primary schools in Blessington & District, two denominational, one multi-denominational and one inter-denominational, had separate buildings, staff and shared no facilities or services and all four principals remained in position.

In conclusion, the project testified to the enduring logic of a relationship between church and state even in a context of a new rationale of privatisation via economic partnership arrangements. In Blessington & District, these rational criteria of economic partnerships favoured the establishment of the Catholic school, since they required a level of influence over civil society, which still largely accrued to the Catholic Church. The proposers of competing educational developments based on alternative, pluralist or non-denominational principles found it more difficult to compete on the same basis as traditional religious patrons (Participant A17). In the contest to establish new primary schools in Blessington & District, the Catholic Church remained 'the first among equals' with the state partner and not merely one interest group amongst many. In turn, the seemingly impersonal processes of partnership underpinned the parish priest's influence.

Moreover, the moral persuasion applied by the Catholic clergyman in civil society ensured that the new Town Centre shopping centre and the national school would share a common footprint, road access and linked entrances. Hirschle (2010, p. 673) argued that the Irish case supports a thesis, which states that consumption supplants religion by providing alternative intermediaries for social behavior, but only marginally affects religious values. By contrast, the Catholic parish priest in Blessington actively promoted the alignment of religious and economic symbols, infrastructure and practices, offering tangible evidence of an accommodation being made by the Irish Catholic Church with an ideology of consumption.

4.11 Chapter conclusions

For nearly 150 years, the organisation of Irish Catholic meaning relied on two structural features; clericalism and the strength of church state relations (Garvin, 2011).

Eipper's class analysis provided a unique account of the relationship between the personal power of an intellectual parish priest (and his dynamic curate) and the corporate power of the Catholic Church, that explicated the relationship between local clerical leadership and Catholic cultural control in Ireland (see also Peillon, 1982). It therefore helped to explain the continuing importance of Irish catholicity in social power terms, in spite of a gradual trend in favour of more liberal social values from the 1950s. For Eipper, as for most scholars, local clerical control over the faithful was premised upon the church's control of key ideological institutions, for example, educational, health and other charitable institutions (1986, p. 86). However, Eipper also suggested that the influence of the parish priest by the 1970s was now greatest in poorer parishes, where resources were limited and where there were fewer alternative leaders.

In the contemporary period, scholars of Irish religiosity have largely agreed that the basis for church state relations has narrowed substantially, while simultaneously expressing much greater ambiguity on the reasons for the continuing salience of Irish Catholic values in the state. As one study participant remarked, clear contradictions have emerged amongst a more morally autonomous population, still readily yielding to clerical leadership: 'People who never go to mass, who hate the church, but will still stand up and do what the priest tells them.' (Participant E8). Such ambiguities were not illuminated by contemporary scholarship. In the light of my findings in Chapter 3, the challenge for this chapter was twofold. Drawing on observations in Blessington & District, I sought to explore Catholic social power in the period characterised by economic and religious change and to describe a still influential Catholic clerical leadership.

An exceptional religious profile in the case study territory featured a strongly influential local Protestant leadership. In addition, I found that the disproportionate prominence of Protestants amongst a local leadership in both public and civil society spheres had not reduced relative to dramatic increases in the local Catholic population. This evidence validated a literature suggesting that integration rather than isolation, or even assimilation, characterised Protestant identities in the state (see also Hayes and Fahey, 2008). A local Church of Ireland membership in Blessington & District numbered strongly amongst traditional land-related occupations and rural organisations such as the IFA in particular, but was readily identified as Protestant locally.

Indeed, the social profile of the Church of Ireland in Blessington & District was defined by study participants in terms of its social, political and economic conservatism and associated with a lengthy and stable local land tenure (see also Pilkington, 2002, pp. 130 - 131). In Chapter 2, I concluded that the social power of local Protestants remained salient in Blessington & District and argued that this salience was associated with this population's class affiliations within the agricultural economy. In short, a Protestant cultural legacy dating from the landed estate period before Independence remained important to local economic relations in the 21st century.

In Chapter 3 I interpreted the evidence available to suggest that the activity of the property developer served the interests of *both* the Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland in Blessington. However, only a Catholic leadership facilitated the reconfiguration of civil society for collective decision-making. I suggested that in the Blessington case, Catholic dominance of Protestants was only finally achieved when civic affairs were united under local governance. From the point of view of local clergy, an alliance with the property developer and the promotion of local governance reproduced a relationship with the state, even as the scope of church state relations narrowed.

In fact, this evidence served to offer a viable explanation for a key problem identified but not fully resolved in the previous chapter; the reason new economic actors engaged in an exceptional negotiation strategy in Blessington & District in the first place.

In the central sections of the chapter I interpreted my observations of a morally persuasive Catholic parish priest leading the reconstruction of civil society organisations in accordance with a Catholic ethos and in the furtherance of church state relations. Civil society concertation favoured local Catholic clerical influence in part because it broadened the basis for the Catholic parish priest's social power during the period of economic growth, notably now including a Protestant leadership. Certainly, as Eipper had suggested, devotional practice was less relevant to a more pluralist and urban population. In addition, the state's introduction of impersonal principles of partnership and negotiation threatened in theory, to reduce direct clerical control over civic affairs by facilitating direct engagement by civil society leadership in projects previously led by clergy. However, in Blessington & District, new forms of local governance centred in a discourse of partnership and consensus were ready social proxies for Catholic culture in local society (see Haugaard, 2011, p. 164). Clerical patronage therefore remained crucial to economic and development relationships with the state. More specifically, the parish priest in Blessington continued to act as an effective and popular patron of governance by brokering economic partnerships for educational provision.

This chapter showed that the social power of the Catholic parish priest from 2000 was now more dependent upon his patronage of education than on patronage of a broader set of charitable institutions, unlike the situation described by Eipper in the 1970s (see also Halikiopoulou, 2011). In addition, the construction of a new Catholic primary school in Blessington demonstrated that a local Catholic ethos was being challenged by competing ideologies.

The Educate Together and Gaelscoil projects represented different cultural identifications, distinct from that of Irish Catholicism. However, in this case, the Catholic Church retained its dominance over education provision since a Catholic ideology remained especially relevant to a changing national relationship between labour and capital. In spite of observed differences *in* and challenges *to* the contemporary organisation of Catholic leadership in Blessington & District, Catholic influence was readily reproduced amongst a morally autonomous population, when concertation gave priority to an ideology of education as a passport to social mobility and as moral development projects for the common good.

A final point is relevant here. At the same time as the Catholic clergyman reproduced church state relations, he contributed actively to a decline in local political representation. This represented an important difference to the local society observed by Eipper, where the politicians and priests 'clearly respected the institutionalized prerogatives of the other' (1986, p. 108). Garvin (2011) suggested that by the time this study was undertaken, 'Ireland's experiment with Catholic democracy is over' (2011, p. 165). However, in this case, it was striking that a political expression of Catholic moral persuasion within collective structures continued to reproduce the power of the institutional church. The unification of civic affairs as a political project guaranteed by Catholic clergy then represented a key difference between Eipper's account of Bantry in the mid-1970s and the case of Blessington & District. In the next chapter, the negative effect of a reassertion of a morally persuasive Catholic leadership on local elected representation will be examined in more detail, as part of a collapsing of local democracy into the civic sphere and an apparent paradox of personalism as the key mechanism structuring local political practice.

Chapter 5

Political Personalism and Impersonal Governance

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will interpret evidence from the Blessington & District governance territory that addresses the challenge to a local political leadership that followed a 'radical new localism' in participatory practice from the late 1980s (Sabel, 1998, p. xi). The enduring significance of local politics in Ireland stood in opposition to broader, more long term context for shifts in the political sphere in Ireland since 1987 and that have been associated with a changing pattern of nationalist politics. In particular, the increasing influence of European over national governance has been noted (O'Mahony, 2012), together with a decoupling of vertically integrative party political machinery from 2003, amid growing evidence that party politics has become less important in social terms in Ireland over the period (Mair, 2011, p. 4; Van Biezen et al., 2012; Gallagher and Marsh, 2011). Moreover, trust in Irish political leadership has progressively declined (Byrne, 2012) and the axiom that 'all politics is local' is viewed as increasingly anachronistic in a context where voters will not know the local elected representatives and where access to information is more widely available.

The relevance of these facts to this study lay in the effects of local personalism in securing the significant social power of local politicians over their clients and in sustaining an unequal access to political decision-making in the Irish political system. The early sections of this chapter will comprise an account of changing conceptualisations of clientelism that have highlighted the importance of local personalism within Irish political culture and also, its anomalous nature in political terms (Higgins, 1982, p. 114).

More recently, the abolition of the dual mandate in 2003, together with the establishment of new forms of governance in the public sphere, contributed to a majority view of a decline in the representative role and local influence of local elected representation (Weeks and Quinlivan, 2009; Hughes et al., 2007).[65] In the main sections of the chapter, I will draw upon my observations in Blessington to assess the influence of political leadership in a contemporary context characterised by the establishment of a new political strategy of governance.

5.2 The changing power of 'pull'

The term personalism referred to a foundational feature of Irish politics, namely that voting behaviour is based on the personal qualities of the individual candidates, rather than their party affiliation or ideology (Cain et al., 1987). Moreover, if at the national level the voter chose a government, at the local level 'the voter selects a candidate' (Gallagher and Marsh, 2011, p. 227). In Ireland, these personal qualities have been theorised to extend into an individualised, social relationship with voters, which reduced political citizenship to a simple political transaction (Gibbon and Higgins, 1974), simultaneously reducing competition between political leaders (parties). Personalism or clientelism, was reproduced by the Irish politician who transferred a promise of 'pull' into a personal relationship with voters and who then went 'knocking on doors' at election time to secure his vote (Marsh et al., 2008).

A range of ethnographic accounts interpreted these processes as productive of an exceptional Irish political culture in comparative democratic terms (Coakley, 2010).

[65] The term 'governance' is used in many different ways. Here, I adopt Hardiman's (2012, p. 3) broad definition of the term, which includes both formal structures and also political practices worked out 'dynamically through the involvements between political actors and social and economic interests'.

In seminal studies of Irish political culture, Sacks (1976) and Bax (1976) found that the power of local party political machinery ensured that national political careers remained firmly anchored at the local level. The accounts suggested that Irish democratic practice merged personalism and localism into a single characterisation of Irish political clientelism – two theories that candidate-centred voting and friends-and-neighbours voting effectively described Irish electoral behaviour (Weeks and Quinlivan, 2009). For the purposes of this chapter, the term personalism will typically be used to connote the conjoined character of clientelism as a political power practice realised in local society.

According to Rose (1971), political representatives and their clients 'wanted the same thing' by and large (1971, p. 380). A general uniformity in views of Irish political culture was predicated upon the fact that a single party, Fianna Fáil, had won 22 of the 36 general elections from Independence to 2007, representing an 'extraordinary' monopoly over Irish political decision-making in European terms (Hughes et al., 2007, p. 219). For Mair (1987, p. 136), the renowned authority of Fianna Fáil over its party machine contributed to the stability of its electoral success and also ensured the progression of expansionist economic policies from the 1950s. The success of Fianna Fáil then inhered in a homogenising of preferences at the national level, combined with their individualisation at the local level in a context of clientelist political practice.

In particular, scholars argued that the individualistic and privatised nature of the bond between politicians and voters, de-emphasised collective political action and instead co-opted the subordinate political client to an overarching project featuring social mobility as a common objective in the developing state (Curtin and Varley, 2002). A near political monopoly by Fianna Fáil linked social trust effectively with political trust and both fostered deference to politicians as brokers of state resources.

In his work on the relationship between Fianna Fáil and Irish labour, Allen (1997) pointed out that political success in Ireland followed forms of economic nationalism that 'seemed to lift all boats' (1997, p. 181). Higgins (1982) argued strongly that even such conceptualisations missed 'the coercive, exploitative character over time of such relationships' (1982, p. 117) and he reasserted his finding that a primary function of clientelism was that it 'disorganizes the poor' (1982, p. 133). His conclusion regretted that the empiricism of studies of political transactions tended to evade theoretical conceptualisations of the underlying class relations that gave rise to them (Higgins, 1982, p. 135), so that the 'interaction between economic and social change and politics' remained unclear (1982, p. 136).

The real (Bax, 1976), or illusory (Sacks, 1976; Higgins, 1982) mutualism between local voters and politicians therefore characterised Irish democracy in a majority of accounts (Almond and Verba, 1980). Recent studies of Irish political transactionalism continued to demonstrate the resilience of a personal political culture, but also demonstrated its changing character. Komito (1993; 1984, p. 177) posited a more careful delineation of clientelism as; a (defunct) democratic practice, a mechanism structuring political access and a political relation acculturating moral obligations within voting behaviour (1984, p. 183). Komito (1984) concluded that the influence enjoyed by local politicians in his study of personalism in Dublin relied on the more slender basis of control over information, rather than control over the dispensation of material resources as heretofore.

5.3 Personalism and governance

The evidence of changes to political leadership associated with national policies of economic expansion from the late 1980s, contributed to a radical reconceptualisation of Irish political culture as political corruption (Byrne, 2012; O'Toole, 2010).

Byrne's (2012) comprehensive research charted an upward trajectory of political corruption in the Irish state, centred in the rising significance of the 'unorthodox link between political donations and business or personal interests' (2012, p. 4). She argued that the politicians who most successfully reproduced personalistic ties with economic elites, including international beef traders, property developers and elite bankers, preferentially rose to national political leadership. Thus, the social power of an economic-political alliance became concentrated in *individual* national elites over time (see also Clancy et al., 2010; Cooper, 2009). Byrne's (2012) conception suggested the relative *unimportance* of local personalism in this context.

Much of the analysis of personalism in Irish political culture to date has excluded consideration of role of governance. Yet, governance structures offered new spaces for political action and promised to broaden access to political resources, potentially reducing the vulnerability of local voters to dyadic political relationships. One study informant characterised the changing context in which local politicians found themselves from the mid-1990s.

> The old way was that politicians would have had to talk to constituents and friends to gain consensus. Modern change means you're talking to people you don't know – you have to negotiate things (Participant A27).

For one study participant, a senior Council manager a simple transition had occurred: 'Politics has gone out and participation has come in' (Participant D9). Participation and representation were no longer considered as alternatives but as related forms of political action (Urbinati, 2006, p. 5). In the sections that follow, I will examine the evidence of the changing influence of local representation in a context of a politics of negotiation and address the persistence of local personalism as part of a changing pattern of political leadership in the case study territory.

5.4 Dealigning local party politics in 1985

In Chapter 2, I demonstrated that the basis for political leadership in Blessington & District up to the 1980s was broadly similar to that evinced elsewhere in Ireland in the period. So much so, that one contemporary account of political jobbery in the constituency came to epitomise the transactional nature of public positions in the 1950s. *The Battle of Baltinglass* (Earl, 1952), famously described a local challenge to the political appointment of a postmaster by the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, James Everett, T.D. over the familial claims of the sitting incumbent, which challenge provided a rich account of patron-client relations in the Irish political system. From the 1950s and, for the subsequent three decades, an authoritative and personalistic Fianna Fáil politician, Cllr. Jimmy Miley, a local Publican in Blessington, dominated local politics. One community participant phlegmatically characterised the unambiguous power of this powerful local politician over his clients.

> Jimmy Miley was influential. People went to him and it was done. You didn't ask him how it was done maybe. (Participant A26).

Two key shifts in local political leadership from the mid-1980s, however, transformed the local election area from a bastion of machine party politics, to one contextualised by independent, strategy politics (Weeks, 2009). In 1985, the local fortunes of the famously embedded Fianna Fáil machine suffered a seismic shock. In that year, a previous Fianna Fáil Senator returning to local politics, sought selection as a second candidate at the West Wicklow Comhairle Ceantair, in opposition to the Chair of the West Wicklow Fianna Fáil Comhairle. As part of a bitter campaign in the run-up to the selection meeting, a report appeared in a national newspaper identifying the well-established opponent as the 'arch-enemy' of Charles J. Haughey, a stance that could only damage the candidate in the midst of what has since become known as the Haughey era (*Wicklow People*, 12/04/1985).

Despite losing the local selection contest on this occasion, the well connected ex-Senator was subsequently co-opted onto the Council on the death of the powerful Fianna Fáil local councillor, Jimmy Miley in 1988 and his anticipated selection as a candidate for the 1991 local election alongside the returning Cumann Chair opponent and now running mate. However, in this second selection contest, Jim Ruttle again failed to secure the nomination against a much less well-known candidate from his own Manor Kilbride area who was supported by the Cumann. In response, he subsequently established himself as an Independent in 1991, winning this local election decisively. The traumatic selection process and subsequent result of the 1985 local election depleted the political influence of the Fianna Fáil party locally for the next 20 years and similarly degraded the mass party vote in the constituency.

While Fianna Fáil achieved 37.9 per cent of first preference votes in 1991 (Weeks and Quinlivan, 2009, p. 146) in the local election nationally, in the BEA this figure was just 15.5 per cent. Non-party candidates achieved 1.9 per cent of the total vote (including transfers) in the Baltinglass LEA in 1985, while in 2004 they attracted 38 per cent of the total votes. Both competing political aspirants in 1985 were farmers, but the successfully elected Independent hailing from the study territory in 1991 was a member of the Church of Ireland, a Veterinary Surgeon employed as a Department of Agriculture Inspector, who enjoyed a close relationship with senior Fianna Fáil leadership figures and drew on a more significant local Blessington & District large farmer vote even in the 1980s. Cllr. Ruttle's win was indicative of a shift to an enhanced dominance of the Fianna Fáil national leadership in the 1980s, the political vote strength of the northern urbanised Blessington area and the increasingly elite status of political leadership within Fianna Fáil. In essence, his success over the preference of the Chair of the District Comhairle Ceanntar entailed alignment with individual national party leaders as a result of the transformative leadership cleavages within the Fianna Fáil party itself in the 1980s.

His subsequent ‘loss’ dealt a blow to the previously unassailed local Fianna Fáil party machine, from which it never fully recovered.

The same 1985 election proved to be important for heralding a second shift in political leadership that was also crucial to the reorganisation of politics in the BEA in the two relevant decades of the research study. The construction of the sizeable Parkmore local authority estate in Baltinglass in the 1980s, led to the early success of a new Labour Party candidate. A working class native from Baltinglass and a member of the Labour Party since 1978, Tommy Cullen achieved a significant vote in his first local election in 1985 (coming fourth) before taking a seat on the Council in the subsequent 1991 local election. The Labour Party achieved a first seat in the BEA in 42 years on this occasion and the win represented a loss to the dominant Fine Gael party in its traditional stronghold.

Between 1985 and 1991, this Labour Party politician expanded his electorate from the central local authority estates in Baltinglass town outward to the rural vote, based specifically on his personalistic style of politics and in particular, his active support for rural housing applications. Described in his Council candidacy documentation in 1985 as a social history researcher, Cllr. Tommy Cullen quickly committed to a populist political strategy in the Blessington area. From 1990, he championed local residents in the study territory against the town’s company patron, the Roadstone company and led a series of local and national protests against the company’s extraction plans on new lands they had acquired at Glen Ding (see Chapter 6 for a treatment of this controversy). In 1996, he took the first of several court cases against Wicklow County Council over the refusal to grant him access to relevant planning documents in his role as the Chairman of the local authority. As a consequence of his campaigning against the company and a personal and professional conflict with colleagues, the Labour Party rejected his party membership renewal application in 2003 (see O'Brien, 2003).

Cllr. Cullen subsequently stood as an Independent in local elections held in 2004, winning decisively (see Figure 5.1 below).

The national politician who lived to the south of the constituency, Deputy Billy Timmins, T.D., was an ex-army officer rarely seen in the study territory during the two-year fieldwork period. He was the third generation of his family to enter local political life and the second to win a national seat. He attended just a handful of public events in the two-year fieldwork period conducted as part of this research. Nonetheless, his local vote was significant, especially given the strong local presence of external rivals Fianna Fáil's Deputy and Minister Dick Roche and Green Party (GP) councillor and national candidate Déirdre de Búrca in the preceding decade, when controversial issues relating to the development of a water treatment plant and illegal dumping raised the political temperature locally (see also Chapter 6).[66]

According to the local tally co-ordinator; in the 2007 general election held prior to the economic recession, Dáil Deputy Billy Timmins typically received twice as many votes in Baltinglass at nearly two-thirds of the vote, as he did in the study territory. The sitting local T.D. gained an additional 4 per cent of the vote in West Wicklow in 2011 relative to 2007, or half of his party's overall increase in the local electoral area with the remainder going to other Fine Gael candidates. A preference for other Fine Gael candidates in the national election may have been due to his unpopular support for a challenge mounted against the leader of the Fine Gael party, Deputy Enda Kenny, in 2010. Certainly, in the period of data collection in the study territory, Deputy Timmins' local political influence was perceived to be low, with no local interviewee nominating his influence or decision-making role when asked to nominate those with political power in the locale.

[66] Dáil Deputy and Government Minister, Dick Roche TD, was the only politician to regularly hold a clinic in a pub in the Blessington area in the years prior to his defeat in the 2011 general election.

Moreover, his brother, elected to local politics following the abolition of the dual mandate in 2003 was an engineer and a professional chartered accountant employed in Blessington. Rarely seen in the Blessington area, he applied a pragmatic and managerial approach to local politics on the strength of his political family pedigree. In the aftermath of these two important realignments in 1985, voter preferences in BEA were exceptionally stable between 1991 - 2009. Table 5.1 below shows the proportion of first preference votes granted to local political representatives in the BEA in the relevant period between 1991 and 2009.

Table 5.1 Comparison of per cent share of first preference votes gained by local elected representatives in the Baltinglass Electoral Area (1991 – 2009)

Political representative	1991 Per cent share of 1st preferences.	1999 Per cent share of 1st preferences.	2004 Per cent share of 1st preferences	2009 Per cent share of 1st preferences
Jim Ruttle (Independent, ex-Fianna Fáil)	31.0 (Ind)	15.1 (Ind)	17.0 (Ind)	19.8 (Ind)
Tommy Cullen (Independent, ex-Labour)	19.4 (Lab)	23.0 (Lab)	22.9 (Ind)	23.0 (Ind)
Godfrey / Billy (son) / Edward (brother of Billy) Timmins, Fine Gael	17.6 (GT)	23.4 (BT)	14.4 (ET)	20.6 (ET)

Source: Adapted from notices published in the Wicklow People (official local election result notices published by Wicklow County Council, various dates).

During the period of the study, previous party allegiance was observed to have left a complex legacy of representation. In comparison with mass parties, the independents in the study territory were little affected by dealignment.

In the 2009 local electoral results, each of the two independents achieved a share of the vote that was similar to that of their old parties in the county as a whole. The Fine Gael representative, by contrast, achieved a percentage share of the BEA vote, which was significantly lower (10 per cent) than that of his party in the county, largely as a result of the significant success of a second Fine Gael local aspirant from the Blessington area who gained an impressive 12 per cent of the BEA vote in his first local election attempt. In fact, this candidate topped the six Blessington Town boxes.[67] In the light of a relative stability in the local electorate, the perceptions and attitudes of local people in the study territory to the local political representatives might be expected to be relatively positive. However, a local community study completed in 2010 proved that this was manifestly not the case.

5.5 Perceptions and attitudes to the role of local politicians in the Baltinglass Electoral Area

Almost universally, the community perception of the role of political representation in Blessington & District was extraordinarily low in 2010, where local and national representatives were concerned. In interviews, a lack of influence on the part of local representatives was considered by a majority of participants to be the main reason why the local political constituency of West Wicklow had 'lost out' in key resources distributed in the county relative to the east, in the words of one study participant. At a Local Area Meeting, this view was echoed by one of the local politicians: 'West Wicklow is already the poor relation on public services' even if they typically denied it in public (Participant B1). A poor view of the performance of local representatives contrasted sharply with positive local views of the capacity of the local representative development group or either of the two main churches to achieve their goals.

[67] Per comm. Fine Gael candidate.

Fifty-four per cent of 1,032 respondents to the community survey conducted in 2010 rated local political representation (both Dáil deputies and local politicians) as 'poor' in the study territory, relative to just 7 per cent who believed the Churches role was 'poor' and 12 per cent who perceived the local governance group's role to be 'poor'.[68] The respondents who asserted a lack of trust in local political representation were older than the generality of survey respondents, more likely to be men, to be actively involved in local organisations or to have experienced economic deprivation.[69] In short, they represented those local people who might be anticipated to have had either most contact or most need of local elected representation, were more likely to be affiliated to a political party themselves and to have high levels of social capital and social trust (see also Van Biezen et al., 2012).

Little surprise attended upon this poor rating of local elected politicians. At the same time, some local politicians felt a public lack of trust was well deserved in the aftermath of public approbation of planning corruption issues. As one local politician put it: 'I don't blame them [for a lack of trust]. Local politicians are in there for the wrong reasons' (Participant B5). The study participants interviewed during the research and who led local associational life agreed with the poor community view. However, for this group, political failure was not considered as important a contributor to a lack of successful local development as matters of geography (being on the 'wrong' side of the Wicklow uplands) or demographic change (brought about by a new population of Dublin commuters with a lower social investment in local community development). The vast majority of the leadership of local sporting, community and social groups still intended to canvass local politicians for help with community issues, while expressing cynicism about the chances of success.

[68] This question was added to the local survey questionnaire by the thesis author.
[69] Per data supplied by the social researcher appointed to conduct the survey - Ms. Fiona Mulvany.

In summary, it was clear that local voting behaviour was not supported by a positive perception of the influence or success of local political representation – suggesting that local personalism in the case study territory attached to interests, rather than to an individual relationship with voters. Being a councillor continued to accrue political capital (at least, in terms of an incumbency advantage), if not necessarily prestige, as demonstrated in the local responses to the community survey. However, it did also include a direct financial reward. In 2003, Cllr. Tommy Cullen claimed €55,948 in expenses, in addition to his taxable remuneration of approximately €13,000, together with a further ca. €6,000 for attending Council meetings. He was the sixth highest paid councillor in the state in that year.[70]

5.6 Divergent strategies of local representation 1989 - 2012

According to Weeks and Quinlivan (2009, p. 145), local elections differed from general elections in that voters tended to punish governments in power at the local level. However, in the dealigned context of the BEA, the political strategies that local elected representatives adopted were indicative of wider political shifts in the period. Since two of the local politicians were dealigned Independents, I have inferred that the opposing strategies pursued by them offered a further view into voter preference locally. The third local politician, a Fine Gael local councillor was a full-time working professional. He viewed his role pragmatically as a part-time post providing oversight, largely with regard to planning decisions on behalf of his constituents. The near invisibility of this local representative in the area confirmed that his political success was a direct result of the dynastic power of his Fine Gael family.

[70] Per figures cited in *Wicklow People*, 10/06/2004 and obtained from a survey conducted by the Irish Farmers Journal and published in 2003. It should be noted that figures released by the County Council on their website, showed that Cllr. Cullen's expenses were exactly in line with other councillors in 2012. See spreadsheet available to download at http://www.wicklow.ie/corporate-services viewed on 22nd September 2014.

The majority of his vote was gained in his home town of Baltinglass and by 2009, it was clear that his competitor, a second Fine Gael aspirant from Blessington had made important electoral gains in the local constituency. The differing political strategies identified for each of the three local political representatives are proposed below.

Table 5.2 Governance memberships of local elected representatives in the BEA (2012)

Local representative	Representative strategy	Governance memberships 2012
Independent (ex-Fianna Fáil)	- Pro- governance political strategy. - Electorally personalistic.	- Member, Roads Special Policy Committee. - Board member, County Wicklow Partnership Board. - Member, County Wicklow Vocational Education Committee. - Chair, Blessington Community College. - Board member, Wicklow County Tourism. - Member, Wicklow Joint Policing Committee. - Governor, Tallaght, IT. - Chair, Baltinglass Electoral Area Committee. - Board member, The Meath Foundation.
Fine Gael	- Familial personalism only. - Moderate governance political strategy.	- Member, Planning Special Planning Committee. - Member, Wicklow Joint Policing Committee. - Member, County Wicklow Vocational Education Committee. - Member, Baltinglass Electoral Area Committee. - Liaison, Baltinglass Forum.
Independent (ex-Labour)	- Electorally personalistic. - Anti-governance political strategy	- Member, Housing Special Policy Committee. - Member, Dublin Mid-Leinster Regional Health Forum. - Member (non-attending), Baltinglass Electoral Area Committee.

Source: Prepared by study author

The most successful of the local politicians electorally was the Independent, a strongly personalistic local councillor, who ‘came up the ladder on Glen Ding’ in the words of one study participant, as an early focal point of resistance by urban residents of new housing estates opposing Roadstone’s extractive activity (see Chapter 6). Hailing from Baltinglass, he competed with a powerful and longstanding Fine Gael family in his own native town. Although some distance away, the newer Blessington Town estates provided a valuable new source of local votes and also an opportunity to transcend local politics and operate in the national domain, which he did in a context of cases taken against Roadstone and the County Council (see also Part III of this thesis) between 1990s and 2006.

Cllr. Tommy Cullen operated almost entirely on the basis of individual acts of clientelism. He was renowned for working tirelessly on behalf of individual requests for support and rarely, if ever, conceded a role for consensual working or partnership decision-making. There were many accounts of his clientelist actions in mediating between the citizen and state services in contemporary times – for example, routinely collecting car tax forms and taxing constituents’ cars while in the Council offices in distant Wicklow Town across the uplands. At the same time, he refused to attend the Baltinglass Local Area Committee meetings and generally eschewed the newer, collective decision-making structures in local government. The radical, ex-Labour politician required enormous resources to progress his campaigns and excited a strong animus amongst council staff and fellow local politicians alike. Moreover, several court cases he spearheaded against the county council between 1996 and 2010 succeeded in forcing changes in how the local authority operated with regard to enforcement of environmental management regulations in particular. As a result of his many challenges to the County Manager, in particular, it was said that he was ‘hated’ amongst Council staff (Participant D13).

He was also widely disliked by study participants in the political sphere interviewed as part of the study, several of whom referred bitterly to alleged ‘dirty tricks’ campaigns (Participant D5). His role with regard to housing and other development planning however, was much more typical of local elected representation, generally described as pro-development by senior planners at Wicklow County Council (Participant D9). There was little evidence that this local politician opposed specific instances of planning sought by constituents and moreover, he was publicly and strongly in favour of one-off rural housing applications in particular (see also section 5.8 below).

This Independent local politician overcame a clear disadvantage arising from his ongoing conflicts with local authority officials and furthermore, lived in the southern pole of influence in West Wicklow at some remove from the more influential north (see Chapter 2). His capacity, therefore, to both capture ideological differences via representation can be said to have shown remarkable electoral appeal. A populist influence, however, was more tenuous than the networked influence enjoyed by the governance oriented local politician. In particular, it relied on the availability of conflictual issues within the community to champion and investment of material resources in terms of both money and local electoral machinery. Moreover, this local politician had not only to represent the community with regard to controversial issues, he also had to succeed at them.

Conflictual issues certainly existed in the 1990s and Cllr. Cullen achieved a large measure of popular support with them, but the core community concerns had largely been either resolved or side-lined by the time the primary fieldwork was being conducted as part of this study. He was little visible in the community during the period, even though issues with flooding at the local authority housing in Glen Ding, for example, represented a ‘hot’ social issue between 2009 and 2013.

In summary, Cllr. Cullen's strongly personalistic approach was more time-consuming since it depended far more on delivering individual acts of clientelism and was more perilous for the fact that it opposed council officials. His local electoral success in 2009 and again in 2014 was, perhaps, all the more remarkable for these facts. Cllr. Cullen achieved a 4 per cent higher proportion of the vote than his old Labour Party achieved in the county as a whole in 2009 and in 2014 he once more topped the local poll. Moreover, he was now prominent in the Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) for Housing in particular, since this closely aligned with his main policy interest, public housing.[71]

During the period from the mid-1990s to 2011, a new kind of 'pull' emerged for local representatives via membership of a wide range of county level governance groups established following the publication of a number of government publications advocating improved local democratic practice through citizen participation.[72] The three local politicians in the BEA adapted to varying degrees to county governance arrangements. The local politician working and living in the study territory committed most strongly to the new participatory fora. In addition to attending and often leading local area meetings, this local representative was active on partnership fora, including being nominated as a board member on the local area partnership, Wicklow County Partnership Ltd. Although this politician was the more influential across a wider range of issues in consequence of the breadth of his governance affiliations, he combined active participatory practice with a more traditional direct personalism.

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71 Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) were established by the Local Government Act of 2001. Membership of SPCs includes councilors and one third of members are representative of civil society groups.

72 These notably included the White Paper *Better Local Government* published in 1996, the White Paper *A Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector*,published in 2000 and the Local Government Act published in 2001.

His website promoted his commitment to a local planning and education-led agenda, excepting only a reference to diversity in education, which reflected his Church of Ireland religious affiliation and board membership of the Blessington Vocational College. In fact, his participatory practice extended opportunities for personalism.

> I am deeply committed to improving the lives of West Wicklow people both rural and urban. I am committed to empowering people to own or build homes in their own locality. I am committed to providing the best possible Educational [sic] facilities for children at both first and second level and for allowing diversity in education. I am committed to localising services to my constituents in so far as possible.

In the case study territory, the availability of a governance strategy transformed the role of local elected politicians in two ways. For the local politician who largely eschewed negotiative approaches, a mix of radicalism and a strong clientelism was dependent upon episodic social conflict and therefore, unpredictable. The rising influence of governance groups in fact deepened his own reliance on clientelism, since negotiative governance groups such as the Blessington & District Forum now increasingly mediated these same social conflicts (see also Chapter 6). For the two local politicians who embraced governance approaches to differing degrees, the county level governance groups offered new opportunities to exercise influence as brokers within the complex landscape of local government and local development structures and relationships (see McInerney and Adshead, 2010). However, a strategy of concertation nonetheless further altered the nature of 'pull' since, while membership of governance groups extended their influence, at the same time, councillors' representation on these groups was more closely associated with the local authority as an institution, rather than representative of their electorate.

5.7 County level governance and local representation

A pragmatic and professional style paved the way to membership of a variety of county level governance and local development groups operating on the partnership principle. Hence, the more managerial local politicians were more welcome additions to these groups and significant additional resources, prestige and opportunities to imply 'pull' were strongly associated with such representation (Participant B5). Direct financial recompense made the HSE and the VEC Board memberships particularly attractive - both gave honoraria to local representatives. As a consequence, within parties there were important gains to be made in carefully selecting from the lengthy list of potential governance memberships. Such ad hoc political groupings drew independents inwards into ideological alliances – the Fianna Fáil group selecting from this list post the 2009 local election included two local Independents, one of whom was from the Blessington & District area. The other was a previous independent who had recently joined the Fianna Fáil party and who was elected on this basis.

The real influence over allocation of resources unavailable to the council was the new basis for 'pull' within partnership governance groups. On his own, the local representative had no influence over the significant resources that were accessible via local development. The pay back for the local politician came when local project meetings or consultations, for example, by partnership companies within communities, granted them a place at the top table with the implication that their 'pull' had brought the project to the area. This happened, for example, when a significant tourism project was proposed for Blessington & District in 2009 and a public consultation exercise enabled the local elected representative who was also a member of the local development Partnership Board part funding the project, to contribute his views from the perspective of both the community and the little known, local development company to a packed public meeting.

However, this project was, ultimately, an economic one and fostered by the same leadership that have been identified generally in this sphere and which had little requirement for the influence of local elected politicians (see Chapter 3).

Similarly, a Joint Policing Committee public meeting, held for the first time in Blessington & District in 2011, had the same affect of implying 'pull' for local politicians in nominating the 'wins' achieved for gaining 24-hour policing in the town - a long sought goal of the community. Indeed, this additional 'pull' for the first time extended beyond his own electoral locality. As one local politician said happily of his inclusion in such a public event in a different electoral area to his own as a board member of the partnership company, 'Wherever I go, I get associated with the funding.' (Participant B5). This same politician was a member of the local Partnership Company Board for several years and his view was that membership gave him 'a favourable position on the LEADER Board, that's wrong too'.

For another politician, the multiplicity of county level governance groups masked the reality that many of the same individuals were members of several groups. Moreover, these groups had adopted a particular type of development discourse.

> If you look at them, there's a lot of the same people on these groups, the CDB, partnerships etc., they're almost like a clique. They have all of the language and the sound bytes. (Participant B3)

In interviews, all local politicians denigrated the 'in-house' participatory groups such as strategic policy committees, designed along social partnership lines to facilitate decision-making between social and economic interests (McInerney and Adshead, 2010, p. 5). National politicians in the county were the most dismissive of this form of governance, primarily, because their influence was more threatened by these than even local politicians.

It was clear that national politicians in particular, were not only scathing of governance groups, but actively worked against them where they could. In this opposition, they differed from local politicians, who could at least participate.

> CDBs, SPCs are all a load of bullshit. Officials find it hard to respond, so they don't take it on board. Even a lot of the councillors don't know what's going on. (Participant B7)

> Networking groups were important, but sometimes they thought they were running the county. It became a nuisance. (Participant B4)

Within elected representation, the individual role of the elected representative had shifted territorially - representation had shrunk to an electoral area basis and elected representatives found that a large proportion of the operational work that most interested the community was conducted in the Blessington local area office, between elected representatives and local officials. In this context, members of the community noticed an increased specialisation of interest within Electoral Areas that was unrelated to party factionalism.

> It's quite funny, they almost have different areas they'll do. You can ring the three of them and one of them will take up the running on it. I don't know if they agree it in advance or what (Participant A41).

Tacit agreement for the most part forestalled the potential for conflict on a party political basis between the larger parties, in particular in the council chamber. One of the local representatives in Blessington & District was keenly aware of the changed circumstances of elected representation.

> One time, 25 – 30 years ago, you'd spend a lot of time talking to your party colleagues about what's needed and what's best. Now, you spend a lot of time networking with local organisations and voluntary groups. It's not the party meetings anymore, it's local area meetings (Participant B2).

At local electoral area committee meetings, practical decisions were taken with regard to Council services and operational plans to which the community had no access. In consequence of their specific remit and functional responsibilities, local electoral area committees were, by and large, positively viewed by local politicians[73]. This was partly because of an enhanced localism and certainly, because local politicians led the meetings. At the meeting attended by the study author, councillors were clearly in charge, chairing the meeting, making most of the contributions and actively involved in the issues. Council staff responded to questions raised and were assigned actions.

> It's better because you're discussing things that are relevant to your area. After all, you've been voted in by people in your area. They're [the area meetings are] not necessarily very successful, but at least you're awake and clear on the agenda. (Participant B1)

In practice, however, the local area meetings were held as professional business meetings in small Council boardrooms and community actors, in any event, had no knowledge of the public nature of such meetings. The decisions taken at local area meetings were then more typically ratified in the general Council chamber, since representatives from other electoral areas were either uninterested in BEA affairs or unwilling to challenge 'neighbours' from other Electoral Areas. An example of this occurred in 2010 when consultation invited by the Electoral Area Boundary Commission was pre-empted by agreement between local politicians favouring the status quo in opposition to local calls for change. In summary, the influence of local elected politicians was more difficult to perceive when it was subsumed within county level governance and local development groups.

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73 A notable exception is the personalistic local politician, who typically refused to attend these meetings.

For elected politicians, being part of county level governance extended brokerage by giving them access to both more information and more opportunities to suggest that their 'pull' had been successful. However, it simultaneously reduced political accountability, since their position on these groups often reinforced a view that they were there as experts with regard to the centralised programmes being implemented by local government or on behalf of key interests. Also, such groups were directed according to strictly prescribed EU or national programmes and had little autonomy to distribute what were significant material resources. By 2012, for example, County Wicklow Partnership was sending each project approved by its appraisal panel straight to government for both eligibility checks and financial approval, so that the reality of Board decision-making was entirely illusory. As was shown in the example of the tourism project presented here, the development aims of avowedly local development actors too often contributed to reinforcing new economic relationships while disempowering local political decision-making.

5.8 Bureaucratic influence and local representation

Management staff in the Council believed that the development of significant public buildings and services established in Blessington since the 1990s had little to do with the influence of local politicians in the area and much more to do with an ill-defined County Council strategy to 'open up' the town to citizen consumers settling within commuting distance of Tallaght and other parts of west Dublin. A senior planning official stated:

> The fire station, library, playground and so on, they were executive decisions based on planning and levies - politicians just rubberstamped them (Participant D12).

At the same time, a retrenchment of local public services took place during the period of economic recession, while none increased or improved. The local area Council office at Blessington was said to be 'hanging on by a thread' in 2012 (Participant D12).

Established in the town centre in late 2006 as another one of the 'deals' completed with Cookehill, the public library reduced its opening hours by half in 2011. In the same year, the local motor tax office reduced both opening hours and the range of services offered. Based in the public library, the Citizens Information Centre similarly reduced in scale in the same period. None of these public service decisions were amenable to local representation and local politicians simply either reported on them to the community or, even, advocated for them. The decision to reduce the County Council motor vehicle taxation service available in the county administration office in Blessington in 2011, for example, was supported with minimal interventions for amendments to the proposal put by Council staff only by local representatives. In the case of the changes in public library opening hours, no protest was made, notwithstanding an appeal for support made by Citizens Information Centre staff volunteers at a Forum meeting.

Local representatives still perceived the role of the Manager to be preeminent in terms of local public service decision-making, evinced both in conflict and in consensus. One previous local elected representative, for example, explained the negative reaction of a fellow representative to a legal challenge mounted against a decision of the County Manager by saying '… you don't bite the hand that feeds you' (Participant B5). Somewhat paradoxically, Council officials agreed with this view. The comment below is from a senior planning manager, referring to the power of the County Manager over his directorate.

> Under Better Local Government, the major decision-makers are the Manager and the Directors. They can tell professionals what to do. In the old days, I did a report and it had to sit on the file. Now the manager can change the report. (Participant D8)

The County Manager was perceived to have a close relationship with the 'Minister' and to defer tactically to the increasing number of regulations emanating from Departmental officials. Council staff participants in this study adverted to an increasing centralisation of policy across all directorates and services. In one example cited by a senior housing officer, between January and May 2011 some twenty-nine significant individual policy directives issued from the Department to the Housing Directorate at Wicklow County Council (Participant D12). Central regulation was perceived to be increasing, bringing with it fewer opportunities for local politicians to imply 'pull' with respect to provision of public services in particular.

As noted by Byrne (2012), from the early 1990s the most time-consuming function of elected representatives was decision-making on land zoning and planning issues. When it came to it, housing and other capital developments were almost always favoured by elected representatives, as was evidenced by scrutiny of the representations made by local elected representatives to planning applications. One party political local election aspirant, in the 2009 and 2014 local elections, explained the social power to be gained by local politicians from even a suggestion of transactionalism in a context of rural planning.

> Every one of those has a potential vote on it. Every time someone gets planning, [names political representative] writes to them saying, 'I'm glad you got a house'. I'd do it. It's a family vote forever, the most important thing you'll ever do is buy your own home. (Participant E7)

Population growth promised economic vitality, an irresistible combination to a vote *and* electorate hungry politician. A review of the zoning and planning decision objections in the study territory demonstrated that all three politicians typically approved, or at least did not object to planning by developers in the main despite adopting differing strategic approaches to the role of elected representative.

It is, of course, unclear whether councillors made their views known directly to officials through the backdoors 'representation' process internally within the Council planning directorate, with some evidence from one representative and a senior planning staff member that, informally, they did, typically positively in the majority of cases. A power over land zonings was the most obvious dimension of 'pull' in the local elected representative's arsenal in an area that was developing as rapidly of that of the study territory and was deployed largely as a latent opportunity to influence development events.

Generally, the influence of local politicians lay in decision-making on zonings, rather than on individual planning applications. The interventions of the dissentist politician, for example, successfully prevented the establishment of a Blessington LAP for nearly two decades as part of a popular protest against Roadstone and this served to extend and deepen the ad hoc nature of local planning. In the absence of an agreed local plan, local representatives could choose to treat each sub-deal negotiated by the property developer of the largest land bank in the centre of the town in an individual, and ultimately, personalistic manner. As a result, planners themselves retained the strongest influence, as was accepted by a senior planning official.

> Officials have less say in theory. But, yes, officials have a lot of power in fact (Participant D9).

Overall, there was a remarkable lack of interest in a genuinely planned approach to development endemic in all relationships, avoiding the integration of new participatory forms of governance with representative governance and the redistribution of power across the spectrum of development interests. Council staff had limited experience only of decision-making in consultation with communities.

> We've tried a number of different types of consultation – but they have often descended into shouting matches. We tried facilitated workshops. They didn't work, none of them work. People don't come to planning meetings. Now we do clinics for our latest run of Local Area Plans (Participant D9).

In fact, these clinics consisted of a room in the Local Area Office equipped with a single table, behind which sat two Council officials and into which streamed a succession of potential planning applicants, including Cookehill on the day the author attended the 'open' LAP consultations in 2010. Local influentials highlighted a lengthy period of conflict in local planning issues and the prescribed, narrow approach taken to planning for development.

> The vision of the local is of nil importance. Planners are planners, they'll do sewage, roads and so on, but they don't care about the bigger picture, our vision of Blessington, say, as a gateway town to the National Park (Participant A4).

There was a clear sense that local democracy was deliberately mobilised so as to be essentially unaccountable to community oversight. One community activist recalled a large contingent of locals attending a Council meeting in 2003.

> There were so many people from Blessington at the meeting, the Council shelved the LAP [Local Area Plan], rather than deal with it. Local people were mobilised that day to go to the Council. The Council was being observed. It was quite a contentious meeting. It was my first view of how local politics works and I wasn't impressed. Councillors have a vested interest in decisions not being made (Participant A18).

In the study territory, the factors referred to above described a shifting representation, relative to governance as a strategy for local elected representatives and also to changes in brokerage engendered by the power of county governance. Collectively, these factors also tended to encourage an expectation in the community that local elected politicians would work together on community interests.

> The three [elected representatives] took different positions and it was easy for the Council to make their own decision. For the elected representatives to be involved in the decision, they would have had to work collectively. One wanted five days, the other wanted one or two days [for the tax office to remain open], one abstained I think (Participant A41).

In the light of new planning regulations, increasingly, local elected representatives found it difficult to reconcile responsibility for land zoning decisions with a role as brokers for local development interests. Instead, it was to local governance organisations that potential development partners turned.

5.9 Elected representation and local governance

The single most important factor affecting the influence of local politicians in the study territory was represented by the social partnership potential of local political action. As one elected representative stated 'A structured committee will deliver more for their community than any local representative can.' (Participant B5). Most of the key development issues for the area from the late 1990s were negotiated between the Council and the emergent political actor, the Forum (see also Chapter 6). This actor was closely involved in both managing and preventing local objections to the development plans negotiated with the property developer, Cookehill (see Chapter 3). One community participant articulated the confused logic of a scalar shift from individual democratic representation to the soft political power of collective community governance.

> The point is that the Forum is a collective voice. The councillor makes the decision in the chamber. And in any event, the Manager makes the decision. The councillor as a representing person to officials isn't as effective as a collective body. The decisions of the Forum are representative. Usually, there's a consensus in the Forum. If there is disagreement [on an issue], then it's usually parked (Participant A40).

Moreover, a local leadership representing a wide range of interests articulated a view that the new governance group was not only influential, it was also accountable and legitimate and therefore, could credibly claim to be representative.

> At least there is someone that can stand with the agencies, elected, and can say we represent Blessington (Participant C1).

This positive perception of the actual, real influence of the civil society governance group, the Forum, was shared by Council management, by the leadership of a wide number of governance groups in the county and by a majority of civil society groups in the wider area.
Local representatives were well aware of the rising influence of local governance organisation, but denied its political legitimacy.

> I've had someone come to me and asked for my help about something. Then they say 'I'll go to the Forum as well, they have real clout', but the Forum doesn't have funding or a mandate. It's very confusing for a representative (Participant B2).

Two of the three representatives were careful not to alienate the political competitor, but were equally careful not to promote representation claims in particular. The positive view of the Forum in the wider community and its broad representative membership, meant that individual elected representatives had little basis for public complaint about its activities. However, local representatives maintained a watching brief over the discussions of the group by placing supporters in key role. At the only meeting of the governance group attended by two of the three local elected representatives during fieldwork, local politicians showed their ambivalence, claiming that they were already dealing with the issues raised at the meeting directly with residents associations.

Residents associations offered less of a threat than the Forum group, since they had a narrow range of interests, primarily associated with the basic services supplied by Wicklow County Council. In Blessington, however, it must be acknowledged that local politicians were oriented towards residents associations since the Forum had absorbed most forms of political activity into its area-based remit.

> I find that residents associations are not affected by outside interests. They have clean agendas. They're the cornerstone and foundation of community. They look to the quality of life in their estate, it's their primary interest (Participant B3).

On one of the few occasions he attended in 2012, one of the local elected representative deflected a discussion of a locally important community project – the development and use of an old and almost derelict Council building in the centre of town as a day care centre, then being negotiated with County Council officials. At the meeting, the most governance oriented Independent local politician insisted on the positive potential for an alternative site for the Centre, based on his own direct negotiations with the HSE. The first proposal and the preferred alternative for a new build on WCC land stalled as the councillor flagged a positive outcome for the more significant alternative. However, this challenge from the local representative to the Forum was unusual and widely perceived as a move against the project's main champion, the Catholic parish priest. As long as the community perceived the role of the Forum positively, even if this conversely negated their influence, local politicians found it otherwise impolitic to move directly against the political competitor.

A further cause for competition between local elected representatives and the local governance group centred in the fact that community governance groups acted as political nurseries for competitor political aspirants and shored up social capital for the parties they represented in novel ways under partnership principles.

The Forum was a vibrant political force, effectively conjoining both public decision-making and secondary association intermediation within the boundaries of the Blessington & District governance territory. Three local political aspirants from 2009 were members, while a further three members were previous local electoral candidates.

> Everyone who's involved in politics wants to be involved in groups like the Forum (Participant E7).

Party activists, supporters of the local political representatives and local political aspirants were all present on the local governance group. Eight members of the local governance group were active party members (in the sense of campaigning for a political party) or either previous or potential political aspirants, and this figure rose to 10 following the local governance group's election process in 2011. A partnership approach within local governance further shaped political strategies. The Sinn Féin local candidate radically altered both his negotiating style in the Forum by 2012 and his articulation of party political strategy – for example, supporting integrated social housing development he had previously opposed, as a direct result of his perceived failure to elicit votes for the Sinn Féin party candidate in the 2011 national election.[74]

In spite of the observed hostility between local politicians and the governance group, co-operation as well as competition characterised the relationship. The role of local governance supported the brokerage of local elected representatives to the extent that they retained a place at the 'top table' when development projects eventually came to fruition. At the same time, the political activity of the group in negotiating for local development distanced local politicians from the risks of conflict with officials and with one another.

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[74] This same, longstanding local political aspirant finally secured his local seat in 2014, as part of significant national gains for the Sinn Féin party in a context of declining support generally for party politics following 6 years of austerity measures. In fact, this local politician, active in local politics since the 1980s, secured the only new seat available in the new District, as a consequence of the reorganisation of local government implemented in that year. All other local elected representative incumbents were returned for a further term.

In a context where local elected representatives were poorly perceived, one study participant pointed out that 'the Forum lets the elected representatives off the hook, because the Forum locks in issues' (Participant A3).

Two points were relevant here. Firstly, the participant was referring to the fact that the Forum mobilised political issues into the Forum and thereby, precluded their democratic resolution (see also Schattschneider, 1960, p. 70). Secondly, the Forum preferentially managed local issues directly with Council officials as a secondary process of de-politicisation.
The greatest range of opportunities for brokerage accrued to the local governance group and, in particular, to its leadership. Local governance group members were formally represented on county fora, local development companies and negotiated directly with the state, as well as local government and with economic actors. In his personal capacity, the Chairman of the local governance group also had a near equivalency of opportunities to be directly involved in county level networked governance groups as a result of his positive reputation for negotiation and his credentials as an economic actor. This influence ensured the greatest level of access to political decision-making across the county of any political actor. One local party manager suggested, for example, that if he chose to have a formal political career subsequent to his role on the Forum group, he would be 'a shoe-in' (Participant A15).[75] The fact that he routinely and plausibly denied any interest in a political career in spite of his political party activism was attributed, ironically, by the same study participant, to the superior prestige that accrued to his role as a Chairperson of the Forum.

In April 2013, the Receiver appointed to manage the affairs of Cookehill Development Ltd. was invited to meet with representatives of the local community in order to discuss the fate of the undeveloped 30 acres of parkland, dedicated to public use as part of the original planning approval.

[75] This manager was not from the same political party as the Chairman.

A decade after the community had first 'elected' him to negotiate with the property developer on their behalf, this political actor would lead the discussion between the Council, the state appointed Receiver and local civil society interests, not local political representatives. This example reinforces an argument that the alliance between local elected politicians and businesspeople was comprehensively broken as part of a fundamental shift in local political leadership. For the first time, local elected politicians were willing to concede to a lack of influence over political decision-making at public, high-stakes events such as pre-election meetings.

In April 2014, the Forum further asserted a political brokerage role, hosting a public questions and answers session for local political aspirants in the upcoming local elections in that year on behalf of all three West Wicklow Fora acting in tandem, itself a landmark political event. One of the key features of the meeting was a newly dispirited tenor of remarks made by incumbent politicians in a context of a public election event. One study participant reported his surprise that 'the sitting councillors practically admitted they had few if any powers as councillors' (Participant A16). At the public meeting, the long standing, most local elected politician bitterly told an audience of his constituents that 'we don't really have any power [to resolve the issue raised by the audience member]… well, we can lobby [Council staff]' (Participant B2).

This revelation appears to have caused little real public concern however or perhaps, elicited a similar lassitude amongst constituents to that expressed by local politicians. All sitting local elected representatives were returned by the electorate in 2014 in the extended Baltinglass Local Electoral Area, now renamed the Baltinglass Municipal District under the terms of the most radical reorganisation of the local government system in over 100 years. As mentioned, the Sinn Féin local candidate from Blessington, himself a highly experienced, longstanding local aspirant, won the additional 'new' seat allocated to the newly expanded District.

5.10 Chapter conclusions

Accounts of the influence of local elected politicians in Ireland have consistently highlighted a dependence on brokerage practice, establishing local political culture 'as an unproblematic given' in Irish terms (Komito, 1984, p. 174), when linked to a social acceptance of hierarchy, family values and deference (Byrne, 2012, p. 225; Schmitt, 1973). In Eipper's study, party machines were strengthened by local clientelism. The centralisation of power in the party leadership, combined with Fianna Fail's transforming class base were linked to 'the state's role in fostering capitalist economic development, which led to increased control of the economy by foreign capital' (1986, p. 60). The premise of this chapter is that the two most important features of a changing pattern of political leadership between Eipper's description of local politics in Bantry in the 1970s and that of Blessington from the 1990s are; the prevalence and influence of participatory democratic structures and, a critical gap between local and national representation occasioned by the abolition of the dual mandate, which disrupted the hierarchy of the party machinery. Either or both of these changes suggested a diminution in the influence of local politicians.

During the period of this study, political actors generally reflected on the diminution of the influence of local elected representatives, sharing publicly a view held by the Blessington & District population at large. The following quote was proffered by a long-standing and influential local politician in County Wicklow, an Independent up to 2009, a Chair of the County Council and an active member of a broad range of county-level governance and local development groups.

> If you were to ask me what role do I have, what decisions do I take? I'd have to say, very little. Even with the Development Plan, we can't decide where people settle, water does that… As far as the Estimates process goes, we decide about 5% of what goes into it… We still provide a service to people; information. That's it. (Participant B5)

However, this was not the whole story. The influence of local representatives on the other hand, increased within a new and diverse range of county level governance spaces and was favoured by two of the three local politicians, but its representivity or what Urbinati (2006) termed the 'surplus of politics' was elided within these processes. In the Blessington & District governance territory, this represented not simply the transference of the functions of representation into governance, but rather a fundamentally new way of performing representation in a context of participatory practice.

Local elected politicians were now effectively acting as information and promotion experts not between the state and its institutions, but internally, with respect to acting on behalf of the local authority on participatory decision-making groups, contributing to a displacement of representative politics. The state's role also depended on a new political leadership within local governance to broker extra-local relationships, for example, to deliver EU programmes, to secure population expansion and the revenue needed to deliver local public services. Political legitimacy was further eroded in representative politics because, as Brandenburg (2013) has asserted, 'To put it bluntly, communication, good customer service, competence, performance and delivery can result in satisfaction but never in consent' (2013, p. 85).

Although not visibly influential to local people, local politicians retained 'symbolic' access to more information from state sponsored decision-making groups than any other influential as representatives and they shared development benefits with economic actors with regard to development planning - the key process catalysing economic growth in the 25-year study period in the Blessington & District territory, even accounting for the radical and populist stance of one of the local politicians. Local politicians were caught in a bind here too though, if they negotiated with the economic actor on behalf of the state, they eroded the value of clientelism still further.

If they opposed the economic actor, then they also opposed potentially well received local economic developments. This may have been an old antagonism which local politicians were used to in the past and managed by means of their party machinery. However, in the contemporary context, their political competitor had no such conflict in engaging in negotiative partnerships, laying claim to community representation and indeed also availing of party machinery resources. This explained on the one hand, the virulence of the approach adopted by one local politician and the attachment of all local politicians to housing estate resident groups, where the old rules applied. It also explained their lack of visibility in the local area, as a compromise between political opposition and compliance.

The projects that local politicians supported, regardless of their political strategy, were firstly those that reflected their local social associations and to this extent an implied brokerage with regard to local development projects underpinned electoral strategies. They could also still champion local causes, a strategy employed to particularly good effect by one of the local politicians, and thereby preferentially shaped local identities. However, this ability, as shown above, was a more risk-laden strategy than that of participation in wider county level governance. In fact, what I observed in Blessington was a complex repositioning of clientelism within the local political sphere, including its relocation as part of a strategy of governance amongst local politicians and which reflected their opposition to or compliance with the advancement of the state.

Notwithstanding a finding that personalism continued to characterise local politics, in this case, a new collective political actor mirrored both representative legitimacy and party factionalism in a weakened form. The local governance group successfully integrated negotiation and brokerage as a single political strategy and mediated with the state, substituting for, or competing with, local political representation.

In a broader landscape of governance, local elected politicians similarly linked negotiation and brokerage, but with differing degrees of success. As a new political actor, the social power of the political leader situated within local governance devolved to a capacity to pre-empt and to remove from the agenda disputes between economic interests by structuring and leading a normalising discourse of consensus. A senior planning manager in Wicklow County Council articulated this view.

> It's amazing what the community leveraged. I'd put it down to [names the Chairperson]… It was interesting to see how gently and subtly he got everyone on his side. He showed great political skill, I remember how skilful he was. And all just for the community (Participant D9).

Indeed, it was leadership as political consensus-building rather than brokerage, which guaranteed his selection as a political leader in the first place (see also Haugaard, 2010, p. 1049). The fact that he was also an acknowledged strong campaigner for a then resurgent Fine Gael party, who applied his local political resources to attain a discrete membership on county level public decision-making and local development bodies, further demonstrated that mass party allegiance remained an important referent of social power locally (see also Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2012, p. 179 - 181). Moreover, the new political leadership represented by the appointed Chair of the local governance group in the Blessington & District governance territory was drawn from the economic core of the town. Since many of his clients are local, his role, in fact, reproduced old style clientelism through brokerage of the Town Centre Development Plan on behalf of economic and religious interests.

In spite of the establishment of participative decision-making arenas, the fundamental issue in a context of local political representation, remained that of facilitating access to political decision-making (Beetham et al., 2008; Hughes et al., 2007).

The question of a changing pattern of leadership in the political sphere then, finally hinged on a characterisation of the role and influence of collective decision-making. Since the Blessington & District political territory was established specifically in consequence of a weakened local political representation, I concluded that a changing pattern of local political leadership must finally account for the political influence of decision-making within local governance.

5.11 Part II conclusion

Part II of this thesis explored the contemporary influence of a Catholic-nationalist leadership in a context of deep changes in the economic, political and religious spheres since 1987. Each chapter in Part II characterised the macro level context for these changes and drew on evidence in Blessington & District to consider their effects on local power dynamics. In the case study area, I observed key shifts in the power processes Eipper associated with Catholic-nationalism. Part II of this thesis described the mobilisation of a new ideology of collective, negotiative leadership. However, taken as a whole, it was also clear that novel forms of governance reinforced *personal* social power relations and also provided a new source of social power. Given an overarching perspective of continuity, rather than change in the fundamentals of dominant class power in Ireland (Silverman, 1993), the question of the role and influence of local governance will provide the central topic of Part III of this thesis.

PART III : The Ruling Trinity Transformed

Chapter 6

Negotiating Power and Civil Society Leadership

6.1 Introduction

In the 1970s, Eipper mapped the structural organisation of local influence in Bantry town and argued that the divisions in evidence in civil society both represented and reinforced the class interests of the dominant ruling bloc. In the contemporary period, the extension of participatory practice in civil society followed the success of national social partnership arrangements in facilitating consensus-based decision-making. In Chapter 3, I concluded that the Blessington & District Forum represented a unique attempt at consensus, which was similar to but also different from, that observed by Eipper in civic affairs. However, this conclusion left unanswered the question of the nature of the relationship between collective local governance and the ruling bloc. This chapter will depart substantially from Eipper's exposition of civic affairs in the 1970s, to explore the development and influence of a unique consensual, collective local governance group in Blessington & District.

First, I will briefly examine the development events from 1990 that led to the establishment of the Blessington & District governance territory in 2004 and will link these events to social and economic transformation in the same period. In the main sections of the chapter, I will address the membership, activity and decision-making scope of the Forum directly.

I describe the internal organisation of influence that shaped group decision-making and then assess the contemporary scope and influence of the Blessington & District Forum (B&DF) over local development specifically from 2004. The concluding sections of the chapter will present my empirical observations of the authority of a consensual civil society leadership relative to the state and the market and will interpret the power dynamics and social power relations reproduced by this leadership.

6.2 Conceiving of civil society

In this chapter the term civil society will encompass the organisation of collective leadership as local governance and as a novel basis for social power. It will include civil society organisations of all hues existing within the governance boundary of Blessington & District and will assume distinct interactions external to this local governance territory with the state and the market. In this usage, I exclude decision-making that is internal to public authorities and services (the state), to private companies (the market) and to households (the family) within the territory. However, I will include secondary associations as varied as chambers of commerce, parish councils, development organisations, whose decision-making may be associated with either the market or the state but was demonstrably separable from either domain.

Eipper neither theorised nor developed a concept of civil society, referring only to the organisation of civic affairs by a ruling elite. In civic affairs, however, the complexities of the local interplay between the material and ideological basis of the class power system were both keenly felt and observable. A structural analysis of the mobilisation of influence was therefore critical to his conception of Catholic-nationalism in class terms. In this chapter, by contrast, it will be important to first offer a brief overview of differing conceptualisations of civil society over time, especially in the light of the discussion already offered in Chapter 3.

This conceptualisation will be associated with the empowerment prospective of local governance groups and a changing role for civil society relative to the political sphere as part of the advancement of the state (see also Chapter 5). In its earliest use, the term civil society contained within it the earliest conceptualisation of a political community, ordered by a common adherence to agreed rules and laws and undifferentiated in this regard (Locke, [1689] 1982). Later, the rise of democracy as a political system in the 19th century generated the first interpretations of the importance of secondary associations to the development of democratic practice in modern political communities. Thus, a flourishing civil society was first proposed as a signifier of democracy and then only subsequently was distinguished from the state as a separate, secondary sphere of collective influence and leadership, which complemented political and economic spheres.

By contrast, Marx theorised an economic base of capitalist society, where economic relations ordered social power relations and both reciprocally determined a legal and political superstructure comprising *inter-alia;* institutions, culture, political power, social values and the state. In turn, the legal and political superstructure extended a universalising social consciousness mirrored in the organisation of social class at the economic base (Marx and Dobb, [1859] 1971). Gramsci (1971, p. 207) famously reframed Marx's concept of superstructure in a seminal work theorising civil society. He characterised the differences between political society and civil society and argued for the importance of civil society as the place where the morality of relations of dominance was both mediated and reproduced, justifying a middle class sense of reality where it was weakest and most available to cultural resistance; away from the totalising influence of either the economy or the state. Gramsci (1971) likened civil society to a battleground crosscut by deeply emplaced positions, where the dynamics of class relations were most intensely experienced.

The concept of hegemony which Gramsci (1971) developed, was referred, but not wholly adopted by Eipper.

A premise of this study is that the establishment of partnership arrangements for economic development after 1987 forms part of the ideological changes being investigated. In the contemporary period, civil society has been re-valorised as a result of a change in political culture, including in Ireland.

> 'Precisely because modern civil society is based on egalitarian principles and universal inclusion, experience in articulating the political will and in collective decision-making is crucial to the reproduction of democracy' (Cohen and Arato, 1992, p. 19).

In the Irish case, the institutionalising of partnership arrangements between the state and local communities for economic development carried the potential for the latter to recognise and collectively address the double-bind situation Eipper described in Bantry. More generally, the power of local collective action represented a new and impersonal power capacity capable of overcoming personalistic power relations, as a result of more inclusive, democratic initiatives from the 1990s (Hirst, 1994).

6.3 Community engagement and Irish civil society

In Ireland, scholars noted a 'growing interest' in the structural relationships established to facilitate community engagement from the 1990s, primarily in the form of novel governance arrangements involving the state, citizens and communities (Bell and Hindmoor, 2009, p. 137). A shared meaning of community was implicit within the concept of community engagement. Tony Varley and Chris Curtin examined the contemporary experience of local development companies as partnerships of local power actors applying 'power to' politics and threatened with co-optation or infiltration while confronting 'power over' type dominance structures.

Further to a long-term ethnographic analysis of the Connemara Forum, Varley and Curtin (2002; 2006) concluded that community and state actors were positioned increasingly ambiguously relative to one another for consensual decision-making in the contemporary experience of social partnership in Ireland. They suggested that a Catholic-nationalist leadership 'has not disappeared from the scene' but instead took on a 'new guise' in local collective decision-making (2002, p. 13). These scholars work emphasised once again that the question of the share of societal power was at stake in contemporary civil society and their analysis offered a theoretical point of departure for the empirical observations included in this study. They concluded that the changes they observed between the pre- and post-1990s era, was not that 'power over' power relations had disappeared, but that 'power over' and 'power to' dimension of local power structures 'had come to be related to each other in a very different way' (2002, p. 12).

At the outset of this section, I suggested that this chapter would conceive of civil society in broad terms and was differentiated from Eipper's own treatment of local society conceptually. In the contemporary context, conceptualisations of collective action then drew on a legacy of democratic theory and political power theory to focus on structured dialogue with and within civil society groups (Dryzek, 2000; Fung and Olin, 2003, pp. 17 - 19). In summary, this study must account for a consciousness of structured partnership and negotiation, which did not exist before 1987 and which has been suggested to realign relations between the market and the polity precisely as a consequence of drawing in civil society. Moreover, the Irish experience suggested that personal social power relations contributed to the success of social partnership arrangements, even though, ostensibly, these presented the conditions under which personal power dynamics might be mediated by the empowerment capacity of more inclusive democratic initiatives. However, this chapter will focus on empirical local evidence rather than making any broad claims for national social partnership arrangements.

Already, the evidence from this case and evidence presented by Curtin and Varley (2002) suggested that a more nuanced analysis was required. At the local level, a new expectation of civil society groups to partner with the state and with economic actors for local development outcomes characterised this period. Thus, the emergence of community leadership organised for political consensus, represented a clear departure from Eipper's observations in Bantry in the 1970s. The key question for this part of the thesis is the nature of the relationship between local governance as an ideological institution using partnership as a power process and a local political, economic and religious leadership. However, in this chapter, my task will be to assess the membership, internal dynamics and interests served by the group. First, it will be necessary to describe the civil society observed by Eipper in the 1970s.

In Bantry, Eipper found that a civil society leadership corresponding to class position was reliably structured within each of the expressed spheres of the social power order he identified – charity, government and development. 'The clergy and their lay associates dominated the first, politicians and civil servants the second and the owners and managers of businesses the third'. (1986, p. 119). In fact, Eipper suggested that a clear majority of all influentials were either business people themselves or closely connected to them and generally, membership of the three spheres overlapped to a significant degree. On this basis, Eipper argued that this class leadership was firstly a function of economic status, regardless of the sphere in which it was actually positioned. Meanwhile, the working class had no independent leadership and little influence in any of the spheres of influence he described (1986, p. 127). Eipper summarised the profile of civil society leadership in Bantry as predominantly an economic leadership, who also constituted a political leadership.

Eipper also defined a range of ideological cleavages, which divided and organised status in hierarchical terms. He argued that the local consciousness of social power was claimed by these cleavages, between men and women, for example, or between old-stock and blow-ins. The attribution of such identities marked out and masked the contours of class conflict and social change. Eipper's work suggested that such cultural ascriptions played a key role in fixing the social order. Cleavages contributed to a local view of what the social power order ought and ought not to be and they organised the social power order internally, according to shared social norms and values. As a result, change was more likely to attend upon a wider changing economic environment. In the case of Bantry this happened when Gulf Oil brought prosperity, so that friction between a new economic class and the pre-existing economic elite found cultural expression in competition for social position within local society.

Eipper's perspective focused firstly, on the ordering of class relations by a ruling bloc and secondly, on the evidence for changing social power relations between the market, family and the state *in* civil society. Eipper therefore distinguished his study amongst a well-established canon of community power studies. He de-emphasised questions of rural peripherality and the social effects of processes of modernisation, in favour of analysis of common processes of class development relative to their distinctive expression in particular cases (Silverman, 2001). In consequence, Eipper's account lent little support for a normative theorisation of the power capacity of civil society leadership and his hypothesis hinged instead on an assessment of the role played by the Irish Catholic Church in presiding over a persuasive rationale for Catholic-nationalism in civil society, viz, a consciousness that what was good for the ruling bloc was good for all.

6.5 Changing economic relations and the logic of consensus

In Chapter 2, I described the development and activities of civil society groups up the 1980s and referred briefly to the resistance mounted by civil society groups in the late 1980s. Two forms were mentioned, the conflictual model adopted by local residents associations on issues of public service provision and the community development approach adopted by the Blessington Women's Group (BWG). The failure of the former was linked to changes in the political economy that occurred in the post 1987 era, as outlined in Chapter 3. By contrast, the success of the BWG from 1987 represented a local example of the challenge mounted by Irish women to Catholic social policies and which were facilitated by membership of the (then) European Economic Community (EEC).

The BWG enjoyed a considerable and national success for a decade, as a network dedicated to raising awareness of and advocating for what were described as 'women's issues'. The failure of the group was marked This is not to say that the BWG was not extremely important to a large number of local women and indeed, several local women interviewed for this study lamented the group's demise. However, the BWG had little impact on local development organisation as a discrete interest group in the local area and commensurately, local feminism offered no direct challenge to either local Catholic clerical leadership or to male dominance of socio-economic development groups.[76]

By 1990, the development of new urban housing estates in Blessington Town was gathering pace (see also Chapter 2). In that year, a new community development association was established. The new group consisted of a mix of new incomers and natives.

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76 As a study of leadership, it is acknowledged by the author that this study contributed little to an understanding of the continuing lack of representation of women amongst civil society leadership, excepting only that the study confirmed the dominance of a traditional and male leadership.

For one founding participant, the Blessington & District Community Council was established because the membership ‘didn’t want the town to be over-developed’. As described also in Chapter 3, in the same year a senior figure in An Taisce and a lawyer by profession moved to Blessington with his family. He researched the archaeological site at Glen Ding wood newly purchased by Roadstone and began a campaign to raise awareness of the potential negative impact of quarrying on the site. For some of the original membership, the environmental professional’s single-minded objective in opposing Roadstone threatened to take over the remit of the group. These members left the B&DCC and a bitter row ensued, which led to a court injunction being taken out by the now anti-Roadstone majority in the B&DCC to prevent the exiled membership from continuing to use the original name. They subsequently established a rival development organisation, Blessington Area Development Ltd. Both sides recalled the depth of anger between the two groups as the campaign against Roadstone progressed. Notices and newsletters were issued by Roadstone and by rival community groups. Public petitions and meetings were held and then disrupted by opposing factions. Legal actions were taken by one local development organisation against another’s representative claims.

Over the next decade, three interlinked issues related to Roadstone’s extraction activity generated national debate and divided local civil society into pro and anti-Roadstone sides; (1) the sale of the Glen Ding lands (also known as Deerpark lands) by the state to Roadstone in 1990, the propriety of which sale became the subject of a national enquiry as part of the Moriarty Tribunal; (2) multiple attempts by Roadstone and the County Council between 1995 and 2003 to rezone a portion of the Deerpark lands (known as Glen Ding) for extraction, simultaneously derailing local development planning processes until 2010; (3) the discovery of illegal dumping of over 100,000 tonnes of mixed waste on Roadstone’s lands in 1997 and in 2001.

While all groups in Blessington were affected by these events, the main groups involved in socio-economic development activity in Blessington first split and then collapsed in acrimony. Later groups included the Blessington Heritage Trust Ltd. and Blessington Residents Against Dumping.
At the same time, the protests against Roadstone's land purchase near Glen Ding devolved to an unlikely alliance between a non-native left-wing politician and a 'green', non-native professional. Behind these two champions was ranged a shifting mix of external national political actors (see also Chapter 5).

In the national media, the events were portrayed in simple terms, as an example of a victimised but plucky local community taking on the might of the criminal corporate multi-national. Within civil society, a cultural narrative of newcomers versus natives framed an increasingly bitter and personalised debate. Both national and local discourses masked the national transitions in economic relations that were the source of social upheaval, exemplified by the rise locally of a professional class, both incomer and native. In the aftermath of public protest and bitter inter-community strife, local society in Blessington enjoyed no coherent civil society leadership. Nor was there any evidence of significant participation in the new rural development programmes that were characteristic of new 'bottom up', participative decision-making newly emergent in rural County Wicklow from 1992 (Ray, 2006).

In summary, a failed and still fractious civil society leadership in Blessington through the 1990s offered no basis of collective action and which translated directly into a loss of local representation on the early iterations of partnership implemented in rural areas in Ireland with European co-financing. Most participants agreed that 'it was a complete mess in Blessington - no-one knew where to go for anything.' (Participant A10).

An initial process of reconciliation ebbed and flowed fitfully only from the mid-1990s, marked by a series of bilateral meetings brokered by Catholic and Church of Ireland clergy between the pro- and anti-Roadstone factions (see also Chapter 4). These efforts, however, made little progress and a religious leadership was unable on its own account to establish a persuasive argument for consensus.

In conclusion, the 10-year period from the late 1980s to 1999 was marked by divisions in civil society, with new development organisations being established to progress pro and anti Roadstone interests. This proliferation of development organisations in local society however, did not contribute to any meaningful extension of civil society power. The challenges to civil society organisations failed to progress either the interests of new community members or of the rural working class associated with Roadstone local plant workings. The subsequent serious revelations of dumping provided a new source of protest from the early 2000s, but by that time civil society was already being reconfigured in response to the local economic development potential represented by Cookehill Development Ltd. It was only when the opportunity for a local leadership to regain a stake in new forms of economic development via partnership that consensus finally gained ground.

As one influential local actor said, ‘They didn’t come together until they were forced’ (Participant A20). The parish priest argued that it was obvious by 2000 that ‘the sands were shifting’ in Blessington. The sale of the O’Leary landholding had changed the local landscape of economic decision-making so that Roadstone’s local economic influence declined (see also Chapter 3). The membership of the O’Leary Development Group established to negotiate with the property developer included the champions of both pro- and anti-Roadstone factions. In fact, it represented the first accommodation of new economic power relations - a barrister and an accountant dominated each side the proto-consensus group.

The subsequent establishment of the Blessington & District Forum led by the parish priest completed this process, subsuming and in one case dissolving the originating protesting groups.[77] Some degree of organised protest continued, but 10 years of discord amongst civil society groups was largely extinguished as the Forum reorganised dissent into negotiation. In laying claim to represent a community redefined by a new political boundary, the Blessington & District Forum either subordinated or excluded the representatives of the new homeowners most affected by Roadstone's degradation of the local environment, the company's local employees and the small traders it sponsored. Social conflict, economic challenge and political interests alike were now filtered through the leadership of the B&DF. In this context, a review of the membership of the B&DF is relevant to questions of the role of the Blessington & District Forum and the interests it served.

6.6 Collective decision-making in the Blessington & District Forum

As articulated in its terms of reference, the B&DF was constituted from 2004 as a forum with an area-based representation for collective decision-making on a wide range of local social and economic issues. The Forum's boundaries were established to encompass the traditional village hinterland of the Town, reflecting an agricultural and landed estate history and also, incorporating the majority of the historical Catholic parish. The group advertised itself as the united community body for the area. Accommodated within the Blessington Parish website (see also Chapter 4), the B&DF's website stated:

> 'The Forum is a 48-member body representing the wider Blessington area and formally has regard to all matters in relation to community development, planning, town development and environmental issues'

[77] The Minutes of the Blessington & District Forum for 10th December 2007 note agreement by both parties to the resignation of B&DCC Directors and replacement by Directors of the B&DF.

Initial positions on the Forum were predominantly filled by the existing leadership of groups from the pro- and anti-Roadstone sides and also, from the leadership of the proto-type for the B&DF, the influential O'Leary Development Group. The first formal, open election of the Forum took place in 2011, organised by neighbourhood. According to the Chair of the group decision-making is consensual, 'based on round-table discussion of the agenda item and followed by call for specific inputs by each member prior to the recording of the issue decision in the Forum minutes. The discursive practice in the group is discussed further in section 6.7 below.

6.6.1 Forum membership

Notwithstanding a reduction in membership from 48 to 38 members by 2009, the Forum's meetings were well attended and an average of 19 members attended each meeting over the 9-month period of close study observation from October to June 2009. The Catholic parish provided the premises for evening meetings held in the National Junior School. Desks were arranged in a square shape following the perimeter of the large classroom. The chairman sat at the head of the 'square', with officers and senior members seated on either side. A regular positioning of bloc seating by interest group featured so that seating was predictably patterned according to the member's affiliations (see also section 6.6.2 below). Attendance was open to members of the public and long benches were placed against the walls for this purpose. Public attendance was rare however and typically, visitors with a specific interest in a particular agenda item observed at meetings, although in most cases their views were not directly sought. Just 12 per cent of agenda items drew a contribution from visiting non-members. The agenda and minutes of meetings were published on the Catholic parish website in a dedicated suite of B&DF webpages.

The average Forum member in 2009 was male, over 50, a native or a Blessington & District resident for more than a decade. He was most typically retired or in professional employment or a farmer. Just two of the attending Forum members were registered as unemployed. Another was a small farmer; a participant on an employment scheme. The division between native and non-native membership was approximately 2:1 in favour of those who were either from Blessington or at least, had lived in the community for more than a decade. To the extent that the membership shared common economic and social status, the level of trust could be anticipated to be high between individual members. The views of certain members carried a disproportionate weight in decision-making, most often as a consequence of their professional and local seniority but significantly, also as a result of his capacity to achieve consensus. The chairman of the Forum was highly regarded by all members. He epitomised the membership profile and also, its foundational aspiration for consensual decision-making.

The secretary of the group was the only woman who regularly attended meetings. Her infrequent contributions were mediated by a commonly held view that she was the informal representative of the Independent local elected representative and therefore, spoke on his behalf. As discussed in Chapter 5, political parties were represented by active party members and by the majority of local political aspirants. As one non-member study participant summarised the membership, the Forum was locally ‘well got’. Members tended to have multiple affiliations amongst local civil society organisations, be representative of wider sectoral, political or local interests and to champion other local groups and projects. They represented a local male decision-making elite, with the recent inclusion of in-migrant professional men.

Men dominated the Forum, as they did all local civil society groups with an economic or development orientation. Analysis of meeting attendance showed that 91 per cent of the attending membership was male and 9 per cent was female. Regularly attending female participants rarely contributed to any debate recorded during the study and only led discussions as visitors attending to discuss specific issues, for example, in respect of the Day Care Centre project or as leaders of Residents Associations particularly, in disadvantaged housing estates. Given the advancement of women in the labour force, the failure of women to breach the structural power of men in civil society denoted the deep structural privilege retained by men in Irish society even in 2009 (O'Connor, 2000).

By contrast, the low representation of women on the Forum had pertained since the group's establishment in 2004 and generally reflected the over-representation of men on decision-making groups for economic development since the 1960s and a commensurate over-representation of women on social and community welfare issues. The Forum's gender profile changed radically in late July 2011, however, when 21 new members were elected. Female attendance reached nearly one-third at the first meeting held immediately after the election, although had dropped to 26 per cent by the third meeting observed one year later in 2012.

In summary, the membership of the B&DF represented an accommodation to the new socio-economic reality in Blessington. It successfully incorporated new in-migrant professionals and substituted for the leadership of opposing factions in part by absorption. The structure of the group as a development organisation applying a consensual decision-making model further guaranteed that the bitter conflict of the 1990s would be submerged. Simultaneously, the proposed boundary of the territory as a political project of reconciliation ensured a representation drawn from the wider geographic area favouring a native, rural leadership over that of urban incomers.

In short, the membership of the Blessington & District Forum was likely to preferentially favour native rural interests and the interests of a new professional class in its decision-making.

6.6.2 Organisation of influence and decision-making in the B&DF

A concentration of decision-making in fewer groups similarly concentrated community leadership so that the scope of decision-making within civil society narrowed. However, if the range of decisions available to the B&DF had increased, then it was possible that the overall scope of civil society decision-making had commensurately increased. Goverde et al (2000, p. 27) summarised the six steps associated with decision-making as follows: (1) the perception of an issue over which a choice has to be made; (2) the identification of a number of possibilities with regard to this issue; (3) the admission of the issue and attendant possibilities to the decision-making process; (4) the comparative assessment of these options; (5) the election of one of the possibilities as the one to be chosen; and (6) the implementation of that choice. They argued that each step was both critical to outcomes and inter-related, from socialisation in the first steps to a capacity to achieve real interests in the latter steps.

During the period of participant observation, the B&DF discussed some 130 issues at nine meetings approximately 2 hours in length each, observed between October 2009 and June 2010. Many of the agenda items were duplicated from one meeting to the next.[78] The following Table 6.1 lists the most frequently represented agenda items. These items included the most significant decision-making matters for the Forum during this period.

[78] One of these meetings was a special meeting convened to consider the Forum's response to the local area plan draft produced by Wicklow County Council. This is recorded as a single issue even though a number of sub-issues were raised during the conversation.

Table 6.1 Most frequently discussed B&DF agenda items October 2009 – June 2010

Agenda item	Frequency	Sphere of influence	Issue type
Lake trail project	9	Business	Economic
Day Care Centre	8	Catholic Church	Social
Theatre	8	Catholic Church	Social
N81 upgrading/bypass	7	National	Public service
Motor tax office closure	6	Local Government	Public service
B&DF election/structures	6	Community	Social
Delay in water supply	5	Local Government	Public service
Parish / Forum survey	4	Catholic Church	Social
Tidy Towns	4	Business	Economic
Glen Ding housing	3	Local Government	Public service
New Aldi	3	Business	Economic
Proposal for printed newsletter	3	Community	Social

Source: Analysis of interview data by thesis author.

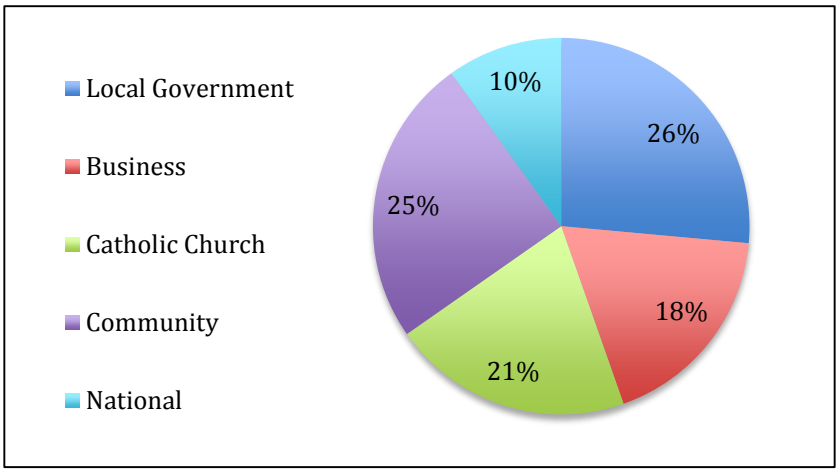
Collectively, these items represented more than half of all items discussed (54 per cent) over the 9-month period. While frequency of discussion did not of necessity imply salience, with the exception of the regular Tidy Towns report and the proposal for a newsletter, these items were important local issues generating considerable debate and Forum activity. The lake trail development project and the day care centre development were capital projects involving dedicated discussions including external representation at meetings. Both the trail project and the theatre project were led by established sub-groups of the Forum who reported regularly on progress. The water supply issue was noted by the chairman as a key Forum achievement just coming to completion in early 2010.

The Forum was also considering its own future membership in that year, including a desired future Forum election and potential restructuring. Both of these items were in fact delayed until 2012. A substantial effort to contribute to the development of the Local Area Plan in 2010 should also be noted. The Forum dedicated a special meeting to this issue and also facilitated a public event to feed into a Forum submission so that, while not represented as a frequent agenda item, it had a significant impact on the Forum agenda during the period.

In summary, the range of issues that the Forum was dealing with suggested that its existence both expanded and intensified the community's local development role. Table 6.1 also shows that the Forum was most often dealing with issues that were not generated by the broader community, but were led by a small elite group. In these instances, the Forum was a broker for community consensus and unlike previous development groups, it supplied decision-making leverage as a partner in its own right. In this respect, local government, the Catholic Church and business were the progenitors of several items of broader scope. Community projects with a social objective were more minor and more diffuse than these items.

Figure 6.1 overleaf presents a summary of the agenda items by type, collated in accordance with the subject type of the issue being considered.

Figure 6.1 Proportionate representation of Blessington & District Forum agenda items by sphere of influence (per cent)



Source: Analysis of B&DF meeting data by thesis author.

By a narrow majority, the largest proportion of agenda items involved the local government sphere and demonstrated that in this period, local governance organisation performed as an auxiliary to local government. The most frequently represented individual items here ranged across public services, including the threatened motor tax office closure (6), delays in the new water supply system for the Town (5) and ongoing issues with the poor quality of local authority housing at Glen Ding and the poor treatment of its estate residents by the local authority (3). Only in respect of the water supply system could the Forum be deemed to have had a decisive role and impact. However, this item represented the culmination of a significant multi-annual effort led by the Forum. In addition, the Forum considered its relationship with Wicklow County Council during this period and an ongoing relationship with local councillors contributed to a consideration of issues beyond those directly related to Wicklow County Council. Finally, a single item; examination of the draft Blessington Local Area Plan prepared by Wicklow County Council, generated a lively hour-long debate. The Forum facilitated a public event on the subject and prepared a detailed submission on the draft plan.

Figure 6.2 below shows the diversity of agenda items by issue type. The greater number of these agenda items by type naturally included public services. However, the local government sphere demonstrated some diversity in the type of decisions being taken. Economic activity and social projects were encompassed by this sphere, including works related to the Town Centre and in respect of capital projects being dedicated to social use in the community, for example, the renovation of the Old Library and discussions on the use of the new library. The decision-making that emerged from agenda items relating to the local government sphere of influence showed that these represented the most dynamic of the Forum's discussions, often leading to decisions and an active role in progressing matters to a resolution with Wicklow County Council.

The community sphere by contrast, although well represented amongst the agenda items, typically led a diffuse range of more minor items, the greater majority of which were informational in nature rather than active. In other words, they represented information provided to the Forum membership, involved no decision-making by the group and typically did not recur with any frequency from one meeting to the next. The greatest number of items in this sphere in fact involved discussions relating to the Forum itself (5 items), including the need for an election, discussion of Forum structures (2 items) and the need to hold a cross-Fora meeting (1 item). Other recurring items included the proposal for a printed newsletter (3 items), which was never implemented and the Community College (2 items), an informational only item since the Forum had no direct scope of action in respect of the College. These items were also the least diverse in type. Just 6 of the items involved community leadership of a public service (5 related to local education provision and 1 represented a proposal for a cycle path). Finally, a sole agenda item involved the proposed community leadership of an economic project (the Ballyknockan Quarry), which never progressed.

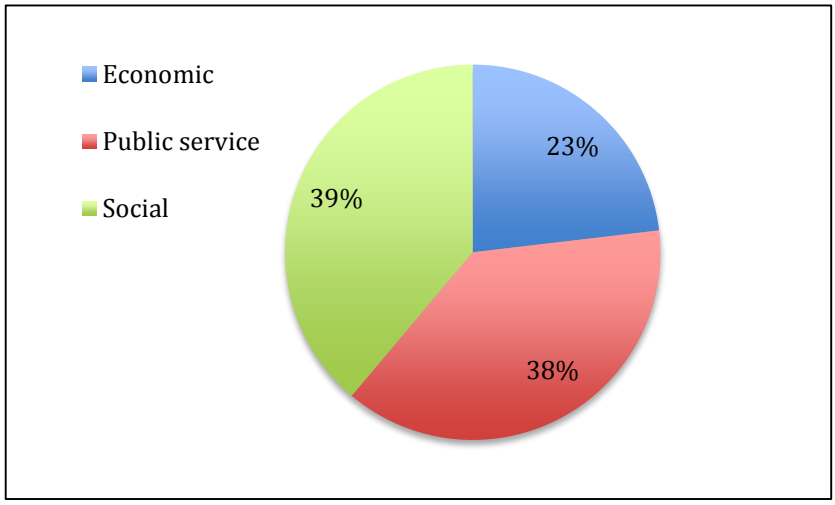
In sum, the activity in the community sphere which was considered by the Forum represented the weakest and most limited in scale of all the activity undertaken by the Forum in the period observed.

In sharp contrast to this finding, the interests of the Catholic Church were strongly represented by items which tended to recur with significant frequency and were typically embedded as core elements of the Forum's ongoing work programme in 2009 and 2010. These included the operation of the theatre in the national school building (8 items) and the community survey, which was initiated and led by the parish. Core responsibilities of the Forum in respect of the community theatre involved sourcing funding for its fit-out in the national school and management of its operation. In order to progress the former, the Forum established a legal entity to run the theatre as a sub-group and this sub-group applied for grant-aid on three separate occasions via the LEADER programme. In addition, the preparation and conduct of the parish survey was a frequent addition to the agenda and the parish priest sought the co-operation of the Forum to broaden its appeal as a joint effort. The joint parish and Forum community survey proved to be an important and wide-ranging social initiative. Led by the parish priest, its results were launched at a well-attended public event and the responses to the survey were given a high local prominence as a credible articulation of community wishes and future development needs.

A representation of agenda items by agenda type painted a somewhat different view of the Forum's activity. All spheres of influence had at least one social project, even if these social projects tended to be more minor than either the public service or economic types being discussed. In fact, the only social projects of any scale were those that remained in the sphere of influence of the Catholic Church; the theatre, the community survey and the proposal to develop a Day Care Centre. Issues relating to public services crossed national, local government and community spheres of influence.

Finally, the business sphere led almost exclusively on a narrow subset of economic issues and just one social issue was attributed here, the discussion on ways to reanimate the Tidy Towns group. Considered collectively as here, the types of issues raised at the B&DF explained the purpose of the group as a substitute for local political representation and provided further support to the findings presented in Chapter 5.

Figure 6.2 Proportionate representation of Blessington & District agenda items by type (per cent)

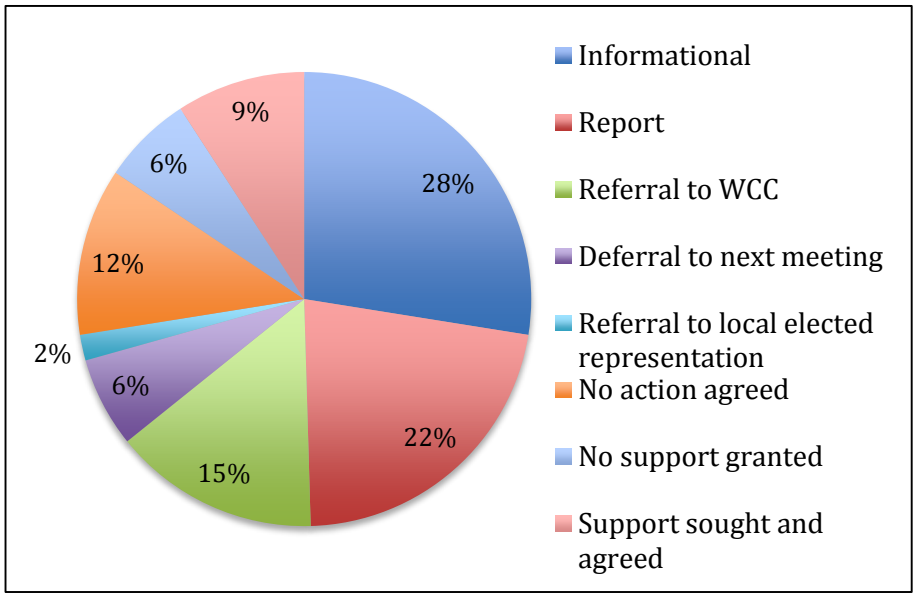


Source: Analysis of B&DF meeting data by thesis author.

Figure 6.3 below analyses the outcomes of meetings in terms of decision-making. The Forum was most often considering items, which did not in fact require a group decision since they involved a report on completed actions or were informational only in nature. On occasion, this reflected the fact that the main activity on this item was being conducted outside of the meeting by the Forum membership. An example was the theatre operation; a recurring item on the agenda of the Forum led by a sub-group of the Forum, who merely reported monthly on progress. However, it was also true in respect of items that related to public services. In these cases, the Forum's leadership maintained an informal network of relationships with Council officials to progress matters between meetings.

The same could be said of the items deemed to have a wider significance, such as the funded development of the trail from the Avon Ri hotel to Russborough House. In this instance, the Forum legitimated funding applications as a necessary community partner under the particular scheme, but in practice enjoyed little influence over the project itself. National and county level tourism, development agencies and economic actors determined the implementation of the trail. In opposition to the stated community aim for a lake walk with direct access from Blessington Town, the sub-group agreed to its development as a trail from the Avon Ri hotel located outside the town to Russborough House. Thus, the economic aims of wider development projects took precedence over concertation and over stated community objectives.

Figure 6.3 Frequency of decision taken by Blessington & District Forum by type of decision (per cent)



Source: Analysis of B&DF meeting data by thesis author.

In conclusion, by 2009 the Forum was dealing with a less urgent mix of issues relative to the intensive period of economic transition prevailing from 2002 to 2009.

The earlier decade of negotiation with the economic actor described in Chapter 3 no longer, therefore, provided the central focus of the Forum's activity.

Nevertheless, the Forum had by this time developed key relationships with Wicklow County Council officials in particular and enjoyed a credible role as the primary representative of all civil society organisations in Blessington & District and of the community as a whole. In turn, local organisations believed the Forum to have the critical scale needed to progress local development issues with external partners. On the one hand, this legitimacy increased the number of issues with which local development organisation was entrusted. It is clear that the group had achieved an ongoing partnership status with respect to the provision of public services and for local economic partnerships, which had not been achieved by previous development organisations in the area. In interviews with external development actors, the Forum was widely perceived to be not merely influential in its own right, but an essential partner for local development projects with local authority involvement.

On the other hand, the Forum was a reliable partner only in so far as it was able to divert dissensus and was in fact unable to advocate for *particular* groups or interests where these were not universal (see also section 6.7 below). In consequence, the Forum initiated few projects on its own account and found seriously conflictual issues, such as the poor treatment of social housing residents at Glen Ding, too challenging to offer residents any advantage from its core relationship with the local authority. In addition, the issues within the group's self-defined purview were of a narrow and local nature. Unlike the WWDA in the 1960s, the Forum had little ambition to a broader rural societal relevance and a claim to advance a West Wicklow development agenda by means of a facilitative role in respect of the remaining two Fora in this wider territory found no meaningful expression.

Again unlike the WWDA, the Forum had no specific economic vision or objective following the departure of Cookehill Development Ltd. and its representative mission dictated a passive, reactive decision-making role. Largely, the interests the Forum served were those preferred by its own membership. In conclusion, the analysis of issues undertaken showed that these first served the interests of the economic, political and religious spheres. When the community sought support for social projects directly from the Forum, for example; for the community use of the old library building, against a reduction in public library opening hours or to resolve the flooding of Glen Ding housing, the advocacy involved in their resolution proved too challenging for the Forum membership. An analysis of discursive practice within the group offered further insights on this basis.

6.7 Limiting consensus

In the previous section, the decision-making agenda of the Forum and the interests it served were described so as to evidence the influence enjoyed by an elite local membership. Clegg (2000) argued that at the core of the relation between consciousness and interests was 'some conception of a significant relation between power and language' (Clegg, 2000, p. 79). In this section, I will describe some key features of this relation. I found that collective decision-making was most challenged by choosing amongst options where community interests were divided. The Forum ultimately had no political mandate and its decisions relied on the presence of a champion on the group. Where none was present, as in the case of the discussion on selection amongst options for an N81 bypass route, no decision was recorded.

1) Native, CoI farmer - 'We can't back any route'.
2) Native, professional Chairman - 'Can we say, 'consider the soccer club?'
3) SF, political aspirant – 'We've had every chance to put in our view.'
4) GP, Soccer Club – 'There are 500 kids in the soccer club.'

1) Native, CoI Farmer – ‘Are you prepared to sacrifice other people?’
5) Dublin MNC professional - ‘Everyone along the route is going to suffer. For us to get involved in that is a political disaster.’
6) Native, local shop owner – ‘I would think that our role is to make sure that anyone affected is compensated.’

The group was consistently unable to represent the interests of subordinate groups, whether it was the Glen Ding Residents Association or the popular, but outflanked Soccer Club where these had no specific expression in the group’s membership. Clearly, where no consensus was achieved, no further discussion took place.

Practical knowledge of who had authority to speak on specific issues shaped the conversation along determinate lines and was indicated in silences as an expectation of this silence being filled by the anticipated interest champion. These moments of discursive leadership rarely if ever, included either the few women who attended, the newer members of Blessington’s population or those who were unemployed or poor. Silence served a further function. On the one occasion when a woman referred to a lack of female representation directly to the group, silence or refusal to respond further signalled the way in which discursive as well as action possibilities were managed in favour of existing power relations.[79]

A further feature of concertation was the representation of external views by the Forum membership itself. Members of the community raised the issue of the closure of the Motor Tax office in Blessington in early 2010.
The discussion demonstrated how discourse within the group was shaped by a pragmatic acceptance of external economic priorities.

1) Native, FG – ‘People do their motor tax online now.’

[79] It should be noted that this rare occurrence within the Forum was likely to have been catalysed by the author. Immediately prior to this meeting, I held a discussion with three women involved in the leadership of local groups and as a result of discussing the topic of women’s low representation raised awareness of this fact. Subsequently, to the author’s knowledge, no further discussion or action on this issue ever emerged.

2) SF, political aspirant – ‘But we don’t all have broadband in West Wicklow.’
3) Native, professional Chairman – ‘Can we be part of this review?’ [review being conducted by Wicklow County Council]
4) Professional in-migrant, retiree – ‘Everything again is centred in the East. Broadband isn’t in West Wicklow.’
2) SF, political aspirant – ‘Two Councillors voted for the closure of the tax office, by voting for the budget. One abstained.’
3) Native, professional Chairman – ‘We should write to both other fora and Councillors. Sometimes they don’t open letters.’
1) Native, FG – ‘They respond and say, they can’t do anything on this side’.
5) Native, professional – ‘It’s really just a glorified post box, much of the documentation is sent to Wicklow. We can’t make an argument about money. There’s no cash. We have to make an argument on economic grounds. ‘
2) Native, professional Chairman – ‘Again, will we be part of the process?’
6) GP, soccer club – ‘What’s the motive? To save staff etc., to be part of the process?’

By contrast, the most definitive actions occurred when the interests on the group were directly challenged. Farmers formed a significant bloc on the Forum and combined to represent landowner interests.

1) Native, FF political aspirant – ‘We should be talking about what’s appropriate for the town, the zoning, regardless of who owns it. The Lake is the major attraction. You destroy the Lake, you destroy the town.
2) Native, professional Chairman – ‘So, should we say within certain limits the appropriate zoning is agricultural or recreational?’
3) Unknown – ‘The Council just put this in for their own sakes.’
4) In-migrant, professional – ‘It’s now appropriate to look at the reservoir as an amenity. A developer would want to have apartments or houses on the Lake. But, we want the town to use it more. The Council is doing the right thing.’
5) Native, farmer – ‘You can’t stop landowners from farming their land or using it.’

2) Native, professional Chairman – ‘A solution is simply to say that the ESB area is zoned for active recreation. Zone the ESB lands as recreational and leave the remainder.

6) Native, farmer – ‘Think of the farmers trying to scrape a living out of the land. It’s important to keep the value up.’

2) Native, professional Chairman – ‘Leave as is so’.

The examples above described just a few of the ways in which collective action could be prevented or avoided by the organisation of interests internal to the B&DF. Where consensus could not be achieved, because bias was mobilised against it, discussion of an agenda item elicited no decision. The consensus achieved by means of deliberation only weakly shaped collective action, when the Forum contributed to a discursive domination of civil society itself.

6.8 Dimensions of wider consent amid evolving social power relations

An assessment of the construction of meaning attempted by the Blessington & District Forum in the Blessington & District territory directly concerned the credibility of the local governance actor, as perceived by its constituency. The views of local leadership only have contributed to this assessment to date. However, the Blessington community survey conducted in 2011 situated these findings at the macro governance territory level by recording some perceptions of local well-being, satisfaction with community life and with community leadership. It should be noted that the survey was led by the parish and by the B&DF, was limited in its terms of reference and more likely to be completed at the level of the household by more longstanding community members.

The survey aimed to assess the levels of community satisfaction and community need that might be met by the future activity of the parish and the Forum.

In general terms, Blessington & District was not only positively perceived as a place to live but also, identified positively as a community. In response to the question, 39.2 per cent of Blessington & District respondents said they felt 'very much' a part of the community, while 36.5 per cent felt 'a little' a part of the community (n=921). As a place to live, almost 38 per cent of respondents were 'very happy', while a further 40 per cent were 'fairly satisfied' with Blessington. A gradient of community satisfaction was positively correlated with the length of time the respondent had lived in the area. Aspects of community life most highly ranked by respondents, from the list provided in the survey questionnaire, are given in Table 6.2 below.

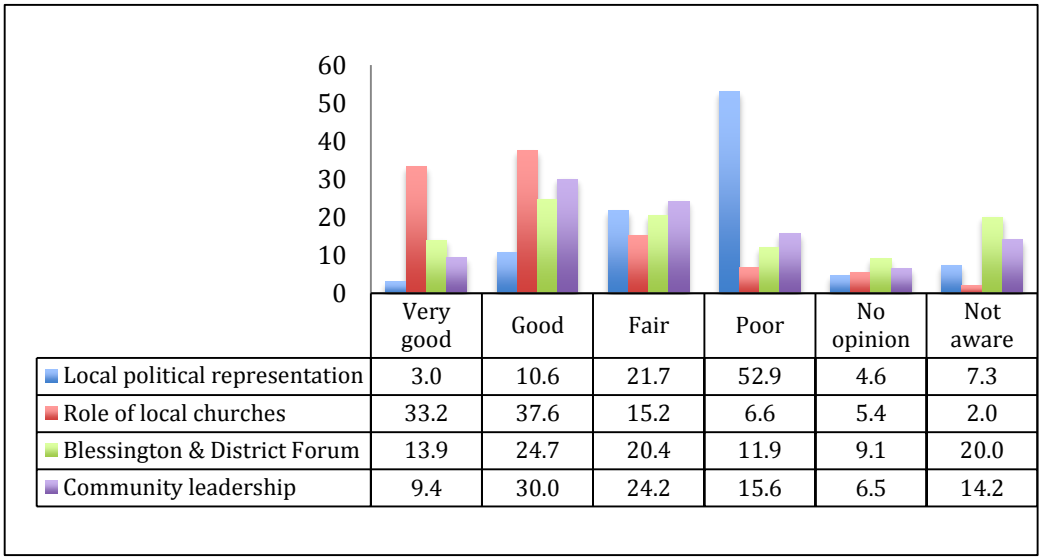
Table 6.2 Highest ranked positive aspects of community life in Blessington & District in 2010

Aspect	Per cent Satisfaction
Role of local churches	70.6
Primary education	67.2
Friendliness and hospitality	57.9
Community spirit	48.1
Pre-school education	47.9

Source: Analysis of B&DF meeting data by thesis author.

A comparison of responses for local leadership is shown in Figure 6.4 below. These responses compared a highly favourable opinion of the role of local churches amongst the local population associated with the churches role in establishing a new local junior school, with a highly unfavourable opinion of the role of local elected representation.

Figure 6.4 Local perceptions of nominated local leadership in Blessington & District, 2011 (per cent)



	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	No opinion	Not aware
Local political representation	3.0	10.6	21.7	52.9	4.6	7.3
Role of local churches	33.2	37.6	15.2	6.6	5.4	2.0
Blessington & District Forum	13.9	24.7	20.4	11.9	9.1	20.0
Community leadership	9.4	30.0	24.2	15.6	6.5	14.2

Source: Adapted from survey data (2014).

A positive view of the role of the clergy contributed strongly to satisfaction levels, just as a poor perception of local political leadership highlighted strong dissatisfaction. Some of this data has already been presented in previous chapters and will not be further addressed here. For example, the positive view of the role of the churches may be associated with the Catholic parish priest's role in establishing the national junior school in particular (see Chapter 4). By contrast, the role of local elected representative was not positively identified with local development activity. In Chapter 5, I suggested that the Forum's role eclipsed that of local political representation and offered a partial explanation as to the widespread and negative view of the influence of local councillors. The survey does not substantiate this evidence in the reported views of the wider community. While the Forum was relatively well perceived, the wider population of the governance territory reported a low level of awareness only of its role and activities as compared to political and religious leaders.

6.9 Conclusions

Following nearly a decade of crisis, local civil society leadership in Blessington Town was reanimated by the prospective of consensual partnership and carved out a new local political geography to create the Blessington & District local governance territory. Structured as a collective, political project in civil society with the power to negotiate with the state and the market, the governance actor the Blessington & District Forum achieved a grand community consensus only attempted by the ruling bloc in the 1970s. In this case, as one local study participant confirmed, collective leadership in civil society was believed by all influential actors to have 'real clout' (Participant B2). For the first time in Blessington's history a single development group laid claim, not only to represent the socio-economic interests of the wider Blessington & District area but also, to represent the interests of *all* groups in the self-defined territory simultaneously. This scope and ambition represented the full extent of local governance as a political project.

By 2009, it was clear that civil society leadership in Blessington & District largely devolved to the activity of the Blessington & District Forum. A unified civil society leadership empowered by a cultural turn in favour of partnership practice also meant a less diverse civil society leadership in comparison to the 1980s and 1990s (see also Cohen and Arato, 1992, p. 19). The representative voice of a single group replaced a multiplicity of voices amongst the previous sporting, welfare and economic development groups. Moreover, the new version of local democratic practice was more exclusive than the previous patchwork pattern of civil society organisation and supportive of particular, rather than general interests. A longer perspective demonstrated a reduced role for local organisations in economic development since the 1960s and a commensurately deeper role for collective decision-making in a context of a politics of land from 2000.

The transition was characterised both by an agglomeration of interests and the orientation of those interests in favour of economic development.

> Certain people took the leadership in dealing with the developer. There was an agenda of; we need to dramatically expand, we need an economy, we can make this a tempting suburb of Dublin. I think that meetings and attending meetings, took over the function of the Forum. They became a way of staving off change, rather than actually negotiating. They wanted to modernise. It was a pragmatism. Accepting that change would happen rather than directing it. At that era, they thought, we need some of this new money. (Participant A27)

Collective governance represented at least a project of empowerment and consensus was legitimised by the state. However, the analysis of the issues in play between 2009 and 2012 undertaken in this chapter showed that the collective or 'power to' capacity of the Forum was predictably shaped by the narrow range of social power relations it both incorporated and represented and which could, in turn, be directly linked to the economic, religious and political spheres. The structuration of the Forum as a collective actor then served to shore up the dominance of local business, religious and political actors when a command and obedience model of governance was no longer acceptable to the broader population.

At the same time, the B&DF ordered civil society by means of a political influence, substituting for a weakened local political representation and reducing the potential for resistance. The founding purpose of the B&DF specifically addressed the need to accommodate and resolve conflict and the representative Forum was adept at this task. In summary, a relatively superficial concertation only established the legitimacy of decision-making by the Blessington & District Forum. Internally, participative discursive practice was shaped by the organisation of local interests. While consensual decision-making within the Forum contributed to the group's moral authority, it was in fact its persuasive authority over civil society, which provided the real basis for its social power and this persuasive power, in turn, was guaranteed by the parish priest.

In Bantry, the key influentials mobilised civil society around 'key issues of local significance' (1986, p. 109). Eipper argued that class both suffused and structured social power relations in civil society. A class leadership then worked to preclude the potentially competing structures and the leadership of the working class. Divided by the aligned and dominant interests of local politicians, business and clergy, civil society was generally experienced as a persistent local powerlessness in the face of overwhelming economic challenges. In his account, Eipper's observations underpinned a concept of power as a struggle *in*, *for* and *over* consciousness (1986, p. 14). By contrast, in Blessington I found that consensual forms of decision-making in local society offered fertile ground for an old leadership to renew its influence.

However, Catholic-nationalist power dynamics and consciousness of Catholic-nationalism remained credible in the self-defined Blessington & District local governance area. The negotiative practice of the Blessington and District Forum continued to reliably reproduce the social values of a new in-migrant population by means of partnership. Consent was therefore also achieved by the old means. Finally, this chapter therefore has provided little evidence that negotiation and partnership had developed a discrete ideological character in Blessington & District, notwithstanding the fact that the group fostered pragmatic, consensus drive leadership. Governance altered the prevailing relationship between the 'power over' and 'power to' dimensions, but ultimately, in this case the outcome in terms of the interests that were served by this leadership, demonstrated stability relative to the pre-1990s pattern.

Chapter 7
Conclusions: The Ruling Trinity Transformed

7.1 Introduction

Drawing on class theory, Eipper examined the historical development of an Irish power order to explain its structural configuration and to hypothesise its likely transformation. The arrival of the multinational Gulf Oil company in Bantry presented Eipper with an example of the hegemony of international capital. However, Eipper's main project provided a coherent account of how processes of consciousness and power constituted class dominance as a societal 'field of force' and elucidated critical inter-dependencies between the micro and the macro levels (1986, p. 15). Eipper's examination then represented a critical break from earlier theses positing Ireland as a communitarian peasant society teetering on the brink of collapse under the forces of modernisation (Gulliver and Silverman, 1992).

Instead, Eipper's fieldwork in Bantry, Co. Cork offered an in-depth analysis of the replicable logic of Catholic-nationalism for an internally coherent class society in the 1970s. In consequence, his local observations supported a novel assertion of the critical connection between the personal power of clergy, business people and politicians in local Irish society and the structural processes of domination characteristic of the Catholic-nationalist leadership that Eipper termed the *Ruling Trinity*. In sum, Eipper's insights served to explicate the stability of Irish social power relations by applying a sophisticated analysis of the evolving relationship between the material and ideological conditions upon which they were based from Independence. In addition, by integrating micro and macro levels of analysis through ethnographic fieldwork. In short, he suggested the extant Irish power order he observed was neither exceptional nor opaque when considered through the lens of his class approach, which foregrounded struggles in, for and over consciousness as essential to reproducing processes of domination.

In Chapter 1, I argued that Eipper's careful delineation of power and consciousness and his exposition of the ideological forces that made sense of a lived experience of power relations, suggested no teleological necessity for the dissolution of the class power processes he observed, or their reconstitution in the event of either material or ideological changes. Eipper nonetheless argued that the national ruling bloc's membership was '*functionally coupled*, and that because of *this*, changes *within* and *between* them were extremely important for the cohesion of the ruling bloc locally' (Eipper, 1986, p. 188).[80] Some forty years later, this study has observed and compared the influence of contemporary local clerical, business and political leadership in the light of Eipper's conclusions. I reasoned that a comparison of the patterns of leadership between the 1970s and today would yield fresh insights into questions raised in the literature concerning the nature and stability of Irish social power relations in the face of dramatic changes since the late 1980s. These included at the macro level; a dramatic reorientation of the political economy in favour of global capital, a diminution in church state relations, the resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict and closer integration with the European Union.

This conclusion led to the development of the specific research question for this study. What contribution does a Catholic-nationalist leadership make to a contemporary Irish social power system? A review of the literature and an in-depth analysis of the development history of the selected case study territory raised a further research consideration. I discovered that answering my original research question in comparative terms called for an account of the role being played by new institutions of consensus and partnership in the Irish polity. In this concluding chapter of the thesis, I will summarise some founding assumptions of the research, discuss key findings and alert the reader to avenues for future research.

[80] Italics are per original text.

7.2 Investigating cases of Irish exceptionalism

Written prior to what Foster has wryly termed a 'fast-forward phase' in Irish economic development (2007a, p. 419), Eipper's empirical study of uniquely personal and authoritative Irish power relations in the 1970s followed an extensive scholarly canon on Ireland's development history, which has often argued for and (less often) against Irish social, economic and religious exceptionalism in comparative terms (see Byrne et al., 2001; Whyte, 1980; Silverman and Gulliver, 1992; Girvin and Murphy, 2010; Inglis, 2014).

Arguably, Arensberg and Kimball's (2001) highly influential study of life in Co. Clare in the first half of the 1930s was the originator of formal approaches to such accounts in Ireland. This study offered a detailed, scientific ethnographic study of the western countryside, 'as a social and economic system which produced and reproduced a self-sufficient rural community' (Byrne et al., 2001, p. 2). In the introduction to the third edition of the book, Byrne et al (2001) argued that Ireland was valued by social anthropologists, because Irish society presented a case of a society in transition, dealing 'in a special way' with the facts of conflict and change (2001, p. 3). This special way was demonstrated by the organisation of community for and by an economic, religious and political elite and in the local social power relations that softened the impact of social and economic change. In subsequent studies and across a range of disciplines, a proliferation of other accounts assessed an incongruent mix of authoritarian and communitarian social values in Ireland on a similar basis (Varley and Curtin, 2002).

Eipper's contribution to a long-standing scholarly canon on Irish leadership patterns cannot overestimated. A deep historical approach insisted that micro and the macro levels of social analysis were not discrete, but simply a matter of scale.

A class framework emphasising the ideological and the material bases for class power revealed a more nuanced and 'mutually imbricated' system of power than was available in other accounts of the time and was particularly relevant to this study. Eipper demonstrated the conceptual value of local social power studies empirically. This demonstration depended on a central pillar of his thesis; that the tripartite Irish power order he observed in the 1970s was dependent on the reproduction of certain power capacities between its local and national leadership. These capacities included political clientelism, nationalist economic development and a clerical Catholic culture, which connected the different levels of the Irish social power system he examined. In turn, these mechanisms made sense to an Irish social experience shaped by forces that evolved from the post-colonial era. In sum, Eipper's class analysis contributed vital and long called for insights into Irish social power relations, which explained the trope of Irish exceptionalism in terms of the historical development of specific conditions from the 1920s (see also Higgins, 1982).

In Chapter 1, I summarised a diverse scholarly literature that still featured arguments for Irish exceptionalism in the contemporary period. This discourse spanned political, social and economic analyses, in periods characterised by both rapid socio-economic growth and deep decline. I suggested that at the heart of this consistently salient topic lay not simply an ambiguous scholarly discourse on a lack of congruence between the retention of personal Irish power relations and the advance of the world economy in Ireland, but also ambiguity as to the evolving interplay between power and consciousness in the post-1987 period as a result of changes in the economic, religious and political spheres (see also Silverman, 1993, p. 222, O'Riain, 2014). One example of a new ideological institution called forth by this interplay was social partnership and indeed, Irish social partnership arrangements similarly drew attention for its exceptional character.

I concluded that the value of a contemporary comparison with Eipper's research scheme in the 1970 at the local level, included Eipper's conceptual emphasis on investigating the local power relations that reproduced a prevailing pattern of leadership (see also Gaventa, 1982, p. 252).

7.3 The limits of comparison

Where Chapter 1 presented an argument for the relevance and value of an empirical local study of Irish social power relations, in Chapter 2, I clarified that my study makes no claim to pick up in 1987 where Eipper's left off in Bantry in the 1970s. Firstly, this study has not reinvestigated Eipper's class account of the evolution and development of a specific class society, so that his original exposition of the development of Catholic-nationalism in the post-colonial era was accepted as a basic condition of the research. This also meant that the concept of inter-dependency between a local and national social power order was similarly accepted. In consequence, a narrower research focus on a changing pattern of local leadership in the contemporary period offered a more limited scope for this study relative to Eipper's conceptual framework.

Lukes (2005) and others have argued that structural forms of participatory democratic practice represent a greater potential for the subordinated to exercise choice 'under conditions of relative autonomy', because they offer the potential to raise consciousness of true interests (2005, p. 146). The Blessington & District governance territory was selected as the empirical focus for this study because the structural form of collective action that evolved there suggested itself as a new basis for social power, with the potential to mediate local power relations and processes in a new way when compared to Eipper (see also Goehler, 2009, p. 45). In short, the conditions of the Blessington & District case highlighted the fact that a comparison with Eipper was both useful and timely.

Finally, the historical development of the local case further delimited the study as a comparison case in empirical terms, since it contributed in specific ways to local structural responses to developments and challenges in the post 1987 period. Initially, the rural conditions in Blessington were broadly relevant to Eipper's arguments. As noted, the promise of 1960s industrialisation contributed to a brief flourishing of civil society leadership in Blessington. The political ambitions of the WWDA and the territory it represented reflected a newly confident Irish rural middle class, certain of the advantages of linking local labour to international manufacturing capital. Short-lived, this local capacity to shape a nationalist economic agenda failed because of this same dependency, mirroring the Irish economy as a whole. Nonetheless, the advantages of European Union membership from the 1980s, in particular, were available to rural areas close to Dublin such as Blessington, which combined Roadstone's success in drawing down European Union cohesion funding for transport infrastructure development with membership benefits now available to the agricultural economy.

By 1990, however, Blessington was at war with itself. The failure of Roadstone's cultural domination of Blessington stemmed from three main causes. Firstly, its material contribution to Blessington's economy had declined below a threshold required to maintain its economic patronage of civil society. Secondly, a rising professional middle class population now living in Blessington Town critically weakened the rural labour class that provided its main ideological support. Thirdly, the rural character of Blessington was being transformed by the development of Dublin and in particular, by that of Tallaght housing estates. National processes of socio-economic transformation from the late 1980s were highlighted by these facts. The depth of their impact in Blessington and the chaos into which civil society was thrown by the routing of Roadstone, was attributable to an exceptional stability in the local social power order up to 1990 and to the fact that national economic developments prior to this period favoured the extraction and construction projects of Roadstone.

Due to its position on the periphery of Dublin City, and in sharp contrast to the case of Bantry in the 1970s, the Blessington & District area was strongly favoured by contemporary national economic development policy drivers. From the 1990s, these included the potential for Blessington to fulfil an urgent need for additional housing to cater for an expanding Dublin-based labour force. This need and the community's political, economic and social responses to it catalysed the catastrophic events that occurred up to 2000. The substitution of Roadstone's influence by that of the property developer Cookehill Development Ltd., resulted indirectly from the unusual alliance forged between a clientelist local politician and professional incomers. The former stood to gain from a reenergised clientelism in the face of a challenge mounted against local elected representatives by new forms of governance. The latter represented the claims of a new class of professionals whose credentials exemplified the pinnacle of Irish social mobility, combined with an ideological shift from homeownership to property speculation fuelled by international finance capital.

The conflicts that engaged local labour and capital from 1990 in Blessington played out in an equivalent and radical restructuring of civil society organisations. The establishment of the Blessington & District local governance territory as a common space of action for negotiation within and between religious, state and economic actors then presented this study with a unique perspective on collective civil society leadership unforeseen in Eipper's original analysis. As argued here, this was firstly, because the establishment of the local political territory on the novel basis of partnership for local economic development suggested that the 'reconstruction of the relationship between macro and micro processes of social change' (Eipper, 1986, p. 204) may in fact have occurred.

The establishment of the Blessington & District Forum, therefore, facilitated an analysis of collective governance as a novel basis for social power associated with new economic power relations, including the Irish experience of social partnership and the role of the state in this context. An examination of the Forum firstly offered an extended perspective on the persistence of Irish social power relations as consistently specific to Ireland's historical development. However, it also offered a view of an evolving relationship between personal and impersonal power anticipated by Eipper in a context of ideological and institutional shifts in the prevailing Catholic-nationalist ruling bloc. Part II of this thesis brought both questions to bear in its constituent chapters.

7.4 Is the Ruling Trinity in decline?

In accordance with Eipper's conclusions, the character of the *Ruling Trinity* had begun to be modified by the 'penetration of the national economy by foreign owned capital' (1986, p. 203) by the 1970s. Further to his observations in Bantry, Co. Cork, Eipper acknowledged that he presented a partial only foreshadowing of the effects of international capital on the Irish power system. In Bantry, Co. Cork, the multinational Gulf Oil subordinated 'all other objectives to its pursuit of capital' (1986, p. 203), including those of the ruling bloc. Global capital succeeded in suborning existing power relations, because it prevailed over *both* the relational and ideological forms of power upon which the *Ruling Trinity* relied. For example, Gulf Oil devalued local relations of clientelism and also supplanted the ideology on which nationalist politics was based – nationalist economic development. However, further to a nuanced analysis of the post-colonial conditions that led to the evolution of an Irish class system in the 1970s, Eipper's advanced no specific vision for the future of Catholic-nationalism for the dominant class system as a whole.

Rather, Eipper's theoretical contribution stated that the *Ruling Trinity* leadership emerged as a result of a struggle *in, for* and *over* consciousness in the post-colonial period (1986, p. 14). In interpreting his findings in Bantry, Co. Cork he suggested only that a greater convergence with the European Union or a resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict might sufficiently alter the underlying forces which had favoured the reproduction of Catholic-nationalist power relations up to the 1970s. This study then began with two empirical premises. Firstly, a premise that conditions in the political economy post 1987 were even more likely to threaten the local leadership of the ruling bloc than those existing in the 1970s. Secondly, that there was nothing 'teleologically predetermined' about changes in and between the ruling bloc in response to these conditions (Eipper, 1986, p. 5).

For many scholars, the solutions to a failed frugality were enshrined in the recommendations of the Whitaker Report (1958), the famous 'grey book'. This report represented a watershed moment for the Irish economy and, at the same time, a turning point for traditional social values (see Corish, 1996; Mulreany, 2009). After 1958, Irish economic development policies encouraged 'efficiency, competing in foreign markets and attracting foreign capital' (Mulreany, 2009, p. 6) more closely aligned with the European political economy (Murphy, 2003). Scholars agreed that the process of convergence was slow to start, but differed as to the causal factors. For some, the flourishing of a new political leadership unconstrained by post-civil war nationalism followed upon the economic growth of the late 1960s: 'The great dividing point is the beginning of December 1979 [when Charles J. Haughey secured the leadership of Fianna Fáil party]… All the rules and conventions that existed prior to that changed overnight' (Des O'Malley cited in Sheridan, 2014, p. 3). Social historian Roy Foster (2007b) argued that changing economic and political conditions begin to translate into an uneven pattern of cultural change only very gradually from the 1970s and he claimed that 'after 1990, however, in one bound, we were modern' (2007a, pp. 423 - 424).

Part II of this thesis presented a comparative assessment of shifts in the power of local leadership between the economic, religious and political spheres, incorporating local observations in Blessington & District. Chapter 3 followed closely upon the progress and main findings of Chapter 2. This chapter first rehearsed the mixed evidence for the integration of the Irish economy into the world economy since 1987 and described the realignment of labour and capital in this new context under social partnership arrangements. In the local case of Blessington, a delinking of consent to Roadstone's patronage from the interests of a rural, agricultural and working class prefigured social changes accounted also by Eipper. These included myriad processes of urbanisation, a general upward social mobility between 1986 and 2011 and the new influence of professional (in this case) men involved in the sale and development of land – town-based landowners, solicitors, accountants and estate agents. These features collectively contributed to the failure of the existing cultural relationship between local capital and labour. Notably, they also supported the retained social power of native, Church of Ireland landowners.

Chapter 3 also charted a liminal period for power relations that followed the withdrawal of Roadstone's patronage. Unstable and dissensus-led power actors and alliances emerged fitfully within and between the economic and political sphere as the previous social power system failed. A local and by now, largely illusory, cultural ideology expressing the relationship of Roadstone to Blessington in terms of the positive benefits to a rural working class finally expired in this context. The new incoming population in Blessington were, typically, socially mobile urban workers, buying property rather than homes in the contemporary narrative and incurring unsustainable mortgage debt from international banks to do so. The fact that a professional incomer, a member of the new 'clerisy of law' led the anti-Roadstone faction exemplified the contradictions that were hidden beneath a media narrative of the local versus the multinational, Roadstone (Cronin, 2009, p. 120).

Next, I explored and characterised the rising influence in Blessington Town of a property development company representative, the infamous property developer of recent Irish renown. This empirical evidence directly addressed the question of the extent to which local transitions in the economic sphere provided evidence for the hegemony of international capital. While the transition from Roadstone's economic patronage to that of Cookehill Development Ltd. was accompanied by the reconfiguration of civil society, the evidence showed that traditional local economic interests, for example, those of local landowners and native shopkeepers, continued to be served by the new power process represented by local concertation. On the basis of the locally observed evidence, I interpreted a changing pattern of economic leadership, which could not be wholly characterised as representing the transformative effects of global capital observed by Eipper in Bantry. In spite of changes *within* the economic sphere, since business people, clergy and professionals continued to exercise the most influence, there was an overarching continuity in change. In conclusion, I suggested that a more finely grained analysis of local power dynamics within the ruling bloc would usefully focus on the ideological character and interests of the new authority of negotiation and partnership.

In Blessington, partnership decision-making in respect of economic developments shaped a preference by the property developer for negotiation with a traditional local leadership. These arrangements included an alliance forged by the property developer with the local parish priest, which realised the structural organisation of negotiative decision-making in civil society in support of consensual arrangements for economic development. The distinctive features of the Irish experience of economic growth were highlighted by this analysis. In essence, a politics of land was effectively enmeshed via social partnership in a politics of labour. The effect in Blessington was to privilege both the owners of land as economic actors and the economic actors who converted land ownership into the mortgage debt of Irish labour.

The facilitative role played by national social partnership arrangements was crucial in facilitating a changing pattern of national economic leadership in favour of capital. In the conclusion to Chapter 3, I suggested that local governance was predicated upon these national social partnership arrangements and its local version was similarly facilitative of finance capital. Nonetheless, the chapter concluded that a discrete analysis of local governance was required to better understand the relationship between the new authority of the local governance group and macro level shifts in power relations, which continued to serve the interests of a political, economic and religious leadership. In particular, I noted that the ideological pressure exerted by the local governance group on local power relations might be revealed through this analysis.

In chapter 4, I described a high degree of scholarly uncertainty as to the contemporary strength of clericalism within the Catholic Church and the basis for contemporary Catholic social power. I suggested that a local examination of Catholic clerical authority and influence conducted as part of this study was then of particular importance in comparative terms, given the rigour and clarity of prior analyses of the contribution of local clerical leadership to sustaining Irish Catholic culture. This literature notably included Eipper's account of a managerial and effective local clergy in the 1970s, by and large adapting to increasingly modern, pluralist perspectives and playing a crucial role in reproducing national Catholic culture and church corporate interests in the state. I argued that a more recent literature on the religious sphere now neglected the influence of parish priests in favour of analyses of Irish religiosity, as part of a preoccupation with a modernisation thesis. Blessington was already atypical in religious terms, being distinguished by a strong legacy of protestant social power. In the chapter, I examined the role played by the Catholic clergy in ensuring that civil society was reconfigured for negotiation and assessed the successful outcomes of partnership for the interests of both churches.

In summary and in a remarkably similar manner to Eipper, I found that while the corporate power of the church had significantly narrowed in scope, it could still be argued that 'its organisational hold upon diverse areas of civic life, mediated its relationship to business' (Eipper, 1986, p. 202). Nonetheless, in Blessington & District, the organisation of Catholic meaning in negotiation and consensus differentiated the pattern of religious leadership observed in the contemporary case study from that described by Eipper (1986) in Bantry. While Eipper focused on the changing role of clergy and their leadership in the charitable sphere, I found that in Blessington, a religious leadership was successfully navigating new economic realities and in particular, renegotiating a relationship with the state in default of local political representation.

In the main sections of the chapter, I described the ways in which the social power of religious actors remained bound up in their patronage of local schools and showed how this continued to shore up church state relations. This social power was still underpinned by a consciousness of social mobility via educational credentials. In the light of the severe curtailment of the role and reputation of the corporate church in the state, the continuing and strong influence of the pragmatic and business-like local Catholic parish priest was perhaps the most divergent of Part II findings, when considered in the light of a literature which has largely 'counted' on religious decline.

In Chapter 5, I examined a radically changing pattern of leadership in the local political sphere, where local political representation was perceived to be very weak in the Baltinglass Local Electoral Area (West Wicklow). I showed that in effect, since public decision-making was dependent simultaneously on economic relations with the property developer and the partnership practice of governance, local political representation had little overt influence, a fact amply demonstrated by the weakness of local elected politicians in Blessington & District.

I argued that the evidence suggested they were caught ideologically, between opposition and compliance in their relationship to the state in a new way, which in this case, was no longer resolved by the traditional party machinery as in the past. Their response involved divergent political strategies.

The relative success of two local political strategies observed in Blessington was considered in more detail since they offered a perspective on the changing role of local elected representation in the post 2003 era. While both local politicians concerned espoused and adhered to personalism and localism, one pursued a politics of protest during the Roadstone controversies, while the second consistently adopted a contrasting strategy of concertation via governance. I found that local politicians acquired a new and enduring scope for influence in the establishment of county-level governance groups, but this influence was associated not with the function of representation, but rather with a managerial competency and an expertise as local 'governocrats'. To this extent, local people had lost representation to consensus, which substitution tended to favour the agenda of the bureaucratic state.

Arguably, both strategies investigated had their strengths and weaknesses. However, for being favoured by the state, a strategy of governance with clientelism succeeded where a mix of clientelism and dissent did not. In Blessington, a transfer of political, collective and distributive power to the Blessington & District Forum specifically and negatively impacted on the role and functions of both local politicians, irrespective of their political strategies. The transition from government to governance noted did little however, to dislodge clientelist political behaviour, which continued to characterise local access to political resources.

7.4.1 Part II conclusions – the social power of partnership

Part II culminated in a conclusion that the observed and retained influence of a traditional leadership in Blessington & District did not suggest the demise of the local Catholic-nationalism leadership under transformative material and ideological conditions. Personal, local social power relations continued to influence the prevailing social power order, absorbing new power actors and processes. In addition and perhaps more surprisingly, I did not find that Catholic-nationalist power processes were materially supplanted in local society. In sum, this evidence appeared to validate Inglis (2008) assertion that Ireland's development trajectory since the late 1980s represented an attempt at 'riding two horses' (2008, p. 246), Catholic-nationalism and international capital (see also Taylor, 2005). However, it also validated a view of social continuity and change as a unity 'albeit a contradictory one' (1986, p. 10).

The data presented in this thesis for changes in the economic, religious and political spheres featured concertation as a new basis for social power and as a contradictory fact of Irish social and political exceptionalism from the 1990s. In each chapter of Part II, I found that this social power accrued to local power actors associated with charismatic and persuasive forms of authority favoured by, and flourishing with, novel forms of partnership-centred governance. In the light of the novel forms of power that accompanied economic development in Blessington & District from around the year 2000, key transitions in the institutional forms of leadership and the macro-level changes in the political, economic and religious spheres, a conclusion that Catholic-nationalism continued to be reproduced unchanged in and by local society was untenable in the face of the local evidence.

7.5 The negotiative power of civil society leadership

> *The present-day world can only be described to present-day people if it is described as capable of transformation. (Bertold Brecht)*[81]

The potential of collective decision-making within governance to disrupt Catholic-nationalist class relations followed from a critical feature of Eipper's argument. This key pillar of his contribution to class analysis stated that the institutional forms assumed in the national structure of power were mirrored in the part played by a local class leadership, who 'mediated the hegemonic deployment of power locally as well as nationally' (1986, p. 8). Eipper suggested that an outcome of this was that local affairs were divided into discrete spheres of influence' (1986, p. 8), representative of the tripartite structure of national power.

An examination of the lived experience of the class system as it played out in civic affairs, yielded an understanding of the interplay between the material and the ideological bases of the Irish class system in the Bantry case. In his analysis of the way a Catholic-nationalist leadership mobilised their influence and shaped town affairs, for example, Eipper evoked the class system as a societal field of force, in sharp contrast to the notion of class as a set of discrete categories. In the conclusion to Part II, I suggested that a reconfiguration of local leadership along negotiative lines might represent a modification of the Catholic-nationalism was based, if it expressed 'fundamentally dissimilar' power relations (Cerny, 2000b, p. 150). The empowerment prospective of participatory democracy at the local level, therefore, presented a possible alternative basis for social power and also, an alternative basis for leadership in opposition to the social closure which was exemplified by the Catholic-nationalist field of force Eipper described.

[81] Cited in Bellamy (2014, p. 107).

In discursive practice, in decision-making and in the exercise of its leadership, I found that concertation in Blessington & District subordinated a diverse civil society leadership. In a radical change from the previous pattern, the Forum both encompassed and ordered all previously disparate interests, reducing the number of latent sites of resistance and at the same time, becoming a widely accepted, unified voice for the community. To this extent, local negotiative arrangements shaped the incentive structures for local decision-making (see Dowding, 1996). However, the basis for the social power of the Blessington & District Forum was determined not by its representation or its influence in a context of new economic relations, but by the degree to which the group's leadership aligned with the ideological forces that underpinned social power relations amongst the wider Blessington population and which were based on a Catholic-nationalist consciousness.

The institution of governance in Blessington & District served firstly to absorb and to defuse the challenges being presented to the existing power relations enjoyed by the traditional ruling bloc. For example, the leadership claims of a new urban, secular class of professional opposing a rural working class. To explain the ultimate failure of collective action to promote a new and inclusive consciousness is perhaps only to suggest that this was not its purpose in this case. The establishment of the Blessington & District governance territory was firstly, the response mounted in defence of existing local power relations by the local ruling bloc. As a consequence of its mediating role in respect of the new in-migrant population, a Catholic-nationalist leadership was forced to contribute to the social power of the negotiative governance group even where it weakened its own. The most visible form of its authority stemmed from an ability to manage the potential for local dissent. While partnership was plainly authoritative in local terms, in Blessington & District, consensus based decision-making never attained a distinctive cultural or ideological character but remained an auxiliary of state power and representative of a new class compromise.

7.6 Summary of thesis conclusions

Between 1987 and 2014, Ireland experienced a convulsive economic transformation characterised by two successive cycles of recession and of prosperity. The troughs of these economic cycles precisely framed the twenty-five year timeline considered in this study. The first in the depressed mid-1980s, galvanised an urgent phase of state engagement with European and international capital as well as new political initiatives for north-south reconciliation. In this context, characteristic Irish social partnership arrangements at the national level facilitated inward investment by means of negotiation for income distribution. The second was intensifying its grip as the empirical fieldwork for this study got underway in 2009 and was characterised by a strengthened co-ordination of Irish fiscal policy led by the European Union.

Severally, these macro-economic features challenged an authoritarian pattern of institutional leadership in Ireland. Yet, mixed evidence suggested intriguing and complex shifts in the Irish power order, relative to Eipper's observations and conclusions, including the retention of personal social power relations. Eipper applied his framework in a local study to insist that 'old habits of consciousness' may not become obsolescent and this final perception extended his conception of leadership beyond a functionalist perspective. On the basis of this mixed evidence and a conceptual argument for the contemporary salience of an investigation of local leadership, this study aimed to answer the question – what contribution do local politicians, local businessmen and local clergy make to a contemporary social power order, as compared to Eipper's community case study in the 1970s? The selection of the case of Blessington & District anticipated a fertile comparison of social power relations between the pre and post 1987 era, at the level of local society.

Stated most simply, I found that Blessington was remarkably like Bantry in demonstrating the contemporary social salience of a leadership structured between the economic, religious and political spheres. During the fieldwork undertaken between 2009 and 2014, this leadership was observed successfully progressing its projects and interests over those of others. By contrast, Blessington was unlike Bantry when it was considered that local material conditions granted it important development advantages and when key institutional shifts were observed between the members of the local version of the ruling bloc. Finally, when governance was deployed as a novel power capacity to reinforce the social power of a Catholic-nationalist leadership threatened by material and ideological change.

Following a difficult start, local leadership mediated the social, political and economic transitions of the 1990s by the novel means of negotiative, collective governance. From 2000, concertation was successfully embedded as an institution in the contemporary Blessington & District power system. The overwhelming rise in and the aspirations of a highly educated, middle class urban population characterised the threat to a Catholic-nationalist leadership in this case. A finely grained analysis of the membership, activities and outcomes of the Blessington & District Forum revealed that only the dynamics of institutional power had changed. On the one hand, the Forum represented a more assertive democratic impulse than was available in the 1970s. However, on the other hand, the successful incorporation of traditional influentials and interests reproduced the same personal power relations that were threatened by the empowerment potential of collective and inclusive action.

In summary, the establishment of the Blessington & District political territory served to achieve a remarkable defence of existing personal social power relations. I surmised that this was possible, because the fundamental ideologies that underpinned a Catholic-nationalist leadership continued to reflect certain ideological dynamics.

For example, just as the promise of a vote and the potential for a favour continued to fuel personalism, clerical control of educational provision continued to represent the potential for social mobility. Since Eipper's conceptual framework accorded closely with my findings of the continuing salience and fluidity of the relationship between class, power and consciousness, my case agrees with his central conceptual preoccupation. This is by no means to suggest that the ruling bloc was unaffected by a changing pattern of authority. Instead, where I found continuity in change, my local observations in Blessington also highlighted how the specific features of economic development by means of international finance called forth new institutional responses.

In sum, the evidence I have presented in this thesis suggested the social power of a Catholic-nationalist class system extant in the 1980s remained remarkably stable in a context of a changing pattern of leadership, because there was no source for an alternative consciousness in a local devaluing of its founding ideological forces. The native and new population of Blessington continued to subscribe to the projects and interests of its economic, religious and political leadership, because they continued to make practical sense to the local lived experience of the prevailing social power relations. A final point is relevant here. Eipper argued that Gulf Oil's chief affect was to 'stymie' hope of an alternative to its domination to secure community support and leaving a deeply felt pessimism in its wake (Eipper, 1989, p. 162). The prescription of collective decision-making for partnership with new economic actors left no such legacy. Instead, the formation of the B&DF as a political project, its selection processes and representation continued to present the possibility of self-defined local economic development even in the straitened recessionary period.

To this extent, Eipper's original insights had again demonstrated a significant explanatory value in a contemporary case. The limits of Eipper's account reflected the limits of power theorisations of collective leadership as a source of social power, together with the capacity of a ruling elite to reconfigure civil society to accommodate new defensive institutional alliances between political, economic and religious actors. While the ultimate failure of these defences against international finance capital may be attested by the economic recession, nonetheless, this case has amply demonstrated that understanding the social translation of large scale forces at the micro-level is critical to understanding processes of social change through the evidence of struggles in, for and over consciousness. These struggles underpin changing patterns of leadership and are not revealed in research schemes emphasising powerlessness under a globalisation thesis.

7.7 Afterword and avenues for future research

A final, brief afterword on the future utility of this study is warranted by the concurrence of an extraordinary experience of economic recession suffered by the local population of Blessington & District just as this thesis was being written. Earlier in this chapter, I stated that, in spite of an encroaching European coordination and the resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict, the evidence from the case of Blessington & District suggested that the ruling bloc continued to rely on key elements of the underpinning consciousness that was characteristic of Catholic-nationalism. I argued that this suggested, in turn, that global capital had not wholly penetrated Irish social power relations. However, at the time of writing in early 2015, two new features of the national economy heralded a novel phase of economic development in Ireland. Firstly, a transfer of private bank debt to public debt completed in 2011 in a context of the collapse of the speculative and hyperinflated property market.

By 2014, Irish Gross General Government debt amounted to approximately €182.3 billion or 114.8 per cent of GDP (CSO, 2014).[82] The figure for private mortgage debt was €126 billion in 2013. Secondly, an extended co-ordination of the Irish economy by the European Union from 2014.

In the midst of a new global discourse on patterns of wealth and inequality, in Ireland as elsewhere 'private wealth rests on public poverty' (Piketty and Goldhammer, 2014, p. 567; Stiglitz, 2012). Ironically, Ireland is held up as an axiomatic international case of runaway bank and individual private debt transferring to public debt and which will take a generation's labour to repay. In 2014, a growing trend is for this public debt to be owed to an Irish financial elite. Inequality in Irish society has risen sharply. In consequence of an acknowledged lack of national regulatory oversight, European co-ordination of economic and social policy has strengthened across its constituent member states (Laffan, 2014, p. 270).

It follows that the situation the Blessington & District Forum finds itself in in as this study was being completed in 2014, is radically different from that pertaining when it was first established in the late 1990s. The question of whether Blessington & District is held in a double-bind situation in terms of its relationship to powerful economic actors is relevant to the different perspectives on power discussed by Lukes and Eipper. In short, the evidence suggested that the strength of personal power relations in Blessington & District supported both individual and collective agency and the efforts of a local elite to manage the local effects of macro-level economic change. Moreover, the productive nature of the multi-national corporation in Bantry and that of globally financed property development company in Blessington were differentiated by a requirement on the part of the latter to engage in local economic partnership. No conflation of these two separate types of economic actor has been suggested in this thesis.

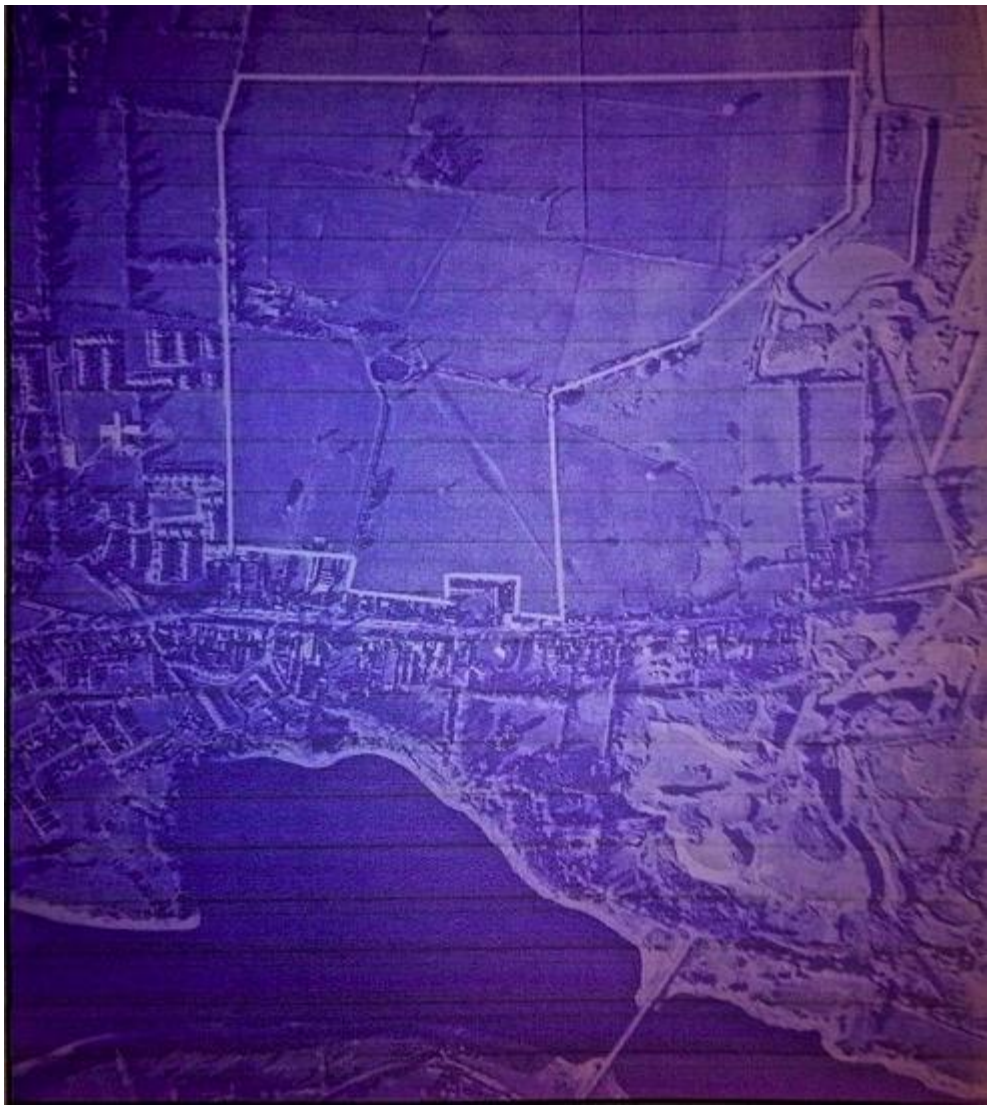
[82] According to the OECD, 'Gross General Government Debt comprises comprises currency, bills and short- term bonds, other short- term loans and other medium- and long- term loans and bonds.' See http://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=1161

However, the relationship between the ‘new’ political community of Blessington & District was ultimately mirrored in the diminished national situation of labour relative to capital from 1987. Firstly, because the local population of the new Blessington & District governance territory had a weakened relationship to local leadership since their social lives and economic livelihoods were located to a much greater extent in Dublin than heretofore. Secondly, because heavily mortgaged workers had a weakened position relative to capital as a result of this very personal form of indebtedness. It was clear then that the capacity of the Blessington & District Forum to negotiate was predicated ultimately on a fundamentally flawed basis of property development on the one hand and rising house prices on the other. Cookehill Development Ltd. was in receivership by 2014. Neither the Court appointed Receiver, nor the planning regulator Wicklow County Council, had confirmed an intention to ensure compliance with the planning requirements, including for community and social projects originally agreed in 2002.

Further case studies will usefully examine other cases of local governance organisation in the light of these very recent events and in particular, if a social partnership model is revived under conditions of renewed prosperity anticipated in 2015. Especially, since this Irish case may then become relevant to key transitions in the ‘turbulent and mighty continent’ of Europe (Giddens, 2014) in comparative terms as an example of the ‘polymorphous globalization’ noted by Mann (1986, p. 400). In this context, the new relationship between the local and national variants of the *Ruling Trinity* will merit further research effort.

APPENDIX I

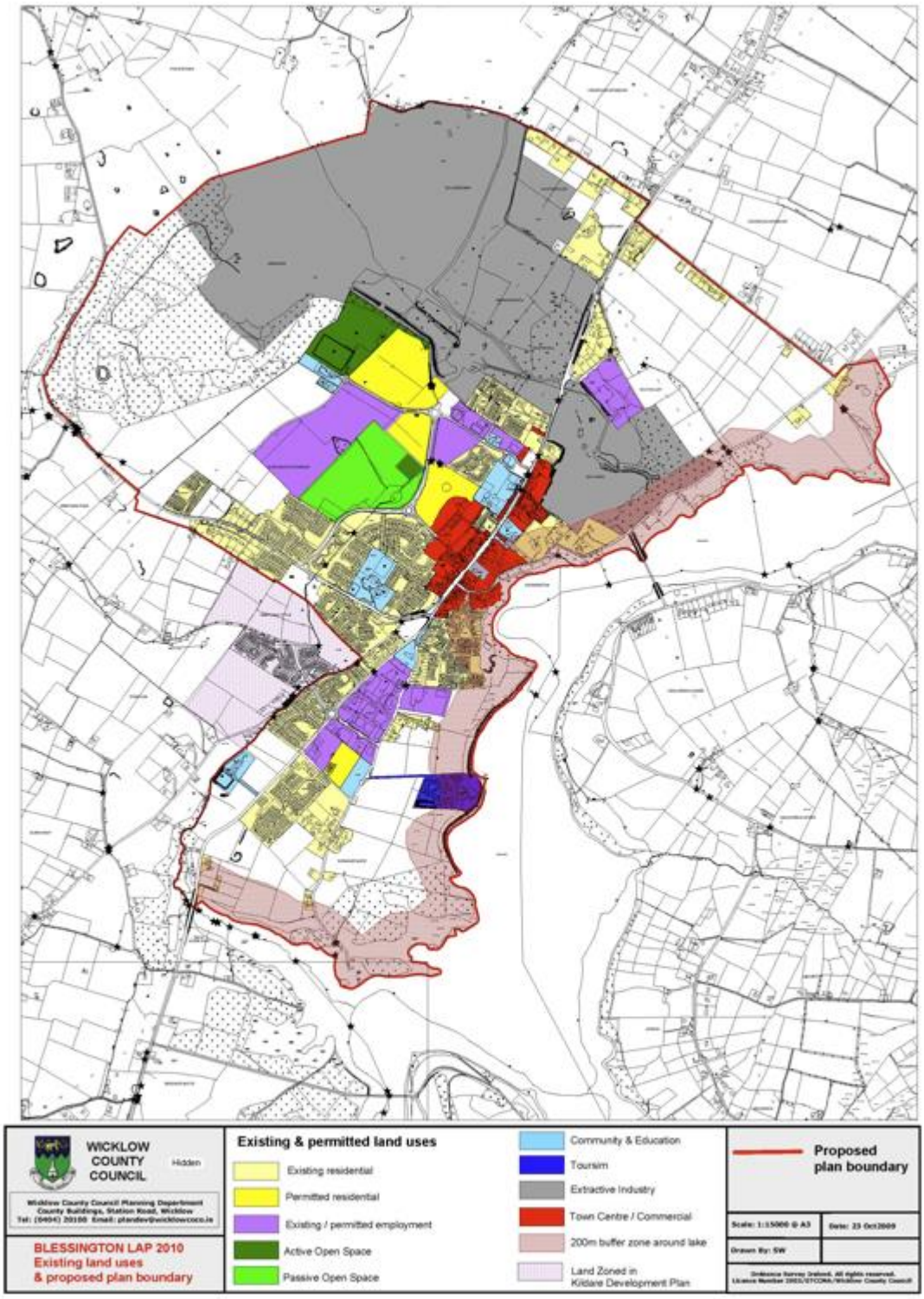
AERIAL VIEW OF O'LEARY LAND HOLDING



Note Blessington Main Street to front of marked outline of ca. 200 acre land bloc owned by the O'Leary family since 1921 and purchased by Cookehill Development Ltd. in 1999.

APPENDIX II

LOCAL AREA PLAN MAP, BLESSINGTON TOWN (2010)



APPENDIX III

TYPOLOGY OF LOCAL LEADERSHIP INTERVIEWS

No.	* In text ref.	** Sphere of influence	***Main Affiliations
1	A1	Civil society (economic)	History / heritage group B&DF BWG
2	A2	Civil society (economic)	B&DF GAA National school
3	A3	Civil society (economic)	B&DF Theatre group
4	A4	Civil society (economic)	B&DF O'Leary Development Group
5	A5	Civil society (economic)	B&DF BAD
6	A6	Civil society (-)	History / heritage group
7	A7	Civil society (development professional)	History / heritage group BDCC B&DF
8	A8	Civil society (-)	BWG
9	A9	Civil society (political)	B&DF
10	A10	Civil society (-)	BDCC BAD B&DF
11	A11	Civil society (-)	B&DF
12	A12	Civil society (-)	Older peoples group / Day Care planning

13	A13	Civil society (economic)	Community Centre BWG B&DF
14	A14	Civil society (-)	BWG
15	A15	Civil society (political)	FF Soccer BAD
16	A16	Civil society (political)	B&DF Soccer
17	A17	Civil society (-)	National school B&DF
18	A18	Civil society (political)	Political activist B&DF Soccer
19	A19	Civil society (development professional)	Community activist Youth group
20	A20	Civil society (economic)	IFA CWP B&DF member
21	A21	Civil society (development professional)	CWP B&DF
22	A22	Civil society (economic)	Credit Union Parish Council
23	A23	Civil society (-)	B&DF Soccer
24	A24	Civil society (political)	FG GAA Parish Council
25	A26	Civil society (political)	Political activist Youth group B&DF
26	A27	Civil society (development professional)	B&DF Youth group
27	A28	Civil society (-)	GAA

28	A29	Civil society (-)	Theatre group
29	A30	Civil society (business)	Soccer National School
30	A31	Civil society (-)	History / heritage group
31	A33	Civil society (-)	B&DF Parish Council Residents Association
32	A34	Civil society (-)	B&DF Residents Association
33	A35	Civil society (economic)	National School
34	A36	Civil society (political)	Soccer Club BAD Political party
35	A37	Civil society	B&DF GAA Residents Association
36	A38	Civil society (religious)	Parish Council B&DF Credit Union
37	A39	Civil society (-)	B&DF GAA National School
38	A40	Civil society (-)	B&DF Residents Association
39	A41	Civil society (-)	Residents Association
40	A42	Civil society	Theatre School
41	B1	Political	Elected representative (local)
42	B2	Political	Elected representative (local)
43	B3	Political	Elected representative (local)
44	B4	Political	Elected representative (national)
45	B5	Political	Elected representative (local)
46	B6	Political	Elected representative (local)
47	B7	Political	Elected representative (national)

48	C1	Religious	Various (civil society, education, welfare).
49	C2	Religious	Various (civil society, education, welfare)
50	C3	Religious	Various (civil society)
51	D01	Civil society (-)	Development professional
52	D02	Civil society (-)	Education
53	D03	Civil society (-)	Education
54	D04	Civil society (political)	WCC
55	D05	Civil society (political)	Various civil society organisations.
56	D06	Civil society (-)	History / heritage group
57	D07	Civil society (-)	Development professional
58	D08	Civil society (political)	WCC
59	D09	Civil society (political)	WCC
60	D10	Civil society (political)	WCC
61	D11	Civil society (religious)	Development professional
62	D12	Civil society (political)	WCC
63	D13	Civil society (-)	Public service
64	E1	Economic (-)	Business owner
65	E2	Economic	Credit union B&DF
66	E3	Economic (civil society)	Chamber of Commerce B&DF

67	E4	Economic (-)	Local industry GAA
68	E5	Economic (-)	Retail
69	E6	Economic (civil society)	Professional services History / heritage group
70	E7	Economic (civil society)	Retail Political party B&DF

* The code for each interviewee uses an initial letter to describe the primary sphere of influence initially attributable to this leadership. There are four main spheres of influence from which such interviewees were drawn; civil society (A), political (B), economic (E) and religious (C). The civil society leader is primarily associated with civil society, 'A' for example, as a consequence of leadership of a local group or organisation. An additional code 'D' has been added and denotes the development sphere, i.e. the interviewee was selected as an influential, typically, local authority or development organisation employee *and* because they were involved in local development decisions in Blessington & District.

** The auxiliary or type description, describes a direct link between the interviewee and a secondary association as an influential with another relevant sphere – economic, religious or political. An example is a political aspirant, for example, who is also a member of the B&DF. The figure '(-)' denotes the absence of a clear-cut auxiliary affiliation. Finally, in some cases, e.g. the religious sphere, a secondary affiliation would have too clearly identified the participant and in these cases, a generic description is applied.

*** In all case, these study interviewees formed part of a decision-making leadership, e.g. they either had been since 1987 or were currently represented on the leadership of civil society groups.

APPENDIX IV

BLESSINGTON TOWN VIEWS

View from south to north on Blessington Main Street

View from north to south on Blessington Main Street

View of access road to Town Centre from Blessington Main Street, showing row of new retail outlets to left.

View of Town Centre – main building with access to Catholic national school to far right of picture.

View of planned but undeveloped recreational park to immediate rear of Town Centre development.

St. Marys Protestant Church, Blessington Town

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