Everyday Life, Debt and Death in North Dublin

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Contents

Abstract

This thesis is about the cultural phenomenon of homeownership in Ireland; a country where, historically, home ownership has particular cultural, symbolic content. It is also about the collapse of Irish property dreams using the key example of Priory Hall in Donaghmeade, Dublin 13. On Friday, 14 October 2011 Dublin City Council asked the High Court to evacuate the 249 residents of Priory Hall as it was declared a fire hazard due to poor building standards. My research considers how a group of some eighty-five families bought their dream homes in the Priory Hall apartment complex during the Celtic Tiger, only to find themselves a few short years later dispossessed and homeless yet still paying mortgages. Priory Hall is now one of the key spaces of representation for the follies of the Celtic Tiger era and subsequent economic collapse; it is also a key site in which notions of ownership, rights, responsibility and respectability are being hammered out alongside new modes of governing and new ways of articulating the relationships between the state and its citizens.

Declaration

I hereby state that this dissertation has not been submitted in part or in whole to any other institution and is, except where otherwise stated, the original work of the author.

Signed ----------

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The Closing Album

Dublin

Grey brick upon brick,
Declamatory bronze
On sombre pedestals-
O'Connell, Grattan, Moore-
And the brewery tugs and the swans
On the balustrade stream
And the bare bones of a fanlight
Over a hungry door
And the air soft on the cheek
And the porter running from the taps
With a head of yellow cream
And Nelson on his pillar
Watching his world collapse.

The lights jig in the river
With a concertina movement
And the sun comes up in the morning
Like barley-sugar on the water
And the midst on the Wicklow hills
Is close, as close
As the peasantry were to the landlord,
As the Irish to the Anglo-Irish,
As the killer is close one moment
To the man he kills,
Or as the moment itself
Is close to the next moment.

Fort of the Dane,
Garrison of the Saxon,
Augustan capital,
Of a Gaelic nation,
Appropriating all
The alien brought,
You gave me time for thought
And by a juggler's trick
You poise the toppling hour –
O greyness run to flower,
Grey stone, grey water,
And brick upon grey brick.

This was never my town,
I was not born and bred
Nor schooled here and she will not
Have me alive or dead
But yet she holds my mind
With her seedy elegance,
with her gentle veils of rain
And all her ghosts that walk
And all that hides behind
Her Georgian façade
-The catcalls and the pain,
The glamour of her squalor,
The bravado of her talk.

She is not an Irish town
And she is not English,
Historic with guns and vermin
And the cold renown
Of a fragment of Church Latin,
Of an oratorical phrase.
But oh the days are soft,
Soft enough to forget
The lesson better learnt,
The bullet on the wet
Streets, the crooked deal,
The steel behind the laugh,
The Four Courts Burnt.

-- Louis MacNeice, 1939

Introduction: What lies beneath

> I think that this is the last time I will come back to Priory Hall. It is too painful and the worst has yet to happen. I really believe that something drastic will have to happen before any definitive action will be taken.
>
> – Nuala, Priory Hall resident, December 2012

On the 4 September 2015, journalist Tim Lott published an article in *The Guardian* newspaper entitled, 'How I crushed my eight year old's innocence at Dismaland.' The Dismaland-Bemusement Park was orchestrated by the British street artist Banksy at a derelict seafront in Weston-Super Mare, England.[1] Banksy asserted that, "It's a theme park whose big theme is theme parks should have bigger themes" (Lott 2015). The themes provided by Bansky and fellow artists indexed senseless death, insidious debt, abandonment, crumbling capitalism and a broken social contract. This macabre inversion of Disneyland included a Cinderella pumpkin carriage crash, complete with frenzied paparazzi, a trip on the dodgems with the Grim Reaper, a statue of a killer whale jumping out of a toilet and a duck pond filled with miniature migrant boats chock-full of asylum seekers. One installation on the site—billed as only for children—featured a trampoline and a stand offering small loans with interest rates of several thousand percent.

As a visitor to the theme park, Tim Lott, worried that he had prematurely plucked his happy child from her beautiful world, shattered her dreams and roughly catapulted her into irony, cynicism and delusion. As her father, he considered that she does not yet "see below the surface to the stark reality of things" (Lott 2015). He was surprised to discover that ultimately his daughter seemed to take their visit in her stride, and happily accepted her 'I am an imbecile' balloon as they left this unsettling location. Perhaps the child nonchalantly took her visit and balloon because she does

not yet have the great expectation of what it means to be protected by a social contract.

Bansky's art is a striking comment *on* the effects of contemporary capitalist society and the manner in which this social contract has been redrawn, yet no one appears to have noticed. Life and its everyday realities and experiences can be starker and more dismal than art. My thesis offers a comment from *within* society where actual eviction, debt, suicide and abandonment render Bansky's anti-capitalist art mundane.

My research explores the experiences of a group of people who bought their dream apartment homes in Dublin 13 in 2007. They believed that they were in control of creating their dream homes and lives during the so-called Celtic Tiger through the purchase of property. Historically, in Ireland a key feature of owning property was a belief in the existence of the home as a safety net that is always capable of protecting a family's future. These people believed that they were 'respectable' members of society protected by regulation, pro-consumer policies and state agencies. Indeed, they thought they were protected by a social contract, one that would be there for them if anything were to go wrong. I consider how this group of some eighty-five families bought their dream houses only to have to admit, within a few short years, that their homes were resoundingly unsafe. These families felt that they had followed and checked all of the required bureaucratic procedures yet, simply put, their homes were fire hazards and in no way fit for purpose. In addition, they discovered that they were fully expected, by both their banks and the state, to repay their mortgages in full. They slowly realised that they had transformed from reliable homeowners into faceless debt holders. Not only did their idea of a social contract no longer apply, it appeared to have been redrawn. These people were abandoned by the very state

agencies that they thought would protect them. In fact their lives descended into an absurdist bleak world of endless fear, uncertainty and foreboding. My thesis tells their story.

Welcome to my Dream Home

My destination is Clongriffin train station, the stop just before the Priory Hall apartment complex in Donaghmede, Dublin 13.[2] Clongriffin is a recent addition to the established community of Donaghmede. I am on my way to meet Nuala, a founding member of the Priory Hall Residents' Committee. Along with four others, Nuala works voluntarily to represent some eighty-five families who were evacuated by Dublin City Council in October 2011.[3] The residents refer to this process as an 'eviction' because the Council went to the High Court in order to seek a court order to direct them to leave their homes.[4] These people's dreams of homeownership were shattered, and they found themselves living in an altered state.

I walk through the streets of Dublin, which is home to over one-third of the Republic of Ireland's population and much of its employment opportunities, on the way to catch a train to Clongriffin. The main entrance to Connolly train station is filled with smokers, and just inside the station their second-hand plumes of smoke fuse with the aromas of perfume and coffee. A cacophony of sound further assaults the senses: public announcements, harried people on phones, and the deafening screech of brakes. American tourists approach an Irish Rail worker to enquire if the reproduction plaque of the 1916 Irish Proclamation represents "the Irish National Day of Independence". "Aaah Jaysus! No luv, sure, we don't have one," he responds, already paces away. I arrive on Platform 7 as my train trundles into the station.

I am the only person to get off the train at the Clongriffin stop and am immediately struck by how silent this place is in comparison to Connolly station. The developer of this new town, Gannon Homes Limited, was granted residential planning permission on condition that they construct a new train station to accommodate the thousands of expected commuters.[5] Today, the commuter traffic is so light that the station is not serviced by the city's main commuter rail system, DART.[6] The interior glass design of this modern looking station offers impressive views: one can view the coastal route to Malahide, Howth Head, Ireland's Eye and the Martello Tower. Today, however, a waste ground with building rubble and wild horses interrupts this view. The south and west of this train station falls within the jurisdiction of the Council, and the Priory Hall apartments lie just beyond Clongriffin. One generation ago, this entire area was farmland allotted for growing potatoes, peas and cabbage. It was later incorporated into the greater area of Donaghmede, which was developed from farmland into housing estates from the late 1960s onwards. This newly built town of Clongriffin was once at the centre of the Celtic Tiger property boom and was considered to be prime development land.[7] 3,500 housing units and 50,000sqm of mixed retail and commercial units were built right beside the train station. Outside this station, approximately one-third of these housing units are occupied while the majority of the shop units remain empty.

I walk down steps alongside an empty new bicycle shelter leading into a windswept square. This square is surrounded by empty units replete with 'To Let' signs. The facades of these units have larger than life-size images of young and beautiful busy shoppers emblazoned across their windows. A banner reading, 'No Other Supermarket Comes Close' runs across the ground floor windows of the supermarket that never opened its doors. An empty number 15 Dublin bus awaits

passengers outside this glass building. The typical qualities associated with town life are starkly absent: there are no key structures, such as a bank, church or bridge to which the eye and heart could fix itself. I continue on my journey through this post-boom landscape. Not far from the Priory Hall apartments there are signs of new houses being built. I ask one of the builders at work there why they are building new units when so many apartments appear to be unoccupied. He good humouredly replies,

> Irish people want to live in houses not apartments. We neither know how to build them nor live in them. Sure we are just starting to insulate houses properly!

His comment indexes how perspectives surrounding the experience of homeownership can vary depending on a person's position. Planners have one perspective, politicians another, developers and builders a different perspective, and a community has still different perspectives and practical needs. I arrive at the Priory Hall complex. The two apartment blocks facing the main road have rusted balcony railings. There is evidence of excessive water marking to the degree that one apartment looks as though a fire had once broken out. Beyond the locked gates, lie apartment blocks in various states of disrepair that straddle both sides of the weed ridden road.

Some apartment fronts have green plastic tied into the crumbling brick facade while other apartment blocks have been stripped of bricks in a patchy manner. Many of the balconies are full of building rubble such as concrete beams, and the apartments that are without windows appear most desolate. General building rubble is strewn around. No construction work has been carried out on Priory Hall for over a year. In November 2011, the High Court ordered the Priory Hall builder, Tom McFeely, to repair these apartments. Two weeks later the Council went back to court and ordered

this builder off the site because he was, according to the Council, not doing the work. The Council had no alternative plan. During this time, Priory Hall has morphed into a Lego-like set of structures, not more than six years old, yet visibly deteriorating.

Nuala toots the horn in order to get my attention and as I get into her car the security guard unlocks the gates. Once he has checked Nuala's residential documents he instructs us to drive up to her apartment block and wait for him. "It's a while since I was here," she sighs, "It's just getting harder and harder to come back. Actually, we are locked out fourteen months today." We sit outside until the security guard arrives to unlock the main door, and he apologises for having to escort us up to Nuala's apartment. "Are you still paying the mortgage luv?" he enquires of Nuala as we walk up the distressed stairwell. Nuala nods and, arriving at her apartment, begins to search for her front door key. The security guard continues, "Terrible! Bankers and politicians getting pensions and lump sums for screwing up the country, and the likes of us paying for it, wha? Pack of fucking scumbags the lot of them." Nuala struggles with her key and suddenly the door snaps open releasing a blast of freezing air more piercing than the January wind outside. The security guard takes a few steps back saying, "I am supposed to go in with youse, but sure go ahead, and just keep fighting luv, don't let those robbers win." We smile back at him, a curious figure awkwardly guarding a derelict hallway.

"Welcome to my dream home," Nuala said quietly as we walk into her empty living room. The room looked desolate. "Imagine," laughs Nuala, "I spent five years saving up the deposit. And, I am such a sap, because when it was being built, I used to drive up here, sit in my car, and just look up because I knew this was my one. I really couldn't wait to have my own home." As with many home purchases during the Celtic Tiger, the Priory Hall residents bought off the plans and waited a couple of

years to get the keys to their new homes. In 2007 these residents were excited about moving into the Priory Hall chapter of their lives despite what Nuala recalled being "a longer than anticipated wait". They felt that it was their turn and also believed that most new developments experience teething problems. "Of course, initially you expect problems to crop up," continues Nuala, "but the issues in Priory Hall were neither ordinary nor run of the mill". She searches for and lights a cigarette as I look around at peeling paint, water stains and hanging wires and for something to say I offer: "Lovely floor". "It was nice, yeah that was my second floor, because I had to replace everything after a flood in 2009."

Nuala steps through the balcony door, pointing straight ahead saying, "I'm from an older estate behind there; that's where I grew up. That was all cornfields and we used to spend hours making dens and hiding in them." Leaning wearily on the balcony she says, "It's weird because it doesn't feel like it's mine anymore." As we stare across the abandoned complex she continues, "We were catapulted into oblivion and at the moment the Council is paying our rent, but they keep bringing us to court to get out of that responsibility".[8] For the Council, however, the Priory Hall evacuation had created a potential legal precedent concerning whether in future local authorities could be instructed by the courts to house all people evacuated due to poor building standards.[9]

Nuala, like her fellow committee members, always seems to consider "the residents' situation" and not just her own. She says, "Imagine that area below full of people trying to pack up and move all at the same time." She takes out her phone and shows me a series of chaotic looking scenes from that exact spot in front of her apartment block on the evacuation day. The photographs she shows me can be juxtaposed to those taken by the photographer Kim Haughton who recorded this day

in a haunting sequence of black and white photographs entitled *The Last Day at Priory Hall* (Haughton 2012). Haughton's images serve to illuminate human fragility on a different scale to the faceless mob captured in Nuala's amateur photographs. Haughton's documentary style catalogues people's pain and confusion, from the father dismantling his child's cot to the youngster cuddling a soft toy in his empty bedroom, to a scene depicting countless cardboard boxes stacked outside the main door of one of the apartment blocks. Of course at the time Haughton recorded these scenes the people packing up their belongings believed that they would one day return home to Priory Hall. They never did.

As we leave Nuala's abandoned dream home, Nuala points out, while locking the door, that many of the owners had their empty apartments broken into and vandalised. On three occasions one owner had to replace door furniture.

Figure 1: The Last Day at Priory Hall

(Source: photograph courtesy of Kim Haughton)

As we walk down the dilapidated stairwell, she grabs my arm, miming “shush”. And we quickly sneak down into the dark flooded underground car park. Nuala whispers as she guides me through it saying, “Oh, careful. If you feel something shake your leg, it will definitely be a rat. The place is full of them,” she said as I grimaced. “This car park flooding was one of hundreds of snags. In fact our lives became a never ending snag list which just kept growing.” I ask, “What is the plan for the coming year given that you are in this process of mediation?” Nuala replies, ‘We were so crazy last year, full of ideas and so angry. But the stuffing has been knocked out of us now.” She pauses for a moment. “You know, before the mediation we had the idea to get a boat and bring it in here,” she says with an ironic laugh. “And have all of us up in the boat to highlight the utter stupidity of this mess. Now we are tired and afraid, and we wait, and wait and wait every day.” Her mood changes a little: she says, “I can’t remember when I last really slept.” We exit the flooded car park and make our way to the back of the complex which is overgrown and littered with loose bricks, excessive building rubble and open vents. Nuala offers to drive me back to the train station, as it was on her way home. “Well I mean, the house where I stay,” she says correcting herself referring to her temporary dwelling space. She continues, “I just don’t look around that house anymore. I exist in it. That way it feels temporary which can be good and bad because time is starting to pull-me, pull all of us-under. This waiting game is a killer. Something or someone will have to give ...” Nuala’s voice trails off. As we drive out of the apartment complex, Nuala articulates how, for the owner-occupiers of Priory Hall, the most draining aspect of their everyday life is the ways in which their prolonged uncertainty has worn them down. When Nuala drops me off at the train station I feel compelled to ask, “What does it feel like to be you?” as I am getting out of the car, she replies softly, “abandoned”.

Prior to entering into the mediation process the residents had been thinking of new ways to get public attention across all media. At this time, a judicial led mediation process felt sluggish with no signs of the banks wishing to engage with the residents or the Council. But by now many of the residents had stopped paying their mortgages as, increasingly, they refused to pay for a home in which they could no longer live. Moratoriums were put in place so monthly payments could be postponed, but interest was accruing on the overall monthly loan.[10] Nuala was one of the few who continued to pay because she was "both young and shitless", she said over the potential outcome of bad credit. The government had cited the personal insolvency regime as a possible solution to the Priory Hall residents, but the residents had dismissed this idea, claiming their issue to be a unique one and not akin to that of people in negative equity. They always claimed that they were capable of repaying their mortgages but objected to so doing while they had no physical home. Meanwhile their entanglement within an increasingly absurd waiting game put a strain on and, in some cases, irrevocably destroyed their relationships. The sum of their everyday lives has become one never-ending moment in waiting. This waiting had become a form of violence. Time was always the silent assassin for the Priory Hall residents and their families.

In *Life and Words* (2007) Veena Das tried to unravel the cultural and social force of violence in constructing subjectivities and everyday life. Das considered a violent event as always attached to the ordinary "as if there were tentacles that reach out from the everyday and anchor the event to it in some specific ways" (Das 2007:7). For Das, violence and violent acts are not an interruption of the everyday but instead become implicated within the ordinary. The event folds into everyday life. And, in a broadly similar way, this thesis is about the events of an evacuation and the

destruction of the fabric of peoples' ordinary lives. A key feature of owning property, since the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922, was that homeownership was imagined to be certain, a secure and a safe future grounded in bricks and mortar, something capable of withstanding economic cycles. Many people believed that they were in control of creating their dream homes and lives during the Celtic Tiger through the purchase of property. In *The Poetics of Space* (1994) Gaston Bachelard abandons traditional descriptions of the "humble home" and instead places it at the centre of architecture of imagination. Bachelard's *oneiric* home is,

> Our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word. If we look at it intimately, the humblest dwelling has beauty. Authors of books on 'the humble home' often mention this feature of the poetics of space. But this mention is much too succinct. Finding little to describe in the humble home, they spend little time there; so they describe it as it actually is, without really experiencing its primitiveness, a primitiveness which belongs to all, rich and poor alike, if they are willing to dream. (Bachelard 1994:47)

But what happens when the home becomes a site of uncertain future projections. For the Priory Hall residents their dream homes were places where memory and imagination might dwell together. But these people lost their dream homes and discovered that they were expected to fully repay their mortgages on worthless properties. The seven lending institutions involved were allowed, by the state, to pursue their citizens relentlessly.[11] In their own words, they became "evicted and homeless" over the course of one night. They had assumed that the agencies charged with their care would look after their best interests. Instead, they found themselves catapulted into the grip of the free-falling free market as they spiralled into alien worlds of policy and mediation with the weight of increasing debt pressing upon them. Their futures became ruptured, despite their belief in the existence of a social contract. Importantly, the Priory Hall residents believed that they were valuable and respectable

citizens who had invested wisely into the state. Right up to the evacuation of Priory Hall many of them still believed that despite the fact that the system had failed and abandoned them that their social contract with the state remained intact. The Priory Hall residents discovered, to their horror, that this contract has been redrawn. Clearly, the Priory Hall debacle was an exceptional state of circumstances but it was never once treated as exceptional by the state.

In *The State of Exception* (2005) Giorgio Agamben considers the ways in which sovereign power can directly intervene in people's lives. Agamben traces the modern-day state of exception back to the French Revolution and he proposes that "in truth *The State of Exception* is neither external nor internal to the juridical order, and the problem of defining it concerns a threshold, or a zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other" (Agamben 2005:23). However, the Priory Hall experience illuminates the fact that in the twentieth-first century sovereign power is being exercised by *not* making an exception. At face value, then, Priory Hall can be seen as a worthless nineteen-block complex, an archetype of units of crumbling dreams but, beyond this, it is a twenty-first century exemplar of the ways in which international capitalism penetrates local lives in Ireland and the ways in which sovereign power is and is not exercised.

Methodology and thesis question

I consider an obsession with land and homeownership to be one of Ireland's greatest legacies. After all, for centuries, Ireland's colonial past has long been shackled to a struggle to retain land ownership. Even today this is still not too distant a memory to bridge. Historically in Ireland a key feature of owning property was a

belief in the existence of the home as a safety net always capable of providing a safe haven for a family's future. But by the time I identified my research interest from broad to more specific and began participant observation, my research participants were already locked into a process of judicial-led mediation. The Priory Hall residents were experiencing the worry of immense mortgage debt on falling-down homes. Meanwhile, the seven lending institutions were demanding repayment for these worthless properties while the Council kept seeking to cease the residents' rent payments through court action. For over two years post-evacuation the Priory Hall residents continually had the additional worry of rent plus mortgage payments looming. My initial contact therefore was with various Priory Hall residents and Residents' Committee Members. These people were in considerable distress and had developed a deeply ingrained mistrust of any bureaucracy and researchers. The fabric of daily life had been torn apart with their dream-homes representing, to borrow from James Joyce, nightmares from which they cannot awaken. I wanted to understand what it meant to be in the situation the Priory Hall residents had found themselves and explore the ways in which they would try to now function in their distorted world. How had they got to that point? Much of my initial information was obtained through impromptu conversations with the many actors involved behind the scenes of Priory Hall.

Marilyn Strathern proposes that "social anthropologists attend to the relation of social life, to the roles and behaviours through which people connect themselves to one another" (quoted in Das 2007:3). Social relations have connections that are not necessarily obvious. It takes time to uncover them and the appreciation of the sheer value of time is a fundamental skill within anthropological research. At the beginning of my research process I was dealing with what seemed like an impossibly tiny group

of gate keepers, mainly members of the Priory Hall Residents' Committee. Had I pressured these people, as other researchers who had gone before me did, I believe that the research would not have gained momentum in quite the same way. For example, one of my key research participants, with whom I have forged a valuable relationship of trust, told me after two years of frequent interaction that had I began my research by, "waving about a load of nonsensical bureaucratic forms", that he would never had engaged with me again. Another Committee Member I found difficult to initially meet with told me that she had met other researchers who "repeatedly asked me to reduce my life into a questionnaire so I fobbed you off repeatedly assuming you were just the same." I was trying to make contact with traumatised people who felt that they were fighting a system which they no longer understood, and one that had also thoroughly betrayed and abandoned them. Such people are not always agreeable to meeting or opening up and they can understandably decide not to participate at the last minute. People who helped me greatly at the beginning decided that they could no longer participate as they wished to try to get on with their lives in other directions. In every instance I am grateful for people's time, patience, cooperation and support. I fully appreciate that all research participants gave freely of their time and energies.

Once I managed to negotiate my way through these layers of people I began to engage with others connected to them, such as family members, neighbours, historians, local activists, retired politicians, an assortment of business people, legal, financial, banking, mortgage, political, and planning experts, and what proved to be the most challenging cohort to make contact with, workers in the Council. All these people possess distinct skills, life experiences, backgrounds and perspectives. The myriad of formal and informal conversations that I subsequently engaged in with

these people proved to be ongoing and invaluable. I realise now that I had conducted many of these engagements at a time when I worried that my research was not gathering sufficient momentum but, of course, all of these people were adding context and substance to this work. Importantly, all of these research participants had one initial question in common: they were anxious to know if the members of the Priory Hall Residents' Committee were happy to engage with me and whether they continued to so do. It was irrelevant to them that this issue was a matter of public record. What was fundamentally important to them was the manner in which I had conducted myself in relation to this particular group of people who were, in their opinion, ordinary decent people in a dire situation. This cohort never focused on the fact that they gave their time and expertise to the Priory Hall residents pro bono. These dynamic human relations guided the direction of my study. Most of my research participants asked for their real names to be used throughout this thesis. But over the course of three years of research some informants naturally questioned this decision. These reasons stemmed from being generally disheartened with the Priory Hall debacle to the uncertainty of their everyday lives. This uncertainty was a discomforting experience.

By uncertainty I am following Arjun Appadurai's treatise on Max Weber's concept of uncertainty – and uncertainty, for Weber, was built into early capitalism. According to Appadurai (2011:521), Weber is frequently cited for his observations surrounding the "entrepreneurial spirit of capitalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries", however, Appadurai reminds us of the origin of Weber's less discussed concept of uncertainty. Originally it was built into the mode of capitalism. In fact, uncertainty existed as a necessary warning which was expected to be both anticipated

and managed. For Appadurai, Weber's uncertainty in no way relates to risk taking, but rather stemmed from the *magicality* of Calvinism (2011:252). Appadurai states,

> Uncertainty was defined through ascetical capitalism whereby the system takes on a life of its own and should manifest the properties of Calvin's ideal which include grace, salvation and the profound uncertainty of the Calvinist believer. (Appadurai 2011:522)

The Calvinist spirit was initially incorporated within the mechanism of early capitalism. This was achieved because early capitalists believed that uncertainty was a necessary belief instilled within them. And, as the sum is greater than the individual Calvinist parts, the capitalist system was greater than and more uncertain than the Calvinist believer. Simply put, grace and salvation were deemed necessary in order to *crank start* capitalism.

In essence, uncertainty has been largely edited out from financial discussions and is today for the most part discouraged. Instead, Appadurai stresses, risk has become part and parcel of contemporary capitalism and has even transformed into a commodity (Appadurai 2011:524). Limor Samimian-Darash and Paul Rabinow (2015: 4) attempt to explore uncertainty within the contemporary 'art of government', but here I am interested in the production of uncertainty in everyday life.

The prolonged uncertainty of the everyday lives of Priory Hall residents naturally meant that for some research participants continued engagement with my research became impossible. Other research participants who were involved in the beginning decided that they could no longer afford the time to meet me and they discontinued contact. I am so grateful to these people and gate keepers for finding the time to give me valuable insights. For these reasons, however, I decided to anonymise all of my research participants' identities. Of course, it is inevitable that some

informants will recognise themselves or other people. Ultimately, however, I feel that I did do my best to anonymise everyone and protect their identity. I have endeavoured to treat my informants with the same level of respect in this thesis as I would were I speaking to them face-to-face. My research participants always fully understood the nature of participant observation and the goal of my research. Of note, all of the information pertaining to Stephanie Meehan and her family which I drew upon is a matter of public record. I conveyed through the Priory Hall Residents' Committee that if Stephanie Meehan had any questions for me or wished me to contact her that I was available to meet anytime at her convenience. I was researching and writing at the time of her husband's death and I was fully aware of how demanding her own schedule was during that time.

All the photographs used throughout the thesis are from the Priory Hall Facebook page. I have written permission from the Priory Hall Residents' Committee to employ all of these images throughout this thesis. In addition, the photographer Kim Haughton kindly let me use one of her photographs from her *Last Day at Priory Hall* (2012) collection. This series of black and white photographs catalogues the Priory Hall resident's evacuation day.

Thinking about and deciding which method to use was fundamental to my research. I had to gauge the use of a tape recorder very carefully. Where possible, I recorded interviews verbatim. At public events I always ensured that I had several recordings of speakers. Some Committee members did not wish to be recorded but their patience was boundless and they always allowed me more than sufficient time to make notes. My meetings were never limited or hurried. I always had the opportunities to double check details. Data was evaluated on an ongoing basis throughout my research. I habitually monitored data through regular reduction of field

notes. I developed vignettes drawn from descriptions collected in the field which facilitated the emergence of theory out of factual analysis. Congruently, I analyzed data from the transcriptions of individual interviews and semi-structured focus groups. I quickly learnt that one-on-one contact was far more effective for this particular research. Additionally, I conducted over fifty interviews and countless natural conversations. This procedure incorporated a coding process where I identified major themes. I found archival newspaper research very helpful and spent several weeks in both the National Library of Ireland, Kildare Street and Pearse Street Library.

One central research question frames this thesis: how do states rule if not through exception? Throughout my research with Priory Hall residents I, like they did, assumed that their situation was a humanitarian crisis and soon 'the state', through 'the courts' or the actions of a political figure would step in and declare an emergency and then an exception. An *exception* would have to be made. But this was not a state of exception, and here we had respectable, law-abiding citizens beginning to question their state and protest against the very order of things. This thesis, then, tracks the processes people went through ethnographically in order to see the state from their perspectives (see also Scott 1998).

The Priory Hall Residents' Committee, their families and friends railed against the fact that not only had their social contract been redrawn but no one appeared to have noticed. In addition, for the most part the wider public seemed unconcerned. The Priory Hall residents, to their shame, were frequently misrepresented in the media as 'being up in court' when in fact the Council kept applying to the courts to cease paying their temporary accommodation as court ordered. Phil Hogan, TD, Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government at the time did little to aid the public image of the Priory Hall residents by refusing to meet with them "as they

had a case before the courts" (O'Connor 2013). This prolonged form of inactivity for almost two years by the relevant Minister of State served to complicate the Priory Hall situation unnecessarily. It certainly did not help these people recruit additional public support beyond Donaghmede.

Through ethnographic research I explored how people adapted to living through this altered state. Ethnographic research describes the everyday experience of dwelling and perceptions of 'home cultures' provide a consideration of spatial, social and material aspects of everyday home life. Certainly a long line of anthropologists have thought so, from the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1963), Pierre Bourdieu (1970) and James Fernandez (1977) to more contemporary explorations of home and space which draw from contemporary critical theory (see Low & Lawrence-Zuniga 2003; Blom HansenBlom Hansen 2010). This literature broadly explores spatial awareness, the agency of material culture, home structures and the ways in which everyday life is played out in the home. I acknowledge, then, the considerable anthropological literature on 'home cultures', especially the materiality of home, but I argue that the intensification of the commodification of the home has received insufficient attention. Especially, I feel that not enough ethnographic attention has been paid to the idea of the home as a site of uncertain future projections.

Jean Comaroff (2012) discusses the emergence of a highly abstract and high-speed global economic system simultaneous with the rolling back of state-led governance under the star of neo-liberalism. Her interest is to explore what happens when the walls separating societal domains come down and 'the division of institutional labour' between government, judicial processes and the market is disrupted (Comaroff 2012:45). During the Celtic Tiger, contemporary capitalism commodified dreams which mixed with local forces and entered the realm of a

liberalised international property market. Experiences of home have radically altered this century as the social costs of spectacular financial and property-market collapses continue to mount.

Ireland was for over a decade the poster-child of neo-liberalism. In 2008 it transformed into the key international examples of recession and austerity. My work is about the consequences of these broad moves for people struggling to live their lives and how they carry the costs of market failure and restructured governance. Many people believed that they were in control of creating their dream lives during the Celtic Tiger via the purchase of property. But they, like the Priory Hall residents also assumed that the agencies charged with their duty of care would look after their best interests. But, tellingly, nobody remembered there being a property crash before. A deeper analysis of the situation is therefore required, one that considers socio-cultural, economic and political implications while taking into account the historical and symbolic power of homeownership within Irish culture.

Theoretically I draw on Giorgio Agamben's ideas in his work *State of Exception* (2005) throughout. Through a consideration of Agemben's work I began to consider how there is something about the nature of state power which manifests itself as power through exception. I ask, then, in the exceptional case of Priory Hall why was there no manifestation of this power? The question becomes, therefore, this one: is the state trying not to make an exception? Another theoretical source which I found helpful to think with is Marshall Sahlins' ideas around the relationships involved within kinship networks in his work *What Kinship is and is Not* (2014). Sahlins acknowledges that biology remains a factor within kinship connections, but posits that these are relationships of recognition are mainly due to "mutuality of being" (Sahlins 2014: ix). This is a key concept within this thesis. I was especially struck throughout

my fieldwork by the ways in which the Priory Hall residents were piloted by the dynamic members of their Priory Hall Residents' Committee, none of whom were (biologically) related. Nevertheless, these people who were once strangers bonded together fiercely when they recognised their "mutuality of being" (Sahlins 2014). Their collective subjectivity of loss brought about their otherwise unlikely set of kinship-like connections.

The Priory Hall residents formed a relationship of mutuality of being amongst their fellow evacuees and their families. These relationships grew and strengthened, and grew not solely through the evacuation but also because they consolidated these relationships when they were all relocated to the same hotel for five weeks. In their own words they 'stuck together.'

Outline of Chapters

'Buying Tiger Dreams' considers how property dreams were induced. I consider what was originally packaged and sold to the Priory Hall residents. I explore how in Ireland, planning and planning decisions became distinctly cultural processes which, even today, are intrinsically woven into early decisions made by original politicians of the Irish Free State.

Chapter Two, 'The Politics of Protest in Priory Hell' examines the Priory Hall evacuation, the setting up of the Priory Hall Residents' Committee and the subsequent protests this committee organised. This committee fought hard to raise awareness of the unfairness surrounding the Priory Hall debacle. They were driven by their belief in a social contract which not only no longer existed but appeared to have been redrawn, yet no one had noticed. 'Priory Hell' was a term coined by the residents, one which was frequently employed by them and their families to describe their absurd situation.

Chapter Three, ‘A State Without Exceptions’ looks at the eighteen months of judicial mediation which the Priory Hall Residents’ Committee entered into at the Council’s request. This mediation, which the Priory Hall Residents’ Committee fully complied with, was merely a political illusion because it looked like a practical support, something to redress balance in the system but the reality was that the judge who mediated this process never had any actual power. Meanwhile the relevant Minister for State, under whose remit the Priory Hall situation fell, had seemingly calculated a delaying tactic designed to wind down their protests and drain them. Indeed, throughout this process the Priory Hall residents, together with their families and friends, were left waiting indefinitely for any progress with their mediation. In the end, progress was never made because this mediation was declared to be at an end but no resolution was offered. In fact, what emerges from this type of governance is a world governed not through a moral order or the natural justice of ‘the law’ but rather through policies. It would drive one to consider what are the reasons of the state and what are the reasons for the state?

Chapter Four, ‘The Gift of Impossible Exchange’ considers how the suicide of one of the residents, one month after the mediation process was halted, ultimately brought about a resolution which remains bitter sweet. In essence, the Irish State refused to make an exception until a person died. A person’s death ruptured a placid type of violent governing. It ruptured the biopolitical government form and in so doing it put a different version of human life back into the biopolitical equation.

For many, the ultimate gift of Fiachra Daly’s suicide can never be repaid. The self-sacrifice of this husband, father, son, friend and neighbour ultimately provided the only window of opportunity for a resolution agreement.

Chapter Five, ‘Living in an Altered State’ revisits the Priory Hall apartment complex which is currently being rebuilt by the Council. The expected completion date of the yet to be renamed Priory Hall is September 2016.

Chapter 1: Buying Tiger Dreams

> Priory Hall was close to the airport, motor way and shopping centres. Location wise, it was the bee's knees. I came back from Canada in 2003 when an average three-bedroom-house was €400,000-450,000. So for €285,000 and 962 sq, feet Priory Hall seemed like a great find. It seemed like a dream come true.
>
> - Mandy, Priory Hall resident, April 2014

The Poetics of Imagery

I was by now a frequent visitor to Clongriffin train station and my destination today was west of the train tracks to the coastal area of Baldoyle.[12] Throughout the twentieth century, Baldoyle was renowned for its racecourse, but by the twenty-first century property developers had built on this land. The landscape is now characterised by Celtic Tiger-era residential developments, which were packaged and sold as homes on 'the Coast'.[13] I was meeting Mandy, in April 2014, for the first time. Mandy was a former resident of Priory Hall, and we had arranged to meet in her temporary accommodation. While most of the 249 Priory Hall residents were originally placed in a hotel, many, like Mandy, were later re-housed by the Council within empty National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) properties, some of which were in the Baldoyle area.[14] Mandy was going to talk me through how she and her husband came to buy an apartment in the Priory Hall complex. I had made contact with her through her mother Frances whom I had met socially at a Priory Hall community event.

Frances mentioned in passing that as soon as her children found houses they wished to buy she started a scrapbook which catalogued the original sales brochure, price lists and newspaper articles. From there she naturally progressed to cataloguing photographs of the various stages of the building process. This is because Frances felt

that a house purchase would mark her children's transition from "footloose to maturity". She wanted to document this particular moment in their lives, like a precious family recipe, in order that her children could someday tell their children the story of their quest for a home. For Frances, "You are only half-baked until you own your own house." Mandy had agreed to talk me through her mother's mementos from an era she identifies as being "a time before Priory Hall came to dominate every waking moment and haunt my dreams." Frances had, therefore, also saved the original brochure and newspaper advertising material from the Priory Hall apartments.

As soon as I meet Mandy she points out that the Priory Hall Framework Resolution, which was proposed by the state in October 2013, is almost finalised—indeed, the last thing she wants, apparently, is for me to "drag it all up again". Yet, she feels that it is important that the experiences of former residents are recorded. Mandy's apartment is bright and homely with lots of photographs, and she frequently refers to this place as "a stop gap". We drink coffee while Mandy outlines the range of pressures she felt had contributed to her buying an apartment in Priory Hall ten years previously, and the subsequent consequences of her buying a home during an out-of-control property boom.

Over a decade ago Mandy lived abroad independently before returning home and residing with her parents for three years in order to save money for a deposit on a home of her own. She categorises this time as "saving for her bottom drawer". "I mean," says Mandy, "living back with my parents was so embarrassing because as lovely and supportive as they are, I feel that it is not considered socially acceptable to be living with them after a certain age." She really felt pressured to buy a home and felt that renting was not an option. Significantly, renting in Ireland is commonly considered a waste of money because no Irish government has ever introduced, let

alone encouraged, mechanisms to facilitate a fair rental market where long-term stability for the tenant is assured. Instead, private landlords throughout Ireland are granted free reign to set rent prices, and may chose to sell their property giving only a modest period of notice to tenants. In Ireland, renting in this precarious fashion still remains the only clear alternative to buying a home. The second pressure felt by Mandy arose because all of her friends had settled down, bought houses and were starting families. Mandy and her husband were anxious to be young parents, to have a "proper home", one that they could call their own and not become victims of "the rent trap". Added to this, during the Celtic Tiger-era people were increasingly facing into lengthy daily commutes due to being priced out of the Dublin housing market. In contrast, Priory Hall was just 10k from the city centre, and within easy access to most necessary facilities.

For Mandy, the location of Priory Hall was alluring because it was within a twenty mile radius of her extended family. Her language, recalling that time, was peppered with phrases such as "getting out of the rent-trap", "a foot in the door", "getting a step on the ladder", and "trading up or down". Significantly, these phrases came to stand for a reality in such a way that they ultimately obscured reality. Like countless others, during the Celtic Tiger, Mandy's property dreams were induced and she felt that she had to act swiftly to secure a home. She recalled waking every day to the news of rapidly increasing property prices. So much so that when she went to see the Priory Hall show apartment she could not believe that all the units had not been "snapped up".[15] The speed at which people like Mandy felt they had to buy a home coupled with access to cheap credit saw tens of thousands of people, who five years previously would never have been considered eligible for mortgages, believe that the purchase of dream homes was integral to the foundations of dream lives.

We opened her mother's scrapbook and the pages are laden with cuttings from old newspaper advertisements, photographs of the various stages of the building of the Priory Hall apartments taken by Mandy'"s father, and the original A3-sized Priory Hall brochure which is preserved at the back of this scrapbook. Mandy found the Priory Hall brochure and excitedly flicked through it searching for her apartment. "Here it is! Block X Apartment X. Welcome to my dream home! I fell in love with the idea; you do fall in love with the idea, really, a home to call my own." On the plans, her apartment has an impressive layout that signified a distinct break from the monotonous low density suburban vista common across Ireland since the 1960s. Mandy"sMandy's tone began to develop a sense of urgency. She stressed that at that time, during the Irish boom, she felt as though being denied the opportunity to buy a home was an unthinkable horror. She felt that if they did not buy "right then" her opportunity to secure a home might be out of her reach forever.

The Irish construction boom, which was state sponsored through banking and building deregulation, tax breaks and societal yearning, scared people onto the property ladder during the Celtic Tiger era. A key element in a Priory Hall apartment purchase was the promise that people were receiving so much more than they were paying for. The starter idea was green-housed through various duplex choices and planted in the homeowner's mind assuring one's ability to trade up in the future. With just a single show apartment on display, there was no sense of the unfinished and dangerous building site which most of the residents ended up living in for some four years prior to their evacuation. Instead, future homeowners were presented with a dream apartment complete with a flawless finish which they were assured could adapt to suit their own individual desires. Here, in a page below, from the Priory Hall brochure, we see the introduction of the notion of a traditional look juxtaposed with

the modern. This Priory Hall brochure is steeped in a notional Irish history while embracing a modern style of life. It was a marketing creation which appealed to the psyche.

Figure 2: Priory Hall Brochure

The area surrounding Priory Hall is largely portrayed as a seaside resort in a country which rarely experiences rain, but according to the brochure small print "these particulars do not form part of any contract and are for guidance only" (Priory Hall

brochure: 2005:6-15). This Priory Hall apartment style of living was marketed as a unique experience which would fit the personality of the owner. It also promised to be urban, hip and chic. The brochure images are accompanied by rendered 3D images of the future Priory Hall development minus the actual background. The rest of the pages are peppered with sketch drawings of the multiple floor plans available.

Figure 3: Priory Hall Brochure

In the image above, from the Priory Hall brochure, Donamghmede is portrayed as an idyllic place to live. According to my research participants some of whom have lived there for up to forty years this locale is indeed a great community. But this alluring brochure indexes a particular type of reality. In fact it paints an image of a promised

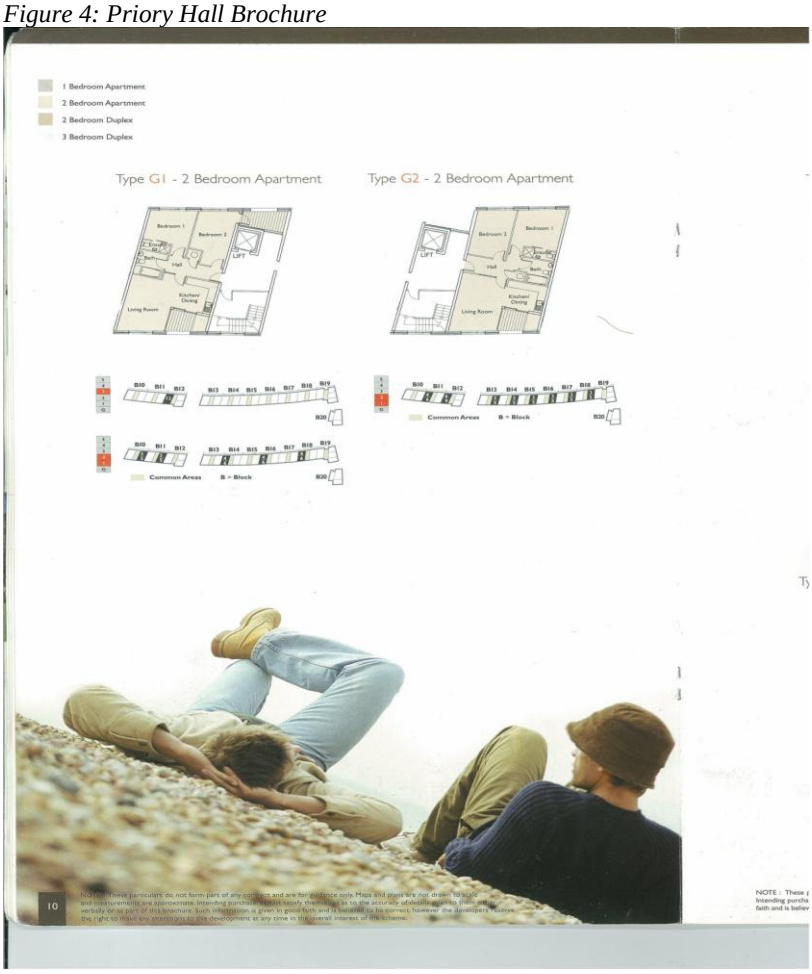
utopia. The amenities listed as *close by* to Priory Hall are special, from a farmer's market boasting organic produce to keeping fit as a given with the promise of wide ranging sports grounds, gyms and *famous* golf clubs. Also listed as adjacent are fishing, hill walking, parklands and a castle. A theatre is close by (10k drive) plus a cinema is near. One can choose from a range of crèches in the knowledge that third-level institutions are also advertised as being on your doorstep.

As a young couple Mandy and her husband could easily have been drawn in by the alluring nature of these advertising images: young couples jogging along the coast; a chic couple enjoying a coffee in cosmopolitan Temple Bar; a picture of the entrance plaque from The Royal Dublin Golf Club and worry free couples depicted enjoying ice-cream by the sea whilst gazing dreamily towards a stately castle or a perfect horizon. The couples portrayed seem carefree and look like they are on an indefinite holiday. Despite the reassuring language throughout the brochure, which begins with,

> Priory Hall is your dream of a contemporary-style home in a pleasant, "urban-village" setting realised—midway between the trimmings of city and the trappings of country. With their proximity to the centre of Dublin, the green belt of north County Dublin, the coast, airport, motorways and rail networks, these homes are perfectly placed to meet your every need. (Priory Hall brochure 2005:2)

Few to none of these amenities are necessarily within easy access to Priory Hall. In reality this brochure is constructed of vacuous slogans, but like countless consumers, Mandy was enticed by the combination of the language and imagery.

Figure 4: Priory Hall Brochure



In Mandy's case the duplex quality highlighted in the brochure made her feel like she had choices, and some level of control over her property design. Mandy was especially drawn to the idea of the bedrooms being located on the same level as the kitchen while the sitting room was upstairs. This design was a distinct break from a typical Irish *estate type* house where the living areas would always be downstairs and the bedrooms, invariably small-scale, are located upstairs. The interior and exterior layout of these houses are always exactly the same. Mandy said, "I loved the fact that

it was not going to be like permanently walking into your own house just with different furnishings."

Mandy breathlessly outlined this unusual split-level aspect complete with a double staircase which she had decorated "from top to toe" with photographs. In addition, each apartment block was to come complete with an underground car park. The brochure also promised that the view from Mandy's dream home would boast a tree lined boulevard. Here again we see the notion of a traditional look juxtaposed with the modern. A big selling point of the entire complex was this stylish looking tree-lined boulevard, subsequently dubbed "the pyrite boulevard of broken dreams" by the residents, as it was neither completed, structurally sound nor connected to the main roads as promised. The rest of the brochure outlines plans for up to nine different duplex apartment types marketed with the view of trading up or down. This type of advertising for a unique type of home typifies a different emphasis that came to surround notions of home during the Celtic Tiger.

During our conversation, I got the sense that Mandy had worked herself into a frenzy in order to achieve all that this advertising promised. This Priory Hall experience was, for them, anticipated as a secure dream home. In fact, the once considered mundane act of a house purchase had transformed into an almost impossible pursuit of a dream home. It has long since been a usual practise for developers and builders to invite the public to view show houses, even though the designs of these houses are available to view in a glossy brochure. This practise is commonly known as buying 'off the plans'. During the Celtic Tiger boom this established practise served to add to a sense of urgency regarding the immediate desire to secure the perfect home, lest they disappear forever. In Priory Hall however, there was only one finished apartment for viewing and customers largely had to

imagine the completed process with the aid this over-sized A3 brochure. The visible images and text masqueraded as property clichés. They combined collapsing ideas of a past, present and a future, but nevertheless they only played a part in creating an ideological world view. Despite being from the area and based solely on that impressive brochure, Mandy recalled that all she had seen in this brochure was a safe home for her future family, and a financial investment in their future.

We moved our attention from the Priory Hall brochure to the newspaper articles in the scrapbook; an *Irish Times* article dated May 19, 2005 with the headline 'Donaghmede from €190,000: Modern Suburban apartments in D13' which indexed the pending arrival of the Priory Hall complex. This price would have been unobtainable during the property boom. Journalist Fiona Tyrrell outlines the proximity of Priory Hall to the city centre and the high standard expected of each unit. This text is supported by artist's drawings of the promised complex. One picture displays an interior functional living space while the exterior image suggests: ease of parking, green surroundings, and wide open spaces (Tyrrell 2005). In both the newspaper article and the Priory Hall brochure, visual mediums and linguistics are presented, and perceived, as portraying reality while in fact they helped to construct a particular reality.

As Roland Barthes argued in 'The Rhetoric of the Image' (1977) a combination of real images such as photographs (denoted) alongside a symbolic image (connoted) and a linguistic text can construct a particular reality (Barthes 1977:155). For Barthes, advertising images have clear intentionality—they are constructed to convey specific meanings and specific messages. In the case of the Priory Hall brochure the photographs of real couples, an artist's image of the complex and accompanying linguistic text, form three separate messages which entangle and

take part in creating an ideological view of a dream home. These images work together denoting something in the real world with the supporting linguistic captions serving to create a relationship between the consumer and the signs themselves, but also with the consumer's body of knowledge.

Beneath the visible, clear, reassuring language and imagery within this magnificent brochure, within the newspaper article lay an invisible, murky, unregulated system of inept planning and banking. This system had not developed over night, but rather was the product of decades of specific housing policies and light-touch building regulation. The building regulation had become so hands off, in fact, that by the time the Priory Hall residents were evacuated it was seemingly impossible to definitively trace the blame back to any particular quarter.

Generally in Ireland, unless a person was building their home on a rural site, urban dwellers had to live in a house designed and built to mirror their neighbour's house. The single 'show' apartment offered for viewing in the Priory Hall case was even more unusual in that potential buyers were furnished with designs outlining how they could adapt their private living space to their own needs and desires. The nine distinct apartment types were advertised starting from €238,000 to €293,950.[16] Meanwhile, the 'starter home' ideology was transmitted through various duplex choices and planted in the homeowner's mind assuring one that you had the ability to trade up in the future. Not only would they own unique homes, but these homes could mirror one's personality.

The process through which Mandy's dream house fell apart is unintentionally captured through her scrapbook mementos. We turned the page to a photograph of Mandy looking ecstatic and hugging her proud father. In this photograph, they are both donning hard hats and high-visibility jackets. "Oh, my God", shrilled Mandy,

“that was the day I went with my Da to see the apartment being fitted out on the inside”. We turned the pages following a sequence of photographs featuring the interior of her new home boasting: fresh paint and tiles, a shiny new kitchen and visible stickers on the immaculate bathroom suite. The next series of photographs capture the moving in party (one of several), countless photographs of elated family members and supportive friends. But as we continue to turn the pages photographs of people dissolve into images of construction problems within the apartment, which include pictures of leaking windows, damaged floors, faulty plumbing and poor electrical work. All these photographs are evidence of sub-standard building practices. Mandy’s dream home began to crumble soon after she and her husband “got the keys” in 2007. By 2011 the Priory Hall apartment complex was declared a fire hazard and the residents were evacuated. “I mean”, said Mandy shutting her scrap book abruptly, “how did we get to here?”

In order to formulate a clearer picture about the subjectivity of loss experienced by Mandy, the other Priory Hall residents and their families, it is helpful to think about the cultural history of homeownership in Ireland. I want to stress particular policy and planning decisions, at local and national level, concerning housing, taken throughout the twentieth century. In particular, I want to consider Ireland, in 1922, as a new but war-weary state desperately seeking stabilization; the opening up of the economy since the 1950s; and the introduction of formal planning in 1963. Specific policy decisions fed directly into the structure of the contemporary system of planning. But the interaction between ordinary people and state officials also played a role in both the evolution and the architecture of the state.

In January 2015, European Central Bank (ECB) economist Klaus Regling, who is managing director of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), told the

Oireachtas Banking Inquiry that the crash of the Irish Banking system could have collapsed the Euro. Regling concluded that property acquisition in Ireland was a "national obsession" (Taylor 2015). I consider that housing policy, formal planning and the opening up of the Irish economy crucially intertwined both prior to and during the Celtic Tiger. These elements intertwined and created the conditions for the possibility of what was rather simplistically identified by Klaus Regling as "a national obsession with property acquisition" (Taylor 2015). In the next section, I draw on these three points that together present a range of relationships between state officials and citizens including: home seekers, developers and both national and local politicians. Because if indeed one of the least essential countries within the Eurozone could have, according to Regling, caused the collapse of its currency due to its citizens unnatural interest in purchasing property undoubtedly Mandy's question of 'how did we get to here' is certainly pertinent.

Crouching tiger: hidden boom

The term 'Celtic Tiger', which became an everyday life motif, was coined in 1994 (Coulter 2003:3). It was a time when low taxes lured multinationals to our shores, fuelling a huge expansion in employment. Recently, Irish journalist Fintan O'Toole charged post Celtic Tiger Ireland, "as the country which had entirely skipped modernity expecting not to have to pay a price for all the buzz and brassiness" (O'Toole 2009:213). Meanwhile geographer Rob Kitchin notes that planning should have acted as the counter-balance to the excessive pressures for development, working for the common good to produce sustainable patterns of residential and commercial property (Kitchin et al. 2010).

Various commentators (Allen 2009, Coulter 2003, Foster 2008, O'Toole 2009) agree that there were two distinct phases to the Celtic Tiger. The first phase lasted from 1995-2001 and was largely economically driven. Coulter discusses how this was made possible by convenient changes in the operation of global capitalism and the fact that Irish corporate tax rates were among the lowest in Europe (Coulter 2003:19). O'Hearne outlines how by 2001 "the recession in the United States precipitated the closures of some US- owned subsidiaries in Ireland" (O'Hearne 2003:51). The Irish property bubble was apparently no accident. An ailing Celtic Tiger should have died from natural economic causes in 2001; however, an unregulated planning system provided an arena whereby the construction sector and property transactions overtook many others as the driver of the economy. This ultimately created a housing bubble in Ireland. Priory Hall was therefore built during the second phase of the Celtic Tiger which lasted from 2001 to 2006.

In the twenty-first century, across the Western World, many people, like the Priory Hall residents were building their dreams and hopes on the fragility of an economic system fuelled by an apparently endless supply of credit. Simultaneously in Ireland unregulated planning created an environment whereby the construction sector and property transactions overtook many other areas as the driver of the economy.

Recent changes in international capitalism were, of course, fundamental to the sustaining of the Celtic Tiger property boom, and the existence and development of a myriad of properties such as the Priory Hall apartment complex. Gillian Tett (2009) and Susan Strange (1997) both identify changes in the operations of global capitalism which was fundamental in order to enable the flow of seemingly cheap and easily accessed credit which became the necessary lifeblood charging through the self-regulating Irish planning system. After all it is almost twenty years ago since Strange

said that the "once liminal space of the casino has become a permanent feature in people's homes" (Strange 1997:103).

Gillian Tett considered that the banking system was allowed to run "akin to that of the European medieval church: although almost nobody in the congregation really understood the financial 'Latin' in which the service was being conducted..It was accepted that the priests were the keepers of the faith" (Tett 2009: xiv). Tett studied how finance has fundamentally changed and she charges the widely accepted nature of finance as specialised as the reason why the financial system is so flawed. According to Tett, people have long treated finance as a tribal affair therefore failing to understand the system holistically (Tett 2009). Financial risk has always been crucial to the growth of capitalism but it has become a key component of contemporary capitalism. According to Chris Hann and Keith Hart, "It is no longer possible to contend that economies will prosper only if markets are freed from political bondage" (Hann and Hart 2011:161). Indeed, today self-regulation has found a way to make people culpable for risk capitalism evidenced by ongoing sweeping state bank bailouts across the Western World.

Neither O'Toole's "buzz and brassiness" (O'Toole 2009:213), nor inept planning erupted overnight; rather, both have cultural origins deeply embedded in planning decisions made at political and local levels. In order to identify reasons why neither society nor the myriad of entities involved in the planning process behaved as anticipated, it is worthwhile tracking the cultural evolution of the Celtic Tiger from policy decisions made since the foundation of the state. That said, I am mindful of the fact that a long line of historians have widely attended to the history of modern Ireland including Mary Daly (2006, 2007), Diarmaid Ferriter (2015, 2012, 2009, 2004), Roy Foster (1989, 2008), Tom Garvin (1996,2004), Dermot Keogh (2004,

1995) and J.J. Lee (1989), to name but a few. These penetrating works give crucial insights into how historical events have helped shape contemporary Ireland.[17] Indeed across disciplines academics including Elaine A. Byrne (2012), PJ Drudy (2012), Tony Fahey (2004,2002), Diarmaid Ferriter (2015), Michelle Norris (2013) and Eoin O'Sullivan (2012) Lorcan Sirr (2015) have studied Irish housing policy, highlighting the issue of tenure and, implicitly, discussing the commodification of housing.

I am interested in exploring anthropologically how housing policy decisions shaped contemporary societal thinking in relation to ideas surrounding the meaning of home. I am interested in how over time 'home' came to denote ownership in Ireland. And how, ideologically, the idea of home became aligned with the act of buying a house.[18] These persuasive ideas ultimately reinforced Celtic-Tiger thinking and facilitated the inflation of a housing bubble.

For Akhil Gupta, "any analysis of the state requires us to conceptualise a space that is constituted by the intersection of local, regional, national and transnational phenomena" (2009:215). The Celtic Tiger-era saw a level of wealth previously unknown in the history of the Republic of Ireland. By the dawn of the twenty-first century, Ireland, a onetime insignificant ex-colony, appeared to be in procession of an economic model which was the envy of the Western World. But, I argue that a large part of what drove the Celtic Tiger was the gradual intensification of the commodification of the humble home since the foundation of the state. This began, I argue, due to housing policy decisions that were introduced in order to stabilise an insecure state born in the midst of a bitter Civil War.[19] These housing policies and the subsequent introduction of formal planning alongside the opening up of the economy intensified the commodification of the home up to the point when the people of Priory Hall experienced the unexpected consequences. I am interested in an exploration of

how the destruction of the lives of the Priory Hall residents potentially came about due to an excess of state stability.

The first ten years after the Civil War were spent on state building projects. But Ireland's first independent government also took over a significant housing problem. Poor housing conditions were an ongoing worry for inexperienced politicians, espousing patriotism and the common good, while juggling depleted state coffers. Dire slums, called the tenements, were widespread throughout the city of Dublin. Importantly, these tenements were not confined to back street ghettos and by 1922 incorporated once lavish Georgian houses abandoned by the wealthy throughout the nineteenth century. Dubliner and Dramatist Seán O'Casey lived and wrote throughout this time. In a letter penned the same year as he wrote 'The Plough and the Stars' (1925) he argued that the creation of the Free State had made little difference to urban squalor:[20]

> It isn't a question of English or Irish Culture with the inanimate patsies of the tenements but a question of life for the few and death for the many. Irish-speaking or English-speaking they all are what they are convalescent homes of plague, pestilence or death. (quoted in Ferriter 2004:25).

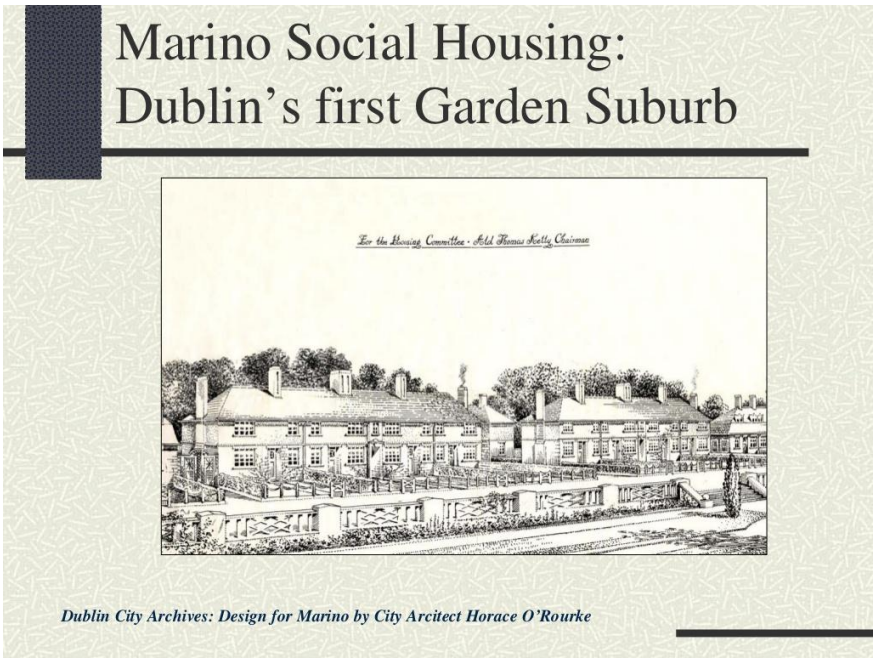
Seán O'Casey was making the point that there was a stark contrast between republican revolutionary rhetoric and the reality of the new Irish conservative state. Indeed, his type of thinking was in opposition to the fiery idealism advocated by the founding fathers of the state. And, for them, social unrest posed a significant threat because as well as the spectre of war and excessive poverty, other challenges included: the rise in popularity of trade unions, high unemployment and a general fear of Bolshevism which was sweeping across Europe at the time.[21] Providing a stable state became paramount to policy decisions.[22]

Homeownership as linked to public order is indexed in a *Weekly Irish Times* editorial article, published on 13 June 1925, entitled 'Houses and Men', which outlined the development of 248 houses being built by Dublin Corporation in Marino Dublin 3.[23] The Marino houses were the first major building scheme under the Free State regime. This article details how applicants are invited to apply for housing, in a lottery-style system, by letter.[24] The housing available was social housing but it was also possible to buy a house in Marino through a mortgage scheme which became commonly known over the next half century as the tenant purchase scheme.[25] Dublin Corporation was responsible for this innovation. It was necessary to be an existing Corporation tenant in order to qualify for this scheme.

According to this article, 4,400 applications had already been received, and seeking a home was portrayed as being the act of a respectable and loyal citizen dedicated to the building of the young Irish nation-state. But, nevertheless, this nation-state was looking for particular types of citizens as outlined below,

> The vices of drunkenness and excessive gambling which fret our social reformers are only symptoms. They reflect the despair of the slums and the fecklessness of the countryside. House builders and character-builders are the country's first need. We deceive ourselves miserably if we think that good citizenship is not dependent on decent homes or that an undisciplined people ever can become great. (Editorial, Irish Times, 13 June 1925).

Figure 5: Marino Social Housing Planner Image



(Source: Dublin City Archive courtesy of National Library of Ireland archives.)

According to geographer Ruth McManus, a major explanation for the Corporation's preference for purchase rather than rental schemes was financial (McManus 2002:147). The privatisation of social housing through the tenant purchase scheme was a practical exercise. Home owners, not the Corporation, would be responsible for the upkeep of the house, and the Corporation would still benefit from ground rents as the land would remain under the ownership of the Corporation. In the meantime, the fragile state need not concern itself with ongoing housing maintenance.

The tenant purchase scheme was, in many ways, a practical endeavour. The policies and politics of maintaining a stable state were the original idea behind the foundation of these tenant purchase schemes. But it meant that the Corporation was acting as a developer and not necessarily in the interest of public good. Historian Diarmaid Ferriter made the point that despite the poverty associated with the

tenements “housing was not a problem for people with adequate income” (Ferriter 2005:319). But these purchase schemes continued throughout the twentieth century, up to 1987. Citizens, through the daily and evening newspapers were invited to apply for house purchases through this lottery style system. The unintentional consequences of these schemes, however, are that from the 1920s onwards a subtle trend emerged within Irish political policy linking stability and respectability to homeownership. But unintentionally, housing policy became an element of short sighted political action in order to mitigate potential social issues. Meanwhile, Irish voters followed these patterns of political culture which, through time, transformed into what Irish historical writer Tim Pat Coogan deems populist “parish pump style politics” (1996:436). By this Coogan means where public pressure can manipulate political will at local level. Importantly, a change in government power in 1932 saw state interest in home purchase and entrepreneurial development augment due to more robust policies. Meanwhile a continuing emphasis on the stabilization of the state in the here and now became a key feature within Irish policy during the twentieth century.

In 1932 the Fianna Fáil party entered government for the first time. This party was to remain the biggest political party up to 2011. Throughout the twentieth century, its founder Éamon de Valera could symbolically invoke past images of failed yet glorious Irish rebellions throughout centuries of fighting the English. Borrowing the language of the dead, he carved himself out to be a powerful Catholic leader.[26] His protectionist platform reinforced ideas of Irish nationalism, Irish land and Irish politics.[27] De Valera gained great influence over Irish society, so much so that by 1937 he had written a new Irish Constitution (*Bunreacht na hÉireann* 1937:148-166).[28] Significantly, Articles 40.3.2 and 43 of de Valera’s Constitution permit landowners to profit from the ownership of private property.

The Housing Act of 1932 increased home owner grants and launched the first substantial urban slum clearance. From the 1930s onwards, increased state-sponsored urban housing programmes encouraged people to buy their council houses. In many cases the Council built houses directly for sale. In this way the state interfered with publicly owned houses through their privatisation. In essence, ironically, the commodification of the home began through the privatisation of social housing accelerated during an era when de Valera's protectionism was prolonging emigration and stifling trade. In fact, by the late 1950s de Valera's inward looking policies meant that the Irish economy relied heavily on the remittances of those forced to emigrate. The Irish economy urgently needed to be opened up to foreign investment. This point is important in relation to housing policy because as Ireland increasingly became an open economy, during the second half of the century, the commodification of the home steadily intensified.

In 1957 Seán Lemass approved a memorandum drawn up by a senior civil servant, T.K. Whitaker, which recommended a programme for economic expansion.[29] Part of this expansion was to introduce planning laws but also to lure multi-national companies to invest in Ireland. The Irish state's desire to court Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) intensified over the next decade.

In July 1963, as Taoiseach, Seán Lemass appeared on the cover of *Time Magazine* (Time Magazine 1963).[30] This front cover was designed so that a large close up picture of a smiling Seán Lemass was in the foreground. But one's attention is inevitably drawn to a playful leprechaun behind Lemass drawing back a curtain decorated with shamrocks in order to reveal a previously hidden yet apparently wildly industrious Ireland. This suggests that tradition and modernity could all at once meet and seamlessly mingle. What the *Time* article camouflaged was Irish politicians

beginning to play local politics on a global stage while, off stage, the free market was increasingly in charge. This is evidenced in Luke Gibbons essay 'Coming out of Hibernation' (1996) where he scrutinises the ways in which the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) portrayed Ireland, using advertising posters, as a land in which to invest. One poster depicts the board members of a manufacturing company gathered at the front entrance to Newgrange, a five thousand year-old Irish Neolithic tomb—an enduring remnant of Irish durability. The caption below reads: How did you manage without us? [31] The small print reveals,

> There are over 900 overseas manufacturing and international service companies in Ireland. They rely on the skill of Irish managers. Give your company the competitive edge of the Irish. The best management team in Europe. And wonder how you managed without us. Republic of Ireland: The young Europeans. (Gibbons 1996:93).

The Irish government was on a mission to beguile FDI. These images juxtapose ancient rituals with modern business practice. The desired underlying message from the IDA was that Ireland was a reliable location, steeped in a history, in which to do business. Alongside opening up the Irish economy, the commodification of the home was intensifying throughout the 1930s-1970s, as successive Irish governments gave citizens the opportunity to purchase their council houses.

I argue that, from the 1920s, in Ireland, nation building became aligned with ideological and symbolic attachments to home. This is unsurprising in a new state and a once long-time colony. But subtle shifts in policy decisions, through time, carried unintended consequences for future home owners. This reconfigured the meaning of home with the need to buy a house. Moreover, the home owner was solely responsible for securing a deposit, up front, which by the 1950s and 1960s was often up to a third of the total house price. Crucially, by the 1950s and 1960s this commodification of

social housing had steadily increased. From 1963 this commodification intensified once Séan Lemass instigated *The Irish Local Government (Planning and Development) Act, 1963* which is the foundation of all planning legislation in Ireland. In England planners were in charge of planning and planning outcomes. The Irish government wished to be different and subsequently gave the power to control, develop and implement planning to local county councils. As a result, Irish planning became localised and mainly controlled by county councillors.

Historian J.J. Lee discusses this relationship between localism and local government outlining how despite having a weak local government in Ireland, localism is the rule and not the exception, even ignoring the fact that local issues are decided by the central government which means lobbying at a national level instead of making decisions at less obtrusive levels (Lee 1989:546-547). The system of planning in Ireland, although funded by the central government whilst visibly organised at a local level, became intrinsically linked to the global. Local government in Ireland therefore is financially dependent on distribution through the central government; its structure is more disconnected from its community base in comparison to many of the self-sufficient European systems of local government. These local representatives, elected by the Irish electorate, are not required to have any background in the practicalities of formal planning. Crucially, these local politicians were given the power to override decisions made by professional planners.

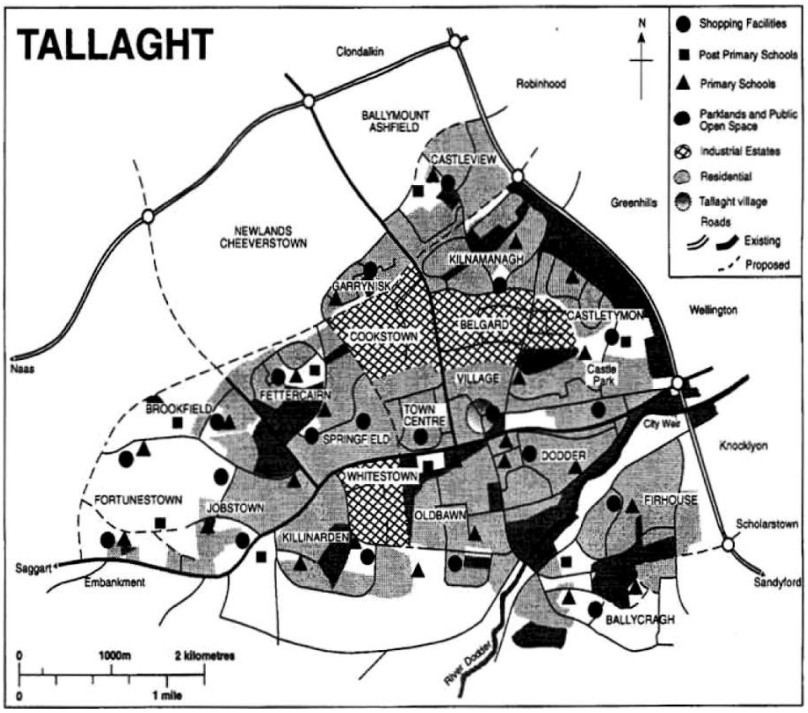
According to geographers Bartley and Waddington the main objective of the 1963 Act was to set up a more flexible planning scheme (Bartley and Waddington 2000). The statutory definition of *The Local Government (Planning and Development) Act, 1963* is defined as "in the interests of the common good, for the proper planning and development of cities, towns and other areas, whether urban or

rural." Importantly this act also created a process of decision making known as rezoning. This is a practice, controlled by local authorities, whereby the value of agricultural land increases once it is approved for planning permission. Consequently from 1963 onwards, the buying and selling of land became a lucrative business. Once a plot of land became designated for housing it could immediately increase in value. Subsequently, the profits to be made from rezoning were too great for many developers and politicians to simply ignore. In an agrarian society, this rezoning process was relished by property developers and politicians who colluded to maximise on potential profits. This is evidenced by the fact that county councillors, even today, may work as farmers, auctioneers, solicitors and estate agents giving them invaluable inside knowledge. This practice was commented on by Irish journalist Geraldine Kennedy, of *The Irish Times*, in December 2010 who reported that up to an eighth of county councillors simultaneously work as auctioneers and estate agents (Kennedy 2010:13). Their potential vested interests have yet to be prohibited. Even prior to Kennedy's observations, Paul Melia from *The Irish Independent*, had reported, "There is enough land rezoned in Ireland to build homes for over three million people – equal to two-thirds of the current population" (Paul Melia et al. 2009). In 2012, journalist Michael Clifford of *The Cork Examiner* described rezoning as

> instead of acting as a tool to facilitate the development of the State, was often used as nothing more than a means of enrichment for landowners. Effectively, councillors could make overnight millionaires of landowners, turning muck into gold at the stroke of a pen. In such a system, corruption lucrked in the shadows, waiting to pounce at the right opportunity. (Clifford 2012).

Essentially, from 1963 onwards developers were allowed by the state to pave the way to the suburbs and the citizens of Dublin were relocated to landscapes with inadequate basic infrastructure.

This happened in the case of the *Myles Wright Strategy (1966-1986)* which created three 'new towns' close to Dublin: Tallaght, Clondalkin and Blanchardstown.[32] In order to populate these new places, the centre of Dublin was emptied of many of its inner-city inhabitants. Journalist and author Frank McDonald (2000) insists that the local authorities purposely ignored sites for these new suburbs that were better served by railway lines. He notes that county councillors chose to design these new towns on land that would have to be serviced by private roads because speculators would net vast quantities of money once rezoned land multiplied in value (McDonald 2000:209). One key way to entice people to move out of Dublin was through the tenant purchase scheme. Meanwhile, not only were existing urban communities torn apart, but new suburban communities were abruptly flung together. As a result of the *Wright Strategy* by 1985 Dublin had become a doughnut city depopulated at the centre, while surrounded by large areas of dereliction**.** The people relocated from Dublin city would need private transport or have to make do with poor public transport.



(Source: Dublin City Archives: Pearse Street library.)

Tallaght, Clondalkin and Blanchardstown were not chosen to service the practical needs of the public or to facilitate development of necessary infrastructures essential to the organic growth of developing communities. These locations were chosen to facilitate developers. These elements along with the increasing deterrent of high land prices in Dublin city encouraged low-density housing construction throughout the suburbs. Planning from the 1960s became a significant function of an underfunded local authority which, although financially dependent on a central government, generated substantial sums of money in relation to the private market. People selling land were legally entitled to profits while the homeowners who inherited the inflated house prices through mortgages were further penalised by inadequate social and community facilities. While the political will sustained a cultural need for homeownership, homeowners continued to pay the price.

Unquestionably, since the 1960s rezoning transformed the Donaghmede landscape where the Priory Hall apartment complex is located. This process began with the involvement of a politician named Charles J. Haughey (1925-2006).[33] Charles Haughey, a self-made man, had a different ethos to the revolutionary generation. He recognised the profits to be made from the continual rezoning of land.[34] In 1959 Matt Gallagher, his developer friend, advised him to buy Grangemore House in Donaghmede. This Georgian house stood on twenty-five acres of land. In 1968, when Minister for Finance, Charles Haughey brought in a new provision of the Finance Act which protected the profits derived from selling property from windfall tax. One year later, Matt Gallagher's building company bought the by then rezoned Donaghmede land from Haughey for £204,500.[35] The original price paid by Haughey was £13,000. Meanwhile Irish citizens continued to vote for politicians like Haughey whose windfall sale of this rezoned land was reported in *The Irish Times* on May 29, 1969 as a natural transaction at a time when a government minister's wages were less than £4,000 per annum. The Republic of Ireland had crucially transformed from an insular economy into an open economy anxious to explore the possibilities of the free market.

Again, if indeed the main objective of the 1963 Planning Act had been to set up a more flexible planning scheme, Ireland's planning nonetheless evolved from a system with little or no planning to one with poor planning throughout the 1960s, 1970s and into the 1980s.[36] It was also a system which gave politicians direct control over signing off on policy and gaining access to large amounts of money for rezoning. Seán Lemass retired in 1966. De Valera and Lemass had fought so that Ireland could become a land of property-owning Catholic farmers. Rising politicians could see the

potential in the acquiring of land, and had the agency to alter policy in order to directly profit from this process.

The redefinition of the Donaghmede landscape was one of Haughey's initial ventures into the commodification of land. When he became Taoiseach (Prime Minister) in 1979 this process accelerated. Roy Foster notes that by the time Ireland joined the Common Market in 1973 a kind of New Ireland was coming into view. Ireland was to become a place where business could not only be linked to land and property but also to vast profits (Foster 2008:69-75). The colonial past was still useful, however, as a way to legitimise rezoning. It enabled politicians to publicly cite a hatred for colonial buildings while privately profiting from the process of tearing them down or selling them. This populist discourse also helped to shape the Irish system of planning. In addition, the system of planning in Ireland, although funded by the central government while visibly organised at a local level, became intrinsically linked to global processes.

The 1963 Planning Act is an initial road sign to a future of chaotic planning which by the time of the Celtic Tiger-era would be largely developer led. In essence, the key legacy of *The Irish Local Government (Planning and Development) Act, 1963* is that it provided the conditions whereby local authorities gained significant agency as planning authorities. This meant that the planning process could be swayed by the populist vote or over-influenced by private developers within a political system preoccupied with historical land issues. County councillors who worked as auctioneers and estate agents were well connected to trades people and builders. In 1971, the government commissioned a report to look into the method of rezoning land, with a particular view as to how it might be better achieved for the common good. In 1974 a committee on The Price of Building Land was chaired by a High Court judge

called John Kenny. The findings were published in what became known as *The Kenny Report, 1974*. One of its major recommendations was that rezoned land should be valued at the agricultural price plus 25%. This they felt would dampen down the potential-frenzy for land speculation and lead to a greater incentive to proper planning (Clifford 2012). The strength of *The Kenny Report, 1974* rested on the political will to implement it. To this day it has never been implemented.

The implementation of this report would have been hugely unpopular in an agrarian society. The Fine Gael government of the day decided that the *Kenny Report* was unconstitutional, as according to the Constitution the state could not interfere with private property. The state meanwhile actively intervened to build enough houses for those who may need them but not always necessarily to rent. It became possible to not only hoard land but to sell and buy and resell the same plot of land over a short period of time for considerable profits. In continually ignoring the recommendations of the *Kenny Report*, successive governments encouraged the inflation of land values. Vast profits could be made for any land owner, or a person who speculatively acquired land. For example, rezoning facilitated the developer of Clongriffin in Donaghmede to build up huge 'land banks' over a period of time. In contrast, land is taken into public ownership in England and a development commission is set up to plan new towns. Meanwhile in Ireland giving planning powers to a weak local government stunted its growth.

As a direct consequence, the county councils' inefficiency in relation to the provision of necessary social structures has had far reaching effects today. The Myles Wright legacy is still evident walking through the new town of Clongriffin up to the older suburb of Donaghmede. Unlike Tallaght, Clondalkin and Blanchardstown, Donaghmede was not a village absorbed into suburban sprawl: it was all rich

farmland comprised of a number of large houses with workers' cottages. The Donaghmede area, some 85 acres, comprised of two farms owned by two English army officers up to the 1920s. Today, the large houses have disappeared but some of the workers' cottages remain along the 'Hole in the Wall Road' where the Priory Hall apartment complex is situated.

In addition, while the new Planning Act intensified and the economy continued to open up the tenant purchase scheme remained a fundamental aspect within the fabric of everyday society. One of my research participants purchased his Donaghmede home, through the tenant purchase scheme in 1969. The joy on Paddy's face, as he described the process, was infectious. He stated with pride,

> In 1970 we moved to our new house in Donaghmede. It was a place with no main road, no bus, no shops and no school. But people were delighted to get their very own new houses. Those with no cars just used to walk to Raheny to get the bus. Ah sure, it was only a mile and a half I suppose!

Paddy and his wife's first home was rented rooms in an old Georgian House in Dublin's Mountjoy Square. Their rent was 1 pound 12 shillings and 6 pence per week. Paddy was anxious for his growing family to get on to a council housing list. At that time there were various mechanisms which could speed up this process, not least the Irish government's apathy towards British-built Georgian buildings. The Georgian tenements of Dublin were being demolished by the state while being politically brandished as a stark reminder of centuries of colonial rule. Paddy said, "When rain came in the old windows I didn't stop it which I could have easily. I let it flow. I used to write to—no one had phones then—the Council who were obliged to inspect properties after receipt of up to five letters of complaint from a tenant." In reality, according to Paddy, the windows could have easily been made waterproof but as he said, "They were crazy (the government) for pulling down Georgian Houses! Sure

they loved doing that. So I just played the game and told them what they wanted to hear." Akhil Gupta (2009) outlines the ways in which the day-to-day encounters between ordinary people and state officials construct the idea of the post-colonial state. In a similar way to Paddy's involvement with county councillors, Gupta identifies this type of ongoing discursive practice as a form of corruption which comes to constitute the state because everyday encounters with individuals can manipulate bureaucracy (Gupta 2009:216). This type of encounter therefore becomes a mechanism of behaviour that keeps the state in motion, as opposed to overt forms of corruption. It is therefore, the day-to-day encounters, the everyday practices, between state officials and ordinary people that help to construct the idea of the state.

Once Paddy procured a council house for rent he was eligible to apply for the lottery-style tenant purchase scheme. He had to painstakingly read the daily and evening broadsheets until he saw the written advertisement in the Evening Press. Paddy quickly wrote the required letter of application and "posted it directly". Two months later his name came up in a draw that would be held in the Mansion House. His wife attended the draw but somehow missed their name being called and returned home disappointed. Later that same day, Paddy was working in his garden when his neighbour called over the hedge, "Congrats on getting the house." He replied, "Sure we didn't get it," only to hear back, "You did, sure it was in the paper!" His joy was short-lived however, because a key aspect in being granted the possibility of getting a mortgage was the need for them to come up with a quarter of the price of the house as a deposit: a sum of 450 pounds. He and his wife had two months to so do. And Paddy's weekly wage was 12 pounds 10 shillings a week. The only way for Paddy and his wife to secure this considerable deposit was through a series of complex kinship connections. Through some meagre savings and multiple family loans Paddy

and his wife painstakingly gathered the deposit by writing a myriad of pleading letters to relatives far and wide. Furthermore their capacity to repay these loans, in a timely manner, was linked to Paddy's commitment to repeatedly write and apply for a housing grant of 400 pounds. This process usually had a waiting time of a minimum of two year after mortgage approval.

Following several failed applications, Paddy approached one of his local county councillors to ask for his help. This is a quotidian example of Tim Pat Cogan's "parish pump politics" (1996) in motion, where local pressure manipulates political will, as the councillor wrote letters on Paddy's behalf until his grant eligibility was granted. Akhil identifies this encountering of the state at a lower level, by people like Paddy, as a type of functional corruption which lends itself to a set of practices 'ordinary' people have to master in order to make the state work on their behalf (Gupta 2009:215). As Paddy stated, "The worry of thinking that I was going to lose our new house, and that we might never get this chance again was sickening."

Significantly, the Irish state provided the possibility for people to purchase their homes based entirely on citizens' ability to resourcefully source and tap into any social or economic capital available to them, to borrow from Pierre Bourdieu (1986). Without the capacity to procure these forms of capital, achieving a home purchase would have been highly unlikely. Throughout the twentieth century tens of thousands of people across Ireland like Paddy and his wife Ena, obtained mortgages in this way. The state sold the properties for a slightly lesser value but in return did not have to concern itself with the headache of social housing maintenance.

Meanwhile the Irish government was moving families like Paddy's from the city centre to live in landscapes with little to no infrastructure. And Dublin, in one of two English speaking countries within Europe, increasingly became a landscape

interested in attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) business opportunities. Dublin city centre was therefore, being depopulated of what Jane Jacobs (1992) lovingly describes as "its people vitality" in order to make way for office, retail spaces, and car parks, all of which would yield lucrative taxes.[37]

The consequences of an excess of state stability were unwittingly commented on by the Australian poet Vincent Buckley, who toured Ireland during the 1980s, in his book, *Memoryies Ireland* (1985) Buckley became preoccupied with the strange blend of housing developments that seemed incomplete, yet inhabited. Moreover, Buckley questions why the Irish never complained about obvious injustices such as the corrupt rental system where private landlords enjoyed carte blanche over an unregulated rental market. Neither, he observed, did the Irish seem to lament over a completely inefficient system of public transport. Buckley fails to consider how the public transport system is, in reality, a semi-state monopoly that is not answerable to the people it is supposed to serve. In a way Buckley's observations could serve to illuminate the daily outcomes of a patch work system of "parish pump politics" because this type of system solely focuses on a continuing emphasis on the stabilization of the state in the here and now. In fact, these deeply entrenched destabilizing policies affecting services such as public transport and housing. The ramifications of such policies, for the people of Tallaght alone, are outlined in a 1988 Tallaght, Welfare Society report below,

> The story of Tallaght is one of neglect. Despite representations throughout the years, nothing has changed...It is not realistic to locate 70,000 people to the largest suburb in Europe, to christen it a town, and then expect it to work. (Tallaght Welfare Society 1988:1)

Although Tallaght, Clondalkin and Blanchardstown remained connected to Dublin, too close to the city, they mushroomed out and today still function more to service the city rather than develop a life of their own. The private sector was given free rein by the Irish government to develop laissez-faire planning while creating isolated suburbs.

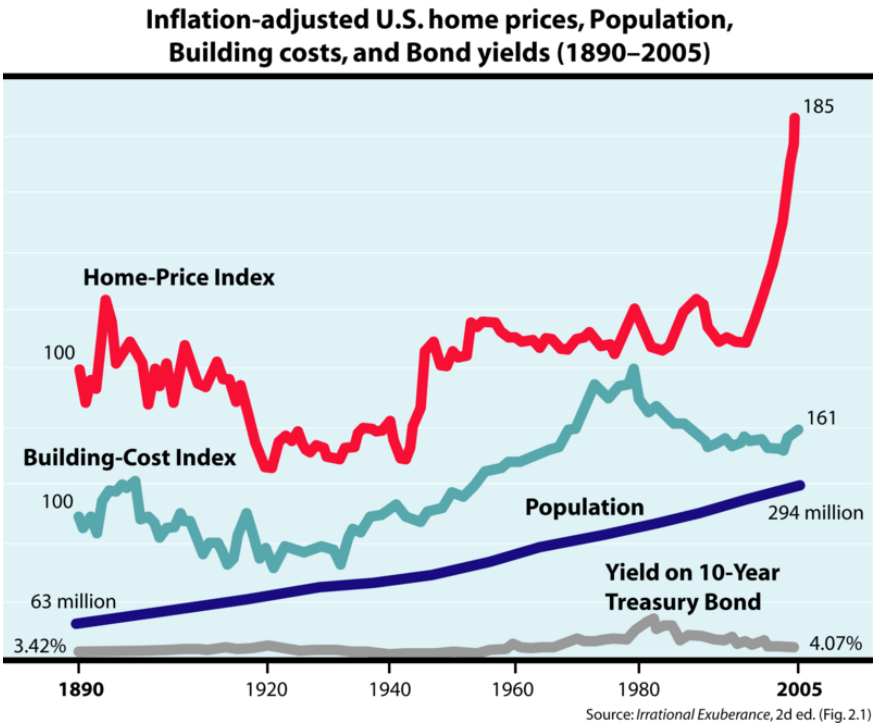
An example of how intensely the commodification of the home has accelerated in Ireland since the 1960s is that in 2005, the year that Priory Hall apartment complex was being built, 81,000 housing units were completed in Ireland. This rate of construction represents one of the highest per capita in the world and was unprecedented for any Western economy in the twenty-first century (Corcoran et al. 2007:249). By way of contrast McGrath notes that in 1960 Ireland had the smallest house-building industry in western Europe per capita (McGrath 1992:27). A key element in making this volume of construction possible during the Celtic Tiger was a system of building self-regulation which relied on a relationship of misplaced trust to exist between all of the parties involved from the landfill to completion processes.

While the political will sustained a cultural need for homeownership, meanwhile individual homeowners like Paddy and his wife grew older fully expecting that their children would in turn purchase houses. Undoubtedly people like Paddy, and his family, were empowered through the tenant purchase scheme but by the advent of the Priory Hall debacle, some forty years later, the commodification of the home had significantly intensified. It only subsequently struck me, having met Paddy more than a half dozen times, that he never once mentioned his dream home but frequently referred to his new home. By the twenty-first century the once greatly lauded opening up of the economy, and the practical exercise of the tenant purchase scheme had largely been forgotten, but their ramifications had yet to be fully played out on both a national and world stage where many people's hopes and dreams revolved around

home and ownership. By the dawn of the twenty-first century, Irish people, like the residents of Priory Hall, were continuing to buy houses. Concurrently, as a country within Europe, Ireland has also forged substantial trade links with the United States. So much so that in July 2000 when the then Enterprise Minister Mary Harney went on an official visit to the United States she told a meeting of the American Bar Association that, geographically, "We (The Irish people) are closer to Berlin than Boston. Spiritually, we are probably a lot closer to Boston than Berlin" (quoted in Allen 2003:64).

At the time of Harney's speech the Celtic Tiger was being reengineered with construction taking over as the main driver of the economy. But there was also a broader international trend in relation to housing unfolding at the same time. The difference since Paddy and Ena's time was that people's dream homes had increasingly become subject to the forces of the free market. Houses, once homes, had now transformed into assets and as such did not necessarily need people to populate them.

Figure 7: Irrational Exuberance



(source:Shiller 2005)

Closer to Boston than Berlin

The graph above is from economist Robert Shiller's book entitled *Irrational Exuberance*. Schiller's graph demonstrates how from the late 1990s to 2005 inflation-adjusted U.S. home prices escalated in an unprecedented manner. According to Schiller, inflation-adjusted U.S. home prices increased 0.4% per year from 1890 to 2005 and 0.7% per year from 1940 to 2004 (Schiller 2005:5). In essence, Schiller sketches how in the U.S. the humble home was suddenly catapulted into the free market as an asset. He further captures the relationships between U.S. population,

inflation-adjusted U.S. home prices, building costs, and inflation on 10-year Treasury bonds.

Another consideration of how an international root cause for credit and housing booms could lie in the jettisoning of the Bretton Woods system in the early 1970s. The Bretton Woods Conference was the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference held in 1944 between 44 Allied nations. It instituted a fixed exchange-rate system and there was a trade constraint on the amount of credit that could be created. The idea was to force governments to impose credit control and thereby create financial order after the conclusion of World War II. This form of international credit control was dispensed with in the 1970s and the 1980s due to the rise of neo-liberalism.

In 'The Vanishing Middle Class' (Warren 2009), United States Senator Elizabeth Warren considers that from that time there began a government incentive to flatten the earning capacity of the middle class. As a direct result, the relationship between fixed expenses and income for families has drastically altered. This policy has routinely driven families into debt. As a result selling debt to the middle classes has become a bonanza within consumer banking and as a result the middle classes struggle to manage (Warren 2009). Warren states that the middle class in the United States is under attack from consumer banking and underscores this activity as the "squeezing of the middle classes" (Warren 2009).

This activity is evidenced in the documentary *The Flaw* (2010). This documentary takes its title from the testimony of Alan Greenspan to U.S. Congress in which he conceded, during a congressional hearing, to a defect in the worlds free market model which he nominates as a flaw. Greenspan admitted that for forty years he worked to the assumption that the financial system was self-regulating. It was not,

he felt, in his remit to do anything about bubbles. For Greenspan, a central bank should only involve itself with asset prices when prices showed signs of falling. This ideology demonstrates how a credit boom can effortlessly infiltrate markets and property with ease.

The Flaw examined this asset rising belief that appeared to have taken hold by the twenty-first century. It captures a time when people seemed to readily believe that their dream homes would only ever rise in value and that mortgages, no matter the size, were a safe investment. Importantly, *The Flaw* underscores ways in which the most recent boom and bust was closely tied up with the growing inequality of the U.S. population that emerged in the 1980s as a consequence of Bretton Woods being abandoned. In the USA as wages became lower people came to habitually rely on credit. Lower wages fuelled a borrowing frenzy ultimately creating subprime loans which are invisible packaged bundles of good and bad debt. Meanwhile, the rich needing high-yielding assets snap up the mortgage of people who lose their homes. Money, generally, is just playing around in the asset market. *The Flaw* highlights how bad an idea it is to lend people excessive amounts of money at low interest rates by showing the ramifications for the U.S. middle classes forced into debt.

Nevertheless many people in the USA, as in Ireland, became overly preoccupied with missing their opportunity to 'get on the ladder.' Another A key difference between the U.S. and the Irish experience of the increasing commodification of the home is that, in Ireland, building deregulation, framed in the language of self-regulation, had given way to poor regulation enforcement. Loose regulation was not necessarily even being applied, let alone checked, certainly not in the case of Priory Hall. In fact, by the time Priory Hall apartment complex was being built less than 14% of new builds in Ireland were being routinely inspected. In

contrast, in the U.S. and also in Great Britain, 100% of new houses are subject to inspection. Importantly, in the U.S. the property market operates on the basis of non-recourse loans, but in Ireland this does not apply, leaving Irish mortgage holders liable for the sum borrowed regardless of the value of the property at any given time.

Another salient difference between Ireland and the U.S. is that, in Ireland, alongside a domestic economic and international crisis, homes, like those in the Priory Hall apartment complex, literally collapsed and no one appeared to be accountable. All of the seven lending institutions involved with Priory Hall residents, doggedly perused these borrowers. All this despite the fact their properties were worthless. Ordinary people were sold dangerous homes. Sadly the Priory Hall experience exemplifies this level of destruction and heartbreak at ground level.

In the case of Priory Hall with just a single show apartment on display for the potential buyers, there was no sense of the unfinished and dangerous building site, which most of the residents ended up living in for some four years prior to their evacuation. Instead, people were lured by poetic images indexing dream homes complete with a perfect finish. The Priory Hall brochure transported future residents into “large light-filled rooms” whilst offering “authentic connections” with the street and its various shop fronts. Indeed an apartment within the Priory Hall complex appeared to be truly flawless.

Celtic Flaw

Mandy’s eyes filled up with tears, as she reached for the scrapbook once more and reopening the brochure recalled the ways in which Priory Hall seemed: more modern, more distinct and more individual. She wept, “I put my blood, tears and sweat into

that apartment. I must have been mad but sure we were told by everyone, especially the media, to buy, buy, buy or be left out in the cold forever!" She continued, "Look at the size of this brochure – it's huge! I never clocked that before. Of course there were no show houses because there was nothing like it. It was my house and I sobbed when I left", she said, tears now running down her face. I asked Mandy would she talk me through the evacuation day, "Oh God", she shuddered "I will never forget that day. Why didn't they just call it eviction day. I mean, after all, we were never allowed back." Initially the residents were told that the work needed on their homes could take from five weeks up to three months. She recalled how while still reeling over the shock of the court evacuation order all 249 Priory Hall residents "scrambled like crazy" from Friday to Sunday trying to pack up belongings with no idea where they would sleep or live from the following Monday. That Monday, the judge ordered the Council to provide accommodation for the residents over its official's strenuous objections. "Only then," stressed Mandy, "did we learn that we were being given some accommodation". At that stage, "I was out of my mind with worry and trying to decide what things to take and what to leave behind." We then learnt, in court, that we were all temporarily moving to a hotel. Little did we realise that we would still be living temporarily two years later. Mandy went on to outline what seemed like a long moment of chaos collapsed into the subsequent weeks, months and what turned out to be the following two years.

The following chapter, 'The Politics of Protest in *Priory Hell'* considers how, as a result of being pitched together under desperate circumstances, the Priory Hall Residents' Committee was formed and the residents began to raise awareness through different forms of protest which were mainly supported through kinship connections. This chapter considers how an initial three month evacuation turned into two years of

precariousness and sickening uncertainty for the Priory Hall residents. “Odd to say” said Mandy, drying her eyes, “the eviction was probably the best thing that happened to us because the Council had put everybody into one place and it gave us a chance to get organised.” Meanwhile, the Council was preoccupied with trying to get out of the responsibility of paying the accommodation costs for the Priory Hall residents. “But with the protests we really stuck together” said Mandy, shutting the scrapbook definitively, “and I tell you one thing neither the government nor the Council ever expected that!”

Chapter 2: The Politics of Protest in *Priory Hell*

> I mean the thing that always surprised me about the Priory Hall protests was the ways we were described in the media. We were always referred to as having dignity and the news people sounded so surprised that we displayed such decorum and respectability. What did they expect, a brick through a window? Although what really killed me about Priory Hall is my pride. I was so ashamed. I worked my arse off and in the end when we had to evacuate, the media gave the impression that we were people from council houses who needed to be relocated. I have no problem with these people; just that I saved and saved to scrimp that deposit together and I'm sorry but then I just got thrown out and that deposit money is gone forever.
> - Joe, Priory Hall Resident's Committee Member, April 2014

Reclaiming Respectability

Five key elements surround the evacuation of the Priory Hall apartment complex. Firstly, the formal and legal processes which finally led to the evacuation; secondly, the events of that moving weekend; thirdly, how this sudden move brought about the Priory Hall Residents' Committee; fourthly, the particular types of political protests orchestrated by these people; and, finally, throughout this chapter, I am going to argue that driven by basic kinship connections, and a shared experience of uncertainty plus mortgage debt, the Priory Hall residents searched for their lost sense of respectability through protests.

Marshall Sahlins' stance on kinship (2014) is helpful to think with in relation to the type of kinship connections the Priory Hall residents and their families forged. For Sahlins, "the specific quality of kinship is "mutuality of being": kinfolk are persons who participate intrinsically in each other's existence; they are members of one another" (2014: ix). Sahlins reinforces the idea that kinship is inherently social and that in any society those who count as kin have the capacity to so do not only in

terms of group activities but ontologically as well. For Sahlins, kinship is broader than biological categories because kin are not necessarily related by blood, and kinship networks include non-'family' members. Sahlins uses "mutuality of being" to argue that "kinship is locally constituted, whether by procreation, social construction, or some combination of these" (Sahlins 2014:3). Culture is the essential element through which this quality is channelled. And, if something happens to one kin member it is ontologically experienced by other members within this kin group. Importantly, in defining kinship in this manner, Sahlins (2014: ix) borrows extensively from non-Western ethnographic material. To expand on Sahlins' argument and to apply it within a Western example, I use the quality of "mutuality of being" (Sahlins 2014: ix) to refer to the Priory Hall familial networks, including non-biological neighbours, where this quality is both determined and limited by the ontological experience of being kin and the emotional obligations thereof. For the Priory Hall residents, their neighbours and their families, "mutuality of being" came to represent practices and actions in the everyday world. Before they were evacuated from the development and thereby got to know one another, the neighbours and families of Priory Hall were connected through feelings of fear, uncertainty, stress and abandonment. Once they were evacuated from their homes and housed together they fully realised that they were all expected to continue to repay their mortgages for broken homes. In some ways, however, this mutuality of being could be viewed as double-edged. As a result of the evacuation of Priory Hall residents, the residents were forced to return to family connections. This is an unintended consequence of the whole process for all stakeholders. In being abandoned by the very state agencies they expected to protect them, the Priory Hall residents returned to their kinship connections. The overwhelming support and backing they received through kinship was in many ways

an unanticipated development for their situation. It was, solely, these very kinship connections that helped them to get through the evacuation. In addition, the Priory Hall protests were mainly sustained through these types of kinship connections. That being said, the worry, strain and toll on health which circulated through this mutuality of being quality must not be underestimated. Parents and their family members were often distraught by the stress of debt weighing down on their families. The Priory Hall residents, like their neighbours, came from a position of shameful loss whereas their family members often experienced feelings of utter helplessness. Yet all of these people had to remain strong in the face of uncertainty. Importantly, this quality of mutuality of being was just one aspect which helped mobilise the Priory Hall protests. The other elements were debt and respectability. The salient aspect of the debt worry surrounding the Priory Hall residents was the structurally violent way in which they experienced debt as a grinding daily reality and a moral obligation. Further insights into the situation endured by the Priory Hall residents are provided by David Graeber in his book *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (2012).

David Graeber noted that today debt is written off only when the two parties are equal.[38] It never occurred when one party is poorer than the other unless there was a unilateral type of debt forgiveness. Graeber describes the nature of debt throughout history thus, "The struggle between rich and poor has largely taken the form of conflicts between creditors and debtors – of arguments about the rights and wrongs of interest payments, debt peonage, amnesty, repossession, restitution, the sequestering of sheep, the seizing of vineyards, and the selling of debtors' children into slavery" (Graeber 2012:5). David Graeber underscores the fact that today there is an assumption that debts, in particular between the rich and poor, have to be repaid at all costs and that this appears to be a moral issue despite the fact that throughout history

debt forgiveness routinely occurred. For Graeber, "If history shows anything, it is that there's no better way to justify relations founded on violence, to make relations seem moral, than by reframing them in the language of debt—above all, because it immediately makes it seem that it's the victim who's doing something wrong" (Graeber 2012:5). Graeber posited that the role of violence, through wars and slavery, has been pivotal in shaping the institution we call the economy. Although today in a modern nation state this violence appears to be absent, in reality it is an invisible force. Graeber proposes that the key difference between today and the previous 5,000 years of debt is that contemporary debt between equals remains sacred, but contra to historical experiences there is, today, no political will to renegotiate debts between the poor and rich. This lack of a mechanism to re-set society financially has created a new type of political system, and today societies are divided into creditors and debtors where the people at the bottom get hurt. For Graeber, the experience of violence is linked to the fact that one cannot negotiate if one is in an inferior position.

The Priory Hall residents found themselves in an inferior position to their lending institutions. As a result, the banks refused to negotiate with them. Research participants frequently made reference to the fact that, for them, as a direct result of losing their homes their sense of worth had somehow been diminished. To add to this, these people had to decide whether to continue paying their mortgages for broken homes. Meanwhile the banks communicated in an aggressive way with threats and automated forms of communication. They could do so because the law was on their side. The Priory Hall residents felt abandoned by the very state agencies, which included some of the banks, that they had assumed would protect them. This feeling of abandonment became heightened due to their additional worry that in so publicly losing their homes that they had also lost of a certain sense of respectability. This

respectability had vanished alongside their dream homes. It is, therefore, at this point helpful to consider the meaning behind the quality of 'respectability' within an Irish context.

Irish respectability

An unusual aspect of the case of Priory Hall debacle was that the residents had only ever wished to quietly pay off their mortgages. It was an alien concept for these families to consider protesting by refusing to honour their repayments, or to seek moratoriums. For these homeowners, not paying their mortgages played on their minds, as they saw themselves stepping outside of a particular stratum within Irish traditional society, that of a respectable home owner behaving appropriately. On the day of their evacuation, none of the Priory Hall residents were in mortgage arrears. Yet eighteen months post-evacuation, crippling mortgage debt had continued to collectively accumulate. As Michael from the Priory Hall Residents' Committee stressed,

> Before I was evicted I never missed a mortgage payment in my life. Now I get letters from the bank's arrears department. So families who have already lost their homes and done nothing wrong are falling further and further into debt. Collectively today the residents are in debt over a million more to their banks.
>
> - Michael, Priory Hall Resident's Committee Member, May 2013

The rising tide of debt combined with the shame of so publicly losing their homes led many of my research participants to frequently comment on a loss of respectability. They felt a moral obligation to pay back or restructure their debts, but they were also publicly shamed into admitting that their homes were not fit for purpose. They had all secretly suspected for four years prior to the evacuation that this was the case, but

they had wanted to believe that their never-ending building issues were ultimately solvable. Once the media coverage of their crude evacuation put them under a public spotlight they could no longer hide inside their crumbling homes.

In most governmental dealings with the Priory Hall residents, the Irish state was represented by the Council which seriously underestimated the tenacity of the Priory Hall kinship connections. The case of Priory Hall was curious in this regard because these people were publicly humiliated by a botched evacuation which resulted in them all coming together under the same roof for five weeks. As one man said to me, "Without my family and friends, after the evacuation I would have had nothing. Jesus, I would have been nothing." The experience of the togetherness of kinship, that mutuality of being quality somehow kept the idea, for the Priory Hall residents, that they still commanded some level of respectability. Another research participant flatly stated,

> Let me say that I never wanted to turn to the state for help. We did not save and sacrifice to scrape together a deposit, nor did we take out a mortgage so that four years down the line, I would find myself out on the street and relying on my government to house me.
>
> - Maria, Priory Hall resident, December 2011

In an Irish context respectability has been widely written about (Humphreys 1966, Messenger 1969, Brody 1973, Scheper-Hughes 2001, Inglis 1998, Inglis 2005, Ferriter 2012) but is often linked to matters of sexual repression. While these works treat one aspect of respectability, namely shame and the body, they do not cover how the ownership of property came to confer material security, social attainment, financial gain and future security. I am interested in respectability in relation to homeownership in Ireland, a largely agrarian society up to the 1970s, in which land,

property and ownership habitually conferred respectability. As Terence Dooley asserts, "The latter half of the 19th century saw the consolidation of the ideology that promoted land as the basis of the nation" (Dooley 2004:3). Dooley is referring to the post-Famine period which for many Irish people is still referred to as 'recent history'.

In his essay entitled 'Lady Gregory's Toothbrush' Colm Tóibín chronicles an account of the Irish Famine (1845-1849) from the diary of Lady Gregory's father-in law, the landlord of Coole Park estate in Gort, Co. Galway,

> I well remember Ppoor wretches being housed up against my demesne wall in wigwams of fir branches. ... There was nothing that I ever saw so horrible as the appearance of those who were suffering from starvation. The skin seemed drawn tight like a drum to the face, which became covered with small light-coloured hairs like a gooseberry. This, and their hollow voices, I can never forget. (Tóbín 2002:31).

It is worth noting that the starving, poorly clad people described above were, usually the very particular type of landless people who disappeared as a direct result of the Famine, namely the cottier or labourer class of more than two million people. The cottier people had lived a very simple life, married from sixteen years of age, lived in earthen and turf cabins which could be carved out of the ground in just two days, and had little to no material possessions bar perhaps a stool and a pot. Importantly, the cottier people subdivided their meagre rented land, had large families and lived solely on a diet of potatoes. They had no backup plan because they owned nothing. These people were frequently ridiculed throughout popular British literature as representing native Irish in magazines such as *Punch*.[39]

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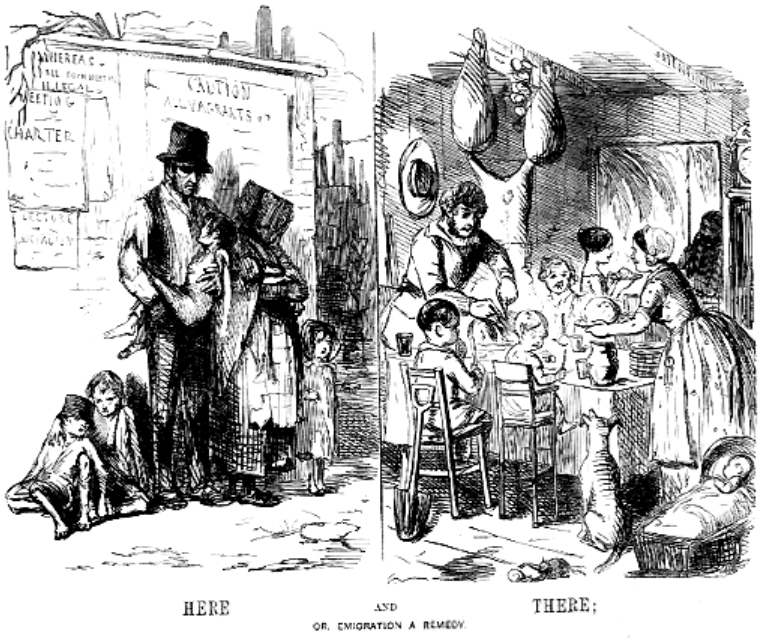
Figure 8: Here and There; or, Emigration a Remedy



(Source: Punch, July 15, 1848)

According to Irish historian Tim Pat Coogan (2013:187), one reason behind such dehumanising propaganda was to make unreasonable policy and law seem necessary and just.[40] There was a deep sense of humiliation associated with the Irish Famine not solely because the landless had died publicly and shamefully destitute but also because they had been forced off the land. In short, without access to a decent home Irish people, through popular literature such as *Punch*, were routinely depicted as destitute and not 'respectable'. Coogan notes (2013:203) that this image of the Irish lived on in *Punch* even forty years post-famine with articles, such as the following, describing typical itinerant Irish traits,

> It belongs in fact to a tribe of Irish savages, the lowest species of the Irish Yahoo. When conversing with its kind it talks a sort of gibberish. It is moreover, a climbing animal and may sometimes be seen ascending a ladder with a hod of bricks. The Irish Yahoo generally confines itself within the limits of its own colony, except when it goes out of them to get its living. (quoted in Coogan 2013:203)

Land or homeownership came to signify social attainment, certainty, stability and above all else, indexed respectability. Moreover, as Roy Foster asserts, "The values, beliefs and influence of the farming class in post-Famine Ireland entered their own ascendancy, mediated through Church, social institutions and, eventually, politics" (Foster 1989:344). The people left behind post-Famine, re-invented themselves as respectable, stable, hardworking, small farmers, vehemently opposed to the subdivision of land and intent on securing, often through arranged marriages, a firm material basis for marriage. In essence, the Famine enabled a revolution in Irish farming and family life. With the end of subdivision, access to land naturally became more restricted and an attitude to land ownership, as opposed to stewardship, was a primary measure of respectability.

Irish poet Padraic Colum's 1906 poem entitled 'An Old Woman of the Roads' was ranked number eleven in *The Irish Times* 1999 survey of the nation's hundred favourite Irish poems (Keating 2006). In fact, his work remained on the Irish national school curriculum up to the 1980s. It tells the story of a homeless woman drifting and wishing for a life purpose, beginning with, "O, to have a little house! To own the hearth and stool and all. The heaped up sods against the fire. The pile of turf against the wall!" (Colum 1953:90). Sociologist Kieran Keohane, in analysing Colum's poem, reminds us how this poet, "... perhaps unintentionally, pinpointed a key wellspring of evil in Irish culture" (Keohane 2009:133), which is the necessity to own a property

and everything inside the home in order to be respectable. For Keohane, "This is a reminder that private ownership is the very cornerstone of Irish morality, and a principle laid down as a foundation in the Constitution" (Keohane 2009:133). But it is worth considering that this poem was written thirty years prior to Éamon de Valera's 1937 Constitution. Colum's poem ends with a caveat for those foolish enough not to work hard and gain a home and material processions:

> Och! But I'm weary of mist and dark,
> And roads where there's never a house nor bush.
> And tired I am of bog and road,
> And the crying wind and the lonesome hush.
> And I am praying to God on high,
> And I am praying Him night and day,
> For a little house a house of my own,
> Out of the wind's and the rain's way. (Colum [1906] 1953:90).

Colum's popular poem reveals how homeownership is a post-Famine concept and with a cultural import beyond its use value.

Arguably the theatre is a realm of high culture which, like poetry, also embodied values of homeownership. Irish playwright such as John B. Keane's play *'The Field'* is set in 1930s Kerry. Like most of Keane's work this play is believed to be based on a true story and is about a small farmer, named the Bull McCabe, who murders an American businessman planning to buy the field he leases. The drama focuses, not on the heinous crime, but on the fact that no decent local person would have been foolish enough to bid against The Bull who defends his murderous struggle with, "I watched this field for forty years and my father watched it for forty more. I know every rib of grass and every thistle and every whitethorn bush that bounds it. There's a shamrock in the South-West corner" (Keane 1990:112). For the Bull McCabe losing his tiny lease of land would have meant losing his respectability in the

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community; murder was a better option and the yank who bought the land had, after all, been warned.

In the 1930s Conrad Arensberg wrote *The Irish Countryman* and observed a social system that identifies men as boys if they have not yet bought over the land from their parents. Only then would he grow into full adult status (Arensberg 1967:654). Land acquisition was that which deemed men to be separated from the boys, to be responsible and respectable adults, not solely family and community. Forty years after Arensberg's analysis, Nancy Scheper-Hughes observed that in Ireland, "The prevailing land tenure system is based on almost universal occupier-ownership of land" (Scheper-Hughes: 2001:104). Land afforded status and once a person had achieved the status of ownership it was intrinsically tied into respectability, how people perceived themselves within their community and also how their community perceived them. I realise that these examples pertain in particular to men but it is notable that my research participants frequently used the term 'half–baked', meaning incomplete, to refer to people who had yet to purchase their homes.

In the case of Priory Hall respectability and home indexed one another once the Priory Hall residents' plight became public. Newspapers frequently referred to the Priory Hall residents as having 'great dignity,' which often irked my research participants. By the time of the Priory Hall evacuation, most of the residents had already endured four years of ongoing building quality issues with their homes. One man recalled that the worst aspect of living through that time was, oddly, not his insurance company's refusal to pay out, but the pending sense of shame in case he received visitors. His home had transformed into, "... at best a cross between a building site and a squat." Because his home was in a permanent state of disrepair he fretted about any potential visit from family or friends. For him, his home rarely

appeared like the dwelling of "someone even half-respectable". The opinion of his family and friends regarding the condition of his abode unsettled him. His private life impacted negatively on his social life so he desperately tried to keep the two spheres separate. Of course, he and his neighbours could no longer separate the invisible sphere of their crumbling homes from searing visibility once they found themselves publicly evacuated in such an undignified fashion.

Evacuation

In 2007 the Council bought twenty-six of the Priory Hall apartments for social housing, but by December 2009 it evacuated its tenants due to fire safety concerns.[41] As a result, for the following two years, a stand-off as to who was responsible ensued between the Council and the builder. Meanwhile the private owners remained in a fire hazard.[42] Finally, however, by 17 October 2011 the Council was forced to seek a court order to evacuate the private residents because the simple fact that their lives were potentially in danger could no longer be ignored. The week of the evacuation the Council issued all the Priory Hall homeowners with letters stating that their homes were no longer habitable, therefore, the Council would be going to court to have them all removed. Significantly, this letter omitted when this event would happen or what preparation was necessary. One resident said,

> The days leading up to the evacuation still have a sense of unreality about them. Everyone was in a panic. When would the evacuation happen? Would it be before Christmas? Where would we go? No one could provide answers. The Council refused to meet with us and we were never given any indication of when the court action might happen.
>
> - Priory Hall resident, December 2011

In fact, many of the residents first heard about their pending evacuation on their car radios while driving home from work. One woman recalled, “I don’t know how I didn’t crash into the car in front when I heard on the evening news”, “Priory Hall apartments to be evacuated today.” “The Council had gone to the court to evict us and throw us out onto the streets, (but legally mind!)”. Another resident shared a similar experience,

> I learnt of my family’s fate that Friday when I turned on the six o’clock news. The segment stated that the chief fire officer had told the judge that a fire could spread throughout the entire apartment complex in minutes and a fire engine had been ordered to remain on site until the following Monday when we had all been evacuated. This news shook me to the core. The fact that our children had been living in our home with such a threat hanging over them filled me with both guilt and anger. Guilt as a parent that, unknown to me, I had put my children at risk, and anger that the Council had left me and my family in such danger for nearly two years without ever communicating the full extent of the dire circumstances.
>
> - Sheila, Priory Hall resident, May 2012

All the residents abruptly discovered that they had to evacuate within the same 48 hour period. Some 249 people, including 87 children were given 48 hours to pack up their lives and leave the place they had called home for the previous four years. As well as 60 owner-occupier families the builder had some 50-60 apartments rented out privately. There were also roughly twenty buy to let apartments some of which were privately rented. All these people were initially told that they could return to their homes within five weeks so they were also trying to decide which possessions to leave behind. There was a real sense that family and friends were hastily contacted.

Figure 9: The Moving Weekend 1

(Source: Priory Hall Facebook page)

The scene above is a photograph from the Priory Hall Facebook page which captures that ad-hoc moving weekend. It is described below as,

> Moving vans, families and friends came in droves to help empty hundreds of apartments. Yet, despite the chaos, people waited patiently for others to load their cars and create some space. Neighbours and the on-duty fire officers offered help where they could, and despite the long delays, tempers never flared. We had no idea where to go or what to do with all our possessions. Luckily, our friends and family rallied round.
>
> - Ann, Priory Hall resident, May 2012

This shock event proved overwhelming for some residents who reverted back to 'a childlike reliance' on their parents as indexed below,

> Imagine ringing your Da or brother on a Friday afternoon to come over and give a hand quick 'cause we all have to move. Imagine not having family to rely on. It was chaotic, sad and confusing but I thought I would go home in five weeks. To be honest my Da had to organise it. I couldn't do anything. I was just frozen, sick with fright.
>
> - Ann, Priory Hall resident, May 2012

Some parents unquestionably resumed decision making roles within their children's lives. They scrambled to call in favours and begged relations wide and far to come and lend practical assistance. Importantly, all of this panic temporarily overshadowed the fact that these people were now both homeless, and the owners of worthless homes.

Figure 10: The Moving Weekend 2

(Source: Priory Hall Facebook page)

The scene above, from the Priory Hall facebook page, could be straight out of John Steinbeck's 1939 novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. It could believably be a horse and cart

while meanwhile the young boy resembles ‘an Okie’, a person from Oklahoma forced to flee the land due to debt, uncertainity and fear. In Steinbeck’s work, when their land becomes untenable crop-farmer families are forced to hastily relocate in the hope of finding a better future. They lose everything as the banks forclose. In one scene, a man named Tom Joad seeks his family and is told that they hurridly moved. When I saw the above photograph I was reminded of Steinbeck’s words, “Took three trips with your Uncle John’s wagon” (Steinbeck 2006 [1939]).

The Priory Hall moving weekend was summed up by one resident as a logistical nightmare,

> Packing up your house alongside hundreds of others; waiting for vans or cars or what have you to get in or out of spaces. I was screwed without my brothers. And of course, the best part, not having a fucking clue where we were going to live after Monday. .
>
> - Ann, Priory Hall resident, May 2012

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The residents had been told by the court to pack up and leave their homes but it was left up to them to find indefinite alternative accommodation. In other words, despite going to the courts, seeking an immediate evacuation, the Council, which is also the housing authority, had no evacuation plan in place. This was because the Council claimed to have no responsibility for housing the eighty-five owner-occupier families of Priory Hall consisting mainly of young couples and professionals. The following Monday in court, Council representatives told the presiding Judge, Mr Justice Nicholas Kearns, that in ordering evacuation through the courts it had effectively performed the only duty of care necessary for these people. The Council then called on a representative from ‘Hayes Higgins Partnership Consulting Engineers’ to act as an expert witness on behalf of the Council. This consulting firm had acted in the role

of independent appraiser on the Priory Hall apartment blocks, on behalf of the Council, since January 2011 but it had not been involved in the initial build of Priory Hall. By that time two reports had been prepared for the Council by Hayes Higgins. The Council did not supply the court with a report but instead called upon one of the engineers involved to outline the following information to the judge:

> Hayes Higgins Partnership was initially appointed to undertake, supervise and report on investigative works to all apartments and the overall development at Priory Hall, Dublin 13.
>
> The inspection works that took place included:
>
> 1. Structural Engineering opinion on development
> 2. Architectural opinion on development
> 3. Mechanical Engineering opinion on development
> 4. Electrical Engineering opinion on development
> 5. Fire Safety opinion on development
>
> Once these investigative works were completed, Hayes Higgins Partnership recommended that the necessary work would include
>
> 1. Removal of all brickwork & rendered facades and replacement with new structurally sound and correctly insulated external finishes.
> 2. Upgrade of drainage within development.
> 3. Full inspection of suitability of concrete structural frame to building with associated remedial works where required.
> 4. Replacement of all roof coverings
> 5. Fire protection works to ensure apartments and development comply with TGD Part B items such as creating fire protected lobbies, fire protection within the external cavity wall, suitable detection and alarm systems etc.
> 6. All stairs and associated handrails to be removed and replaced with correctly designed elements.
> 7. Full Mechanical refit to be undertaken to all apartments, common areas and basement car parks.
> 8. Electrical refit to be undertaken to all apartments, common areas and basement car parks.
> 9. All lifts to be renewed or replaced
> 10. All windows repaired or replaced
> 11. All balconies to be insulated and correct handrails installed

The engineer, on behalf of Hayes Higgins, concluded stating that his company had begun initial investigations into the possible presence of Pyrite within the Priory Hall

development. In the court there were various levels of complexities the day of the evacuation including the fact that the builder and developer Thomas McFeely was still, at that point, claiming to be remediating the buildings. McFeely, a director of Coalport Building Company Ltd, which developed the Priory Hall complex of 187 apartments at Donaghmede, Dublin, told the judge that he would put resources in place for the works. Mr McFeely told the court he learned about the problems with the external walls only on Wednesday and his own consulting engineers had certified the building as structurally sound. He would have a civil engineer on site to deal with the remedial works and his firm would be carrying them out. The court then heard that a programme of works to rectify non-compliance with fire safety certificates had been agreed between a fire safety consultant working on behalf of Coalport with Donal Casey, a fire safety inspector with the Council who inspected Priory Hall. Mr Casey told the court last that any fire could swiftly spread through the entire complex due to defects with fire safety barriers in the external walls. Mr Casey told the court that three fire safety notices were served in September 2009 and a programme to address serious breaches was agreed but not all of the works were carried out. Mr Justice Kearns said the "real scandal" was a situation where fire safety breaches were ongoing since 2009. The judge was referring to the fact that the Council had removed their tenants two years previously. Brendan Finlay, a fire consultant for the developers of the development, then told the court about a schedule of works that had been agreed with the fire service. He said phase one of the works involved removing the external walls to take away the risk of fire spreading and installing enhanced fire alarms and smoke detectors. He said this would take five weeks. Mr Justice Kearns ordered the works to be completed by 28 November and said the High Court would be monitoring the progress of the works on a week-by-week basis. Conleth Bradley SC,

for the Council, said emergency accommodation had been organised at the Regency Hotel in north Dublin. The accommodation would cost about €200,000. Mr Bradley then added that the Council was not responsible for the carrying out of the works and not in a position to pay for the temporary accommodation.

Mr Justice Kearns felt quite strongly about the plight of the Priory Hall residents and he stated that this was an "unprecedented situation." Justice Kearns ordered the shell-shocked Council representatives to assume immediate responsibility, and cost, for housing the Priory Hall residents until a more satisfactory solution could be found. Mr Justice Kearns was told by lawyers for the Council that there were already 8,000 people on the housing list, to which the judge replied that nevertheless the Priory Hall residents must be taken care of, and he added that it was very traumatic for people to be put out of their homes. He then flatly stated, "We haven't seen this situation in Ireland in recent centuries", intimating to Ireland's history as an ex-colony when native people were driven off the land due to famine and eviction. The judge then ordered the Council to continue to pay the cost of accommodating the residents while the works were going on, because the builders and developers had stated that they were unable to fund their accommodation. Justice Kearns said he was not having the residents leaving court without knowing where they were going and worrying that they would have to pay the cost of the accommodation. He added that as the Council had made this application and that this was one of the most obvious things they should have planned in advance.

The Priory Hall residents hurriedly organized themselves and their families to move there throughout the course of that Monday. One resident said, "I didn't really think about what it would be like. I was just so pleased to have some sort of temporary base, and the kids still had school." Importantly, the fact that all of the

residents were put together separates the Priory Hall case from the myriad of other groups of people, potentially tens of thousands, throughout Ireland, currently realising that their homes were badly built during the boom. This is because the Council were anxious to quickly satisfy a court order. They placed everyone together in a nearby hotel. They remained living there for a five-week period. This knee jerk reaction proved to be an invaluable asset for the mobilization of the Priory Hall residents. This very act enabled them to recognise the quality of "mutuality of being" (Sahlins 2014: ix) in one another which ultimately created the environment for their primary sociality and future spirit of resistance. They vowed to stick together as a group that had experienced significant public and violent humiliation. As Michael from the Residents' Committee said, "It was really the bonds forged in that hotel that kept us going. The only way we were ever going to get out of this was if we stuck together as a group."

This hotel accommodation was not suitable for the sudden arrival of more than eighty-five families. The Priory Hall residents felt like displaced people, refugees with no agency over their present or future. This, for them, was impossible to comprehend because they had spent all of their adult lives saving to buy homes, in a democratic state, in order to feel secure. When they discovered that the state would not help them they felt as though they had been utterly abandoned. For that reason, they felt that they had become refugees in their own country, forced out of their own homes, ignored by their own government and intimidated by the seven lending institutions involved.

Figure 11: Dáil Protest

(Source: Priory Hall Facebook page)

That moving Monday hundreds of families sporadically arrived at the hotel and they were greeted by uninformed staff. Entire families were booked into single rooms and the day proved to be almost as chaotic as the evacuation. Two of the Priory Hall residents in that hotel had been trying to raise awareness, for several years, about the never-ending building issues throughout the Priory Hall apartment complex. These women contacted three other residents and asked them to help set up the Priory Hall Residents' Committee. One of the newer committee members, named Michael, who subsequently became Priory Hall's charismatic media spokesperson said,

> In that moment, those two formidable women were like generals and I realised I didn't really know any of my neighbours while I lived in Priory Hall. Myself and my wife went out to work every day and I went to college at night. Never really made the time or effort to get to know my neighbours and I think it was the same for a lot of people.

In the midst of complete chaos the level-headed Priory Hall Residents' Committee came together and chaired their first meeting. In so doing they accepted a mandate to represent the Priory Hall residents in an egalitarian manner. "Of course", one committee member noted retrospectively, "some people just wanted to continue to stick their heads in the sand, me too for a couple of years despite the fact the place was falling around my ears. But I had to come on board when we all became homeless." These five men and women felt obliged to 'step up' and fight the system which they felt had failed them spectacularly.

For the next two weeks, from their temporary hotel base, the Priory Hall Residents' Committee bombarded the public's consciousness through slots on both national radio and television programmes. During that time, several people came forward to offer their expertise pro bono, most significantly the prolific David Hall of the Irish Mortgage Holders' Organisation, and Michael Dowling of Mortgage and Financial Services Ltd. The Irish Mortgage Holders Organisation is a not-for-profit organisation which aims to facilitate independent mortgage/debt resolution between lenders/creditors and mortgage holders. Michael Dowling's company is a firm of independent financial advisors. Both men gave freely of their time, resources and experience to the Priory Hall residents for the following four years. David Hall and Michael Dowling and their associates communicated continually with the seven lending institutions involved in Priory Hall. They tried to find a solution, but the banks just wanted their mortgages repaid at any cost. Also members of the legal profession came on board with the Priory Hall Residents' Committee and represented them in court, pro bono, over the following two years. In an early radio interview one of the Committee Members was asked two questions which framed how the residents felt and what they wished to achieve. Firstly, "What toll has this situation taken?"

Nuala replied, “It’s unbelievable. I mean you are not sleeping. You are okay one minute, crying the next and your future is, well, you just don’t know what is going to happen.” The second question was, “In a message to the government what would you say?” She responded, “Help us, have some dialogue, get all of the stakeholders around the table, and let’s find a solution.” Yet despite significant intellectual support or, to borrow from Pierre Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital at the disposal of the Priory Hall Resident’ Committee from mortgage and legal experts, through to national television and radio contributions two weeks post evacuation government officials had not meaningfully engaged with the Committee. Neither did their radio and television appeals appear to be raising a wider social consciousness concerned about Priory Hall.

After five weeks the residents learned, once more through the media, that the Council had arranged to move most of them into empty NAMA properties to serve as on-going temporary accommodation. One woman said, “On top of everything else we had to keep relying on what family and friends heard on the news for us to find out our fate.” For another resident, “This was just shocking. We looked like the homeless, and were ferried around from Billy to Jack, like spongers.” Many of the residents felt a sense of double shame because they had proved themselves to be independent yet now they had nowhere to go and felt that the media perceived them as destitute victims awaiting state handouts.

Importantly, the lack of communication by the Council was another key reason why the residents connected so quickly to their Committee members. They felt increasingly alienated and insulted by what they experienced as continual Council-stonewalling. This was despite the fact that my research participants appeared to have behaved like model citizens. They had saved deposits and bought family homes. They had paid their taxes and paid their bills. They worked every day and contributed to the

Irish economy. When they discovered that their homes were faulty they reasonably tried to locate the relevant sources. They implored with the insurance companies, the Council, the builder, relevant state ministers and their offices to meaningfully engage with them. In addition, throughout this time, neither the builder nor the Council would take responsibility for the significant building defects throughout the entire Priory Hall apartment complex. In court both parties claimed that neither could fund the level of repairs necessary. Furthermore, both of these parties balked at the prospect of paying for the resident's temporary accommodation. The Priory Hall residents, therefore, had no choice but to reasonably call on the wider public to help them. When all these efforts failed the Priory Hall Residents' Committee got together with other Priory Hall residents and various kin members and they agreed to step outside their prescribed social roles. They wanted to be invisible but the absurdity of their situation forced them out onto the streets. They took to these streets and protested. In so doing they highlighted the potential for betrayal coded into the very system into which they had so heavily invested. I suggest that the particular type of protests orchestrated by the Priory Hall Residents' Committee, and maintained solely through their kinship connections, imagined their lost feelings of respectability. Of course, on some level, they believed that if they took to the streets social consciousness and fairness would surely follow in their wake. In addition, throughout their particular protest types they sought and intermittently renewed a vanished essence of respectability.

Accidental activists

Despite the Priory Hall Residents' Committee appearing open, reasonable and dignified, the government refused to engage in any productive dialogue, in the sense of problem solving, with them. This Committee, however, remained determined to raise public awareness for their plight. Over the course of the first six months, post-evacuation, the Committee organised three verities of protest. They held two local marches in Donaghmede; they ran lunchtime protests, from October 2011 to April 2012, outside government buildings; and, they held candle-lit vigils, in November 2011 and December 2012, outside the main gates of the Priory Hall apartment complex. In addition, two Committee members operated Twitter and Facebook accounts entitled 'Priory Hell,' which frequently called upon external public support for the Priory Hall residents. It never really seemed apparent to the general public that these five Committee members were, in actuality, "accidental activists" to borrow from Faye Ginsburg (2012:107).

> As a group we had no experience lobbying politicians or negotiating with the Council or the banks or dealing with the media. But over a period of two years we have been involved in a campaign to fight for our homes.
>
> - Sheila, Priory Hall Residents' Committee Member, May 2013

These five people found themselves acting on behalf of the other residents within realms with which they were essentially unfamiliar. To help us understand and explain their politics, one may draw loosely on Swartz et al. (1966) working definition of politics which is, "... the processes involved in the determining and implementing public goals ... and the differential achievement and use of power by the members of the group concerned with these goals" (Swartz et al. 1966:7). The public goal of the Priory Hall Residents' Committee was to try and raise awareness about their situation. That said, in attempting to define, or unravel, these people's

politics, I am trying to unpack the everyday complexities of the engagement between individuals and formal state institutions. On the other hand, it is the ambiguities within these relationships rather than definitions that I want to explore. That is, the realities of everyday interactions between real people and abstract concepts, such as states, nations and history. Indeed, more than that, I am trying to tease out the complex relationship between individuals' dreams and world systems, i.e. contemporary capitalism.

The Priory Hall residents were never ostensibly looking to be outside the establishment but, rather, as citizens, they wished to meaningfully engage with the establishment. Their political activation became about much more than their specific homes – the nature of politics (the social contract) itself became the terms and conditions of their activism. For Antonio Gramsci (1971), one way to alter the state is to become part of an organisation that will be absorbed into the hegemony or state. For him, every organisation has the potential to be political because the coming together of two people – from amongst any strata of society – has the potential to organise political thought. This free exchange of ideas, however mundane, could have the potential to ignite political change. Gramsci identified two types of intellectuals: traditional or organic (Gramsci 1971). Traditional intellectuals, as the title suggests, is usually the absorption of intellectuals into the existing hegemonic order. Organic intellectuals may emerge from amongst non-traditional strata of society, but whether or not they influence the ideology of the hegemonic order, their own organisation is inevitably altered as a result of this new type of personnel. Inevitably, however, for Gramsci, the organic intellectuals are the very people with the most potential to ultimately change the existing hegemony (Gramsci 1971). Essentially, the Priory Hall Residents' Committee were organic intellectuals but they were initially propelled

forward through their shared quality of "mutuality of being" (Sahlins 2014: ix) which incorporated feelings of shame, abandonment and the uncertainty of ever increasing debt. This ontological experience is what kept them, not necessarily moving forward, but together. If, as Gramsci also argues, one's social role determines and limits one's position in life, then, for the state, the sole function of the Priory Hall residents was the re-payment of their mortgages in full. The Priory Hall Residents' Committee hoped that through legitimate protest they would create a social consciousness. Initially, they did not wish to upset the status quo but in protesting the state simply saw them as disgruntled consumers engaging in peaceful protest. In reality, through public protest, they became upholders of the status quo.

Also, naturally, it took them time and significant energy to adapt to their new roles in the public arena while holding down full time jobs and juggling family commitments. One member recalled, 'I never in my life spoke in public because I was so shy. But now, there is nowhere in the world I wouldn't stand because being mortified doesn't open any doors.' Another acknowledged that not everyone was directly involved and for him that made sense,

> It's no easy task to speak on behalf of eighty-five families but the limelight is not for everyone and people have kids, families, work. This grinds you down really. It's a full time job because when you get home from work you start work. Have to keep on top of every aspect, media, politicians, the Council, Coalport (developers) and Mr McFeely (builder and developer of the Priory Hall complex); he alone is an unbelievable read.
>
> - Michael, Priory Hall Committee Member, January 2014

These five people were assigned their tasks according to their skills and experience, which consisted of knowledge surrounding housing policy, public speaking, and becoming media savvy; legal issues such as court practices and attending court in order to de-code legal jargon. The fight for awareness surrounding their worthless

apartment complex in Dublin 13 became part of the fabric of their everyday lives. Meanwhile, of course, everyday life went on all around these people. Simple aspects of their-day to-day experiences, however, served to torment them, like the time a resident said to me, in a throw-away comment,

> This is stupid. I know bigger things go on in the world, but I can't hang a picture, place a cushion, because maybe tomorrow I will hear, yet again, on the radio that I have to move. I live out of a cardboard box in a lifeless kip. My only home, in a way, is out protesting. At least with the other residents they understand this empty feeling I cannot shake.

The persistent uncertainty of their collective evacuation meant that, increasingly, their public life became absorbed into their private sphere. For example all of the residents and committee members involved in protesting took the performance of their roles very seriously. Michael said, "I didn't know what I was doing but what drove me was that I made a promise to other families as well." On reflection another committee member described herself laughingly as,

> Imagine me writing to politicians and learning about building regulations and how the Council is run. I was the most typical of quiet mortgage-seeking mice ever! I wanted a mortgage for 35 years and was happy to pay it off quietly. Now I am like some sort of crazy activist. I have discovered an inner me I never knew, and here I am in my thirties. And look at Michael! He's like a professional media person. He, like us, just wanted to live a quiet life and the first time he had to speak in public he nearly died. I am being polite you know he nearly shat himself! Hard to believe now! He is just so brilliant, a truly gifted orator who quite possibly would never have been discovered without Priory Hell! Something great came out of it, seriously. Ordinary people tried to do something extraordinary. And I would do it again. It's important to have self-respect. At the very least be able to look at yourself in a mirror and say ok you tried, now go and do it all over again. Somehow that seemed better than feeling like a failure every day of the week.
>
> - Nuala, Priory Hall Committee Member, January 2013

Veena Das (2007) sought insights into how social and cultural life can be re-created in the aftermath of violent events. She takes the event and shows how subsequently everything is folded into everyday life. Das posits that violent acts are not simply recalled but become interwoven into the practices of everyday life thereby creating different cultural worlds. For Das then private becomes public (Das 2007). Conversely for the Priory Hall Residents' Committee their privacy vanished alongside their homes and all they had left was the ever decreasing hope that the wider public would come to their aid. Their public involvement sucked up their private lives. In a way they lost their private lives altogether and only experienced public ones.

The Priory Hall residents' loss of privacy was symbolised through the particular types of public protests which they orchestrated. Importantly, all of the Priory Hall protests took place in particular types of public spaces, outside the community shops, outside the Priory Hall apartments, outside Parliament buildings and on New Year's Eve 2011 they protested outside the luxury home of the Priory Hall developer and builder. They wanted to show that he still had his home despite the fact that they were locked out from their community through becoming homeless, from their homes, literally, and their futures (ontologically) and increasingly from any meaningful dialogue with the state. Symbolically, these spaces represented and re-enforced feelings surrounding, home, community, kinship, respectability, debt, loss and abandonment. Also the visible sight of the Priory Hall residents being locked out of all of these places framed their protests in a particular way. Within the first six months, post evacuation, the Priory Hall Residents' Committee organised two local protest marches in Donaghmede. The idea behind these protests was to try to attain wider public awareness for their plight. For the Residents' Committee it was vital to "show leadership in chaos and be seen to take control."

Generally, public protests in Ireland are few and far between and not radical. Mass protests, such as the tax marches in the 1970s or currently the water charges marches, are usually held in Dublin. They tend to be pre-approved by the authorities and take a particular form which includes, marching in solidarity, handing out leaflets and holding aloft placards and banners. Violence or anything that resembles it would be frowned upon and at the end of these protest displays people quietly return to their homes. The Priory Hall protestors followed this traditional formula.

The second Priory Hall protest march in Donaghmede was purposefully timed for Sunday, 12 February 2012, because the following week the Council was appealing to the Supreme Court to cease paying rent for the Priory Hall residents. The chosen meeting point was Donaghmede Shopping Centre. This popular shopping place has symbolic inference for local people representing both community interests and is a place for social gathering. Indeed, out of the myriad of meetings I had throughout the course of my research, the majority took place inside 'the Donaghmede Shops.' All of the people gathered outside the shopping centre seemed to hold the similar belief that the Priory Hall residents needed to find a solution. The short one kilometre walk from the shops to the Priory Hall apartment complex comprised of groups of families, neighbours and friends. In reality it resembled an extended family enjoying an amicable Sunday stroll. People of all ages, with lots of small children in tow, chatted amicably and caught up on one another's news. Once we arrived outside the complex, a variety of speakers engaged the crowd with various speech acts from the vantage point of a mobile stage. The speakers included Priory Hall Resident Committee Members, local and national politicians, parents and families of Priory Hall residents and some Priory Hall residents. Some people held home-made signs with messages such as: 'Priory Hell: Shattered Dreams', 'Self Regulation = No Regulation', Priory

Hell: Banana Republic', 'Would you Invest in one of These' and 'Refugees in our own Country.' These powerful signs were not in any way linked to social media in the form of hash tags but were clearly homemade and for the most part held by family members.

Figure 12: Mother and daughter comfort one another during a Priory Hall protest

(Source: Priory Hall Facebook page)

Upon arrival at the Priory Hall apartment complex there were some emotional scenes between some parents and their adult children. One mother upon seeing the distressed condition of the complex broke down completely and her daughter, an apartment owner, comforted her. It was a poignant sight not least given that the daughter was holding her mother with one hand and in the other a poster which read, "What's another year when you have a 30-year mortgage and no home." Here Sahlins' concept of mutuality of being transcends into a contemporary Western example in the form of this mother and daughter's shared ontological uncertainly. In this heart-breaking verisimilitude, a mother felt overwhelmed by her child's pain and loss while her

daughter sought to protect and comfort her mother from her pain. Their lovingly expressed shared mutuality of being, captured in the image below, was beyond words.

Many other supporters had their hands full carrying small children or pushing buggies. Upon arrival to the abandoned complex these protestors automatically transformed into audience members and organised themselves in front of a mobile stage. This is typical of traditional types of protests in Ireland. One of the Priory Hall Residents' Committee Members gratefully welcomed the crowd, acknowledged his appreciation for their ongoing support and assured them that the speakers lined up had important messages to impart. For the next hour the audience were treated to a cacophony of speeches from a variety of people including members of the Priory Hall Residents' Committee, fellow neighbours; parents of apartment owners, local Councillors and national politicians from both houses of Parliament. All of the politicians involved were from across the political spectrum. Clare Daly, Independent Member of Parliament, declared, "Today is the best and the worst type of day because mothers, fathers, grandparents and children had to leave their homes, come out onto the street and demand justice for a forced eviction." Daly shrilled that this was a "scandal". For her it was also, "The best day because so many people had gone out displaying both dignity and a show of strength." There were about 700 hundred people present. The picture below captures the protest being described and is recorded on the Priory Hall Facebook page.

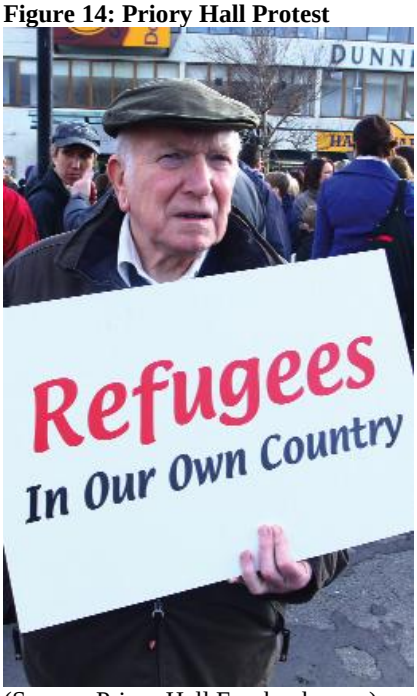
Figure 13: Protest March from Donaghmede shops to the Priory Hall Apartment Complex

(Source: Priory Hall Facebook page)

Other politicians were quick to imply that they were entrenched in the shadows of previous governments' decisions, in particular in relation to building regulations. When one local Labour Councillor cried, "... disgraceful, appalling political behaviour" the crowd cheered and clapped. Otherwise they listened quietly or amused small children as, basically, one after the other, all of the speakers detailed all "that should not have happened" to the Priory Hall residents. Terence Flanagan, Government Member of Parliament, for the Donaghmede constituency was heckled when he said that the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) had written to the residents

expressing sympathy with their situation. After that march, one resident said, "To be honest about 700 odd people turning up. I was really disappointed with that, but it brought home to me that other people have their own problems and either don't have time to or just don't want to know." In reality, as the picture below from the Priory Hall Facebook page captures, it was really the presence of family and friends at these protests that kept them going.

Figure 14: Priory Hall Protest



(Source: Priory Hall Facebook page)

Every Tuesday from October 2011 to April 2012 many of the same family and friends co-ordinated their time to attend weekly lunchtime protests outside government buildings. These protests did not have a significant attendance, 50 to 60 people at most, but they displayed a consistent presence and invariably made the news. The

slogans and banners used were eye-catching, written in red, brandishing messages from ‘Honk for Priory Hall’ to ‘Banks Bailed Out’ and ‘No help for Ordinary Citizen’. It was notable at these protests that when a media person approached they were treated by a Committee Member to a detailed and informed account of the lack of regulation which had enabled their situation. Regardless of whether the questions, outside the National Parliament, revolved around legal issues or building regulation the representative in place displayed a quiet sense of calm, was steadfast in their resolve and capable to provide pertinent information on any issue raised. In contrast to the first ‘march protest type’, where some politicians had tried to push their own political agendas, under the guise of raising Priory Hall awareness, these lunch time Parliament protests were fronted by members of the Residents’ Committee who repeatedly stated that they wanted to engage with the government and reasonably discuss a solution.

But the simple fact was that citizens legally demonstrated and held aloft signs stating that they felt like refugees in their own country but this did not encourage the state to engage meaningfully with them. In a neoliberal state, citizens had made the decision to purchase properties, taken out mortgages and had to re-pay this debt regardless of the human cost. Meanwhile the builder of Priory Hall had not necessarily broken any direct laws given that the legislation and regulation surrounding building issues was so slight in 2005 when the Priory Hall apartment complex was being built. To reiterate a previous point, in the United States, and indeed in the United Kingdom, building is strictly regulated. In both of these countries, at the time of writing, 100 per cent of new buildings are subject to rigorous examination and not the drive-by regulation or desk-top approval which took hold in Ireland. During the boom, in Ireland, only 14 per cent of new buildings (one in seven)

were subject to inspection. The worry for the Council in the case of Priory Hall was, arguably, would Priory Hall be used by others as a 'test case'? After all it was built during an unprecedented building boom driven by access to low interest rates but also by a building system of self-regulation. At that time contractors, or sub-contractors, were not required to sign off on work and for that reason it can be challenging to definitively trace blame back to a particular quarter. Nevertheless, the Residents' Committee were relentless and used yet another protest tactic in the form of candlelit vigils. The picture below from the Priory Hall Facebook page captures the second candlelit vigil held Christmas week 2012.

Figure 15: Candlelit Vigil Christmas 2012

(Source: Priory Hall Facebook page)

Santa don't stop here and the spirit of protest past

> I am asking for your help, to give me back my home, back the way it was signed and certified to be and to give me back my life.
> - Letter from Priory Hall resident to the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), 2012

The first candlelit vigil was held on the 28 November 2011 because originally this was the date when the residents were supposed to move back home. In reality, however, by that date all remedial building work had ceased in the Priory Hall complex. The reason for candlelit vigils was to highlight how Christmas time, in particular, had proven to be especially traumatic for the Priory Hall residents. Their catalogue of Christmas events is captured in a section of a letter written by a member of the Priory Hall Residents' Committee for the Donaghmede Parish Newsletter of Christmas week 2012. It detailed how,

> Christmas 2007 had been marked with anxiety due to the problems in the development and no signs of any progress, Christmas 2008 found us stressed and realising that our "dream homes" were not to be and Christmas 2009 found us living in fear for our safety as Dublin City Council's tenants had been removed for their own safety, yet there was nobody to help us or ensure our safety. 2010 came with some hope based on the building company's promises that they would remedy the fire safety breaches and we could sleep safe in our homes. Christmas 2011 and 2012 we are locked out, homeless with no hope of a solution.

They were physically locked out of their homes, gripped in uncertainty, yet used candles to symbolise their solidarity and unity of strength. The second candle lit vigil took place Christmas week 2012. It was held outside the main gates of the Priory Hall apartment complex. The Priory Hall Residents' Committee posted the message below on the Priory Hall Facebook page.

> We have decided to have a candlelight vigil on Monday 17 December 2012 at 20.00 outside Priory Hall. We would ask you all to bring with you a candle/tea light and a glass for the vigil. Once again please ask your family, friends and supporters to join with us for this vigil. We will invite our neighbours from the surrounding areas to join with us also.

The presence of both national and regional media was notable as was the fact that residents appeared comfortable engaging them. I attended this vigil on what turned out to be a freezing cold night. In the background, the blacked out Priory Hall apartment blocks' were like menacing hulks in the darkness. The residents greeted one another while four security men peered through the bars of the gates. In a short space of time, a couple of hundred supporters, including families, friends, neighbours and community members had gathered together. The meeting was efficiently organised and included a lot of small children. These youngsters offered red candles to people arriving empty handed. Other children held aloft posters with images of Santa complete with reindeer and sleigh, brandishing the stark caption 'Don't stop here Santa.' Meanwhile a line of people attached more of these posters onto the security railings. Despite the cold weather, people appeared in good spirits and many recorded this vigil through the medium of their phones. People mingled and chatted for about half an hour and only two members of the Priory Hall Residents' Committee spoke, Michael said,

> Due to the mortgage providers' unwillingness to acknowledge the unique circumstances the residents' face we are being forced into further debt on our mortgages as the current state of limbo continues indefinitely. It is clear that the sense of urgency felt by the residents to find a solution to this intolerable situation is not felt by the other parties involved. The residents are calling on all parties to work quickly to put an end to the national disgrace that is Priory Hall. And remember this no show by Government Ministers at this vigil tonight! Remember that when next they come looking for votes (cries of hear! hear!) Remember that when you needed them, they were nowhere to be seen.

The crowd clapped and cheered. Michael continued, "But seriously, don't lose heart because from the beginning we have stuck together and we will continue to do so." His final words were drowned out by beeping support from passing vehicles. There

was a general sense of collective solidarity. People mixed for a short while more and hoped that 2013 would be a "game-changer". At the end we all tidied up and the Priory Hall residents wished their neighbours "Happy Christmas" before separating to go in all different directions, to their temporary dwelling places. Unknown to us at that time this candle lit vigil turned out to be the last public protest organised by the Priory Hall Residents' Committee.

The 2012 Donaghmede candlelight vigil featured on the national evening news television channel headed with the pronouncement that "The Priory Hall residents vow to continue to fight." But for these people the reality was that preserving their story as fresh news was almost impossible. 2013 was a new year and Priory Hall was old news because the very nature of news demands something new. In the case of Priory Hall any disclosures or revelations they may have had to tempt the media over two years, was due to the continuing ingenuity of the Priory Hall Residents' Committee.

Leaving the candlelit vigil and walking towards the train I ran into Paddy, one of my key research participants. He drove me to the train station and once there we sat chatting in his car. Although retired, Paddy remains a self-described community activist and had proudly attended every single Priory Hall protest. He didn't know any of the residents but outlined how upset he was to hear that these "poor people never had any proper contact from the banks." Paddy continued, "People say the Irish don't rebel, look at what the Greeks call us! This wouldn't have happened forty odd years ago though because we knew exactly who we were dealing with." Paddy outlined how in 1972, prior to the birth of the Priory Hall residents, he and his neighbours had organised "The great big Donaghmede mortgage strike".[43] The reason for their collective action was because the Council had, in their view, changed their mortgage

interest rate from what had initially been agreed. Paddy and his neighbours all banded together and collectively stopped paying their mortgages for two years. I asked Paddy whether this process had been stressful. He quickly replied,

> Did I worry about refusing to pay my mortgage? You must be joking. We were a different generation. Protest was nothing new to me. We were able to put it up to people. I really had no issue with my Building Society and of course we were able to pay the mortgages. I had no issue with going into my bank and talking face to face with my manager. I could see him whenever I liked whether he wanted to see me is beside the point. We just refused to pay because the Council lied.
>
> - Paddy, retired local activist, December 2012

Paddy's face-to-face interaction with the people in authority had empowered him and made him feel equal in his efforts. In sharp contrast to Paddy's experience through call centres and automated letters the Priory Hall residents, all of whom wished to pay their mortgages, though not for broken homes, experienced a threatening web of bureaucracy. Automated technology created a situation which alienated the Priory Hall residents from human interaction thus making them feel increasingly more isolated and abandoned. According to Cliff Taylor of *The Irish Times*, as of March 2015, 115,000 mortgages across Ireland were in arrears (Taylor 2015). Today, across the Western World, people are terrified of losing their homes and they do not know how or when this could happen. The preoccupation with where to live and how to provide a safe home for family has the capacity to debilitate people through this fear. Today looming mortgage anxiety terrifies people because they do not know whom to contact or when they will be invaded, by, or, threatened with letters or phone calls in their private spaces.

Of course, unlike Paddy, the Priory Hall residents had newer technologies in the form of social media available to them. Through Facebook and Twitter accounts

they appealed and begged the wider community to join in their efforts and put pressure on the governments and banks. They used social media in a desperate bid to try to generate external help, outside of kinship connections, for their cause. Today scholars argue (Axel and Burgess 2014; Bonilla and Rosa 2015; Postill 2014) that Digital protest and hashtag followings empower people and have the potential to create sweeping social change. Indeed, digital politics and political engagement are being widely written about within anthropology (Boellstorff 2013; Postill 2013, 2011; Horst 2013). In contrast to this style of reasoning, the Priory Hall Residents' Committee organised old-fashioned generational protests because they expected that they might work. In addition to their physical protests, the Residents' Committee operated social media accounts. Some residents felt that these newer technologies made the Priory Hall residents feel as though their protests were heard beyond their locale of Dublin 13. For the first two years of their protesting the *Priory Hell* social media pages for the most part had a following peaking at 4,500 to 5,000.

Workers of the world retweet

> An Ethnographer who sets out to only study religion, or only technology, or only social organisation cuts out an artificial field for inquiry, and he will be seriously handicapped in his work. (Bronislaw Malinowski 1984 [1922]:11)

The Priory Hall Twitter and Facebook accounts were set up by a parent of one of the Priory Hall resident's at the time of the evacuation. These accounts were subsequently maintained by two members of the Resident's Committee. It was never clear to the general public who exactly posted information on the residents' forums'. But nevertheless, a form of collective consciousness appeared to steer this project

amplifying the social and political injustices experienced by the eighty-five families of Priory Hall. It was notable that the people who operated these accounts empathised with the plight of other causes especially those that pertained to marginalization or those people experiencing social injustices.

Many of the Priory Hall residents had impressed on me the importance of social media to their lives. Social media had linked residents to their families living abroad and in that way gave the illusion that the Priory Hall debacle had developed an international dimension. Some received contact from shocked relatives who had emigrated to countries such as Canada and Australia. They became aware of the Priory Hall situation through social media and in this way social media enabled residents to communicate with family members overseas. In a way these reactions, from abroad, briefly reinforced their mutuality of being. But the reality was that the Priory Hall residents needed people on the ground in a practical sense, out physically protesting. Despite how heightened social media support appeared to be *on line* when feet were needed on the streets many of these were sitting at computers offering condolences. The Priory Hall residents desperately needed an injection of physical interest in the form of increased face-to face contact with supporters if they were ever to significantly further their cause. Nevertheless, one of the residents, in particular, felt that these social media sites served a certain purpose. For her, the story of Priory Hall would not have gone international had it not been for Facebook and Twitter. She saw the photographs recorded on the Priory Hall Facebook page as a "vivid record of events." When I pressed this resident about actual support on the streets as a result of social media she replied quietly, "Well that's a bit strange we got up to four thousand plus followers on social media fairly rapidly but I was a bit disappointed by the street protests all-in all. There was only ever about a thousand people, at a push." On

reflection, it could indeed be said that social media proved to be an effective communicative tool for the Residents of Priory Hall. But in fact Facebook and Twitter began to be employed in the old fashioned communicative sense by the Priory Hall Residents' Committee. It certainty did not appear as an innovative technology which rallied significant practical support for the cause. As David GraberGraeber pointed out in his lecture (2010) the internet is not such a "new" technology but rather a glorified post office, mail order catalogue and library. He posited that it is certainly not as new as it is claimed (Graeber 2010). Indeed, I had noted that Twitter, with its succinct linguistic formulae, was used by the Priory Hall Residents' Committee to communicate for urgent matters, SOS style. This was in order to seize attention about a meeting date or a possible change of plan. The message was also intended to hopefully entice the wider audience in a way that was beyond mundane and worthy of capturing an external input. Twitter also served to impart significant information such as the example below highlights.

> Please support us the Priory Hall residents, evicted and let down by the Government, DCC [the Council] and Coalport (building company). We are out of our homes 352 days 30,412,800 seconds 506,880 minutes 8,448 hours 50 weeks (rounded down) Thanks for all your support.
>
> -Priory hall@prioryhall Oct 12 2012.

Facebook, on the other hand, acted like a combination of a detailed diary of events, and a valuable storage space for local, national and online newspaper articles, videos, photographs, and even TV and radio appearances. Indeed, both forms of communication indexed a group of people traumatised by the prospect of endless debt and insecurity. But nevertheless, a close analysis of both accounts revealed that this form of communication seemed to lack the necessary element of lasting significance.

In many ways social media appeared to be an effective method with which the Priory Hall residents displayed solidarity with other groups suffering injustices but importantly these were second or even third order instances of a first order experience which had already occurred. In fact, this type of online support seems more of a tangential issue that rendered them second order at best given that quite often an event had to have already occurred, or finished and maybe even have pastpassed before people could possibly comment or even lend *virtual* support. In this way social media does not appear to have the capacity to meta-communicate, to borrow from Charles L. Briggs (1984), in quite the same way as humans. In contrast, The Priory Hall protest signs, many homemade, exemplify the idea of meta-communication as an assault of messages indexing messages of loss, home, community, betrayal and abandonment. In many ways, those Priory Hall signs and protests indexed that an attack on the Constitution of the Irish home had occurred.

This raises the question then of why, in a country so culturally driven by homeownership did the Priory Hall residents receive such little first order support from wider society. Also, the home-made signs were invariably held aloft by elderly parents. Indeed the sight of generations of friends, families and neighbours locked into their mutuality of being connections rendered social media as an impotent form of practical support. The connections through social media did, however, provide some emotional and psychological comfort, certainly some of my research participants told me as much, but it could only ever be short lived and random in nature. Arguably this form of *virtual support* was welcomed but inevitably proved unreliable over time due to its inevitablevery secondfirst-third order nature. Ultimately it appeared to be an additional element of prolonged uncertainty, albeit masked under the guise of an offer of friendship. Oddly it could be described as a

different social form of automated technology, intended for good but ultimately inducing a more distinct form of alienation.

The Priory Hall Committee Members insisted that there was no uniform approach to their politics of protest yet their protests seemed unusual in nature. Strictly speaking, their protests never really appeared like protests. They caused little public disruption and significantly lacked any mob-like qualities. Frequently, when people protest they can display anger, refusal to comply, or they may even appear 'irrational'. In addition, protests can encapsulate either a particular group within society such as, union members, people refusing to adhere to various government policies, even politicians or citizens pushing their own agendas. But all that the Priory Hall Residents' Committee ever wanted to achieve was genuine consultation with the government and banks in order to find an equitable solution for eighty-five families. And, these people were willing to work hard to find this solution. They were never waiting for state salvation, but the state left them to wait seemingly forever. While they waited they were fully expected to repay their mortgages.

Protests, generally, can be seen to address a particular overarching issue such as public spending cuts, pay rates, tax increases or job insecurities. The Priory Hall residents found themselves protesting and fighting an expensive and worthless debt they felt they had not created, from within a system in which they had heavily invested. In reality, they protested to get the attention of the government and the support of wider society but they discovered that both government and wider society ignored them. The members of the Priory Hall Residents' Committee always appeared reasonable, responsible, quietly hard-working and approachable. Yet no one from the government or the seven lending institutions involved would engage with them.

Through a series of organised protests, the Priory Hall residents hoped to raise awareness for their plight, and subsequently return to their societal safety net but, somehow, their protests served to push them further into a peripheral state. Through protest the Priory Hall residents and their families publicly mourned the rupture and loss of their respectability. At no time during their six-month protest period did the seven lending institutions engage with them in a humane fashion. Many of the residents stopped paying their mortgages soon after the evacuation while others opted for moratoriums. Either option came with a wall of bureaucracy via automated phone calls and letters, which were often threatening in nature, or, requests to fulfil replica lengthy paperwork every couple of months. Without the recognition and support of their kinship connections it is difficult to conceptualize how the Priory Hall Residents' Committee would have sustained their spirit of resistance. The Priory Hall protests were only ever sustained through kinship connections. In many cases it was scenes, rather than protests, of distraught fathers and mothers, adult children and aunties, nephews, grandparents and grandchildren getting together. The Priory Hall protests appeared more like scenarios from within the pages of a family photo album. They were snap shots of kinship support amongst people bravely facing down uncertainty together. Their collective protests were strongly backed up through a myriad of kinship connections, which increasingly pushed them towards the periphery. Once there, they moved ever closer towards abandonment.

By the time of the last candlelit vigil, described above, the Priory Hall Residents' Committee were involved in a process of justice led mediation. After six months of protesting the Council had approached the Residents' Committee with the offer of this mediation which was chaired by retired Supreme Court judge, Mister Justice Joseph Finnegan. As proof of their serious commitment to this process, the

Priory Hall Residents' Committee had agreed not to hold any marches or protests during this time, but because this process was "moving along at a snail's pace", they had wanted to try to briefly revisit the public consciousness by holding the candlelit vigil. At the end of 2012 they hoped that 2013 would be the year that the Priory Hall residents would manage to get all of the stake holders together and find a solution. In the end this mediation lasted into June 2013 and throughout this time the Council continued to bring the residents to court in order to cease paying their rent.

Significantly, in refusing to formally meet with the Priory Hall residents the government behaved more like typical protestors while the residents tried every tactic to get the silently protesting government to engage. Meanwhile these protests were not really like protests but displays of kinship and community networks where people tried to become political by underscoring what appeared to be an obvious injustice directed at family members. The Priory Hall Residents' Committee thought that the mediation offer would be the 'game changer' they had been seeking. They readily accepted this mediation process and looked forward to finding a solution. The next chapter discusses this next, mediation stage, of the Priory Hall residents' experience

Chapter 3: A State without Exceptions

> Families have been having sleepless nights for weeks coming up to this. We expected the case to be heard but unfortunately the limbo continues. There's no sign of an end to this in sight. Yes, we took out mortgages and bought homes. But now, we just want to get on with our lives and get away from Priory Hall.
>
> - Michael, Priory Hall Residents' Committee Member, May 2013

Desperately Seeking a Social Contract

This chapter examines the mediation process which the Priory Hall Residents' Committee entered into at the request of the Council. Significantly, the Priory Hall residents believed that their 'sticking together' had brought about this mediation offer. The Priory Hall Residents' Committee felt that this approach meant that they were finally being taken seriously by the Council. They felt that this process was their reward for taking to the streets to protest. The Residents' Committee took the mediation process quite seriously and thought that it would get them to a position where they could negotiate their way out of a terrible situation. In actuality it served to entrench their stalemate.

Three aspects of this mediation process necessitate attention. Firstly, how the mediation came about and the type of process it turned out to be in practice, secondly, the fact that the Council, despite initiating this procedure, kept seeking to overturn the High Court accommodation order for the Priory Hall residents throughout the mediation, thirdly the role that the Supreme Court played in the Priory Hall experience. Finally, I am going to argue throughout that the mediation process

became a prolonged stalemate in which none of the stakeholders were willing to move from their positions. This process served to highlight the impossible nature of the Priory Hall resident's situation but it also laid bare the actual day-to-day workings of the state. The fact was that whether or not they thought so implicitly, the Priory Hall residents believed in a social contract, one where the state protects its citizens when the system utterly fails them.

In speaking of a social contract I draw on the concept of freedom espoused by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Rousseau 1993 [1762]). While Rousseau is not the inventor of this idea (Thomas Hobbes was the first modern writer to articulate the idea of a detailed social contract in *Leviathan* 2011[1651]) he nevertheless transformed it for future political theorists by expanding the concept to include the general will of the population. Rousseau sought to,

> Find a form of association which defends and protects with all the common force the person and goods of each associate and by means of which each one while uniting with all only obeys himself and remains as free as before. (Rousseau 1993 [1762]:31)

The general will, for Rousseau, was the foundation of all legitimate authority. This social contract was Rousseau's answer to the problem of natural freedom because left to nature it is unclear how humans should rule. This will is a uniquely human trait. Simply put, the general will was Rousseau's answer to the problem of inequality. For Rousseau, the purpose of sovereignty is to protect the liberty and life of each of its members. This is not dissimilar to the ideas of Locke and Hobbes but significantly Rousseau had an adage, namely that the social contract must not only ensure the condition for protection but also that each person is obliged to obey in order to enjoy freedom and protection. This factor distinguished Rousseau's social contract from

earlier theorists. Rousseau, therefore, considered the essence of the social contract to be,

> Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole. (Rousseau 1993 [1762]:43)

Rousseau wanted people to become actively involved in politics and not passively witness decisions that control and determine their lives and futures. This was a distinct departure in thinking from earlier contract theorists such as Thomas Hobbes who in *Leviathan* (2011[1651]) argued that it was better to live with the inconvenience of a powerful leader than be in a state of continual war. John Locke meanwhile regarded the role of the state as the protector of life and property; however, his contract relied on tacit agreement on behalf of the population. Locke's alternative to this was revolution. Rousseau proposed as fundamental the idea that the state is based on the consent of its members. In this way, the individual transforms into a citizen.

Rousseau applied new thinking to the term sovereign by suggesting that it should compose of the citizens together acting collectively. Altogether they will represent the laws and general will of the state. This general will is the most fundamental of Rousseau's concepts and is a guiding principle of moral conduct. For a long time, a characteristic privilege of sovereign power was the right of the ruler to decide life and death. In Rousseau's theory, a sovereign state should be ruled under the direction of the citizens. Importantly, the terms of this social contract would be the same for everyone. In exchange, however, all persons must give themselves over entirely to the contract. In this way the sovereign is the people in a collective capacity. The social contract is the foundation of the general will which is the only legitimate

sovereign. Of course in Rousseau's time the sovereign was invariably an absolute Monarch. Ultimately, therefore, Rousseau had a vision of a society in which each person could be fulfilled, free and happy. For Rousseau, freedom starts where the law begins and in a way this is only possible through participation in and service of the state. This is because in Rousseau's social contract the citizen's life, in a functioning state, is predicated on the idea that the general will somehow provide a form of community. The social contract is the foundation of the general will which is the only general sovereignty of the people, popular sovereignty. The sovereign is simply the people as a whole acting in their collective capacity.

The people for Rousseau established a new kind of sovereign –a general will-like a general interest of a community. Instead of people doing exactly as they please they can instead have the freedom to operate freely within the workings of the law. Or in other words, do as the law demands. Natural liberty is lost through this social contract but what is gained includes: civil liberty, propriety and ownership. Self-imposed law would grant people a different form of freedom where the individual does not consider being outside the laws of one's own community. This was a spirit of self-sacrifice in order to reveal a true citizen. This for Rousseau is the true freedom of a citizen, the freedom to live under self-imposed law.

HansenBlom Hansen and Stepputat (2005) trace historical understandings of the meaning behind sovereign power and suggest that "sovereignty of the state is an aspiration that seeks to create itself in the face of internally fragmented, unevenly distributed and unpredictable configurations of political authority that exercise more or less legitimate violence in a territory" (HansenBlom Hansen and Stepputat 2005:3). Sovereignty, then, is not rigid or fixed but rather guided by a will to rule, an unstable force. In addition, the sovereign power retains its right to war, a right to legally inflict

violence and in many ways a right to decide who will live or die. For HansenBlom Hansen and Stepputat (2005), the history of the notion of sovereignty in European politics has been an ongoing struggle between the ruled and their rulers, first between the Vatican and the Catholic kings of Christendom and later between the kings and the landed aristocracy, and up to present day. They note that Hobbes' *Leviathan* rallied behind the divine right of kings to rule in order to ensure "our peace and defence" (quoted in Blom Hensen and Stepputat 2005: 4). For Hobbes, society was best served through the subjects of the king giving up their power to rule and in return the king offered protection and stability. The king represented himself and the people he ruled over. This required regular confirmations of his power through brutal enforcement of laws and readiness to punish any who question authority in order to maintain what Runciman called the 'fiction' of sovereignty (quoted in HansenBlom Hansen and Stepputat 2005:5). Over the centuries the king was replaced by secular authorities. By the seventeenth century the ideas of sovereignty had expanded, becoming 'popular sovereignty' no longer just the monarch, but, including the ideal citizen, the reasonable property owning man, who could share the sovereign power.

In addition, HansenBlom Hansen and Stepputat (2005:3) drew our attention to violence or threat of violence that marks sovereign power. The sovereignty of the state they argue is constructed through violence and suppression of other competing nodes of power and authority within a territory. In order to stabilize or naturalise sovereignty, states or nations engage in spectacular performances demonstrating the 'will to rule' and using physical violence or its' threat as a means to control human bodies. Violence was now employed to ensure the reasonable citizens were safe from threats from less desirable populations originating internally or externally. The violent revolutions in France ruptured the relations between people and state, laying bare its'

illegitimacy leading the way for a stronger more inclusive form of popular sovereignty. Post the revolutionary era, states needed to include 'the people' and this led to a more concerted effort by states to create a nation. European states developed disciplines and practices to inculcate into the mass of their populations into acceptance of patriotic ideals, through the creation of shared identities and history and beliefs. Popular sovereignty was enacted through symbols and knowledge production, 'art, songs, war and worship" (Weber quoted in HansenBlom Hansen and Stepputat 2005). The contrast between Rousseau's eighteenth century and today, however, is that the spectacle of sovereign power is masked within the workings of institutions which routinely deliver policy. Nevertheless, citizens still habitually believe in Rousseau's idea of a social contract.

By the twenty-first century sovereignty had increasingly become enacted through policy decisions. In fact today politician's act as state administrators who deliver policy. Meanwhile the capacity for violence is invisibly dispersed through policy decisions conducted through institutions across societies. With these ideas in mind it is not difficult to imagine how the Priory Hall residents could see themselves as part of the political system. They were after all taxpaying citizens who believed in a social contract and their sovereign right to express their extreme dissatisfaction with their nation state. They chose to protest, as is their right within a democracy, in order to raise awareness for their increasingly dire situation.

The Priory Hall Residents' Committee organized protests over six months post-evacuation. Throughout that time, the Council continued to apply to the courts in order to appeal the temporary accommodation order. The Priory Hall residents attended these court hearings because they needed to find out if they would have to start paying rent as well as manage mortgages. On the evening of Thursday, 19 April

2012 the Council approached the Residents' Committee and suggested that they enter into a mediation process with the seven lending institutions and the Council. This was the day before a Supreme Court hearing. The Priory Hall Residents' Committee were anxious to get all of the parties around a table in order to seek a resolution but they also felt that this mediation would symbolise their commitment to work hard and find a solution. One resident said, "We immediately thought this would be a game changer." The Committee released a press statement stating that they had been "forced to battle with the Council, the banks and the developers in an attempt to find a solution to the problems at Priory Hall." They continued to publicly state that none of the Priory Hall residents had any part in creating their situation.

Of course, people who buy property, or any commodities, share some responsibility for their decisions. But the Priory Hall experience is an example of how, in the twenty-first century, most people had not yet considered that buying homes equated to selling their capacity to dream on the open market. People can arguably survive the loss of countless material goods, but the ability of contemporary capitalism to commodify dreams, hopes, desires and aspirations infuses this strain of capitalism with a sinister edge. In addition, a house purchase is not always a straightforward transaction of currency in exchange for a commodity because a house has the capacity to transform into a home, a place which takes up many rooms within a person's mind and soul. It is where dreams live alongside fears, and hope resides alongside aspirations. In The *Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard powerfully categorises a house as "the human being's first world ... the house is a large cradle" (Bachelard 1994:7). A house is therefore a place where people can store and protect untainted childhood memories and see them play with future dreams. But when these

dreams turned into nightmares for the Priory Hall residents a dangerous and absurd game waiting game ensued where no one stepped up to accept responsibility.

By the time of the mediation offer the Residents' Committee felt that they had "pushed hard" to create public awareness and, as a key participant noted in a regretful tone, "We really believed that through mediation, for the very first time they would be finally talking about solutions." Before agreeing to mediation, however, some Committee Members felt that their hard work had begun to pay off. For example, they had become media savvy and were proven capable of aligning themselves with other groups seeking social awareness and change. They were also gaining elements of public sympathy while organising publicity stunts to raise awareness of their plight. They were energized – fuelled by their own anger and outrage – at being duped by a system they believed had utterly abandoned them. They collectively decided that a mediation process could prove to be an opportunity to bring about an equable solution. All in all the Priory Hall Residents' Committee assumed they had achieved something significant simply by being offered mediation in the first place.

The mediation process was chaired by retired Supreme Court judge, Mr justice Joseph Finnegan, and was expected to last for three months. A condition of the mediation was that the Priory Hall Residents' Committee would cease public protest. Throughout the mediation process, and indeed even today, the Council maintains the position that it should not have been made responsible for the temporary accommodation of the Priory Hall residents, therefore, during this mediation procedure, the Council continued to go to court to appeal this order. This matter was adjourned on several occasions by agreement and consent of the Supreme Court in order to try to find a solution. The Residents' Committee entered that mediation with the hope that a workable solution would be found for all the parties involved. It was

initially their expectation that all stakeholders would attend together, but the judge's preference was to meet each party separately and report back to the other parties on each meeting. The next section briefly considers the evolution of mediation practice in Ireland. It was originally introduced began as a way to avoid costly legal battles for families but today, according to Delma Sweeny, the Academic Director of Mediation & Conflict Intervention at the Edward M Kennedy Institute, Maynooth University, this sector is being increasingly legalised and becoming increasingly more costly. Ms Sweeny has been practicing as an accredited mediator with Mediators Institute Ireland since 1986. She kindly afforded me her time and gave me some valuable insights into the, relatively recent, foundation of the mediation process in Ireland.

Whither Mediation

The development of mediation in Ireland, while relatively recent, has nevertheless become more usual across many sectors of contemporary Irish society as a means of resolving ongoing conflicts. Its origins and progression are outlined by Delma Sweeney in her PhD thesis, 'An Exploration of Intuition in Mediation Practice as Reported by Irish Mediators'.[44] According to Sweeney,

> The mediation process was piloted in Ireland, in 1986, by the Department of Justice. The initial idea of mediation was to give people less costly alternatives to going to court with family disputes. In 1986 the Family Mediation Service was established, starting as a pilot project and becoming, over time a countrywide service. This service offered an out of court, voluntary and free family mediation service for couples who were separating (Sweeney N.d.).

For Sweeney, the following definition of mediation as adopted by the Steering Committee of the Family Mediation Service is a useful guide,

> Mediation is the means or process whereby a couple whose marriage has broken down and who have a specific intention to separate may reduce any areas of conflict, by discussing with each other together with a mediator, voluntarily and confidentially, such matters which need to be dealt with as a result of their separation and reach such agreements with each other as are in the balanced interest and long term benefit of themselves and their family. (Plunkett: 1988:30)

This was the type of mediation process within which the Priory Hall residents had hoped to partake. But their mediation lacked this element of group discussion with all of the stakeholders. It was a fragmented process which is bundled up and packaged as Commercial Mediation. The practice of Commercial Mediation in Ireland has grown considerably over the past twenty years. Importantly, Sweeney highlights that the initial role of mediation was due to the fact that divorce was not available in Ireland, but that today Commercial Mediation appears to have taken hold. Sweeney notes that this form of mediation is defined by the Irish Commercial Mediators Association as,

> The Mediator is a facilitator appointed by the parties. The Mediator does not decide who is right or wrong or issue a judgment in favour of one party. The Mediator's function is to support the process, gather information and assist in problem-solving. The Mediator seeks to isolate the issues, help the parties to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each other's case and encourage the parties to work co-operatively towards settlement. This is done in private meetings between the Mediator and each party and as appropriate in joint meetings where both parties (and some of their representatives) attend with the Mediator. The Mediator will assist the parties to negotiate a settlement in the same way, through the use of private and joint meetings. (Sweeney, n.d.)

There is a shift then from all of the concerned parties having face-to-face interaction, to the mediator becoming a facilitator who can conduct private meetings with each party separately. In 2015, Sweeney outlined how,

> the varied mediation tools that have developed in Ireland since the 1990s:workplace mediation, equality mediation, mediation for industrial

> disputes, landlord/tenant mediation, community mediation and restorative practices. Increasingly these mediation types have been have incorporated into the justice system in Ireland. (Sweeney n.d.) [45]

In Ireland the mediation process has notably shifted from a more informal setting where players would meet together to a situation where judges and lawyers have largely taken over the field of conflict resolution. Legal fees in Ireland are generally considered to be exorbitant. So much so that the 2010 EU/ECB/IMF troika made it a condition of Ireland's €62 billion bailout that the government introduce legislation to modernise the legal sector and make the legal system affordable for everyone. Despite a raft of austerity measures implemented by the government, at the apparent insistence of the troika, this matter has never been addressed by the state.

Jennifer Beer and Caroline Packard identify the necessary components of successful mediation throughout their work entitled *The Mediator's Handbook* (2014). For them, fundamental elements necessary to guarantee the stability of any mediation process include: all parties sharing a common interest in coming up with a solution, parties involved doing the work of coming up with solutions and that authorized decision makers are a necessary component to ensure headway (Beer and Packard 2014:5). Importantly, Beer and Packard advise against embarking upon a mediation process if there have been threats of violence from one party involved towards another (Beer et aland Packard. 2014:15). In the case of the Priory Hall mediation process the goals of all parties remained distinct throughout. The presence of threats of violence that Beer and Packard (2014) index are more noticeable forms of abusive behaviour. It is worth noting that the Priory Hall residents were experiencing significant forms of structural violence from the lending institutions and the Council both before and throughout the mediation process.

Structural violence usually pertains to invisible political and economic forces that can impact on people in ways in which they can neither process nor comprehend. The coining of the term is accredited to the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung who identifies a violent structure as one which "leaves marks not only on the human body but also on the mind and spirit" (Galtung 1969:293). Anthropologist Paul Farmer has expanded significantly on this experience and defines structural violence as, "that which is visited upon all those whose social status denies them access to the fruits of scientific and social progress" (Farmer 2006:79). Throughout *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights and the New War on the Poor* (2004), Farmer argues that medical services are fundamentally flawed given that they have become a commodity, freely available to those who can afford them, as opposed to a necessary service, or an obvious human right. He uses the concept of structural violence to index how medical professionals are not trained to understand or challenge the social forces behind disease. In addition, Farmer posits that structural violence is also the result of policy decisions and indexes the necessity for change from within existing social structures (Farmer 2004:107).

There is, however, a certain sense throughout this work that structural violence tends to be linked to the more obviously disenfranchised members of societies. This is notable in Farmer's choice of epigraph, which is from Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano's oft quoted 1989 poem entitled Los Nadies (The Nobodies) which begins, "The nobodies; nobody's children, owners of nothing. The nobodies: the no ones, the nobodied, running like rabbits, dying through life, screwed every which way" (Galeano in Farmer 20041989). Here Galeano uses poetry in an effort to give humanity to the voiceless, dehumanized and desperately poor farmers of Latin America. Galeano laments that these people have no other form of representation.

They are suppressed but also lack the "cultural capital" (Bourdieu 1977) to help them improve their situation. Pierre Bourdieu's work provides insight into the hidden power mechanisms of social domination. This relates to his concept of 'fields' which Navarro explains as, "a set of relationships which may be intellectual, religious, educational or cultural" (Navarro 2006:18). Cultural capital is the procession of such means.

Throughout *In Search of Respect* (2004) Philippe Bourgois, borrows from Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) analytical categories of forms of capital, in particular cultural capital, as in knowing the right cultural codes within various fields. Bourgois asks what things mean for people living on the ground in street life in New York. His Puertorriqueños informants are living in a structurally, racially and historically marginalised community. It is unlikely that they will ever command respect within a white, middle-class USA. In contrast, my European research participants searched for respectability they felt they had earned, and commanded within their community until it evaporated, alongside their dream homes, into thin air. Bourgois outlined how vulnerable his informants were, lacking the necessary social skills that would enable them to engage more credibly with obtaining some legitimate employment. Bourgois focuses on the exclusionary power of cultural capital which was reinforced in public schools "where the full force of middle-class society's definitions of appropriate cultural capital and symbolic violence comes crashing down on a working-class Puerto Rican child" (Bourgois 2004:177-178). As a result of this children are forced into peer groups which invariably have gang affiliations. In essence for Bourgois his informants are denied the opportunity, in particular through the system of education, to improve their situation.

Structural violence can frequently be understood to pertain to disadvantaged people yet today most people can be subject to the same restrictions as the poor. This is evidenced in the manner in which the Priory Hall Residents Committee and the people they represented became, not overtly marginalized, but increasingly locked out of greater society.

Significantly, unlike Farmer's or Bourgois' informants, my research participants possessed wide and varied levels of cultural capital. The members of the Priory Hall Residents Committee could be described, sociologically, as white, middle class professionals. What I am interested in is the fact that anthropologically, despite their cultural capital, they were just as susceptible to structural violence as Bourgois' and Farmer's marginalized informants. In fact the Priory Hall Residents' Committee, between them, contained vast knowledge, experience and social connections and, significantly, the ability to augment and disseminate this knowledge. This is evidenced through their wide reaching media engagements from the time of their initial evacuation. Despite their skills encapsulating and even attracting cultural capital they found themselves homeless and subject to abject structural violence administered by organs of the state such as the Council, the lending institutions, some of which were state owned, and the judicial system. In fact, in many ways the Priory Hall Residents Committee was comprised of the very type of people that Philippe Bourgois found would exclude his informants from gainful employment (Bourgois 2004). They include an accountant, clerical workers and people involved in middle management. Structural violence, it would appear, is no longer necessarily limited to 'race,' or grounded in history.

How did this happen that structural violence can impact on anybody regardless of their connoted or assumed positions within society? The Priory Hall residents had

ample representation yet their social standing did nothing to help their cause. They were, in many ways, the polar opposite of Galeano's subjects "the nobodies". They were the somebodies, strongly represented by articulate, inventive people with the capacity, not only to speak, but to be heard and understood across a wide variety of social platforms. The Priory Hall residents were the ideal citizens and they did everything right but the structures of the State ostracized them, ignored them and treated them as disenfranchised even though they had done what the state expected of them. In addition, the wide-ranging abilities and ingenuity of the Priory Hall Residents' Committee only served to increasingly frustrate and exhaust these people. The pseudo-mediation process merely heightened this experience for all of them and ultimately had devastating and irreversible consequences for everyone affected by the Priory Hall debacle.

According to *The Sunday Business Post*, throughout the mediation process, at least one of the Priory Hall lenders "issued letters to the residents through a debt-collection agency" (O'Connor 2013). A research participant told me once that this form of violence was difficult to substantiate because,

> It sounds silly to say to your mates I got another scary letter from the bank. But it felt like it hurt and left me reeling and winded and worried for the future of my family. I failed as a man. And we were the lucky ones because from the get-go we had mortgage experts helping us for free but the Council and the banks kept walking all over us and kept putting the boot in while we were down.

From the onset of the mediation justice Finnegan made it clear that this process would be conducted in strictest confidence. The Committee readily agreed. One research participant and Committee member told me that they were a little in awe of mediating with such an experienced judge. To the Residents' Committee's

disappointment, and contrary to their expectations, all the stakeholders did not all literally sit together at the same table. As already noted, the judge's preference was to meet each party separately and report back to the other parties on each meeting. A decision maker was really necessary to make serious headway with this process but the judge involved was impotent and acted solely in the capacity of a mediator. The whole purpose of mediation is supposed to be that parties share a common interest, but from the outset the Priory Hall mediation process was a relay of conflicted interests that each party conveyed to the neutral and powerless judge. Importantly, all of the parties involved wished to achieve different outcomes.

Pierre Bourdieu's notion of doxa is helpful to think with in relation to the Priory Hall Resident's Committee willingness to believe that such a prestigious legal mind could possibly solve their dire situation. In conversation with Terry Eagleton, Pierre Bourdieu noted that a natural way of being in the world is a "doxic experience" (Bourdieu and Eagleton 1992:269). Doxa underscores the notion that most people tend not to think about their social world but rather take it for granted. It is simply not practical, within the confines of everyday practices, to continually walk around questioning the meaning of life. It therefore seemed natural to the Priory Hall Residents' Committee that the judge involved would know what to do and how to achieve a solution. This, with of course the unhelpful benefit of hindsight, makes the process and in particular its outcomes seemingly callous in nature. From the onset of this process, which they realized was a piecemeal form of mediation, they seemed to want to accept and believe that his prestige, cultural capital and vast experience would grant him significant power; perhaps even bring about some form of legal ruling in relation to their situation. In a way, it seemed natural to believe that such a judge

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would know what to do, but the strength of *doxa* lies in the fact that there are many things people, with a certain degree of knowledge, accept without knowing.

At the beginning of the mediation the seven lending institutions simply refused to initially meet with the judge. They maintained the stance, throughout, that the mortgages had to be repaid by the residents. They insisted that there would be no write-down of this debt. One of the Residents' Committee members deduced, "My own thinking on this was that they were waiting to see what the state would do before they committed to anything." Throughout the entire mediation process these lending institutions continued the practice of threatening the residents via automated letters and persistent phone calls. This was despite the fact that these eighty-five families' mortgages were being managed by David Hall of Irish Mortgage Holders Organisation and Michael Dowling of Mortgage and Financial Services Ltd. Both business men and their staff had been regularly liaising with the lending institutions ever since the evacuation. Meanwhile, no quarter was accepting any responsibility for the Priory Hall complex. The builder/developers had declared themselves to be bankrupt. The Council claimed it had relied on the architect's report while the architects claim to have relied on statements from subcontractors backed up with visual inspections, which was all that the regulation of the time required. Homebond, the building insurance agent, refused to accept liability for the entire litany of structural problems throughout the entire Priory Hall apartment complex. Even the block insurance had been dropped days before the evacuation order. Nevertheless the seven lending institutions involved continued to relentlessly pursue the Priory Hall residents for their pound of flesh.

For the Priory Hall residents the mediation process was always based entirely on hope and waiting. All that their Residents' Committee could hope for was that if

one lender moved from their position within the mediation perhaps others might follow suit. Meanwhile the longer this process continued the fewer options the Priory Hall Residents' Committee felt they had available to them. In addition, the mediation process felt like the first level of engagement from anybody, so as frustrating as the process became, it felt better than opting to return to a position without engagement. This process was frustrated by a lack of serious engagement on behalf of the main stakeholders but the reality is that these stakeholders had no one seriously representing the state on board with the authority to make a decision. The mediation process was described by one Committee Member as,

> Extremely difficult at times to remain in that process as it was inordinately slow, the judge reported sporadically, sometimes every four to six weeks with updates from one party but there was never any sense of progress. The judge was out of the country for a holiday, at one point, for about three months where there was little progress and communication was by email only, no face-to-face meetings.

In all, the Priory Hall Residents' Committee had four meetings with the judge. The entire Residents' Committee attended all of those meeting. They had input but as one research participant recalled 'only in the sense that we just stated our expectations and opinion of the process. For this dynamic group of people the worst aspect of the mediation was, "The frustration with progress and asking our neighbours to stick with it when at times we felt we couldn't ourselves." The mediation process, in reality, served to entrench even more uncertainty for the Priory Hall residents. Another Committee Member said,

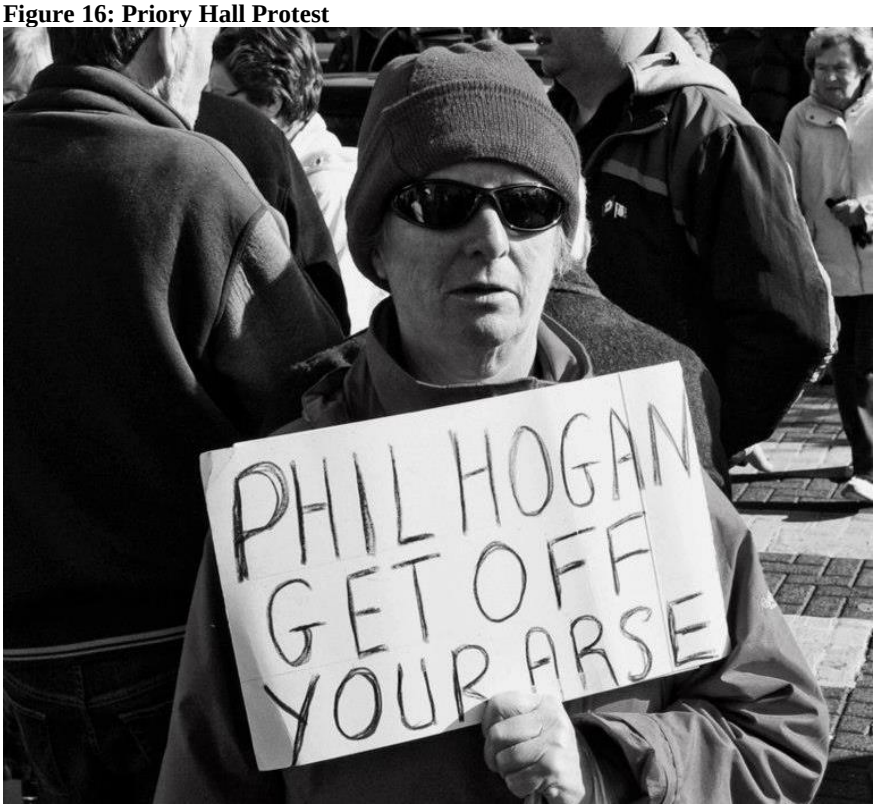
> But then we had to encourage our neighbours to stick with the process as we effectively had no other options. If the process broke down, we feared the Council would be successful in their appeal to cease paying rent, and we would be homeless, would have to rent another home, continue to pay

> mortgages on homes we couldn't live in and face bankruptcy if we couldn't pay the Priory Hall mortgages.

On top of the fact that the mediation process was 'painfully slow', the Council persisted with pursuing court dates to cease paying rent for the Priory Hall residents. It was described by one resident as, "Surreal, to keep having to go to court, feeling like a criminal, yet it was only the outcome of the hearing we worried about. Technically we did not need to be there." But it was important for the Priory Hall residents to go to court and be seen to have the appropriate legal representation. Meanwhile the Minister for the Environment, Phil Hogan (Priory Hall came under his remit) frequently told the press that he could not engage with the Priory Hall residents because, "There was an ongoing case involving the Council in the courts that affects Priory Hall" (quoted in O'Connor 2013). Once the mediation process began, Minister Hogan said that he was awaiting the recommendations of justice Finnegan and that he could not interfere in the court process. Justice Finnegan was unlikely to ever make recommendations because his role was limited to that of a mediator thus the structures implicit in the hierarchical institutions gave the impression of authority. Minister Hogan staunchly refused to meet the Priory Hall residents and he used the media to distance himself from their daily struggles. That said the Priory Hall residents never found Phil Hogan's refusal to meet with them credible. His remarks to the media were for one Priory Hall resident, "So insulting, firstly we are thrown out onto the street and secondly we are criminals. There is no court case between the Priory Hall residents and anybody, never was!" The Priory Hall Residents' Committee tirelessly responded to the Minister's comments, throughout the media, insisting that an ongoing appeal by the Council against the accommodation order was irrelevant to the issues surrounding their mortgages. As the Minister for the environment they felt he

could have, at a minimum, launched an enquiry into why Priory Hall had been so poorly built. His distinct lack of involvement in their plight had previously been indexed during their protests with home-made signs such as the one below.

Figure 16: Priory Hall Protest



(Source: Priory Hall Facebook page)

Furthermore, for the Residents Committee, "The mediation process was not court appointed: it was merely a non-binding discussion between the residents, the banks and the Council." In reality, none of the Priory Hall stakeholders agreed on core issues throughout the mediation process because each party wished for distinct outcomes. The lending institutions wanted the mortgages repaid, the Council wanted to rid itself of paying accommodation and storage costs for the private Priory Hall mortgage holders and the eighty-five Priory Hall families wanted the lending

institutions and the Council to accept that they only refused to pay mortgages because their homes were worthless.

The painful mediation effort lingered for a year and a half and although the experience was a bitter-sweet achievement, it was one that the Residents' Committee were afraid to exit. Notably throughout this mediation time the Priory Hall debacle was frequently referred to throughout all media types, across a broad range of platforms, as one of "exceptional circumstances", "an exceptional case" or a "one-off". The Priory Hall experience was exceptional for a myriad of reasons. I will expand upon three reasons here. Firstly the fact that the Council was so embarrassingly tied into this apartment complex having invested public money into a death trap, secondly, the fact that all of the residents had remained steadfast in their resolve to work at finding a solution and to stick together and thirdly, the fact that Justice Nicholas Kearns had taken it upon himself to issue the Council with a court order to house the Priory Hall residents. Of course these reasons as exceptional do not even begin to address the range of moral, unethical and simply unjust issues that surround the treatment of the Priory Hall residents, but these three facts alone already index an exceptional state of affairs. One could ask, why then did the state refuse to treat or even acknowledge Priory Hall as an exception, and what does this say about governance in the twenty-first century when exceptional cases are simply ignored? Sovereignty today, it seems, is demarked by not making the exception. If this is the case then what does that say about society or what it means to be human. Why was there no manifestation of power on behalf of the Irish state towards the Priory Hall citizens? The question therefore is this: is the state trying to not make an exception? In order to unpack these observations it would be helpful to define and identify the meanings behind the state of exception.

The notion of a 'state of exception' conceptually developed in the legal theories of Carl Schmitt (2005). It is based on the sovereign's ability to transcend the rule of law in the name of the public good. Schmitt established an essential proximity between sovereignty and the state of exception. He posited that,

> ... the sovereign produces and guarantees the situation in its totality. He has monopoly over this decision. Therein lies the essence of the state's sovereignty, which must be juristically defined correctly, not as the monopoly to coerce or to rule, but as the monopoly to decide. The exception reveals most clearly the essence of the state's authority. The decision parts here from the legal norm, and (to formulate it paradoxically) authority proves that to produce law it need not be based on law. (Schmitt 2005:13)

In reality, for Schmitt the sovereign is the one who will decide on the state of exception as a state of war. The sovereign decides the state of exception but nevertheless this state remains connected to law. Schmitt's case for exceptional power seems to be justified by the very conditions that only the sovereign power declares.

In *Homo Sacer* (1998) philosopher Giorgio Agamben draws out this Schmittian exception by stating that the relation of exceptions is a relation of ban. "He who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather *abandoned* by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable". (Agamben 1998:28). Here Agamben marks a distinction between a citizen protected through law and one thoroughly abandoned by the law. Sovereignty, then, is a decision on the exception. For Agamben, the state of exception is a point of balance between public law and politics, which is located between juridical and political. The state of exception is a suspension of the juridical border and, therefore, marks the limit of the juridical order.

In *The State of Exception* (2005) Agamben expands on his thinking, and while he drew heavily on Schmitt, he ultimately develops his conceptualization of 'the exception' in a different direction. Agamben responds to Carl Schmitt's definition of sovereignty, as the power to proclaim the exception, by investigating the increase of power by governments which they employ in supposed times of crisis. He does so by employing Walter Benjamin's critique of Schmitt and combining it with Foucault's work on biopolitics (see Agamben 2005:52-64). Benjamin had argued that the law had to be disentangled from the state of exception whereas Agamben decided that he wanted to consider the ways in which sovereign power can directly intervene in people's lives. For Agamben the state of exception, as the rule, is outside the law, in a zone of anomie. He posited that, "What the arc of power contains at its center is the state of exception—but this is essentially an empty space, in which a human life with no relation to law stands before a norm with no relation to life" (Agamben 2005:86). Agamben traced the modern day state of exception back to the French Revolution and he considered that, "In truth the state of exception is neither external nor internal to the juridical order, and the problem of defining it concerns a threshold, or a zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other" (Agamben 2005:23). What characterises an exception, therefore, is the ability of the sovereign power to stand outside the law, essentially exercising unlimited authority. In a way, this idea relates back to the notion of a ruler as having supreme power of life and death over citizens.

Essentially, for my own purposes, I am interested in how Agamben investigated the increase of power by governments throughout the twentieth century in supposed times of crisis. Throughout the twentieth century the state of exception has been used extensively by government to respond to crisis situations such as

insurrection, crises, civil war or other emergencies. "The state of exception should be an exceptional measure" (Agamben 2005:2) yet Agamben has noted that it has become a regular technique of government. Ultimately he evokes a permanent state of exception but what is most interesting for me is that if the state of exception may be possible then why in the case of Priory Hall would the government not exert its authority in order to acknowledge an exceptional set of circumstances. Greg Feldman asserts that today,

> the goal of biopolitics is the maintenance of species life itself according to rational abstract procedures not the empowerment of people as speaking subjects, an effect point that includes both policy recipients or policy executors. This goal may involve the elimination or neglect of certain categorically defined segments of the population. (Feldman 2014:75).

What if, in the twenty-first century we live in a permanent state *without* exceptions ruled by policy decisions which government officials merely rubber stamp.

In 1992, Gilles Deleuze considered how the disciplining of subjects had accelerated during the last thirty years of the twentieth century. Deleuze highlighted how governmentality increasingly focuses on exercising power over the population through administrative practices. In particular, however, Deleuze noted that new technologies had enabled the transformation of money from a solid entity into a fluid transaction. In contrast to David Graeber who considers how debt and credit pre-dated coinage, Deleuze considered the increased pace of debt. For Deleuze, "The old monetary mole is an animal of the spaces of enclosure, but the serpent is that of the societies of control" (Deleuze 1992:5). This new mode of money circulation, Deleuze posited, was made possible through changes in policy which redirected the flow of money in order to remove citizens from a situation of control and place individuals within a potentially endless debt vice. For Deleuze, the endless character of debt had become a new system of domination which could effectively manage and control a

population. Indeed, in this article one could conclude that Deleuze is warning of a soon to be society where there exists no evidence of *mankind* but just a series of *endless debts*. Meanwhile, the flow of money is managed by a benign faceless administrator capable of persistent violence channelled through biopolitics (Deleuze 1992:7).

Greg Feldman (2014) expands more clearly on Deleuze's biopolitical thinking by exploring how violence is at the core of the routine delivery of state policy. Feldman begins his inquiry into biopolitics by unpacking Michel Foucault's application of the *coup d'état* (Feldman 2014:75). Feldman clearly states at the beginning of his analysis that the personal input of any individual is irrelevant to biopolitics because this mode of government does not necessitate individual input. Simply put, biopolitics neither empowers those implementing or experiencing policy. Indeed, it is the banal nature and one-way direction of violence conducted through policy that Feldman ultimately underscores.

Feldman draws out Michel Foucault's idea of the "permanent *coup d'état*" which Foucault stated was achieved due to *raison d'état* (reason of state). "A *coup d'état* is a blatant act of state violence conducted in the name of security" (quoted in Feldman 2004:75-76). *Raison d'état* is the necessary force applied in order to preserve the state. Foucault identified the general location of the *coup d'état* within biopolitics. The survival of the state trumps individual needs. Feldman notes that for Foucault a *coup d'état* was deemed a necessary military intervention into a lawless situation. It is, therefore, an internal response to rebalance the state system. Indeed this system acts outside the law as an act of wilful violence in order to protect the state. Feldman expands on Foucault's overarching idea by juxtaposing policy which he notes does not originate in law alongside the *coup d'état.*

Feldman then turns to Hannah Arendt's philosophical perspectives on disempowerment and isolation and the ways in which violence appears in the absence of power. In this way Hannah Arendt had theorized the circulation of violence through society. Feldman expands on Arendt's ideas by unpacking how bureaucracy is a powerful force when no one in particular is in charge. Meanwhile, those who are isolated outside of the system are powerless.

Raison d'état is the necessary force applied in order to preserve the state. Foucault identified the general location of the *coup d'état* within biopolitics. Survival of the state trumps individual needs. Feldman argues that the permanent *coup d'état* is in fact transmitted through policy which is unseen and fluid. Policy, a seemingly banal aspect of the ordinary life can violently rupture people's everyday lives. Feldman notes that for Foucault a *coup d'état* was deemed a necessary military intervention into a lawless situation. It is, therefore, an internal response to rebalance the state system. Indeed, this system acts outside the law as an act of wilful violence in order to protect the state. Through an observation of invisible policy in flux, Feldman pinpoints the location of biopolitics within today's neoliberal state as an invisible violent force with the power to act independently of individuals. Policy is its arrow. Heads of state are merely administrators of this force which mediates and regulates everyday life in order to preserve the state at any costs. Violence, according to Gregory Feldman, is implicit and explicit in biopolitics.

In unpacking biopolitics in this way Feldman draws the following conclusions. Firstly, decision makers have transformed into policy implementers. Secondly, subjects, or citizens have been silenced by the experience of negotiating policy. At the heart of Feldman's argument is the idea that national parliaments within the EU have been reduced to rubber-stamping policies. Today, not only is governmentality

exercised over the population through administrative practices but the state has succeeded in hiding behind policy. Through an observation of invisible policy in flux, Feldman pinpoints the location of biopolitics within today's neoliberal state as an invisible violent force with the power to act independently of individuals. Individuals act on behalf of the state; however, there exists an altered relationship between the state and citizens. The social contract has been redrawn. In fact, the Priory Hall mediation process was a banal event in which nothing apparently happened. But during this eighteen month period this administrative process greatly preoccupied the Priory Hall Residents' Committee Members and their fellow residents. They had directly experienced the ways in which policy is at the core of governmentality.

There was no exception made for the Priory Hall residents. The Priory Hall mediation process served to highlight that fact that today sovereign power is implicitly being exercised through not making an exception. It further demonstrates that the social contract had been redrawn yet apparently no one noticed. Of course for the Priory Hall residents the sheer duration of this pointless mediation process meant that they were, once again, slipping out of the public eye. Meanwhile the banks refused to meaningfully engage and their mortgage debt increased every month. By May 2013, the Priory Hall Residents' Committee had participated in the process of mediation for seventeen months, and the Council were appealing once more to the Supreme Court to cease paying accommodation. I went along to the Supreme Court on that date, 9 May 2013 because one of the residents had described the courts, with weary irony, as 'a home-from-home' for the Priory Hall residents. At that stage they had attended the High Court and the Supreme Court a total of fifteen times. The Council, seemed to use every resource they had at their disposal to try to overturn their accommodation court order. By this time the council were claiming to have

spent €2.9 million on Priory Hall: €1.05 million on security for the deserted complex, €972,000 on leasing apartments for the evacuated residents and the rest on storage fees. In reality, the four security guards which the council employed, using tax payers money, were contracted to take care of the twenty-six units owned by the Council. Meanwhile the private owners were having their abandoned homes frequently vandalised.

On a practical level few individuals could have withstood the sheer cost of employing legal representation for these repeated court cases. The Priory Hall residents always expressed gratitude, through the media towards the two legal firms which represented them pro bono throughout. Up to now the court cases had been adjourned, but as one resident said, "I am not going to wait to hear, once more on the news, my fate." Of course he meant that it would be significant news for the media if the residents suddenly found out they would have to start paying rent. No one knew what to expect that Friday morning in Ireland's main courts' building, the Four Courts, located on Inns Quay, Dublin. [46]

The Supreme Court

The peals of Christchurch Cathedral's bells blended with the rumble of quayside traffic as I shuffle, with many others, through the imposing, yet narrow, doors of the Four Courts. As we were being screened by security two men remark on the bullet holes in the exterior stone columns, visible reminders of the Irish Civil War, 1922-1923.[47] "Of course it was our lot who blew up the Four Courts, and burnt down the Customs House." "True", replies his companion laughing, "but sure it's always handy to have the Brits close-by to blame for everything."[48] The Four Courts is grouped

around a circular central hall which is surmounted by a dome. I walk into this Round Hall area which feels like the heart and life of this building where barristers, solicitors, law clerks, clients and court staff mingle before and after trials.[49] This area measures about twenty metres with a surround of imposing Corinthian columns. This place is loud and people appear animated, some on mobile phones, others shouting, some people looked delighted and to my left a distraught woman was being comforted by several others.

The Priory Hall residents are waiting there alongside their families and supporters. They constitute a curious looking mix of harried families, some extending three generations, who appear out of place. They were very worried about today's possible outcome. Today this group of people look as though they have been dropped from outer space and appear to be numb to the deafening din all around them. They seem a small, impotent group lost within this massive space.[50] This court date has really baffled the Priory Hall residents, their committee and their families. 'Why', asked the father of one of the residents, coming over to greet me, "would the Council seek a court hearing in the midst of a mediation process that they had initiated?" But the initial humanitarian intervention by Justice Kearns' accommodation court order, seventeen months earlier, had always been unsettling for the Council as it raised a question of precedent. What if, in the future, local authorities could be instructed by the courts to house all people evacuated due to poor building standards. After all, Priory Hall was catapulted into public awareness in 2011, a time when media stories were awash with sensationalist tales from the property market collapse. The daily news was bombarded with articles concerned with the potential ramifications of a system which may have built hundreds of thousands of housing units to a poor standard. How many more Priory Halls were bubbling under the surface? In 2015, it

actually has come to light that there are significant amounts of inferior buildings as a direct result of the building boom. The Council – which owns twenty-six units in Priory Hall – was intrinsically linked to this apartment complex. This, in a way, is the main reason that Priory Hall got so much publicity, because each time the Council went to court the media reported that the housing and fire authority owned units in a death-trap building which was never up to fire regulation code. As one resident remarked wryly, "Oddly without the tits useless Council involvement there would have been no Priory Hall media wise, and in essence then no Priory Hall!" It was the Council then who kept propelling the Priory Hall residents into the public sphere. It is worth pointing out, however, that it is not the role of the Council to predict the future. The Council and the courts should represent the people and not worry about future budgets. Also the democratically elected Minister for the Environment, Phil Hogan, continued to remark to the media that he was not in a position to enter into dialogue with the Priory Hall residents as they were involved in ongoing legal cases. This attitude, anchored in untruths, simply painted a skewed picture of the Priory Hall resident's intolerable situation and made it more difficult to disentangle actual facts from irrelevant contributions. It could be argued that Minister Hogan played a Pontius Pilot style role within the Priory Hall experience as from the very beginning he had washed his hands of ever becoming proactively involved. Meanwhile the residents see that Minister Hogan's prolonged inactivity as drawing out the process even more for them and their lives had become an unsettling wait for someone, anyone to take decisive action.

The Supreme Court has a theatrical feel and entering this space is more akin to entering a theatre. The stage is set with five burgundy swivel chairs indicating that five out of the seven current Supreme Court judges would preside. The emblem of the

harp is displayed high and centred above the judges. [51] The Irish flag is hanging, stage right. Although the room is quite compact the high ceiling and gallery lends a certain cavernous quality. By the time the judges appear, and sit beneath their individual spotlights, the courtroom is quite full. People are squashed into the rows of wooden benches with several rows of people standing at the back. The judges nod down at the barristers and the barrister for the Council begins to speak. The acoustics in the room make it quite difficult to hear. The audience look strained as if holding its breath trying to hear the barristers. The barrister, for the Council, speaks for several minutes in a rhetorical manner. The audience looks perplexed, unsure of what is being said. The two barristers representing the Priory Hall residents agree that they were all in agreement.

The barrister for the Council begins to speak once more and is interrupted by a judge who questions why on earth had the Council pushed ahead with an appeal while actively engaged in a process of mediation with the Priory Hall residents. At this point another judge asks the Council barrister, "What would you like to do?" -- to which he replies dramatically, "What I would like to do and have been instructed to do are very different", and then his voice wearily trailed off into a resigned register. One judge laughed while the other four judges smiled broadly, but then all followed suit and burst out laughing. One judge looked as though he might cry laughing. Looking around the stuffy room I noted that a number of observers looked as though they might just start to cry. In the Supreme Court of the land, five out of a total of seven judges, could do nothing but laugh at the illogical manner at which the Council were being allowed to treat the Priory Hall residents. It was as if their situation was so by now bleak that all these powerful and fearful judges could do was laugh at the

contradictory manner in which the Council were treating these people. The judges then huddled together to concur.

In 'Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State' (2006 [1988]) Philip Abrams stated that, "The state is not the reality which stands behind the mask of political practice. It is itself the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is. It is, one could almost say, the mind of a mindless world, the purpose of purposeless conditions, the opium of the citizens" (Abrams 2006 [1988]:125). Abrams distinguishes between the "state-system", which is centred in government and can be inspected empirically and the "state-idea", which is an ideological projection (2006 [1988]). This state, as suggested by Abrams, is not a real thing that stands behind the institutions and government practices; however, there is a state 'idea' which is described and an ideological project that hides and masks political power within the state system. Abrams suggests that the state does not exist in any real sense, but the idea of the state is conjured up in an effort to mask cohesive political ideologies. Thus presented, the state is a tool that is used to control and promote special interest groups. For Abrams then, the state does not exist in a substantive reality, but it acts as the mask that hides political will. This was the ultimate persecution for the Priory Hall residents. They believed in the idea of a state-system whereas they were left to the periphery by a state-idea because they were trying to understand the networks of the state in a rational manner.

Time runs out

The judges were still concurring and the mother of one of the residents suddenly grips my arm whispering in a shaky, broken tone, "We have not slept for weeks". Indeed,

the Priory Hall residents, dotted around the courtroom, look worn out. I automatically touched her arm and patted her hand. I smiled awkwardly into her cried-out eyes which seemed traumatised by uncertainty. In fact, today all of the people directly affected by the Priory Hall experience seemed broken and very different to the band of warriors who had stormed the media with their spirit of resistance for the first six months of their lock out. It was by now hot and stuffy and although we had only been here for fifteen minutes it seemed like an eternity. Ultimately the Priory Hall residents were awaiting a decision from five Supreme Court judges who appeared to be suggesting that they had very little power to lend. They could do nothing either. I looked around the room at the anxious, drained faces of the Priory Hall residents and families who were awaiting their fate. The fact that the Council owned twenty-six units in Priory Hall kept propelling the residents into the news, nevertheless, the continual worry of a negative outcome was clearly taking its toll. This case had by now been put back three times this year, and the Priory Hall residents needed a new angle in order to keep their issue in the news. These people were slipping out of public awareness, and they knew it. RTE, Ireland's national radio and television broadcaster had interviewed their spokesperson outside the court earlier and he was aware that "a lack of a resolution was making their plight old news".

One of the judges began to speak and the crowd held its breath once more. The judge noted that, while a resolution was in the public interest nevertheless this appeal could prejudice the ongoing mediation talks and a decision was taken to put the case back again until 15 October 2013. By that time, the five judges hoped that the mediation process would have resolved all of the ongoing issues. People began filing out of the courtroom, "Why?" a father tearfully asked his daughter, "had the case been allowed to go to court in the first place if the ongoing mediation could disallow the

case from being heard?" Justice was not done but it had been seen to be done. The role of the court system, within this state sponsored comedy of errors was merely that of a helpless spectator.

One month later, in June 2013, Mr Justice Finnegan stated that the mediation process was at an end, declaring that he had done as much as he was permitted to do and that it was necessary to draw this process to a conclusion. Some residents felt that this mediation had just been an exercise to 'keep us out of the paper and shut us up.' One research participant strongly felt that the reason for this was because from April 2012 to June 2013 Ireland had hosted the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The mediation he felt had successfully kept the Priory Hall residents off the streets, and from protesting in front of the Parliament thereby quashing them into silence. Others shrugged saying, "Sure listen, is Priory Hall really that important, like in the bigger scheme?" In any case, the mechanics of mediation had cooled down the politics of protest for the Priory Hall residents. This process had served to raise hope. It had in actuality served to cruelly dash hope.

Throughout the Priory Hall mediation process nothing happened. Nothing could ever happen because there was never an authorised decision maker present at these meetings. While the Priory Hall residents hoped for a solution the other parties knew that there would be no solutions. Their mediation was an illusion, an exercise in smoke and mirrors manipulated to look like a support, something to redress balance in the system. But the reality is that the relevant Minister for State was allowed to pretend that the continual court cases, by the Council, were legally binding. There was no accountability on behalf of the state. This self-regulating system was not regulating but enabling people to become entrenched in their limited and partial roles. The Minister, the Council and the seven lending institutions were parties who looked

after their own interests. On the surface the Priory Hall residents were dealing with what happens when you question the workings of the state and try to pick it apart. The government are the Council and owned half of the banks involved. Meanwhile the judge is a state agent employed by the state. Yet, throughout the mediation process the lenders, judge and the Council were all strangely unified in that they shirked responsibility throughout the process. The Minister for the Environment had refused to meet the residents or engage with them in anyway claiming they all had to wait for outcomes of the mediation process and the other legal matters concerning Priory Hall being dealt with by the courts. Even two months after the mediation process had ended, Minister Hogan still persisted with this stance as reported by *The Sunday Business Post* in September 2013 which stated, "Environment Minister Phil Hogan insisted last week that he could not engage with Priory Hall residents until the mediation process was completed, and this would not be until October. But retired President of the High Court Mr Justice Joseph Finnegan is understood to have informed residents and banks over two months ago that there was no more he could do and that he saw his role in the matter at an end" (O'Connor 2013).

Despite the fact that this overly lengthy, and pointless, process of mediation had stripped the Priory Hall residents and the Priory Hall Residents' Committee of all agency; they were desperate to immediately think up new strategies. Although in shock, the Priory Hall residents quickly tried to regroup and discuss their options. Their street protests had been suppressed and ultimately strangled by the mediation process which, for them, had failed abysmally. They decided that they would go back to the Priory Hall residents and propose a new and somewhat desperate publicity stunt in order to re-launch the Priory Hall residents back into the public domain. They began to develop an idea whereby the keys of every apartment unit in Priory Hall

could be returned to each lender with each family being photographed outside the lender's head office, with their name, the lender's name, the amount owing on their mortgage facility and the fact that they were facing bankruptcy through no fault of their own.

The Priory Hall residents had always accepted responsibility for the reasons why they had stopped paying their mortgages but they wanted the other stakeholders involved to also take responsibility for their part in the Priory Hall apartment complex. On another level if, at any stage, the Priory Hall residents had been made completely and utterly homeless, even penniless, the responsibility to house these people would have automatically fallen to the state. In one way the most tragic aspect of the Priory Hall ultimate experience is that the state, meaning the citizens of Ireland, were always going to pay for Priory Hall one way or another. It is therefore very difficult to understand, and more so for the Priory Hall residents to ever fully accept, why this state roulette situation was allowed to be so painfully drawn out. Importantly the state never treated the Priory Hall debacle as an exceptional case. In the end, the Priory Hall Residents' Committee never managed to launch their last protest bid because tragedy overtook their final, unfulfilled, publicity stunt. This was because all hope had finally run out for one of the Priory Hall residents. The next chapter explores what drastic action a Priory Hall resident took when he felt responsible for not being able to provide his family with a safe home. Fiachra Daly was no longer willing to keep his young family's future basking in uncertainty so he made the ultimate sacrifice for his family and took his own life. The next chapter considers how Mr Daly's death ruptured the state without exceptions.

Chapter 4 The Gift of Suicide

> Fiachra had to die at the age of 37 for the seven banks to be shamed into coming to the table. The government was happy to sit back for two years and let the banks run the show until then. The Priory Hall Framework Resolution is that soulless banks got their money and the citizens took the hit; some a lot worse than others.
>
> - Priory Hall resident, December 2013

This chapter discusses the unexpected consequences of the death of Fiachra Daly. Mr Daly was a Priory Hall resident who committed suicide on 15 July 2013. Stephanie Meehan, his wife, felt that his action was due to the fact that their everyday lives were continually mediated by endless uncertainty and rising debt. Although a moratorium stalled their mortgage payments, the interest on the principle sum continued to accrue on their loan. The week before Mr Daly died he had received paperwork to reapply for another moratorium.[52] Despite the fact that Mr Daly and his wife were represented by Michael Dowling's Mortgage & Financial Services Ltd, their bank (KBC) made frequent direct communication with them to remind them that interest continued to accrue on their mortgage loan and that they were in danger of losing their uninhabitable home.

Three key elements formulate this chapter. Firstly, the consequences of Stephanie Meehan's public reaction to her husband's death. Secondly, a consideration of the ways in which Fiachra Daly's death became a powerful gift which could not be reciprocated. Thirdly, the inception of the Priory Hall Resolution Framework. Stephanie Meehan believed that her husband had died due to an inadequate response by the state to the dire predicament within which the Priory Hall residents found themselves. She was determined that her husband had not died in vain and that no one else would die as a result of prolonged indifference. She approached the Priory Hall

Residents' Committee and worked with them to give Priory Hall a new angle, one which placed the government in a poor media light. The gift of his death became a source of power as only a counter-gift and thereby the reversibility of exchange could have diminished this power. These three elements were direct consequences of Fiachra Daly's premature death. A research participant, who has worked as a banking consultant for over thirty years, assured me that Mr Daly's death was the sole reason that the Priory Hall residents were offered any form of resolution. He said,

> I hate to think this let alone say it, but without Fiachra's death the Priory Hall Residents' Committee would never have got anywhere with the banks. Banks can do what they like. It's called neoliberalism. Poor Fiachra, lovely man and he had a moratorium but sure the uncertainty just ate away at his soul. Banks don't have souls; that's the difference. I think Stephanie was right. Her partner was killed by the State.
>
> - Debt Consultant, May 2014

Killed by the State

Up to a month before Fiachra Daly's death the Priory Hall Residents' Committee had remained largely locked into a mediation stalemate. Fiachra Daly died one month after the mediation process had concluded without any solution or recommendations for going forward. Throughout this deeply frustrating eighteen-month period, there had never been any hint of progressive mediation let alone any sign of pending resolutions. Nevertheless, the Priory Hall Residents' Committee and their supporters were shocked when this process ended abruptly. As one Committee Member recalled with hindsight,

> The mediation meetings had personally been extremely tense, civil but tense, as the matters directly affected my life and my future. In the ordinary course of mediation/arbitration meetings whilst there can be difficult conversations, I can be a little detached but the fact that it affected me and so many other families made it quite stressful.
>
> - Priory Hall Residents' Committee Member, 2014

The process had never been the ideal form of engagement that the residents had hoped for, nevertheless this thin veneer of mediation had proved their commitment to work hard towards solving the Priory Hall debacle. A few weeks after the mediation process had been officially concluded I was scheduled to meet some of the Priory Hall residents. We arranged to meet in order to discuss how their new protest plan was progressing. The day we were due to meet a research participant contacted me to tell me about the tragic death of one of the Priory Hall residents over the weekend.

'Shock as Priory Hall Dad is found Dead at Home' (O'Connor 2013) was the headline of the event in the Herald online newspaper that day. Mr Fiachra Daly was described as "a man who had campaigned tirelessly for justice for the Priory Hall families. … He died under tragic circumstances" (O'Connor 2013). Fiachra Daly was 37 years old and had two young children with his wife of 17 years. At the time of his death their children were aged seven and two years. Since the Priory Hall evacuation, Stephanie, Fiachra and their children had invariably been together at the forefront of all of the protests and court appearances. In fact, their children had featured on the news during the most recent candlelit vigil.

Despite initial coverage in the national press over the next few weeks there was little news of Fiachra Daly's death throughout the media. In keeping with newspaper practices regarding suicide in Ireland his funeral passed unreported. Sources that mentioned his death referred to this event as an unexpected tragedy. For a period of about six weeks there was little media coverage or mention of Fiachra

Daly, or his family and their intrinsic connection to the Priory Hall apartment complex. In a way, a blanket of silence appeared to have fallen over this disquieting and harrowing event as one might expect during that time. The usually inter-active Priory Hall Facebook page went quiet. During that time only one posting was put on that page on 20 July,

> Yesterday we attended the funeral of our dear friend & fellow resident Fiachra. We do not have the words to express our sense of loss. All our hearts go out to Stephanie & the family

The Priory Hall residents were heartbroken and the one Committee member I spoke to during that five week hiatus was distraught beyond words. Of course, Fiachra's death significantly mattered to the Priory Hall residents, his friends and family. But the fact remained that Fiachra's unfortunate death did not immediately alter the position held by the banks, the Council or the government towards Priory Hall. Significantly when Fiachra died, no one from the government, the Council or the banks made contact regarding his untimely death, yet residents continued to receive demanding and threatening letters from the seven lending institutions. In fact, these institutions expected that the, by now, former Priory Hall residents would repay mortgages. But their everyday life had radically ruptured, not least for Stephanie Meehan and her very young family who were now facing a lifetime without their husband and father.

Approximately five weeks after Fiachra's death Stephanie Meehan approached the Priory Hall Residents' Committee, aware that the Priory Hall campaign was slipping out of the public eye. She was mindful that these people did not wish to disrespect Fiachra's memory, therefore Stephanie took the initiative, contacted the Committee and suggested that they reinvigorate the campaign with her help.

From the week beginning 29 August 2013, six weeks after Fiachra Daly's death, Stephanie Meehan featured in a weeklong series of articles in *The Daily Mail* newspaper. 'Killed by the State' was the front page headline which was emblazoned over a Christmas family photograph of Fiachra, Stephanie and their son and daughter. In that picture there is a colourfully decorated Christmas tree on the edge of the frame. The family are beaming into the camera and at the time this picture was taken they could never have imagined where this photograph would end up being employed. The related newspaper article outlines the situation endured by the Priory Hall residents for the previous two years. At the end of the article was the full transcript of the letter Stephanie Meehan had recently emailed to the Taoiseach. She was still awaiting a reply to this letter where she pleaded with him to now directly intervene.

It is notable, in Stephanie's letter below, that even in what must have been her lowest time that there are no vitriolic statements or abusive language within this letter.

> From: Stephanie Meehan
> To: enda.kenny@oireachtas.ie
> Subject: Priory hall
>
> Dear Enda,
>
> I have emailed you on many occasions, regarding my situation in Priory Hall. You have replied once. On July 15th mine and my children's lives changed forever, my beautiful, kind, caring Partner and father to my children took his own life. His name is Fiachra Daly. We will miss him terribly. Fiachra was the happiest man on earth, he lived for myself, Oisin (7) and Cerys (2), he never suffered from any form of mental illness or depression, we had been together for 17 years and I never once witnessed any signs. That is up until the week prior to his death, when we received demands from banks, looking for payment of arrears on a property that we can't live in, asking us to fill out, yet again, forms to request an extension of our moratorium, all for a property we can't live in through no fault of our own. The stress, the worry of not being able to provide a safe home for us, his young children, eventually took its toll, as it has on every resident. He was obviously a silent sufferer, he never complained, he supported me, when I was feeling low, he hated the idea that he couldn't provide a safe home for us, that I do know, but I thought we'd battle through this together. How wrong was I? I now have no home, my children have no permanent home, but most importantly, I have no partner and

> my children have lost their wonderful dad. Our future, security and certainty changed the minute we were evacuated and not one thing has changed in two years, every email, phone call, letter seems to have fallen on deaf ears.
> So I ask you, what will it take now for someone to listen and act on something that should've been dealt with two years ago and saved a lot of tax payer's money and most of all saved a life. Tom Mc Feely walks around scot free, he'll never suffer how we are suffering, he'll never lose what I've lost. He'll start again, I am left with a lifetime of heartache and my children will inherit that too.
> Is there any justice in this country?
> I've lost Fiachra, but I've not lost my voice.
> Stephanie Meehan

What also stands out within the letter is how Stephanie states that she and her husband, along with their neighbours, had not broken the social contract. They had kept up their side of the bargain for the greater good of society. They were deposit-saving tax-mindful citizens who had worked hard to invest in their families' future. When they had bought a house which turned out not to be fit for purpose they had expected to be fairly treated but instead discovered that their notion of a social contract had been redrawn. Their home was unfit for purpose yet no one from the government was willing to intervene or provide any practical supports.

This heartfelt plea was subsequently posted on the Priory Hall Facebook page. Stephanie did not receive an immediate reply to her letter. In fact it took the Taoiseach a couple of weeks to respond. In the meantime, *The Daily Mail* ran articles pertaining to Priory Hall for the entire week. In addition, members of the Priory Hall Residents' Committee appeared on both television and radio programmes. At the end of that week, on 6 September 2013, Stephanie Meehan appeared on the country's most popular talk show, *The Late Late Show*, which has been screened by the national broadcaster RTE since 1962. In fact, this television programme is nationally regarded as an Irish institution as opposed to a mere chat show. *The Late Late Show* is widely accredited as a force which gave a platform to promote debate surrounding necessary

social changes throughout the twentieth century. Spanning six decades the show has dealt with numerous contentious issues, from abortion to clergy fathering children to women's rights to contraception, and regularly attracts audiences of over 50 percent of the adult population. In fact this programme became synonymous with discourse on topical issues and gained a reputation for being controversial when Irish society was deeply influenced by the Irish Catholic Church.

Stephanie Meehan was interviewed on a one-to-one with the talk show host for twenty minutes, and it was powerful and moving television. She was on a mission. Although never overly-emotional, she was naturally upset yet clearly articulated her message. Unexpectedly the interview was split into two parts. It was of note that for the first half of this interview she addressed the common good and the greater society. The reason that Stephanie Meehan agreed to be interviewed on this chat show so soon after her husband had died was because she did not want his death to be in vain. But she also flatly stated that she wanted an equal solution for all of the Priory Hall residents. Stephanie stated in a calm and measured tone that no one should die alone or feel that all their options had run out. She urged any viewers feeling suicidal to talk to someone and to realise that there is always someone to go to for help even if a situation appears to be hopeless. Stephanie succinctly outlined how the Priory Hall residents had never received any practical support, let alone reassurance, from the relevant state bodies in relation to the fact that their homes were in no way habitable. The interviewer asked her what she would say to the Taoiseach were he sitting alongside them. She replied, "He should have dealt with it two years ago and then we wouldn't be in this mess. There wouldn't be millions of tax payers money wasted and most of all we wouldn't have lost a life." Stephanie highlighted how a week before Fiachra's death the couple had received lengthy paperwork from their bank asking

them to, yet again, fill out a moratorium request. Simultaneously they had received another letter from the same bank stating that by now, due to moratoriums, they had accumulated €17,000 on top of their principle sum. Stephanie underscored that Fiachra had always liaised with Michael Dowling about these incessant letters but that, for some reason, he had seemed unusually perturbed by this latest contact from their bank. The second letter in particular had really bothered Fiachra because it stated that their home was at risk. When Stephanie made that point she briefly paused to emphasize, "So strange, because we didn't have a home." According to Stephanie Meehan, this form of institutional pressure had deeply impacted on her normally cheerful and upbeat husband.

The interviewer delicately nudged Stephanie into shifting into the events leading up to her husband's death. The Sunday after receiving those bank letters Stephanie spent the day with her parents, while Fiachra went to watch a match. They were in regular contact throughout the day and that night when their son cried in his sleep Stephanie got up to attend to him and fell asleep with him. The following morning she noticed Fiachra's work van still parked outside and assumed he had slept in so she ran to wake him. To her horror she discovered that her husband was dead. He had hung himself and left no note. Since that time Stephanie had continually questioned whether she could have checked for signs of depression but then again her husband had never been prone to depressive behaviour. In fact, she stressed poignantly, that the role of raising her spirits when their impossible situation had deeply impacted upon her had automatically been managed by Fiachra. She said, "He was the last person anyone would expect to take his own life. He was the kindest person. He loved life and he loved me. He had everything to live for." Stephanie felt that the intolerable pressure to pay interest arrears on a home in which they had not

been able to reside for the past two years appeared to be a significant factor in her husband's decision to take his own life. In fact, Stephanie's bank were still writing to her and her deceased husband stating that they had yet to pay off the €17,000 interest accrued due to moratoriums. This was in spite of the fact that Fiachra's life insurance had fully paid out for the original mortgage. In addition, this bank had been informed in writing and via a phone call of the death of Fiachra Daly over two weeks before these letters were authorized.

Stephanie Meehan's appearance on *The Late Late Show* realized a significant public outcry of support and emotion. Fiachra Daly's death was immediately recognised through the national broadcaster which in Ireland is funded by the citizens. Also recognition was realised through social media with the number of supporters on the Priory Hall Facebook and Twitter accounts doubling overnight. For example the amount of followers on Facebook went from 4,500 people to almost 10,000 followers and Stephanie's letter on the Priory Hall Facebook page received 250,000 hits.

Overall Stephanie Meehan's interview on *The Late Late Show* highlighted the issues at the heart of the letter she had written to the Taoiseach. Over one million viewers tuned in to watch *The Late Late Show* the night Stephanie was a guest, including apparently the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, and his wife Fionnuala who has been described by the media, on more than one occasion as the Taoiseach's "secret weapon" (O'Doherty 2011). It is widely believed that the Taoiseach's wife, Mrs Fionnuala Kenny who was a formidable press officer in her early career was instrumental in influencing her husband's intervention. The Taoiseach's intervention did not happen immediately. For the next three weeks post-interview Stephanie Meehan and the Priory Hall Residents' Committee worked relentlessly throughout the media calling on the Taoiseach, as the only person with the power, to intervene and

appealing for an end to the Priory Hall shame which had by now cost so dearly. Congruently, many Priory Hall residents were receiving incessant letters and persistent phone calls on behalf of the lending institutions holding their mortgages.

Indeed, people working in banks frequently claim that they have no control over automated letters being sent out to customers. It is habitually depicted, by bank officials, as an unstoppable force, one which humans have no control over and, in tandem, the workings of which perplexed or stressed out customers could never possibly comprehend. Through this type of inhumane and ceaseless activity banking institutions have created and consolidated forms of structural violence which infiltrate homes and lodge straight into the hearts and mind of their customers. Throughout history gun boats were routinely dispatched to collect debts from indebted countries. Today these bureaucratic letters serve as symbolic bullets to people already significantly mired in webs of fear and uncertainty. Despite the fact that the Priory Hall residents had professional representation regarding their mortgages these automated letters were apparently unstoppable. Furthermore these mortgage representatives had repeatedly requested that the Priory Hall mortgages be frozen, given that the case of the Priory Hall residents was an exceptional circumstance and that solutions for Priory Hall were actively being sought. The seven lending institutions refused but were happy to provide moratoriums which only serve to heighten stress as deferred payments are simply added on to the loan principle. In the case of Priory Hall, the mortgages just kept getting bigger each passing month. The banks refused to recognise the Priory Hall situation as exceptional. The government still did not intervene. Meanwhile the Priory Hall resident's credit ratings had been irrevocably damaged and the banks availed of every opportunity to remind them of that fact.

On 8 September, two days after Stephanie's widely reported interview, the Chief Executive Officer of Allied Irish Banks (AIB), in which the Irish State is a large shareholder, in rather unusual circumstances and without directly contacting the Priory Hall residents, publicly stated that efforts would be made, within that bank, to make a consideration towards their 18 Priory Hall customers alongside a commitment to try and find sustainable solutions within weeks. It is difficult to fully ascertain how and why this occurred. Significantly, the Priory Hall residents heard about this, like the rest of the general public, through the media. But the other banks involved were adopting different approaches and refusing to resolve the issue without state intervention. In response to the banks uneven approach, Michael from the Priory Hall Residents Committee took to the national airwaves and appeared on as many television and radio shows as he possibly could. He stated,

> We need our government to intervene. The time to do it is now. AIB this week said it would provide solutions to its customers within weeks. The other banks need to make the same commitment. It is time to put an end to the national disgrace that is Priory Hall.

The Priory Hall Residents' Committee were insistent that it would not be the case that one bank would help their customers while another refused. Meanwhile Minister Phil Hogan kept insisting that there was a Supreme Court appeal pending in October, so he had been advised by the Attorney General not to communicate with the Priory Hall residents. This legal matter was the Council seeking to overturn the accommodation order and was always a peripheral matter which had never affected the substantive issue. Congruently and rather embarrassingly for the government, despite the mediation process having officially being drawn to a close Minister Hogan once again told the by now disbelieving media that he was awaiting the conclusion to this process.

The media made much of his gaffe which prompted the Residents' Committee to release the following press statement,

> Minister Hogan is waiting on a report that does not exist. The residents are completely in the dark. On Tuesday, AIB set the tone for what needs to be done. They have promised their customers sustainable solutions within weeks. From their comments at the Finance committee it seems that they are considering mortgage transfers. That is what the residents' need, a chance to get on with our lives, to have a home for our families and to pay our mortgages. There's a window of opportunity here to finally get this resolved. The residents want this over, the Taoiseach has said he wants this over and I believe the whole country wants this over. All that is needed is a commitment from the other mortgage providers. We are asking the Taoiseach for his help. What we're suggesting is that he sits down with a small group of residents that we put all legal issues off the table, to have a confidential discussion on how we can set out a clear roadmap to resolving the mortgage issues quickly. The other problems can wait. The residents can't take on the banks alone, we need our governments help. If the political will is really there, we can get this done. Let's try to ensure families will not have to spend another Christmas worrying about their future.

The following week the newspapers were flooded with stories aghast with how Minister Hogan was so completely misinformed, let alone disinterested in Priory Hall, and there were wide calls across the media spectrum for the Taoiseach to directly intervene.

On 8 September Minister for State Jan O'Sullivan was a guest on the Sunday popular national radio programme 'The Marian Finuchane Show'. Stephanie Meehan was a phone in guest to the show. Meehan's radio slot was timely as the papers that day were awash with stories of continued government stalling on the future lives of the Priory Hall residents. When Minister O' Sullivan attempted to defend her governments by now untenable position Meehan swiftly interjected with, "I am sick and tired of your excuses and your governments' excuses. The Taoiseach should have the humanity and the decency to meet with residents". Stephanie Meehan and the Priory Hall Residents Committee had by now a significant media support behind them

and they were not going to back down. Irish economist Stephen Kinsella was one of the many public figures and journalists who wrote, "How can we find billions for banks, but nothing for Priory Hall Victims?" (Kinsella 2013)

By 10 September the Taoiseach had responded to the pleas of the Priory Hall residents in parliament and across the media. He asked for a little time to put together a workable solution. He promised that the Priory Hall residents would shortly have a satisfactory outcome. Despite being heart-broken, riled up, consumed with anguish and disappointment, the Priory Hall Residents' Committee took their country's leader at his word and agreed to wait again. This time, however, the Priory Hall Residents' Committee maintained their strong media presence. The section below is from one of the final interviews which Michael gave during that time:

> It has often been said in the media that Priory Hall is a symbol of the worst excesses of the Celtic Tiger. But the entire fiasco is symptomatic of a much deeper malaise, of a country that holds no one accountable. A cowboy builder who put families' lives in danger has been allowed to walk away from all responsibility. The Council is trying to wash its hands of the whole affair. The banks are forcing blameless families, who have already lost their homes, further into debt. Meanwhile, the State just stands on the sidelines looking the other way. Last week was the first hint of progress we have had in almost two years. While it was disappointing that we again had to hear about it through the media, we obviously welcome the Taoiseach's and Environment Minister Phil Hogan's commitment to act. However, Mr Hogan's excuses for not meeting us directly have worn thin.
>
> - Priory Hall Residents' Committee Member, 8 September 2013

Figure 17: Priory Hall abandoned in 2013

(Source: Priory Hall Facebook page)

For the Priory Hall residents it seemed as though, for the first time in two years, their nightmare existence might finally be seriously addressed but it had required the sacrifice of their friend, ally and neighbour for them to even get to a point of credible negotiation.

The Gift of Impossible Exchange

Émile Durkheim (1952 [1897]) made the act of suicide an object of social scientific study because he wished to consider the effect of its societal influence across everyday life. In discussing what is routinely explained as a principally individualistic action, Durkheim posited that social factors were crucial determinants of suicide. He

was expanding on his ideas from his work *The Division of Labour in Society* (1933 [1893]) where he argued that society imposes a significantly controlling force on individual behaviour which he called a collective conscience (Durkheim 1933 [1893]:275) This is akin to the word culture—collected beliefs and values which mould behaviour—as employed by anthropologists today.

Durkheim's ideas surrounding suicide are based on changes he noted throughout society as he witnessed the old social order changing for an increasingly individualized Western World. For Durkheim, "The questions it [suicide] raises are closely connected with the more serious practical problems of the present time" (Durkheim 1952 [1897]:358). Durkheim underscored that suicide could be a signal within a given society due to rapid change which threatened both the individual and the society. Generally, what Durkheim tried to theoretically unravel was the commitment of one person to their, at times, insecure social order. Simply put, Durkheim placed an emphasis on suicide as a social act due to the fact that social bonds had weakened in modern societies. It is helpful, therefore, to think about the act of suicide as a social process. It is however, difficult to decipher when reading *Suicide* (1952 [1897]) whether Durkheim drew on statistical proof or built on a dialectical argument. For example, he provides a definition of suicide as, "An act which cannot be defined by the end sought by the agent, for the same set of movements can, without changing their nature, be adapted to too many different ends" (Durkheim 1952 [1897]:43-44). While Durkheim investigates connections between forms of social life and individual acts of abandoning life, he does not appear to interrogate how the individuals involved in suicide construct the meanings of their actions. Durkheim never explains why people commit suicide because, for him, human action, or motive and ideas are irrelevant to a suicide analysis. Importantly, Durkheim established that

the act of suicide is a social process and, therefore, the voluntary death of an individual who needs to be attached to a social goal, is a social fact.

In his work The *Gift* (2011 [1925]), Marcel Mauss expanded upon Durkheim's insights into social integration. Through a close reading of diverse observations on the nature of 'archaic' societies, Mauss posited that the gift formed the basis of 'archaic' social life. He draws on ideas from a myriad of pre-modern societies. For Mauss, reciprocity appeared to function as the basis of every society. He noted that in theory gift exchange was voluntary but in practice obligatory. Mauss thus noted that reciprocity, even when the exchange appeared symbolic in nature, was shown to be the basis of pre-modern societies. Mauss stressed that "in any event gift exchange is the rule" (Mauss 2011 [1925]:16). Mauss seems unspecific in his definition of gift but it is clear from his arguments that the power of a gift lies within one's obligation to return it. According to Mauss,

> In this system of ideas one clearly and logically realized that one must give back to another person what is really part and parcel of his nature and substance, because to accept something from somebody is to accept some part of his spiritual essence, of his soul. (Mauss 2011 [1925]:12)

If it is not returned then the gift will always somehow possess the spirit of the giver. It becomes a powerful force, an immovable object. Mauss proposed that the exchange of gifts and services created social bonds and maintained social and moral relations in families and across communities. Mauss never clarified the specific nature of these relationships, but Pierre Bourdieu captures this form of exchange as "witnessed in countless ordinary and continuous exchanges of daily existence-exchanges of gifts, services, assistance, visits, attention, kindness-and the extraordinary and solemn exchanges of family occasions" (Bourdieu 1994:68). The exchange of gifts and

services, therefore, created social bonds and maintained social and moral relationships in families and across communities. Gift exchange obviously predates the commodity form of today which dominates the neoliberal order. Mauss distinguishes between social life orchestrated through reciprocal interpersonal relationships and the economy with its market relations. Mauss asserts, "For a very long time man was something different, and he has not been a machine for very long, made complicated by a calculating machine" (2011 [1925]:76). Here Mauss reminds his readers that gift relations are face-to-face whereas commodity relations are not. According to Marcel Fournier, Mauss "acknowledged that society is built on solidarity, but he believed it also required reciprocity for survival" (Fournier 2006:3). In fact, at one point Mauss promotes a culture of gift giving to such a degree as to stress, "We can and must return to archaic society and elements of it" (Mauss 2011 [1925]: 69). Perhaps Mauss referred to a certain type of *groupness* which ultimately became alienated within an economic order negotiated through commodities.

The power of the gift lies in the fact that one always feels a sense of social obligation to acknowledge and ultimately return the gift. In the case of a suicide, then, can we consider death as a gift? Can a person who takes their own life create a powerful symbolic quality? The power of the gift lies in the fact that one always feels a sense of social obligation to acknowledge and ultimately return the gift. In the case of a suicide, then, can we consider death as a gift? Can a person who takes their own life create a powerful symbolic quality? Here I turn to Jean Baudrillard and his ideas surrounding the value behind the power of symbolic exchange.

Baudrillard's gift to Maussian discourse is his attempts to elevate the sacredness of the symbolic nature of the gift. Importantly, for Baudrillard, the symbolic is both "an act of exchange and a social relation" (Baudrillard 1993:133). In

addition, "symbolic exchange finds itself expelled from the field of value. Baudrillard considered that Karl Marx had been short sighted in continually contrasting use value with exchange value. For Baudrillard, all Marx had achieved was a simplistic critique of exchange value which had resulted in an exalted opinion of use value. Baudrillard insisted that instead Marx should have juxtaposed the power of symbolic exchange with commodity exchange (Baudrillard 1993:8). In addition Baudrillard posited that in order to understand capitalism it has to be seen, not as a mode of production, but rather as a code dominated by the structural law of value.

The pressure and power within the reversibility of a gift encouraged Baudrillard to develop his idea of symbolic-exchange. Baudrillard noted that the symbolic order has been overtaken by the semiotic order. For Baudrillard, the power of the gift could be "considered the most proximate illustrate of symbolic exchange" (Baudrillard 1981:64). Contemporary society has turned all objects into commodities which endlessly circulate like signs. In western society, today, objects' inherent values have in essence been lost through capitalist transactions (Baudrillard 1993:10). In fact throughout *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1993) Baudrillard documented the destruction of the symbolic by the semiotic in the contemporary world. He emphasised that pre-capitalist societies were organized through gift giving and he considered that, today, not enough credit was given to the idea of symbolic exchange over market rationality. According to Baudrillard,

> The symbol is neither a concept, an agency, a category, nor a 'structure', but an act of exchange, and a social relation which puts an end to the real, which resolves the real, and, at the same time, puts an end to the opposition between the real and the imaginary. (Baudrillard 1993:133)

Essentially for Baudrillard, symbolic exchange stands opposed to the human ideology of the gift. This is because the gift itself represents both the essence and the source of

power. Baudrillard explored how through symbolic exchange the system is incapable of reversibility because symbolic exchange is irreversible. Therefore only the counter-gift abolishes power. Only through the reversibility of symbolic exchange through a counter-gift can power be abolished. But when a person commits suicide how is this act reciprocated, or does this act symbolize the gift of impossible exchange?

A person's death by suicide would appear to be the gift of impossible exchange because it seems as though this gift cannot be returned. Baudrillard noted that the essence of the counter-gift is "continuous unlimited reciprocity" (Baudrillard 1975:79).

According to Baudrillard,

> there are rarely suicides that stand against the controlled production and exchange of death, against the exchange-value of death not its use-value (for death is perhaps the only thing that has no use-value which can never be referred back to need which can unquestionably be turned into a weapon) but its value as rupture contagious dissolution and negation. (Baudrillard 1993:176).

For Baudrillard death is a very real object that exists in the world and he posited that, "Life given over to death: the very operative of the symbolic" (Baudrillard 1993:131). A natural death is common place, banal even and, therefore devoid of symbolic meaning. But a suicide is a doubling of the imagination because it takes on the form of a sacrificial death. Fiachra Daly's death fractured the biopolitical state. It was a form of symbolic exchange that ruptured market exchange because its power was channelled in only one direction. And its force propelled the Priory Hall residents back into the public domain.

In the case of the death of Fiachra Daly, there appeared to be no doubt in Stephanie Meehan's mind that her husband's death was due to their ongoing and exceptional social situation. Her open letter to the Taoiseach flatly stated, "The stress,

the worry of not being able to provide a safe home for us, his young children, eventually took its toll." Indeed Fiachra Daly's death, through the act of suicide, acted as a catalyst for the Priory Hall Residents' Committee to regroup. And with the blessing and help of his widow they bombarded the social consciousness with a new focus on Priory Hall. The media fed on this news like content piranhas because a new angle emerged on a jaded news item. The media reports of Fiachra Daly's death became damning of the governments poor handling of the entire Priory Hall debacle.

An unexpected consequence of Fiachra Daly's tragic death was that it proved to be a powerful and controversial one-way gift to the Priory Hall residents. From the time of Stephanie Meehan's television appearance on *The Late Late Show* there was a public outcry of emotion surrounding continued government delay in relation to the Priory Hall debacle. The highlighting of the manner in which Fiacha Daly's took his own life by his wife, the Priory Hall Residents' Committee and the subsequent media pressure brought about the government-led offer of *The Priory Hall Resolution Framework*. This government led proposal, in stark contrast to the previous eighteen months of pointless mediation was definitive in nature. The Taoiseach's representative pointedly told the Priory Hall Residents' Committee to carefully consider the offer as it had a three week expiry limit. Two days later the Priory Hall residents' Committee agreed in principle to *The Priory Hall Resolution Framework*. By December 2013, this process was fully agreed upon and the yearlong business of its implementing had begun. The reaction to this framework and its key details are outlined below.

The Priory Hall Resolution Framework

The Priory Hall Resolution Framework and the implementation group chaired by former senator Dr Martin McAleese were established by the Government to oversee the effective implementation of the framework. Dr McAleese headed up an oversight board comprised of two members of the Priory Hall Residents' Committee, representatives from the Council, representatives from the relevant government departments and agencies and members of the Irish Banking Federation (IBF). According to a Priory Hall resident for three weeks the Priory Hall Residents' Committee became locked into a situation where the contents of the meetings could not be openly discussed. She said, "The Priory Hall Residents' Committee worked every night trying to get the best possible deal that they could".

By 8 October 2013 the Priory Hall Residents' Committee had agreed to *The Priory Hall Resolution Framework* and they were steadfast in their resolve to help in its implementation. On 10 October 2013 the Journal.ie online newspaper published an article with the headline 'We can finally put Priory Hall behind us'—deal is reached on the apartment complex." The Taoiseach was thus quoted in this article,

> The residents of Priory Hall are victims of one of the worst excesses of the Celtic Tiger era, and this solution recognises the exceptional circumstances they find themselves in. I would like to thank the residents for the constructive manner in which they have engaged with the resolution process established by Minister Hogan three weeks ago.
>
> - The Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, 10 October 2013

After a six-year callous struggle, Priory Hall had finally been recognised as an exception. Once again the Priory Hall Residents' committee were publicly lauded, this time by the Prime Minister, as people brimming over with decorum. The

Taoiseach's priority in the *Journal.ie* article had been to stress that his Minister, Phil Hogan had established the *Priory Hall Resolution Framework* process. Importantly, The *Journal.ie* appeared to be the only media source that reported that a deal had been made whereas other media sources such as *The Irish Independent* newspaper reported that the Priory Hall owners "would have their *mortgages written off* and would be offered pre-approved loans for new properties" (Irish Independent 2013). Meanwhile RTE News announced that "former Priory Hall residents have accepted a new mortgage deal that will see former apartment owners have their *debt written off*" (RTE News 2013). If one was to simply have absorbed this debt forgiveness news one could understandably have deducted that a benevolent dictator had made a generous exception, stepped in and interrupted banks incessant power. But that is not what happened, as the key points of *Priory Hall Resolution Framework* reveal below because the mortgage costs of the Priory Hall apartments were gifted to the citizens of Ireland.

> Owner-occupiers homes in Priory Hall were transferred to the Council. The credit rating of these unit holders would be restored to the position it would have been prior to the Priory Hall evacuation. These owner-occupiers will have 12 months to be aided by their relevant bank to purchase a home. These owner occupiers will be offered a new mortgage for a property by the same bank provided it is affordable relative to their current and expected future income. The Council will continue to provide rented accommodation to owner occupiers for the twelve month period.

The banks had their mortgages bought over by the Council. It was not a case that even a cent of a mortgage payment had been written off. In addition by this time it was almost eight to ten years since the Priory Hall owners had originally received mortgage approval. Not only had these people aged in terms of mortgage approval but many of them no longer trusted that a house could ever be a secure and certain life investment. One of the debt negotiators involved said,

> In one way for the Priory Hall residents you could say it is poor deal. They lost their deposits, any mortgage repayments they had made, all those home repairs, look at Mary alone €100,000 grand gone down the drain if you add up these three aspects just for her. But on the other hand, they do not have some €300,000 mortgage debt increasing every month. To be honest this is unprecedented that the banks even negotiated with the little people.
> Owners of Buy-to-Let (BTL) properties will be given the option of a moratorium on the mortgage for the duration of the refurbishment of Priory Hall, with repayments to re-commence when refurbishment of Priory Hall has been completed.
> - Priory Hall, Mortgage Advisor, April 2014

At the meetings which the Priory Hall Residents' Committee chaired with Priory Hall residents in order to discuss the resolution proposal some of the BTL property owners were devastated by this decision. Ten years ago people were being actively encouraged by the state to invest in additional property as a way of securing a future and banks made it very easy to buy a second property by re-mortgaging the primary homes. Today, such people are habitually being punished by the state by widespread repossessions on such properties.

Almost two years after the dramatic Priory Hall evacuation, the Priory Hall Residents' Committee released a press statement stating that they were all looking forward to moving on with their lives, and that they were working out the implementation of the *Priory Hall Resolution Framework* with various government representatives. They thanked the Taoiseach and his department for working alongside them towards a fair resolution for the former Priory Hall residents. They stated that the two year deadline that had been imposed on the resolution would be adhered to and that they were determined to see that the new structure delivered would be built to a standard of high quality. Their statement finished up with,

> Finally we would like to thank Stephanie Meehan. A little over a month ago she made the brave decision to speak out about the death of her partner Fiachra Daly. It was her strength and dignity that made this government finally take notice of the national disgrace that is Priory Hall. The price she has paid is more than anyone should have to bear and every resident owes her a debt of gratitude we can never repay. We have no doubt that Fiachra is proud of her.
>
> - Priory Hall Residents' Committee Member, 8 September 2013

The Sunday Business Post reported that Minister for the Environment Phil Hogan said that the Council would refurbish the Priory Hall complex. Hogan further stated that he had introduced new building controls to ensure that a situation like Priory Hall could never happen again (O'Connor 2013). The cost of the Priory Hall refurbishment was estimated, at this time, to be in the region of €10 million. At the time of writing in October 2015 "the complete budget for the remediation of the Priory Hall apartment complex is €30.4 million" (Ward 2015).

The Priory Hall Resolution Framework process was not a legal process. It was an implementation of an agreement which took all of the parties involved three weeks to agree to and almost two years to implement. It did not have any legally binding components or strict timelines. It comprised of representatives from Government, the seven lending institutions, the Council, the Department of Environment and the Priory Hall Residents' Committee, who reported to the chair on progress made in former residents obtaining mortgage approval for new homes. In a small number of cases long term state assisted housing solutions were worked out in the case of families who are now experiencing reduced incomes following the economic downturn. There is also an update provided on the rebuild of Priory Hall given at these meetings. As of the end of July 2015 the involvement of the Priory Hall Residents' Committee, as the Priory Hall residents' representatives for the former owner occupiers' involvement was just about at an end. Mortgage and housing solutions have been obtained save for

agreement on a leasing agreement for a small number of former residents in one development where the original property owner has recently sold the property and agreement with the new owner is being sought.

I asked one of the Priory Hall Residents' Committee for a comment on how the Resolution Framework process had been managed and she said that the process had been a positive engagement between all the parties involved. A key focus of this process had been with assisting the previous residents to finalise living arrangements and on rebuilding the development in a timely fashion. There was also the practical matter that for two years Priory Hall residents lived with the relentless worry of a burden of endless debt for a worthless property hanging over them. This experience had ruptured some people's belief in the need to buy a home as they could never again envisage that owning a home could be a guaranteed route to a secure future. As a final comment on the fact that the resolution process was almost at an end of my research participant said,

> All in all, it was surprisingly a positive end to an extremely difficult problem from everybody's' point of view, i.e. the residents, lending institutions and Government. Of note, the developer didn't assist with the solution or contribute in any way to the financing of same.
>
> - Priory Hall Residents' Committee Member, August 2015

It was challenging to gauge how the Priory Hall residents collectively felt about Fiachra's passing. "Heartbroken" was the word some of the Priory Hall Committee Members and other research participants used when we spoke about Fiachra's death. Indeed at every opportunity the Priory Hall Residents' Committee thanked Stephanie and Fiachra throughout the media. They always stated that it was their bravery that had brought about *the Priory Hall Resolution Framework* which was ultimately agreed upon. Once Fiachra Daly's gift of death was out in the public domain its power

dictated that it be acknowledged. Through its acknowledgement the one way flow of policy was halted and the power of this gift meant that it had to in some way be publicly acknowledged. A gift cycle also has the capacity to engage people into relationships of commitments and Fiachra Daly's family and friends wished to mark the event of his life and death by holding a special fund raising event for his family. On 1 December 2013, they held a fund raising memorial event in Fiachra's honour in his native village of Howth, Co. Dublin. The Priory Hall Residents' Committee were not involved in its organisation but they participated in this event along with some 600 other people.

The big Howth walk

On 1 December 2013 groups of people began to arrive in the centre of Howth fishing village to partake in an 8km walk in memory of Fiachra Daly and in support of his family. The event was advertised on Facebook as "an open invitation to the general public to join family and friends of Fiachra and Stephanie and their two children on a walk around the Hill of Howth". There was a €10 registration fee which provided a commemorative yellow wristband inscribed with "Fiachra 2013," and the promise of a cup of soup on completion.

The winter morning was unusually balmy and mellow and Howth resembled a perfect picture postcard with deep blue sky fusing with a calm aqua sea. Throughout summer the nearby working fishing harbour is swarming with natives and tourists alike. In fact, Howth that morning would have been far quieter were it not for the some 600 people gathered for this special occasion. Close to the registration table people greeted each other cordially. Many teased one another as to who was up to the

8km challenge or not. Others hugged and acknowledged the passing of time since last they had last met. “Remember when your parents dragged you out for an endless walk every Sunday,” remarked one person whose nostalgic memory was rewarded with empathetic groans. The sounds of mobiles, dogs barking and excited children increased as more people arrived. There was a general sense that people wanted to get moving invoked by a young boy’s cry of “This is bbbooooooring, really really bbbooooooring.” One of the organisers clad in a Santa suit addressed the crowd,

> There is a community of people here some who knew Fiachra very well but all were very touched and deeply saddened by his loss, by his passing. Fiachra was a kind and loving soul, he was a fantastic partner to Stephanie, an amazing father, loving son and a kind brother. He was popular, loved and is deeply, deeply missed. Stephanie Meehan your actions have directly resulted in the end of the nightmare for the residents of Priory Hall and the beginning of their hopes for a bright and a happy future. It’s an honour, a privilege to call you our friend. We love you very, very much and we are all here for you.

The audience clapped and nodded approval and then Stephanie stood up and thanked them for their continued support. She expressed surprise at the distance some friends and family members had travelled in order to attend and she wished everyone well and hoped that the day would be enjoyable. In contrast to previous Priory Hall public events where supporters and participants seemed harried and appeared very worried, the atmosphere in Howth was relaxed and people seemed relaxed. Stephanie Meehan and her children led the walk which began through the village centre. We all followed behind. This extended Sunday walk felt like a secular pilgrimage. Adults, children, dogs, parents pushing buggies with babies moved past the pier. Some people were sportily clad while others donned their Sunday best. People mingled with ease, chatting to those alongside them. I weaved in and out of conversations throughout the eight km walk. For the most part people said that they enjoyed the day and that it was

important to show up and remember the sacrifice a young man had made in order to save his family. A few weeks after the walk one of the Priory Hall residents said,

> The Howth walk had a weird atmosphere kind of forced. I want to say something positive about it. I went along. I wanted to go and support Stephanie and the kids. It was just kind of sad odd and surreal. Poor Fiachra! God and Jesus! Why? He had a moratorium!

It would appear that having a moratorium was not enough to ease the worry of a continual onslaught of accruing debt. In twenty-first century Ireland and across the Western World the experience of homeownership has shifted from one of certainty to uncertainty. Certainly in Ireland people no longer consider a mortgage to be a solid future investment. While it is true to say that both a borrower and lender have the capacity to reap reward or risk loss the fact is that people never really considered that having a family home equated with repaying a bank loan. Mortgages were believed to be solid investments that would through due diligence and commitment become manageable and allow the borrower to accrue equity on their investment. Of course people take a risk when they enter into debt but today banks seem to routinely do deals with corporations. The ongoing banking enquiry in Ireland has revealed that hundreds of millions of euro was routinely written off for corporations. Fiachra Daly took his own life because he had a mortgage of €290,000 on a worthless apartment. The interest kept accruing on his moratorium. The cruel irony of his life and death is that while he lived KBC were legally enabled to keep applying interest to his mortgage loan. When Mr Daly died KBC got the entire loan back via a life insurance policy and still tried to get the arrears but were forced to waive that €17,000 solely due to negative publicity. Today just over two years after Fiachra Daly's death KBC is branded as *KBC Bank Ireland –Welcome To The Bank of You* and is expanding into

student loans. Debt forgiveness depends on who you are and death seems to be the only way for an exception to be made.

Importantly, the state was not adequately represented in the initial mediation process yet, in the end, it was the state that efficiently proposed *the Priory Hall Resolution Framework* which took just three weeks of negotiations to formulate. This process took almost two years to implement. Fiachra Daly's untimely death proved to be a gift to his family and neighbours, one which could not be reciprocated. Today corporate debt is routinely written off but at the same time individuals can be pursued to death through policy. As the Priory Hall experience showed, all too chillingly, only in death will an exception be made for individuals. This is not the type of governance that citizens generally expect to be dealt with in a democracy and it certainly does not seem to be a social contract that serves the general good of the population. If death becomes the only instance for the possibility of a state of exception then what does it mean to govern today and what does it take to push a citizen to death.

The next chapter considers the ways in which the former Priory Hall residents and indeed citizens across the Western World living today are living within an altered state, a state without exceptions. The Priory Hall residents realized that they were experiencing new modes of governance. As citizens they felt forced to continually try to discover new ways of articulating towards their state. It is not wholly possible for all, if indeed any, of these people to now believe that certainty and security are assured. These people discovered considerable duress and loss when they put their faith in a social contract which they ultimately discovered had been redrawn. They felt that they had been failed as citizens. Unusually, President Michael D. Higgins the current President of Ireland, categorised the Priory Hall residents' experience as an example of "a complete failure by the state towards its citizens" (Higgins 2013). I

begin chapter five by unpacking this President's speech which he made at an event he hosted for the Priory Hall residents to celebrate their chance at a new beginning.

Chapter 5: Living in an Altered State

> It is almost four years, to the day, since the first tenants were originally evacuated from Priory Hall and over two years since all of you had to leave your homes there for good. The end of 2013 marks a turning point in a difficult struggle for the residents of Priory Hall—a struggle for justice and fairness for a place that you could call home. And I think it is very clear that these have been years, for yourselves that have been difficult years, of uncertainty and anxiety and frustration and at times very understandable, dismay... The decades from which we are moving are ones in which we will have to recall were ones, when, by breaches of trust in those institutions and professions where it had been placed, very many were left wounded – those who simply sought a home, but also so many of our citizens were deeply wounded as a people and as an economy. In failing to control speculation, by light or no regulation, our citizens were failed by those in whom trust was placed in their duty of care towards all of our citizens.
>
> - President Michael D. Higgins, 13 December 2013

In the above excerpt from a speech, President Michael D. Higgins alludes to the notion of home as a special place. This chapter considers how Irish political thinking around—a place we call home—to borrow from President Higgins has remained rooted within twentieth-century capitalist thinking despite the fact that today we all inhabit a different type of Kansas, a twenty-first century biopolitical neoliberal order. Home is no longer a place where we can assuredly live, make plans, grow old gracefully or disgracefully and hope to make some memories along the way. In the last 15 years across the Western World the intensification of the commodification of the humble home has trapped millions of people into cyclical and sinister debt.

Firstly, I consider President Higgins' reception for the Priory Hall residents where he stated that the Irish state had failed its citizens. Secondly, I consider how this 'place we call home' story began when the new Irish Free State in a desperate to bid to secure a stable state opted to make homeownership central to the hearts and mind of citizens. Ideas surrounding home, became aligned to the idea of ownership throughout the twentieth century. Thirdly I consider how we appear live in a

particular time where the neoliberal State without exception is governed through policy administered by politicians. Finally I revisit the Priory Hall rebuild which is ongoing into Spring 2016.

A Place that you could Call Home

In December 2013, the President of Ireland Michael D Higgins and his wife Sabina invited the Priory Hall residents to a reception in Áras an Uachtaráin. The purpose of that event was to end the year 2013 on a more positive note for these former neighbours. President Higgins, a renowned orator, gave a speech and poetically referred to the desperate struggle by the Priory Hall residents as one "seeking justice and fairness for a place that you could call home". It sounded like a David and Goliath type encounter one in which these wounded people, who had been failed by the State, had against the odds overcome their trials and tribulations. It was notable in his speech that 'a place to call home', which seems like a simple endeavour, was the main thrust of their struggle. The state had failed them because it was no longer possible to guarantee that citizens could trust in their state to protect them.

The President's gathering was well attended by the Priory Hall residents along with some of their parents and other family members. It was significant for them that this event occurred at Christmas time because their previous seven Priory Hall Christmases had been mired by debt, uncertainty, and endless worry. This year the uncertainty, debt and endless worry that had mediated the Priory Hall residents' lives for almost a decade had finally been addressed but these aspects had been replaced by the gift of impossible exchange due to the death of Fiachra Daly. Mr Daly was notably absent that day. He had been a memorable presence at most of the previous

Priory Hall protests and Christmas gatherings. He had attended with his wife invariably holding one, if not both, of his children. He had always seemed happy with a smile on his face. Stephanie Meehan and her two children presented the President and his wife with Christmas cards and gifts. The room where the reception was held was appropriately decorated for Christmas. People who had not seen one another for a time greeted and hugged one another while children ran around unfettered. The President and his wife happily posed for photographs and the entire event, which had a heavy media presence, seemed to have more of a family wedding feel, rather than a formal event held by a head of state.

The President acknowledged that the Priory Hall residents' struggle to simply secure their homes had been deeply unjust. He stated that a lack of regulation had resulted in years of uncertainty and discomfort for these people. They had, he acknowledged, been utterly abandoned and failed by the very state agencies that they thought would protect them. In fact their lives had descended into a world of endless fear, uncertainty and foreboding. In particular President Higgins commended the Priory Hall Residents' Committee for the effective ways in which they had tirelessly carried out their advocacy role on behalf of the other residents. He noted that they had always portrayed themselves in a most dignified manner. Mr Higgins stressed that, "Stephanie Meehan's bravery and tenacity at a time of enormous personal tragedy moved and impressed a nation" (Higggins 2013). He further added that he would like "to thank Stephanie for being an inspiration to us all and a true embodiment of courage in the face of tragedy" (Higgins 2013). The President's speech described a country where the citizen can no longer trust its government to protect its best interests. Fundamentally, deeply held views of the state had been ruptured. The President's message was that the state had failed its citizens yet on balance he

acknowledged the role of the Taoiseach in resolving the Priory Hall debacle. The President had not invited the Priory Hall residents to a reception while they remained technically homeless. This reception only occurred once *the Priory Hall Resolution Framework* had been agreed upon. The Priory Hall residents had agreed to the terms and conditions of this framework which ensured that no former resident could ever sue any of the parties involved in the building of Priory Hall.

Towards the end of his speech the President hoped that these brave people could now "move out of the shadows of anxiety, hurt and disappointment and look forward to new possibilities and new beginnings" (Higgins 2013). Indeed, a place called home, to borrow from the President, sounds like an innocent and pure place and one to which we should all still aspire. In Ireland today, politicians like the President and citizens alike frequently lament the Celtic Tiger epoch, the boom bust cycle and the entrapment into endless debt experienced by hundreds of thousands people. It is natural to try to identify the source of pain or hurt, therefore they seek to trace blame in familiar places. In addition, as a nation, Ireland has a lengthy and emotive history of emigration. The proof of this today is evidenced by its Irish diaspora which impressively boasts some 70 million people, over half of which hail from the United States. Four American Presidents have recently claimed to be members of the Irish diaspora and visited the Emerald Isle during their re-election years. They were John F. Kennedy, Ronald Regan, Bill Clinton and Barak Obama. The problem in Ireland today is that politicians still have a tendency to think about the state as our state and generally citizens think about their home as our home. The Priory Hall debacle revealed that the reality is far more disconcerting. For a start "a place to call home" (O'Higgins 2013) as the President had so poetically coined it is a place that refused to

make an exception until a person died. It is also a place where the reality of home has drastically transformed in the twenty-first century.

Through the seven decades of the Tenant Purchase Scheme citizens were actively encouraged and helped by the state through tax incentives to invest in family homes. Today, not only is there a dire shortage and neglect of social housing but the very notion of this style of living has become ghettoised in people's hearts and minds. The design of Priory Hall was made possible due to changes made in the density guidelines by the Residential Density Guidelines introduced by Minister Noel Dempsey in 1999. McDonald and Sheridan discuss how the trading up and down notion was tested on a smaller scale for the first time in Ireland with a scheme of 450 houses in Castleknock which have a variety of house types (McDonald and Sheridan 2009:85). In 2002, senior Council planner, Bob Biddlecombe[53] wrote an article entitled 'Planning Suburbia: Density Dilemmas' where he stated that even the cheapest new suburban houses in Dublin cost almost twice the construction prices (Biddlecombe 1992:90). The capital potential from successful high density private developments therefore must have been considered at the time the Priory Hall landscape was being planned. In addition, every unit in Priory Hall is subject to maintenance fees, and each shop unit would be subject to rates. Using forty years of low-density suburban sprawl, in what was frequently referred to as a Tallaght distinct approach, to contrast new innovative suburban options Priory Hall was marketed as individual units of choice. Finally it appeared that people seemed to have some control over the look of their home and during the property boom a home became a bankable investment for both dreams and future security.

Importantly, here is a salient example of a state applying twentieth-century capitalist thinking to a twenty-first century neoliberal biopolitical state. Despite the

fact that the flow of capital has transformed today, nevertheless, Irish politicians and Irish people's idea of homeownership today yet remains rooted in the previous century. During the Celtic Tiger people did not consider that they were entering into a relationship with global capitalism or the free market. In actuality they had a lot less control over their investments thaen they could ever have imagined.

In *'The Fetishism Capitalof Commodities'* (2011 [1867]) Karl Marx identified how the exchange value of the commodity is outside of the control of the person involved. Marx explained that this is because "a commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties" (2011 [1867]:113). The commodity enters the market and gains a mystical value which becomes more important than its use value. In this way even the person who makes the commodity becomes controlled by this as they are distanced from the product of their labour. This fetishism attaches itself, like an invisible host, to the commodity as soon as it produced. This is in spite of the fact that the value-relation of the commodity and the actual form of the commodity have no connection with the physical nature of the commodity or the material relations that arise from trading the commodity. A person therefore cannot simply buy a house. It is a mysterious exchange of cultural matter, dreams and hopes. In a country where homeownership was culturally important each successive government considered ways in which to intensify the commodification of the home.

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It is true to say that by the twenty-first century, across Ireland many people built their future homes on the fragility of an unregulated planning system fuelled by a seemingly endless supply of credit. On the one hand, a failure of building and banking regulation was culpable yet on the other; deregulation had successfully boosted the

economy, created vast employment and secured mortgages for tens of thousands caught up in the rent trap. For a time this aspect of wilful neglect boosted the economy and some of the citizens. These stories were wildly fuelled by the media. Many people believed that they were in control of creating their dream lives during the Celtic Tiger by means of the purchase of property. In a country where home ownership was fundamentally important, people dreamed and were encouraged to dream about how they could achieve both use value and objectification of their dream commodity. Today due to deregulation and the collapse of a property bubble people are trapped into a ruthless system of risk commodities where they are ruled by endless debt. The Priory Hall residents were unusual in that sense because none of the residents were in mortgage arrears at the time of the evacuation. They just refused to pay mortgages on uninhabitable homes and discovered that the banks were indifferent to their plight and that the state allowed the banks to pursue these people relentlessly. The President ended his passionate speech with the following words:

> It was a version of Ireland which was very far from the best values of a Republic, something that must not be allowed to re-emerge, that must be rejected, as we seek to close that failed chapter and begin to look forward with hope, and our characteristic resilience, to better and more responsible days ahead.

Importantly, this reception hosted by the President in his stately home highlights what drastic events need to happen in order to definitively achieve solutions and empathy. Of course it is more complicated than that. In many ways, the media can spark emotion and decide with whom we identify. Politicians then react to the ground swell of a tide of emotion. That said, this underscores a discomforting observation, it would appear that the planning of our society and the basis of its needs is governed by

reactionary politicians fuelled by dramatic public events and rumours. In a brief response Michael, Priory Hall's media spokesperson said,

> I just want to take this opportunity to thank families of the residents. Many of you were there that weekend, back in October 2011, when we had to pack our bags and leave our homes for the last time. And you have been there supporting us for the last two years and more. Whatever success we have achieved to date is your success as well.
>
> - Michael, Priory Hall's media spokesperson, 2011

There was no vacuous rhetoric in Michael's speech. The Priory Hall Residents' Committee understood and appreciated the value and power of the kinship connections they had shared and maintained with their neighbours, parents, families and friends. They had all stuck together alongside their families despite remarkable odds. Michael further stressed that this gathering was inevitably bittersweet because realistically, it would probably be the last time that they would all come together.

The Priory Hall residents held together their mutuality of being connection. People are interdependent and belong to one another. According to Sahlins, "Kinship may be a universal possibility in nature, but by the same symbolic token as codified in language and custom, it is always a cultural particularity" (Sahlins 2014:52). Here Sahlins implies that kinship is deeply cultural in nature. Also, through a set of shared circumstances it is possible for people to see and recognise that mutuality of being in one another. This is because kinship is a social act. In addition, Sahlins points out that "kinsfolk are members of one another, intrinsic to each other's identity and existence (Sahlins 2014:62). Kinship as a social act is not exclusively limited to biological connections. Humans are intrinsically social and can due to the ability to recognise themselves in others formulate kinship connections mediated through mutuality of being relationships. Originally, at the time of the evacuation the Priory Hall residents

only had their shameful evacuation in common. But their "mutuality of being" connection developed because they stayed and participated within one another's lives. They took part in each other's existence. The point is that everyday kinship practices can occur within other social relationships and not always necessarily bounded within immediate family circles. Kinship is not confined to biological families but has the capacity to develop culturally across a locale. The Priory Hall resident's displays of mutuality of being were in many ways in the face of major obstacles. This was further evidenced by their unilateral response to the death of Fiachra Daly. It was only the Priory Hall Residents' Committee who spoke publicly on behalf of the residents in relation to his death.

After Fiachra Daly's death no government minister or banker took the initiative to approach either Stephanie Meehan or the Priory Hall Resident's Committee. Fiachra Daly's wife believed that he died as a direct result of the intolerable pressure he felt to pay arrears on his family's uninhabitable Priory Hall apartment. Meanwhile the state failed to provide leadership or display any humanity when Fiachra Daly died. It was business as usual until Stephanie Meehan went public about her tragic loss. Once the media and the general public reacted to her experience in an emotional fashion the situation reflected the banks and the Taoiseach involved in a poor light. An individual had to be sacrificed in order for Priory Hall to be perceived as an exceptional circumstance despite the fact that, in reality, it was an exceptional set of circumstances.

Giorgio Agamben (2005) draws on a more extreme example of the concentration camp as a zone of exception and he coins this space fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West (2005:22). Camp conditions appear to fall outside the capacity of a lawful state. In this way Agamben argues that a state of exception is

almost the rule in camp life, hence the permanent state of exception. In the case of Priory Hall there was never an indication that an exception could be considered under any circumstances. Although the Priory Hall exception was acknowledged, more flagged, to some degree-albeit symbolic-on a political level by the President it was never treated as an exceptional case in actuality given that the Priory Hall mortgages were bestowed onto the citizens of the state. This is not a sign of governance or leadership. This is a display by a neoliberal state without exception in which we are all now living. The state that President Michael D. Higgins awaits belongs to the previous century. It would appear that politicians and citizens alike have yet to fully recognise this state without exception that today seems hidden in plain sight.

Capitalism failed while neoliberalism thrives

Today across the Western World, states and politicians are increasingly ruled by market practices. I wonder if today's delivery of governmentality in refusing to make an exception could allude to a failure of Western capitalism. Or is it worth considering that biopolitical neoliberal practices simply govern our daily lives through the delivery of seemingly banal yet violent policy? This is proven in the case of Priory Hall because the free hand of the market can now directly impact on the lives of citizens without any interference from the state. There is no longer any state intervention between the market and citizens. The market stringently objects to state interference yet across the Western World today states routinely demand that citizens bail out banks. In 2008 the Irish banking system was bailed out by the citizens. The Priory Hall mortgages were passed on to the Council. There was no debt forgiveness as was widely reported across the media. Capitalism today is a cultural, social and

economic system where the market is not governed by the State yet the State can be dictated to by the needs of the market. What is the function of the State then in contemporary capitalist societies if the invisible hand of the market, in essence, influences the day to day running of a state impunity? It would appear that the State exists solely to satisfy the market.

The invisible hand myth stemmed from Adam Smith, the founder of modern economics, in his book *An Inquiry into the Nature and Convers of the The Wealth of Nations* ([(1776]/1981)) and it is closely related to the myth about market self-regulation. Smith put forward the self-regulating idea as a key aspect of classic liberalism. According to Smith a free market would lead to efficient outcomes free from the burden of government intervention. During the eighteenth century many of Smith's ideas seemed revolutionary such as free markets, no barriers to trade and commerce and less government intervention within the market place. His ideas were so persuasive that today, according to sociologist Simon Clarke, "The fundamental assumptions underpinning neoliberalism remain those proposed by Adam Smith" (Clarke 2005:50). Economist Steve Keen explores the continued use of Smith's very specific social theory in his book *Debunking Economics* (Keen 2011). This work is an irreverent attack on such beliefs at the core of classical economic theory. It ridicules the fact that Adam Smith's ideas have survived in such a rigid sense because they are still routinely taught and to a large degree unquestioned within economics departments across Universities. An example Keen provided is from a leading text book called *Microeconomic Theory* (Mas-Colell , Whinston et al.:1995) where the authors tried to distinguish ways in which the practical distribution of wealth could maximise social welfare. They further tried to argue that consumption choices maximised social welfare. According to Keen,

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> Mas-Colell assumes the existence of a benevolent dictator who redistributes wealth and income prior to commerce taking place: Let us now hypothesize that there is a process, a benevolent central authority perhaps, that, for any given prices p and aggregate wealth function w, redistributes wealth in order to maximize social welfare' (ibid. 117; emphases added). So free market capitalism will maximize social welfare if, and only if, there is a benevolent dictator who redistributes wealth prior to trade??? Why don't students in courses on advanced microeconomics simply walk out at this point? (Keen 2011:60)

In the above extract Keen (2011) vigorously reacted to the idea that contemporary economic classes within PhD programmes would still merely assume that a benevolent dictator redistributes resources prior to trade. He questioned how it is possible that the authors of leading textbooks unashamedly rely on the rigid application of Smith's 250 year-old text. Furthermore, Keen lamented the idea that economists continue to both use and build upon such absurd assumptions. While this is not a great indicator of the state of economics it does illuminate the ways in which markets are believed to be driven by forces of supply and demand and thereby capable of regulating themselves. These ideas are routinely taught throughout higher education within the Western World and meanwhile capitalism is increasingly accepted as the only workable world order. This argument that free markets lead to efficient outcomes suggested that we could, by and large, rely on markets without any government intervention. In fact the idea of capitalism is driven by minimal state participation in the market. In capitalism the State is expected to focus more upon policy administration and policing. This system encourages private ownership and entrepreneurship and supports profit making.

Since World War II capitalism has prevailed within many European countries and the United States. Capitalism refers to the free market economy and ideally is ideally characterized by freedom or laissez-faire. But the inner workings of this

system have radically altered since the days of Keynesian economics. John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946), is regarded as the founder of modern macroeconomics and he gave his name to Keynesian economics. The central tenet of this school of thought is the necessity of government intervention in order to stabilize an economy. It is also Keynesian's contention that free markets have no self-balancing mechanisms that lead to full employment therefore Keynesian economists justify government intervention through public policies that aim to achieve full employment and price stability. Keynesian economics also promote aggregate demand—which is the total spending by the government, businesses and households—as the most important driving force in an economy.

In the 1970s the capitalist crisis in the Wwest saw shrinking rates of profit and this led to led to a revival of liberalization in the form of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is all too frequently employed as a synonym of capitalism but importantly they are not the same thing. Neoliberalism, unlike capitalism is not a mode of production. Instead it comprises the latest developments in capitalism over the past 35 years, a specific moment in time which David Harvey categorised as "the neoliberal turn" (Harvey 20075:80). It refers to the emergence of ideas and thoughts in the economic world during that time which has popularized a strain of liberalism distinct from classic liberalism. This neoliberal turn has succeeded in altering the ways in which capitalism functions.

The last 35 years of capitalism have been transformed by neoliberalism to such an extent that today a new social order exists where debt forgiveness and states of exception routinely occur between the upper fractions of the wealthiest people. David Harvey called a state that reflects the interests of private property owners, businesses, multinational corporations, and financial capital a neoliberal state (Harvey

2011:7). Simply put, neoliberalism is beneficial to few and detrimental to many. Neoliberalism injected capitalism with different focus and a distinct gaze. According to Munck the most damaging effect of the neoliberal hegemony over the last quarter of a century is that democracy has become 'devalued' as a political currency (Munck 2005:60). As a result we live in a different type of capitalist social order, one which we are frequently told there is no viable alternative. Today neoliberalism seeks to disengage markets from social relations altogether. This is a predatory system intent on regulating the freedoms and agency of the middle classes. Instead they are expected to unthinkingly service endless debt. Priory Hall illuminates how the steamroller of neoliberalism is intent on the deadening of people's imagination and the smothering of hopes and dreams. It so does by injecting people's everyday lives with worry, uncertainty, insecurity and the long shadow of debt. When all these issues ultimately mediate people's everyday practices they will not have time or energy to question the type of society in which they live, let alone consider what it means to be human. Philosopher Jacques Rancière gave an example of the ways in which capitalists feared the workers with the power to dream about a better future.

According to Rancière, (2009) in nineteenth century France, capitalist owners feared workers engaged in free thinking. Instead they relished workers who sang popular revolutionary songs because they believed that this endeavour merely helped them to fully engage with the necessary toil of their labour. The capitalist owners however feared the workers who wrote poetry because this would inevitably inspire them into free thought. They believed that poetry had the power to represent a displacement from identity as mere workers. Furthermore, they believed that poetry had the capacity to inspire workers to believe that a different world replete with better working conditions was possible. In other words people's own poetry could

potentially free them from the chains of uninspiring and unfulfilling toil. They could work hard and achieve freedom through their poetry.

People's own poetry ensured that they worked harder to achieve freedom. Humans have the capacity to channel and experience emotions in distinct ways but although capitalism is constructed of human relationships, this cultural, economic and social system can adapt. Contemporary capitalism can function independently of people. In the Western World states routinely bail out banks and bank debt is subsequently spread out amongst the citizens. This is worrying because capitalism and neoliberalism both remain the central organizing aspect of human social lives. Furthermore a core idea of neoliberalism is the notion of deregulation and no state intervention in the market. Importantly, when Margaret Thatcher introduced neoliberal economics into Britain and reduced many regulations in relation to finance, the British system of building control was not deregulated The Priory Hall residents discovered the price of the neoliberal model of building deregulation, known as self-regulation which were introduced with the Building Act in 1990. Under this system there was no requirement in Ireland to have building procedures checked. The new building regulations implemented in 2014 as a direct result of Priory Hall Building Control (Amendment) go some way towards ensuring safer building practices. Importantly, the hundreds of thousands of units built since the 1990s and during the Celtic Tiger will not be protected by this law. A key aspect of it is that each person has to physically sign off on their work and have it checked before the next phase can commence.

The culture of contemporary Irish political habitus evolved throughout the first half of the twentieth century. This political paradigm continued into the latter half of the twentieth century and naturally incubated the political conditions for the Celtic

Tiger's second phase reincarnation through the Irish planning system. As McDonald and Sheridan assert, the beauty of the property business is that no one is disbarred (McDonald and Sheridan 2009:106). There were always trades people looking for work and always people, especially in Ireland, trying to buy homes. In the twenty-first century many people were building their dreams on the fragility of an unregulated planning system fuelled by a seemingly endless supply of credit. Even today the Priory Hall apartment blocks are keeping a large work force of people employed during its complete refit. The discomforting irony is that when the yet to be newly branded Priory Hall homes go up for sale next year they will more than likely be the safest homes in the country.

There is no place like home

In January 2015, I returned to Clongriffin train station and walked up to Priory Hall. There were new signs of life evident in Clongriffin despite the fact that the substantial unit originally intended to house a well-known supermarket chain has never opened. Quite a few of the empty shop units on the main street were being fitted and the presence of construction workers milling about in hi-visibility vests was notable. I was early and as I waited outside the Priory Hall complex I noticed how the front facade of the crumbling brick structure facing the road had been removed and painted. The blue hoarding outside this building site displayed advertising pictures on each side of the entrance. The scenes depicted differed to the original marketing ten years ago. Rather than carefree twenty something's they depict a multi-cultural society with parents engaging with animated children in buggies, a boy with a skateboard, children on bicycles, a stylish couple walking past kerbside parking while residents beneath a

blue sky look out over the tree lined boulevard from sizeable balconies. At the time of writing this, as yet, to be renamed, *new Priory Hall* is expected to be marketed for sale by September 2016.

In the background, the abandoned Priory Hall apartments had transformed into a busy building site. An elderly couple approach and when the man stops and utters "for shame", his companion tries to encourage him to pass on by. Intrigued, I ask what they think of the rebuild. "Oh Christ," said the woman by now perplexed, "You had to ask him. I wish there was a different way to walk to the shops." "It's a fucking national disgrace," he replied, cut short as his shorter companion forcefully dragged him away grimacing and shaking her head at me as I smiled back weakly. As Michael my Council contact arrived, I could still hear the man becoming ever more distant with, "But they should have knocked it altogether. It's not right."

Michael brought me inside and observing the necessary code furnished me with a hard hat and introduced me to Jeff, the site manager. We enter one of the apartment blocks that has been refitted and Jeff talks me through the various stages. "The easiest way to describe it in lay terms," he said is that "nothing, not one thing, was fit for purpose." The only original structure left in Priory Hall is the concrete columns. The corroded railings evident from the main road rusted because the incorrect steel had been employed. They had rusted within two years of the initial completion and will all be replaced during the refit. We walked through a two bedroom apartment similar to Nuala's from two years ago when I had last visited the Priory Hall interior. Each apartment was stripped internally of all the fittings, walls, ceilings and floors. There had been no fire proofing between apartments. I asked was this possibly a cost cutting measure and Jeff suggested that perhaps the builder was unaware of the need for these essential fire stops which would prevent fire ripping

through an entire block. The bricks at the front were not securely tied off causing them to crumble and the brick work had been tied into the frame. The plumbing, Jeff explained, was a "disconnected mess" and as apartment plumbing is fitted into ceilings it explained why all the previous residents frequently had their floors and walls dripping with water. The heating was not fit for purpose and there had been no gas valves fitted to prevent gas leaks. This one apartment alone symbolises all of the broken trust and lack of commitment required to maintain a self-regulating system of building. With self-regulation the fire safety officer could keep going in and making recommendations to the builder but equally the builder could seek extensions on the necessary work and make promises to rectify all that was lacking. In lieu of all the fire safety talks the three of us were having, I asked how effective is the *Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2014* which was brought in as a direct result of Priory Hall. Jeff quickly said, "Yes, since March 2014 we have to adhere to the *Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2014*, which brings in accountability for every individual's work which is recorded, logged and passed prior to the next building stage commencing." He asked if I wanted to see anywhere else I said, "Just the car park, is it still flooded?" They brought me to a different one as the car park in question is still flooded. The reason for the flooding there was because neither the foundations nor the tarmacadam were sufficiently deep. Signs of the pyrite testing are still there and the main road going through the complex, dubbed "boulevard of broken dreams" by one of the Priory Hall Committee members, will have to be dug out as it is also pyrite-ridden.

We remerged from the darkness of the car park into daylight as palates of the new front brickwork were being delivered. "Ivanhoe Crème", Jeff said automatically and we three laughed awkwardly. "It's a lot brighter than the previous brick work,"

suggested Michael and I nodded in agreement. We stood around awkwardly for a few minutes and when it began to feel a little too long I made a move to leave. The Priory Hall complex had been completely knocked down and re-built. None of the original structures interior or exterior remained. I thanked Jeff for his time and patience and Michael said he would walk me out. We walked out of the complex on the road that would soon be demolished and replaced. Michael and I were chatting and when we stopped to part ways he wished me luck. We turned and looked back at Priory Hall and he said, “We forget as well that back in 2005 people were facing into commuter hell and were desperate for places so close to the city.” But his voice broke, tellingly, before he got to the end of the sentence and shaking his head he suddenly hugged me and said , “Wouldn’t life be great if we could see around corners all of the time and this apartment block will be perfect when it is finished.”

In 1900 William James, the father of American psychology, gave a lecture at Harvard University entitled ‘What Makes a Life Significant?’ James outlined a weeklong stay he had experienced in the utopian town of Chautauqua, New York. James described Chautauqua, as a “middle-class paradise, without a sin, without a victim, without a blot, without a tear” (James 2006 [1899]:11). Furthermore this town endured neither crime nor suffering. On the one hand James acknowledged that Chautauqua was “equipped with means for satisfying all the necessary lower and most of the superfluous higher wants of man." On the other hand he sounded a stern warning that we should fear and avoid too perfect a life because were we to so do we would never gain insights from one another. For James, no one could have insight into a perfect world nor should one because this would unbalance the natural essence of the diverse world in which we live. He longed to return to the sins and suffering of the

world because for him the wilderness that encapsulates humanity seemed like a fairer playing ground.

Ultimately, it was the fact that Chautauqua seemed to be perfect that made James flee the place. He found that it lacked the natural and dark corners that usually reside within human societies. While he was there he found himself craving these darker corners of human society. For James, "What our human emotions seem to require is the sight of the struggle going on." James considered that the act of ***anesthetising*** this struggle served to bypass the fun from living and censor life's conversation (James 2006 [1899]:15). James nevertheless felt that human emotions necessitate struggles in order to grow and evolve. Also, the world is not flat and perfect but wild and messy. People are neither rational nor sane all of the time and can be varied in nature. Daily realities are mixed in with the tragic dimensions of the everyday as well as the perfect. Life is not perfect but lived out and experienced. If everyone and everything appeared and looked the same then our lives would flat line into a calm sea of mediocrity. In some small way perhaps the Priory Hall residents wanted to believe that they had found their certain utopia within unique Priory Hall units during the madness of the so called Celtic Tiger era. They majority of these people believed in the seemingly ubiquitous cultural guarantee that homeownership in Ireland was a safe, solid investment. Without ever needing to leave their local area, people could trade their housing units up or down in order to increase their personal security and that of their families. People trusted in this process of exchange not through a blind belief in capitalism but because of the trust they placed in a system which is deeply cultural. It incorporated not only a property transaction but a mysterious exchange of cultural matter comprised of dreams, hopes, desires and fears. During the Celtic Tiger era people were sold their dreams with the promise of so

much more. It became a time for the acceleration, production and belief in the objectification of our very own dreams. And, in addition, no one remembered there ever being a property crash before.

Conclusion: In Plain Sight

A father who brought his eight year-old daughter to the anti-capitalist Dismaland — Bemusement Park in September 2015, worried that he had prematurely debunked his sweet daughter of her happy dream world. He fretted that he had prematurely brought her into a starker world and thereby dented her future dreams. Adults, like children, however, also retain the capacity to dream as they get older. Adults, like children, also dream although perhaps differently. Many adults across the Western World dream of a safe home for themselves and their families. My thesis is about the experiences of a group of people who dreamed of buying safe homes for their families in Dublin 13. Many of these people spent years saving for deposits in order to qualify for mortgages. For a brief time, the Priory Hall apartment complex masked the stark reality that things were far from perfect. The Priory Hall residents believed themselves to be respectable taxpaying citizens and homeowners. They further believed that they lived in a democracy bounded by a social contract between them as citizens and the state as their guardian. They thought that this contract would protect them should things go awry. Instead when everything went wrong their homes and dreams collapsed into nightmare scenarios. They discovered that no social contract existed. In fact it had been redrawn and no one appeared to have noticed. Without dreams perhaps we would all be condemned to the artist's Bansky's stark apocalyptic capitalist existence. Priory Hall highlights the fact that adults like children still dream. Perhaps today, however, from within today's strain of neoliberalism, people who dare to dream shall so do more cautiously.

The Priory Hall debacle was experienced by a group of people in Dublin, whose eagerness to buy a dream home combined with their mortgage eligibility resulted in them becoming vulnerable, homeless and in mortgage debt for worthless

properties. Yes, they made the decision to get mortgages but they never considered that they could ever become locked-out zombie tenants. After the collapse of their traditionally sound bricks and mortar future people discovered themselves to be abandoned by the state and revealed themselves to be precarious beings at the mercy of free-market forces. Certainly at this time of writing no one seems to be going to jail as a consequence of Priory Hall. It would appear that the laws in place have little power for social change. Meanwhile the Priory Hall residents discovered that the neoliberal state seemingly extends its protection to markets and not citizens. Today's strain of capitalism brutally resists debt forgiveness, and prefers to keep citizens enslaved in cyclical debt. This form of capitalism is quick to accept the gift of death as a mere stepping stone to a solution.

Banks deal with debt so the idea of the Priory Hall residents mediating on their own with a retired judge was never likely to reach a resolution stage. In addition, at no stage could the Priory Hall residents access a human banker. People's lifelong assumptions around the safety net of the state and their role as citizens is radically altered because all that was solid and familiar about the world seemed to melt into air. Priory Hall became a place where all the ambiguities of contemporary capitalism impacted positively and negatively. It brought people together through webs of kinship but only because initially they had been cruelly made homeless and had their life security crudely ripped apart.

In ways the marketing of Priory Hall reminds me of a 1906 Paul Henry painting entitled 'Achill' which depicts a cluster of cottages set against a hilly landscape. These white washed cottages are reflected in the bog lake beside the houses. The background hills seem like imposing mountains. According to the National Gallery website, "The turf stacks in the foreground serve as further evidence

of the integral link between the people and their surroundings" (2015). Importantly, the turf stacks reveal that these houses have apparently been built in the middle of a bog which is 98 per cent wetlands. It is also quite likely that, during the time this picture was being painted, telegraph poles would have been meandering up and down the hills and bogs of Achill. They are notably absent on the painting's horizon and instead the viewer is treated to a cobalt sky with rolling foreboding clouds. The fact that Henry's cottages are built in the middle bog land could be argued as a necessary form of artistic licence needed to romanticise the setting.

By the early years of the new Irish Free State, Paul Henry's work had come to typify a vision of Ireland that was adopted into ideas promoting tourism in order to reflect a vision of a type of Ireland as authentic and true. The original Priory Hall brochure harked back to a historical time juxtaposed with notions of the modern. Today Priory Hall typifies a new vision of Ireland. The serious concerns of the Priory Hall residents were so insignificant to the State that a pseudo-mediation process, in which the Priory Hall Residents' Committee fully partook, was set up. The reality is that banks deal with debt so the idea of the Priory Hall Residents' Committee solely in communication with a retired judge was never likely to achieve a resolution. These people were subjected to the experiences of automated banking invading their daily lives with threats. There was therefore a shift in social responsibility whereby the banks were allowed to terrorize citizens despite the fact that all seven lending institutions had originally insured the worthless Priory Hall units. There also appears to have been a shift in legal responsibility as at this time of writing no one appears to be going to jail as a consequence of Priory Hall. It would appear that the laws in place contain little concern for the power of social change. Today's strain of capitalism brutally resists debt forgiveness, and prefers to keep citizens enslaved in cyclical debt.

This form of capitalism is, however quick to accept the gift of death and still burden the solution onto the citizens and not the banks. Death was the only negotiator with debt and meanwhile we are governed by politicians so weak and powerless that they cannot display the power of the exception.

To borrow from President Higgins (2013), this *place we call home* story began, when the fledging Irish Free State government, in a desperate to bid to stabilize a new state, juxtaposed homeownership and respectability as central to the hearts and mind of citizens. A key feature of owning property, since the foundation of this state was that homeownership was imagined to be certain, secure and a safe future grounded in bricks and mortar, and capable of withstanding economic cycles. Ideas surrounding home stealthily became aligned to the idea of ownership throughout the twentieth century. Many people believed that they were in control of creating their dream homes and lives during the Celtic Tiger through the purchase of property.

I argue that from the 1920s in Ireland, nation building became aligned with ideological and symbolic attachments to home. This is unsurprising in a new state and a once long-time colony. But subtle shifts in policy decisions, through time, carried unintended consequences for future home owners. This reconfigured the meaning of home with the need to buy a house. By the 1950s the stagnant Irish economy urgently needed to be opened up to foreign investment. From the 1960s onwards the ideal of homeownership intensified in the Irish Free State but as it did so did its commodification. Throughout the twentieth century the expectation was developed in people that they needed to achieve homeownership. This in turn indexed respectability. Importantly, this was despite the fact that this ideal would not have been on the radar for most people of the previous generation. In addition, all of the pitfalls and risks of homeownership never seemed to have been seriously highlighted.

The Celtic Tiger morphed from a time of seeming significant economic prosperity into a full blown out of control housing boom; a time which saw people become overly preoccupied to the point of obsession with how they were ever going to afford to buy a home. People believed that huge mortgages would be wiped out by permanent increases in house values. In 2005 alone, shifting mortgage eligibilities captured tens of thousands of people in significant mortgage debt. It is unlikely that most of these people would have been eligible for mortgages ten years previously. Like countless properties built during that time, the original Priory Hall apartment complex was marketed as an ideal place to live. It was close to the city centre and packaged as distinctly modern. Policy decisions ultimately accelerated the desire to buy and sell land and houses for enormous profits. This policy ultimately played a significant role in the twenty-first century property bubble and subsequent economic collapse. While it is true to say that some people significantly over extended themselves, the majority of people were like the Priory Hall residents, concerned with how they would achieve a family home, set down roots and prove to themselves and their families that they had grown up and avoided the rent trap.

The Priory Hall case was unusual in the sense that these people had always claimed that they were capable of repaying their mortgages. They, unlike hundreds of thousands of others, were not in negative equity but objected to paying mortgages while they had no physical home. Meanwhile their entanglement within an increasingly absurd waiting-game put a strain on and, in some cases, irrevocably destroyed or transformed their relationships forever. This is because the sum of their everyday lives has become one never ending violent moment in waiting. The Priory Hall residents felt like displaced people, refugees with no agency over their present or

future. This, for them, was impossible to comprehend because they had spent all of their adult lives saving to buy homes in order to feel secure.

Of course, the Priory Hall residents made the decision to apply for mortgages but they never considered that in so doing they were exposing themselves to free-market forces. In addition, these apartment blocks seemingly came with the requisite sign-offs from engineers, fire safety officers and surveyors as well as the necessary documentation from the lending institutions. In many ways the residents of this apartment block became a by-product of a perfect storm of the liberalization of international property markets, the advent of the Celtic Tiger and an unregulated system of planning. But when all of these institutions failed to be held accountable the mortgage holders discovered that they were trapped in an uncertainty. No organ of the state seemed capable of offering them a way forward. Instead, they simply were forced to repay loans on broken homes. People's lifelong assumptions around the safety net of the state and their role as citizens became radically altered because all that was solid and familiar about their world seemed to melt into air. This is because initially, through legitimate protests the Priory Hall residents still believed in a social contract; one where the state acts as a protector in moments of vulnerability. They discovered that the state today seemingly extends its protection to markets and not citizens. The Priory Hall mediation process highlighted that we appear to live in a world of mediation where in fact we numb ourselves through mediation. The deregulated neoliberal government introduced policy that does not really appear to make decisions or govern. The Priory Hall mediation outcome reveals that what emerges from this type of governance is a world governed by policies. The state functions as a policy regulator, an administrator of benign but ultimately violent

policy bullets. Fiachra Daly's death ruptured this state without exceptions. His taken life exposed the biopolitical soft focus regulatory mediated world.

In the preface to *The Anthropology of Security* (2014) Vered Amit and Christina Garsten seek to carve out a space for the discipline of anthropology within contemporary intellectual work. They posit that ethnographic work today must become "about large issues, set in a relatively small place, rather than detailed description of a small place for its own sake (quoted in Maguire et. al 2014:ii). Priory Hall is a 189 unit apartment complex which lays bare the workings of the contemporary neoliberal biopolitical nation-state. The Priory Hall residents dreamt of safe homes and futures for themselves and their families. They fleetingly thought that they had achieved their dreams. Their experience highlights that citizens no longer can rely on the idea of a social contract. Instead, people are governed by a faceless deregulated state where governmentality is delivered under the guise of policy. Of course in reality, a deregulated state is in actuality a highly regulated idea.

The Priory Hall Residents Committee, the Priory Hall residents, their families and friends stuck together. They reminded us that people still have the capacity to try to face and change their situation. The question is, what price individuals should today expect to have to pay within a functioning democracy in order to be governed. On balance, today's biopolitical mode of governance merely maintains the state without exceptions while yielding discomforting uncertainty transmitted through perilous policy.

Postscript on a state without exception

On the 30 September 2015, Sherry Fitzgerald, a nationwide estate agents, advertised several apartments for sale in Longboat Quay apartment block, Grand Canal Dock, Dublin 2 (*MyHome.ie* 2015). This sparkling new development was constructed on the banks of the river Liffey in 2006. Bernard McNamara was the developer. Of course the name *Longboat* indexes a hat tip to our Viking past which spanned almost two centuries from 795-1014 AD. After all, despite the pillage and slaughter, which is largely omitted from contemporary romanticised Irish tourist trails, the Vikings designed and developed the port towns of Dublin, Cork and Waterford. Many Vikings settled in Ireland and assimilated through marriage.

In the Longboat sale above Sherry Fitzgerald stressed that one of the 2-bedroom 70 sqm ground floor apartments "was in excellent condition throughout." They also advertised another 65 sqm two bedroom apartment with the following description "proud to offer this most attractive two bedroom apartment in the heart of Dublin's South Docklands." Dublin's docklands has been recently gentrified with its landscape transformed from a mere twenty years ago. Today, this area is teaming with young *techies* who work for the American multinationals based there. Similar apartments in the same complex were congruently advertised for rent on *Daft.ie* where a one bedroom apartment sought €770 a week or several two bedroom apartments for €1,800 and €3,000 per week. These apartments were described as "located on the 3rd floor of a quality development" (*Daft.ie* 2015).

At the same time as these advertisements were *live*, an emergency information meeting had been called for the owners and residents of Longboat Quay. The entire complex had been declared a fire hazard by the Council because there is insufficient

fire-stopping material in the walls and vital smoke vents were not installed. The building needs to be further compartmentalised which means necessitates the construction of fire and smoke barriers between apartments in order to give the residents more time to escape in the event of a fire. Richard Eardley, a director of the management company told fellow residents that they were expected to pay at least half of the €4m to bring the building up to code. "Unless the money can be found, there is going to be a significant problem," Eardley said. Owners would be asked to pay according to the size of their homes. A one-bedroom apartment would attract a levy of €9,305, while a two-bed duplex owner would be expected to find €18,071. Commercial tenants would be liable for €54,000. Dublin Docklands Development Authority claimed to have already paid €1m towards the problem but angry tenants noted that this money had simply been spent installing fire alarms within a fire hazard. The residents were informed by the Council that they would probably have to immediately evacuate because if a fire were to break out it could mean multiple fatalities.

But what was discussed at the resident's meeting was not so much the details of whose life was especially at risk, or where people might relocate, but rather who was going to pay for the work needed to bring the building up to code. Journalist Michael Clifford from *The Irish Examiner* has been routinely writing about this issue since January 2015. Clifford's September 21 2015 article entitled 'Risky housing sale outrageous but legal' (Clifford 2015) outlined that an apartment in the complex had been hastily sold that same day, the second it reached the reserve price of €250,000. Another Clifford article published 3 October 2015, reported that the family of former President Mary McAleese were owners of two units in Longboat Quay. In fact, Martin McAleese, the former President's husband, felt forced to

resign his position as the independent chair of the *Priory Hall Implementation Oversight Group*. He publicly stated that "As owner of a property at Longboat Quay which is currently facing issues in relation to fire safety, I feel that the parallels with Priory Hall render my position as independent chair of the Priory Hall Implementation Oversight Group untenable" (Griffin 2015). Meanwhile the company used by McNamara to build Longboat is now in receivership which more than likely puts developer Bernard McNamara, who is currently working within the construction industry with offices in Stephens Green in Dublin, beyond the law. The Taoiseach stated on 30 September 2015 that he would like to know more about Longboat Quay before making a judgment. At the time of writing the Longboat Quay residents were waiting and hoping for meaningful state intervention. They are already tired of a lack of meaningful engagement on behalf of the state. These people are, at the time of writing, uncertain as to how their discomforting situation will unfold. Meanwhile state administrators have asked them to wait a little while longer.

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[1] Banskey's identity is allegedly unknown. Invariably Banksey's work has a political theme highlighting the affects of greed, poverty and despair.

[2] The name Clongriffin is believed to be derived from the Anglicisation of cluain (the Irish language word for meadow) and griffin (a mythical beast).

[3] The Council is the authority responsible for local government in the city of Dublin in the Republic of Ireland. Until 2001, the Council was known as Dublin Corporation, and therefore is still frequently referred to as *the Corpo*. This Council is responsible for housing and community, roads and transportation, urban planning and development, amenity and culture and environment. The Council has 63 elected members and is the largest local council in Ireland. Elections are held every five years. The head of the Council has the honorific title of Lord Mayor.

[4] When the residents of Priory Hall were evacuated in October 2011, the Council had no evacuation plan in place. As the President of the High Court Mr Justice Nicholas Kearns put it at the time, Dublin City Council had 'put a torpedo into Priory Hall and the collateral damage was the dislocation of 250 people who lived there'. Kearns further stated that he 'did not understand how the Council could say they had no responsibility for them' and that it 'beggared belief that they could wash their hands of the consequences'. He ordered the Council to assume responsibility for the temporary accommodation for the evacuated residents and the cost of storing their belongings while they were unable to return to their properties. The judge's humanitarian High Court order was unsettling for the Council, as it raised a question of precedent. What if all local authorities, in the future, could be made responsible for re-housing private owner-occupiers in the event of fire safety/construction safety issues.

[5] Gerry Gannon, the developer of this new town, bought this agricultural land during the 1990s-2000. This built environment only started in 2003. Gerry Gannon is a property developer who reportedly owes more than €1bn in debts which have been taken over by NAMA (The National Asset Management Agency is a government initiative aimed at stabilising and fixing the broken Irish banking system, which became over exposed to property development between 2003 and 2007. NAMA was announced by Finance Minister Brian Lenihan in his emergency Budget in April 2009.) Gannon is one of the named 'Maple 10', a group of investors who bought shares in Anglo Irish Bank in 2008 under a deal to slash businessman Sean Quinn's stake in the lender. All men were long-standing customers of the bank who at the time were wealthy builders and property developers. While loans to the 10 have been at the heart of the case there was never any suggestion that the 10 men did anything wrong by accepting loans. Gannon Homes is currently developing new schemes in the Dublin commuter town of Swords.

[6] Dublin Area Rapid Transit.

[7] The term 'Celtic Tiger' was coined in 1994 by Kevin Gardiner of Morgan Stanley investment bank in London. He was describing Ireland as a Celtic economy while simultaneously comparing its growth with the 'Asian tiger' economies of south-east Asia that had enjoyed tremendous growth in the 1980s. To qualify as a 'tiger economy' a growth rate of more than 7% was necessary. From 1994 to 2001 average growth rates in the Irish economy were 9%.

[8] Dublin City Council (the Council) – which owns 26 of the apartments – believed it should not continue to be responsible for privately owned units. The Council wished to be solely responsible for re-housing the corporation tenants which the Council had

evacuated two years previously while the private owners had continued to live within a fire hazard. Priory Hall came into public awareness in 2011, a time when media stories were awash with sensationalist tales from the property market collapse. Poor regulation had not only facilitated a property boom but also the sheer speed at which many units were constructed meant that every county in Ireland potentially had substandard housing. The daily news was bombarded with stories concerned with the ramifications of a system of 'drive-by regulation' meaning that countless newly built boom properties were potentially of a poor standard at best and a fire hazard at worst. Previously, the Council had tried unsuccessfully to have this order overturned in the High Court arguing that it went to the courts to seek a court order to evacuate Priory Hall to ensure the safety of families and persons who lived there. The Council's position was that it should not be held responsible for the temporary accommodation costs of the owner-occupiers. These Priory Hall residents, meanwhile, each had to go to the courts to keep abreast of whether they would end up paying rent on top of servicing the seven lending institutions involved. This, according to many residents, greatly contributed to the ongoing trauma of losing their homes.

[9] There are 34 primary local authorities in Ireland, including 29 county councils and 5 city councils. At sub-county level there are a further 80 town authorities, which carry out a representational role. Local authorities are multi-purpose bodies with responsibility for an extensive range of services.

[10] A short-term suspension of mortgage repayments. The terms and conditions of which depend on the lending institution involved.

[11] The seven lending institutions involved with the Priory Hall private mortgage holders were, Allied Irish Bank (AIB), Bank of Ireland, Bank of Scotland, EBS Building Society, KBC Bank, The Irish Bank Resolution Corporation (IBRC) which was the name given to the entity formed in 2011 by the court-mandated merger of the state-owned banking institutions Anglo Irish Bank and Irish Nationwide Building Society and Ulster Bank.

[12] In Irish, Baile Dúill means Town of the Dark Strangers which dates back to the 9th century when Danes as well as Vikings plundered the monasteries along the Leinster coastline.

[13]The term 'Celtic Tiger' was coined in 1994 by Kevin Gardiner of Morgan Stanley investment bank in London. He was describing Ireland as a Celtic economy while simultaneously comparing its growth with the 'Asian tiger' economies of south-east Asia that had enjoyed tremendous growth in the 1980s. To qualify as a 'tiger economy' a growth rate of more than 7% was necessary. From 1994 to 2001 average growth rates in the Irish economy were 9%. The Celtic Tiger created a level of wealth unparalleled in the history of Ireland. From 2009 to 2010 Ireland's Gross Domestic Product shrank by just under fourteen per cent, one of the worst financial meltdowns ever recorded by a developed country. In late 2010, Ireland accepted a bailout from a troika composed of the European Union, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund.

[14] For the two years preceding their evacuation the High Court had ordered the Council to pay the rent of the owner-occupiers until a solution was agreed.

The National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) was announced by Finance Minister Brian Lenihan in his emergency budget in April 2009. It is a government initiative aimed at stabilising and fixing the broken Irish banking system, which became over exposed to property development between 2003 and 2007. NAMA functions as a bad bank, acquiring property development loans from Irish banks in

return for government bonds, ostensibly with a view to improving the availability of credit in the Irish economy.

[15] Paul Virilio notes that the speed at which something happens may change its essential nature and that which moves with speed can quickly come to dominate that which is slower (Virilio 2000).

During the Celtic Tiger the urgency of home purchasing damaged social housing projects, so much thatso, today there is a dearth of social housing across Ireland in particular in Dublin where 100,000 people are on housing lists.

[16] Two bedroom apartment measuring 683.5 square ft.

[17] In particular, Roy Foster (1989) flatly stated that in *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* that the Irish rural poor were authors of their own destruction due to the fact that "they stayed on the land to an extent unjustified economically.' Furthermore, he noted that Irish landlords and strong farmers alike shared a general sense of indifference to the plight of the poor cottier farmer wiped out during the Famine (Foster 1989:334) See also Colm Tobín's work *Lady Gregory's Toothbrush* (2002) in relation to this.

[18] In 1922 when Ireland became separated from six counties in the north and was officially declared The Irish Free State, it was already in the middle of a bitter civil war. Irish men and women who had fought shoulder to shoulder during 1916 and the War of Independence found themselves on either side of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty that tore Ireland apart once more.

[19] The Irish Civil War (1922-1923) was one year bloody battle of wills had a traumatic effect on Irish politics and on the Irish people. This trauma is still played out in parliament today. This conflict was between Irish nationalists over whether or not to accept the Anglo-Irish Treaty (The Anglo-Irish Treaty was an agreement between the government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland that ended the Irish War of Independence. It provided for the establishment of the Irish Free State within a year as a self-governing dominion within the British Commonwealth of Nations (the first use by the UK government of this term, rather than "British Empire", in an official document). It also provided Northern Ireland, which had been created by the Government of Ireland Act 1920, an option to opt out of the Irish Free State, which it exercised. The agreement was signed in London on 6 December 1921, by representatives of the British government including Prime Minister David Lloyd George, and Irish representatives including Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith. Though the treaty was narrowly ratified, the split led to the Irish Civil War, which was ultimately won by the pro-treaty side. The Irish Free State treaty came into existence when its constitution became law on 6 December 1922). In June 1922, the first elections were held in the Free State. Just before the elections were held, the pact between pro and anti-Treaty sides broke down over the inclusion of the British monarch in the Free State's constitution. The anti-treaty side equalled republicans not willing to settle for any less than the whole of the island of Ireland. The anti-Treatyites entered politics as Fianna Fáil in 1927 and came to power peacefully in 1932. By 1939; most of what they considered the objectionable features of the Treaty had been removed by acts of parliament.

[20] At the time some twenty thousand families across Dublin were living in accommodation types which comprised of single rooms.

[21] 1913, in particular, was a year of great labour unrest within Dublin. Union workers were locked out of their jobs when they went on strike.

[22] The origins of this stable Irish society and contemporary Irish politics were formed from the enduring divide between two main political parties throughout the 20th century: Fianna Fáil (anti-treaty) and Fianna Gael (pro-treaty).

[23] Dublin Corporation changed its name to Dublin City Council in 2002.

[24] This process became commonly known as the tenant purchase scheme lasting from the 1920s to the 1980s.

[25] The tenant purchase scheme was advertised at different times from the 1920s. In particular during 1932,1942,1948,1951,1952,1958,1960-66,1973,1974.1975 and 1987.

[26]Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce" (Marx 1913:3). In 1932 de Valera began a six year economic war with Britain withholding land annuities payable by Irish farmers to the British government. In return for a Gaelicist stable state the Irish people would display heroic obedience and live in frugal harmony.

[27] Protectionism is the economic policy of restraining trade between countries or states through methods such as tariffs on imported goods and restrictive quotas. The idea is to allow for fair competition between services produced domestically imports and goods imported.

[28] Indeed De Valera retained a powerful position within Irish political life up to 1972. During that time he forged a powerful alliance with John Charles McQuaid, (1895–1973). McQuaid was the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland between December 1940 and January 1972. He became known for the significant amount of influence he had over successive governments. In order to maintain a stable state the Irish Catholic Church was given control over health, education and reform schools.

[29] Seán Lemass is a unique politician (he was 16 years old when he fought on the roof of the general Post Office in Dublin during the Easter Rising in 1916), being the creator of two reversals of economic policy in Ireland. He was Minister for Industry and Commerce for most of the years between 1932 and 1959 and therefore the creator of the protectionist framework. He became Taoiseach in 1959 and remained in office until he retired due to poor health in 1966. Seán Lemass is now best remembered for dismantling and reversing the policy from 1960, advised by T. K. Whitaker's (A secretary in the Department of Finance) 1958 report First Programme for Economic Expansion. This then became an important part of Ireland's entry into the European Economic Community in 1973. Importantly, the The Republic of Ireland's population rose in the late 1960s for the first time since independence in 1922.

[30] Inside the magazine is an article entitled Ireland: LiftingIreland: Lifting the Green Curtain. This piece has a heavy focus on Lemass as a revolutionary who having fought for the freedom of his country must now fight to drag it into modernity. The Irish government chose to market Ireland in a particular way to the outside world. The United States meanwhile had its own occult agenda. As one of the two English speaking countries in Europe, Ireland was very useful to the U.S.A.

Both countries share an emotive past largely due to the colonial encounter, and a long history of Irish emigration to the United States.

[31] Newgrange is a prehistoric monument in County Meath, Ireland, located about one kilometre north of the River Boyne. It was built during the Neolithic period around 5000 BP, making it older than Stonehenge and the Egyptian pyramids.

[32] Myles Wright was a U.K. planner and University Professor appointed by the Minister for Local Government to produce a report on the planning and future development of the Dublin region.

[33] Son-in-law to Seán Lemass, Charles Haughey was first elected to Dáil Éireann as a Teachta Dála (TD) in 1957 and was re-elected in every election until 1992. He was also the fourth leader of Fianna Fáil (from 1979 until 1992). He served three terms as Taoiseach 1979 to 1992. As Taoiseach, he is credited by some economists as starting the positive transformation of the economy in the late 1980s. Haughey was first elected to Dáil Eireann in March 1957. By 1960 he had been appointed parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Justice.

[34] By the time Charles Haughey became Taoiseach in 1979 he had an overdraft of almost one million Irish pounds.

[35] In 2006 the son of Matt Gallagher, Patrick, was quoted in *The Irish Times* as stating 'Fianna Fáil was good for builders and builders were good for Fianna Fáil and there was nothing wrong with that.' The Gallagher group built Donaghmede shopping centre and the surrounding housing in the late 1960s and 1970s.

[36] The Local Government (Planning and Development Act) 1976 enabled the establishment of An Bord Pleanála and introduced a new enforcement remedy – the planning injunction – section 27. The Local Government (Planning and Development Act) 1982 introduced fees and legislation with regard to the withering of planning applications. The Local Government (Planning and Development Act) 1983 was to reconstitute An Bord Pleanála. The Local Government (Planning and Development Act) 1990 was to alter issues regarding compensation. The Local Government (Planning and Development Act), 1992, this amendment was concerned with issues surrounding time limits with appeals and that these should be disposed more quickly, the strengthening of enforcement procedures plus other amendments. The Local Government (Planning and Development Act), 1993, this highly significant amendment to the 1963 Act addressed the issue of the status of development by the State and Local Authorities. The Local Government (Planning and Development Act) 1998 changed the membership of An Bord Pleanála. The Local Government (Planning and Development Act) 1999 introduced the concept of the protected structure.

[37] Jane Jacobs argues throughout *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* that urban renewal did not, in any way, respect the needs of city dwellers.

[38] Debt, and particularly personal debt, has been conflated for centuries with sin. In modern German, for example, the same word, *Schuld*, means both debt and guilt.

[39] *Punch* was a weekly British satirical magazine which became well known throughout the nineteenth century for its dehumanising depictions of the native population of Ireland. During the Famine, through cartoons, *Punch* contributors implied that that the Famine was simply an Irish character flaw alongside, murderous thoughts, being treasonous, drunk and disorderly and generally intolerable. The Irish were pitched as the polar opposite of English respectability. The cartoon below with the caption, Here and There; or, Emigration a Remedy appeared July 15, 1848. It portrays a destitute, worthless and homeless family in Ireland and a prosperous Irish family, perhaps the same family, who had the good sense to emigrate. The prosperous family boast a shovel, perhaps to index a sign of willingness to labour once out of Ireland.

[40] For example, The Poor Laws, hastily enacted during the *Ffamine*, stated people had to give up all rights to any type of land holding in order to enter the workhouses.

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[41] This is because, as a landlord, the Council has a duty to protect its tenants. They subsequently ordered the builder, Tom McFeely, to carry out remedial work. He claimed he could not afford the €7.3 million bill.

[42] Ireland's weak system of building self-regulation, which spiralled out of control during the boom, came to the fore with Priory Hall. The apartments, on paper, complied with regulation and appeared to be furnished with all the requisite sign-offs from engineers, fire safety officers and architects. In 2005 it was perfectly legal for fire plans to be signed off on at planning stages so nobody was required to check a site on completion. Because regulations allowed for the certification of work without a local authority representative actually being on site much of the work done was never inspected. It was up to the builder – and, often, the builder alone – to ensure all the materials used were up to standard. The sanctions were so minor for any deviants that, in the case of Priory Hall, there wasn't any incentive to even stay in line with flimsy regulation. A case in point is that the Priory Hall builder has never been held to account for this apartment complex.

From the time that most of the private residents had moved in from 2006/2007 one structural problem had seamlessly led into countless others. From 2007 the underground car park flooded to the degree the cars floated out of their spaces. Rising damp became a prevalent issue throughout the complex. This was followed by serious plumbing and electrical issues.

It is worth underscoring that during the Irish property boom lending institutions were required to send a surveyor but during that frantic epoch that surveyor became more akin to a box ticking valuer. The complex block insurance was dropped just days before the Council sought the evacuationiction order from the High Court. This insurer cited numerous issues not least: fire safety issues, leaking, incorrect materials used on the roof and mould growing on the walls.

[43] This blanket refusal by the 975 owner-occupier families to pay their mortgages resulted in the corporation agreeing to honour their original agreement of a 9 percent interest repayment rate instead of the variable bank rate which could fluctuate between 14-19 percent. At the time it was usual that mortgage approval could take up 2 years. In the interim residents had bridging loans at a higher interest rate and they expected this rate to adjust back to the Council rate. When Paddy's mortgage came through the lending institutions did not revert back to the lower interest rate.

[44] Delma Sweeney is the current Academic Director of Mediation & Conflict Intervention at the Edward M Kennedy Institute, Maynooth University.

[45] Modelled on a similar project, operating in New Zealand, whereby offenders make reparation to their victim or community.

[46] The Four Courts houses the Supreme Court, the High Court, and the Dublin Circuit Court.

[47] This building suffered extensive damage as a result of the fire caused by the shelling of the Four Courts in 1922 when anti Treaty forces occupied the building during the Battle of Dublin.

The Battle of Dublin was a week of street battles in Dublin from 28 June to 5 July 1922 that marked the beginning of the Irish Civil War. It was fought between the forces of the new Provisional Government, which supported the Anglo-Irish Treaty, and a section of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) who opposed the Treaty. The fighting began with an assault by Provisional Government forces on the Four Courts building, occupied by the Anti-Treaty IRA, and ended in a decisive victory for the Provisional Government. In the interim the Four Courts was almost completely

destroyed and 1,000 years of irreplaceable historical and legal records were lost, including the complete records of the Irish Parliament, the original wills of every Irish testator from the 16th century, and the registers of hundreds of Irish parishes.

[48] In April 1922 these buildings were occupied by Republican forces led by those who opposed the Anglo-Irish Treaty. After several months of a stand-off, the new Provisional Government attacked the building to dislodge the rebels. When this anti-Treaty contingent were surrendering, the west wing of the building was obliterated in a huge explosion, destroying the Irish Public Record Office which was located at the rear of the building. Nearly one thousand years of archives were destroyed by this act. These insurgents included future Taoiseach Seán Lemass.

[49] Structurally, the hall and dome are largely as their 18th century architect, James Gandon, designed them. The interior decoration was much richer before the damage caused during The Civil War.

[50] When Priory Hall was completely evacuated in October 2011 the Council had no evacuation plan in place. Furthermore, the Council had no accommodation contingency plans for these mortgage holders, as they wished to be solely responsible for re-housing council tenants. They had removed all these tenants two years previously while the private owners had continued to live in a fire hazard. The judge and President of the High Court, Mr justice Nicholas Kearns therefore ordered the council to assume responsibility for the temporary accommodation for the evacuated residents and the cost of storing their belongings while they were unable to return to their properties. The truth of the matter was starker in the case of Priory Hall. The mistake was not a lack in regulation but a failure to even enforce the flimsy regulation in place. The Council's position was that it should not be held responsible for the temporary accommodation costs of the owner-occupiers.

[51] Since the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922 the Irish harp has been employed as the official emblem of Ireland.

[52] The banks required that moratoriums were applied for every three or six months.

[53] A retired Senior Executive Planner from the Planning Department, Fingal Co. Council whose personal article featured in the 2002 *Journal of Irish Studies*.

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