

Who makes the city?

The evolution of Galway city

Patrick Collins

*School of Geography, Archaeology and Irish Studies,
NUI Galway, Ireland*

Abstract

This paper sets out to better understand the roles of various actors and actions in the ‘making’ of Galway city. From the formation of the state, with a population of just over 14,000, the city has enjoyed population growth rates above EU and Irish averages over the past three decades. This paper maps a series of growth phases resulting from sometimes deliberate and other times non-deliberate policy decisions. The theoretical lens adopted is that of evolutionary economic geography. This is an attempt to counteract the tendency in broader social science research to underplay geographical aspects, such as places, space and scales. Economic geography – and evolutionary economic geography in particular – better identifies the complexity and nuance of place development. Theorists such as Boschma (2017) and Martin & Sunley (2015) consider development as a path-dependent process. Development is situated and place-based. This requires a more historically attuned perspective and a recognition that the role played by institutions, government and policy is vital. The paper concludes with a broad reflection on the role of spatial development policy and the potential future development of the city.

Keywords: Galway, evolutionary economic geography, city-making

Introduction

Galway is an interesting case study. The city occupies a unique place in the national psyche. Home to numerous festivals and events, and Ireland's only bilingual city, it is considered by many as the Irish capital of culture. Yet Galway is also a typical Irish city. In terms of population growth, socio-economic change and industrial make-up, it could easily act as a microcosm of the country as a whole. Galway has found itself exposed during times of economic recession and it has enjoyed the benefits (and other aspects) of economic boom. Therefore, answering the question of who makes Galway gives important insights of relevance beyond the city boundaries.

As a regional capital, the city has a high reliance on public sector employment, yet the small city on the Atlantic coast is also home to some of the world's leading technology companies (including Hewlett Packard, SAP, IBM and Cisco). The city's reliance on foreign direct investment (FDI) suffered a blow in the early 1990s with the cessation of manufacturing by Digital in Ballybrit. Some thirty years later, we now recognise that this helped pave the way, through a concentrated effort by state bodies and local institutes of higher education, for the development of the world's fourth-largest medical devices cluster (see van Egeraat & Doyle, 2018). Looking to the future, the city is set to grow. The *National Development Plan* sees an increase of over 50 per cent in the population up to 2040 (Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, 2017). Achieving this requires significant investment. The intention here is to adopt a historical lens and explore how past growth can affect future change.

The question of who makes the city is pertinent. The recent publication of the *National Development Plan* does not give us real clarity on the answer. Yet, the imperative is obvious. A range of factors, not least over 10,000 homeless people and the effects of climate change, reinforce the need to consider how cities are made. At a time when one of the world's largest tech firms has expressed its wish to play a role in making Irish cities (Weckler, 2019), it seems timely to consider the implications of who is responsible for city-making in the Irish context.

Evolving places

Economic geography relies on complexity to explain development. Important here is the need not only to trace the developmental histories of relevant populations (places) but also to disentangle the

reciprocal relationships among them. As a recently formed branch of economic geography, evolutionary economic geography (EEG) takes this further (Gong & Hassink, 2017). Evolutionary perspectives place the emphasis on non-economic factors such as institutions – that is, organisations and formal and informal rules – in explaining development. This involves a move to a more systemic and holistic understanding of spatial economic evolution. Therefore, explaining the growth of a city is reliant on not just the industrial evolutionary dynamics but also the broader institutional, economic and socio-spatial structures (Martin & Sunley, 2015). This paper uses EEG as a framework for understanding development and how it informs policy. Collins & Power (2019) use this approach to better explain the growth of Indreabhán in Co Galway. Here we attempt to adopt the same holistic viewpoint to better explain the growth of Galway city.

Recognition that the growth of a city relies on a variety of factors is the starting point. Of utmost importance here is the role of interdependence and a recognition of the complex interplay between a variety of factors. Grillitsch & Sotarauta (2018) identify what they term as the ‘trinity of change agency’. This comprises institutional entrepreneurship, Schumpeterian innovative practice and place leadership. All three play a role in the making of places and all are important for understanding the role of human agency in place development.

EEG relies heavily on concepts such as path dependence, lock-ins, path creation, related variety and co-evolution. In short, history matters. This view also contributes to analysing and explaining spatial dynamics (residential settlements, industrial change, localisation, clustering, etc.) in a more holistic and interconnected way (Storper & Walker, 1989). Comunian (2011) uses complexity theory to critique the use of ‘one size fits all’ top-down policy, and instead draw on the principles of a more agent-focused and interaction-based understanding of sustainable place development.

This paper advocates for an explicit evolutionary, history-informed perspective. This affords a much better understanding and analysis of spatial dynamics. At its heart is the idea that no one factor can explain the ‘making’ of Galway. The city’s growth is not the result of economic development, demographic change or spatial policies in isolation. Adopting a complexity theory approach helps us to understand the influence of all these factors in affecting the city over time.

The paper relies on a visual interpretation of spatial development since the formation of the state. A number of resources were used,

including base maps derived from city development plans. Historical maps were reinterpreted to reflect the profile for analysis. The maps reflect spatial development in terms of built land cover. The analysis sets out to distinguish between private and non-private housing initiatives while also reflecting patterns of demographic change.

The following sections look to place the evolution of Galway city in the timeline. The focus will be on place development and the determining factors of change (geography, demography, governance, industry, national policy and global investment patterns). The final section of the paper looks to the future and questions the appropriate path to be taken to ensure the future sustainability of the city.

Galway before the state

The charter for Galway city goes back over 500 years. During the sixteenth century it was a bustling city, with established trading links with the Iberian Peninsula. Galway was a merchant city, with a ruling class that gave the city its moniker of the city of the tribes. As a trading port, it brought wealth to the whole of the western region and established itself as a regional capital. Civic and political disruption under colonial rule saw the city's fortunes decline through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Table 1 shows the correlating demographic trends. By the middle of the nineteenth century and as a direct result of severe mismanagement, Galway's once bustling trading point had transformed into a point of departure.

Between 1831 and 1841 the city's population was halved. By the formation of the Irish Free State, the city was home to just over 14,000 and was little more than a town. Yet, the century preceding the Declaration of Independence was an interesting one for city-making. Reflective of the complex nuances of government and governing under colonial rule, many of the pillars of today's city were established in the nineteenth century.

Over the course of a century (circa 1850-1950), we see the physical manifestation of development through a number of significant undertakings, first by the British government, followed by the Irish government. These resulted in the foundation for growth on the northeastern edge of Galway Bay. These projects improved access, increased protection and improved sanitation, thus facilitating the growth of the city. The building of the Eglinton Canal and the completion of the new harbour in Galway (both in the 1840s and 1850s) took place under the famine relief scheme. Regarded as one of Galway's major engineering projects, the Eglinton Canal (opened

Table 1: Population change in Galway city

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Percentage change</i>
1813	24,684	–
1821	27,775	+12.5
1831	33,120	+19.2
1841	17,275	–47.8
1851	20,055	+16.1
1861	16,048	–20.0
1871	15,597	–2.8
1881	15,471	–0.8
1891	13,800	–10.8
1901	13,426	–2.7
1911	13,255	–1.3
1926	14,227	+7.3
1936	18,294	+28.6
1946	20,370	+11.3
1951	21,316	+4.6
1956	21,366	+0.2
1961	23,700	+10.9
1966	26,295	+10.9
1971	29,375	+11.7
1981	41,861	+42.5
1986	47,104	+12.5
1991	50,853	+8.0
1996	57,363	+12.8
2002	66,163	+15.3
2006	72,729	+9.9
2011	75,529	+3.8
2016	79,934	+5.8

Source: Central Statistics Office.

1851/2) coincided with the building of the university (opened 1849) 500 metres north of the canal. This canal connected the navigable part of the River Corrib to Galway Bay. Beyond its use to increase trade (connecting vast parts of Connaught to the ocean), it also served flood-relief purposes (Henry, 2011).

The chief result of the building of Galway's canal system was the growth of a new industrial quarter directly adjacent. Tanning and distilling were heavily reliant on water, both for access and power. A regional ecosystem began to grow. Primary materials were shipped from across the region through Lough Corrib, manufactured in the city (Nuns' Island and adjacent to the canal) and then exported from the city's newly built docks. Opened in 1842, the city's docks saw

Galway regain national standing as a port city. Between 1851 and 1860 Galway lost close to one-quarter of its population to emigration. This was the start of a trend in population decline that did not reverse itself for over 100 years. Galway Harbour quickly established itself as the point of departure for hundreds of thousands of young Irish people forced to seek a better life abroad (usually the US).

Four years after the establishment of the Free State of Ireland, Galway was a city in decline. The devastating effects of famine saw the city's population crumble so much that by 1926 the city was little more than a town. Residential settlement, though concentrated in the Claddagh and city centre, was of poor quality. Galway city was primarily made up of tenements and the vast majority of all residences were rented. Economically, the city suffered from several closures, notably Persse's Distillery in the heart of the city's small industrial quarter (Henry, 2011). Civic strife along with a change of governance added to uncertainty in the city. That said, the city as a physical entity was well placed, in terms of infrastructure, geographic location and accessibility, to begin a reversal in fortunes.

The making of modern Galway I: The role of the state

The problem of tenements and substandard housing became the focus of the newly formed Irish government. The Housing Act of 1931 paved the way for the establishment of a national housing board. In the decade from 1932, local authorities built close to 50,000 housing units (houses, flats and labourers' cottages) and were responsible for authoring the shape and the feel of the Irish city (Kenna, 2006). In Galway this involved the state's redevelopment of the Claddagh fishing village and its incorporation as a suburb of the city. The making of the city correlated directly with an increasing population (see Table 1). In the ten years from 1926, the city's population increased by 28 per cent.

Increased population also brought about increased demand for housing. In the 1940s, aided in no small part by the government White Paper on housing, Galway Corporation undertook the redevelopment of Shantalla and the expansion of the city to the north-west. This council house programme was part of a statewide process that saw the completion of 100,000 units in 10 years. Other developments, primarily by the local authority (with some private investments), saw the city spread to the north-east (Ballybane) in an effort to accommodate the healthy increase in population through the 1940s.

In terms of economic viability, the city saw some growth over the corresponding first two decades of the state. From the 1930s, an upturn can be seen in the productivity of the city. Small engineering companies such as Dooley's Industrial Engineering and a small number of crystal glass manufacturers had grown out of the revived industrial quarter of the inner city. That said, many of those employed in the city worked in the public sector. Local administration, education and health were among the biggest sectors in the city. This period also witnessed one of the last significant physical developments in Galway. The reclaiming of land from Galway Bay helped shore up the city's flood defences and make some land available for residential development. Later this would be amongst the most expensive real estate land in the city.

In terms of the making of modern Galway in the first three decades of the new state, what is most recognisable is the role played by the state. The policies pursued could initially be defined as economic nationalism (O'Grada, 1995). In this, we see the support of a local productive base via the imposition of tariffs on imported goods. At the same time, the state saw itself as having a role in the housing of its citizens. Housing boards had a direct impact on the making of urban settlements in Ireland. Together these approaches had a strong social and national ethos, influences that combined with much graver consequences in other jurisdictions in the 1930s. Yet Frazer contests the socialist credentials of these policies in the making of cities like Galway with his suggestion that the aim of housing and industry acts was populism, not socialism (see Araghi, 2012).

This form of populism through building and protectionism evolved into the 1940s and 1950s policy landscape in Ireland. The role of the state as animator increases over the course of this time period. Economic nationalism continued through the pursuit of import substitution industrialisation. At the same time, semi-state bodies from Aer Lingus to the Irish Sugar Manufacturing Company grew in stature. State-owned companies were the largest and most powerful in the economy. Together with the council house programme of the 1950s, Ireland had become a major proponent of Keynesianism through state-led intervention, inspiring one commentator to describe the Irish approach as: 'When Keynes came to Kinnegad' (Lysaght, 2013).

The role played by the state was important during this period. However, the scale at which that role was played is also important. In

short, the scale of state intervention in Ireland is national. Garvin (1977) and Hourihan (1989) point to the inherent contradiction of the political-institutional framework in Ireland that sees localism as all-pervading in Irish politics. In part, it is due to the evolution of electoral politics in post-independent Ireland, dominated by an agrarian class with a high level of tension between the urban and rural, and the system of proportional representation. The result is the subservience of national policies to extremely local concerns. Hourihan (1989) argues that the growth of Irish cities has been seriously constrained by falling between these two stools. Lee (1985) goes further by contending that the bureaucratic system (unique for a newly formed state) was effectively depoliticised, non-responsive and overly centralised in Dublin. This degree of centralisation would have a major impact on the way in which Galway was made.

The making of modern Galway II: The role of the market

The period from the 1960s through to the 1970s proved to be one of transition for Ireland. By the late 1950s, economic recession had begun to take hold as policies of protectionism had run their course. The years 1951 to 1956 saw a halt to population increase in Galway, with virtually no change in the population of the city between these dates. Allied with a high level of fertility, this points to the return of emigration as a release valve for Irish demography. Questions had begun to be asked about the state-led approach pursued in Irish policy. In terms of industrial policy, the publication of T. K. Whitaker's *Economic Development* marked a change in the role of the state from author to facilitator.

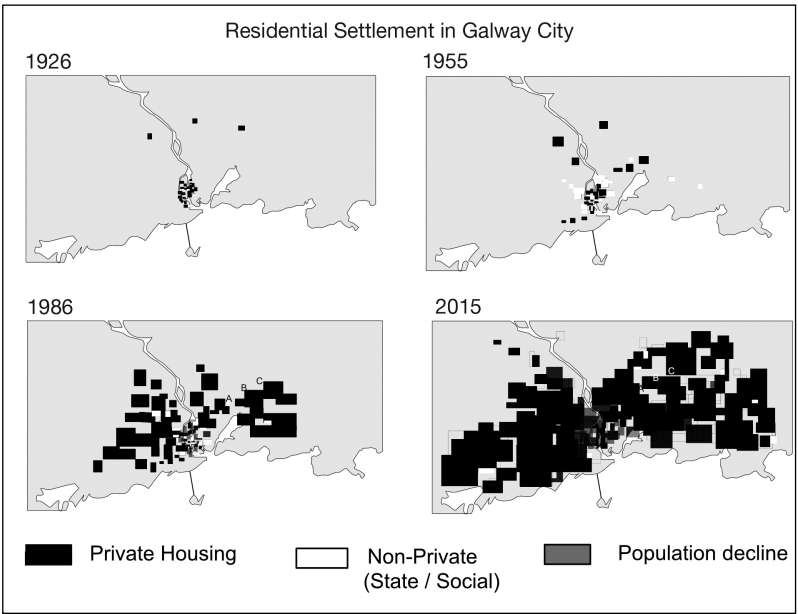
This involved the introduction of a number of incentives, most notably those associated with manufacturing, and the nascent effort to move Ireland away from a reliance on agriculture. Cunningham et al. (forthcoming) talk about the impact of a number of initiatives, from export-processing zones and 0 per cent tax on exports, to land development grants for incoming investors, as tantamount to the neoliberalisation of the Irish economy. The effect on the making of Irish cities became obvious over the course of the 1970s. For Galway city, the opening of the Mervue Industrial Estate (see 'A' in Figure 1) involved the relocation of 'making activities' from the city centre to its suburbs.

The nature and ownership of the new businesses that resided in these industrial estates were emblematic of the policy approach taken

in Ireland at the time. Foreign-owned companies (in the case of Galway, examples include US-owned companies such as SPS International and the German-owned Groschopp) were among the first to reside in these newly constructed industrial estates. These were among the first wave of foreign investors who would radically alter the economic and industrial (and socio-cultural) landscape of the country over the ensuing decades. A point of pertinence here is the fact that the pursuit of exogenous industrial development also altered the physical landscape of the city.

Note should be taken here of the state's first venture into a coherent vision for spatial development in the form of the Buchanan plan (1968). Alongside local authority development plans, national policy acted as a recognition of the need to address the spatial imbalance in a growing Ireland. Previous contributors have dealt with the success or otherwise of these initiatives (see Meredith & van Egeraat, 2013). What is noteworthy here is how Buchanan planned for a second 'regional growth centre' like Galway. Ultimately, Buchanan's plan to focus growth on nine centres around Ireland proved too difficult a pill to swallow for a highly centralised and devoutly localist political system (see Hourihan, 1989).

Figure 1: Residential Settlement Patterns



The Mervue Industrial Estate (A) was the first of several land acquisitions by the Industrial Development Authority in Galway. Larger investments followed. Significant landbanks in Ballybane (B), Ballybrit (C) and latterly Oranmore (not pictured, south-east of the city) were acquired by the state and often leased (many with attractive subsidies) to companies from outside the state. The economic and financial impacts of these policies reshaped the Irish economy and Irish cities (see Barry, 2019; Collins, 2007; Collins & Grimes, 2011). Of relevance here is how the pursuit of industrialisation by invitation helped shape and make the city of Galway. Figure 1 depicts the expansion of the city to the east through the 1970s and 1980s. The siting of FDI was an important part of how the city was formed. Supporting institutions, notably the establishment of the regional technical college (now Galway–Mayo Institute of Technology), in close proximity to the growing industrial base of the city also had marked effects on the city's development trajectory. Interesting here is the influence of national industrial policy on national education policy, with ancillary influence on local city-making.

The tenor of the industrial policy espoused in T. K. Whitaker's report (perhaps owing to its relative success) had also begun to influence other policies in Ireland in the 1970s. Beginning in the latter half of the 1960s, notably through the Housing Act of 1966 and the White Paper of 1969, we see a broad trend of state disengagement from housebuilding. This withdrawal fits with the broader trend of neoliberalisation of the Irish state through the last quarter of the twentieth century. This withdrawal also helped create fertile ground for the growth of a significant private construction industry in Ireland. This sector would go some way to help address the spatial imbalance, between a Dublin that was enjoying a greater share of the nation's wealth and the rest of the country, by employing as many as one in five people in some Irish regions by the end of the century (Construction Industry Federation, 2014).

In Galway the space made for private developers helped match a significant increase in demand for housing through the 1970s and 1980s (see Figure 1). By 1971 Galway city's population had reached pre-famine levels. Indeed, the two decades from 1961 saw the population of the city nearly double in size, inspiring the use of the moniker of 'the fastest growing city in Europe'. Accession to the EEC in 1973 aided the process of state deregulation and shifted the focus from the building of houses to the building of infrastructure supported by Europe through the Structural Funds programme. The

construction boom of the 1970s was led by private capital and saw the city take on the shape that we recognise today. Less than five years after the publication of the Buchanan plan, the early 1970s saw another (equally doomed) attempt to plan for spatial development in Ireland. The Kenny report proposed the acquisition of lands on the outskirts of urban areas in an effort to curtail land price speculation and the phenomenon of market-led urban sprawl (Committee on the Price of Building Land, 1973). The proposals were ignored, and land/house price inflation continued throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s.

The broad trend depicted is that of a stretching city from east to west. Constrained by water to the north (Lough Corrib) and south (Galway Bay), the city and its suburbs adopted a linear form. Land-zoning and planning decisions bear consequence but ultimately the market helped decide how the city was made in this period. Lands to the west were more sought after, owing to the proximity to natural amenities such as Galway Bay, while the industrial pursuits based in the east of the city created a different feel. House pricing on either side of the River Corrib, which dissects the city, reflect this. Developer-led city-making shaped modern Galway as greenfield sites proved more financially attractive to private developers. This led to a phenomenon that many other Irish cities (notably Dublin) experienced over this decade: growing cities with declining populations in the city centres.

The state response to this growing trend came in the form of tax incentivisation. The 1986 Urban Renewal Act, together with the town renewal scheme, positioned the state as a facilitator and enabler of building in Ireland. Towards the end of the decade, many questions would arise through significant tribunals as to the role of local authorities and councils in their facilitation of development through the process of land zoning. From Figure 1 we can see that the Renewal Act had some effect in terms of building inner-city residences (usually in the form of apartment blocks) through the 1990s. However, the broad trend established in the 1970s continued in Galway. Inner-city redevelopment brings with it costs that are much higher than those associated with greenfield sites and is therefore less attractive to developers – a phenomenon that has been spatially articulated in the construction of the Knocknacarra suburb of Galway.

Section 23 tax relief was introduced in 1988 to address this by incentivising the purchase (new build or renovation) of properties in

inner-city areas (and some rural locations). One of the primary outcomes of this was to bolster the landlord class and the practice of renting in Irish cities. For Galway, with its increasing population of young and transient residents, this made investing in properties for rental very attractive (and lucrative). Following a similar trend to the growth centre approach of the Buchanan plan and the interventions suggested by the Kenny report, urban incentives that attempted city-making also fell foul of the institutional (political) infrastructure. The extension of the town renewal scheme and other urban areas reflected the tendency in Ireland to give 'no concession to [its] cities' (Hourihan, 1989, p. 223).

The making of modern Galway III: From boom to bust

Over the course of the 1990s Ireland gained international attention for its rate of unprecedented economic growth. Termed an economic miracle, it was summarised in figures such as GDP per capita (from 15 per cent below the EU average in 1995 to 48 per cent above in 2006) and falling unemployment rates. Collins (2007) points to the role of the open economy model pursued in Ireland. Important here is Ireland's pursuit of two forms of globalisation (O'Riain, 2004). The first, relying on the already established FDI model, involved Ireland winning significant investments from the world's biggest tech companies (notably Microsoft, Dell and Intel). The second was the emergence of Irish companies that were born global. This saw the co-evolution of an indigenous tech sector (Iona Technologies, Riverdeep) that grew alongside the established foreign-owned sector. Yet, beyond the economy, the country also changed dramatically. The population of Ireland rose by 17 per cent in the ten years from 1996. Demand for housing grew in line with this, ultimately altering the ways in which Irish cities were made. The response to this demand not only changed the ways cities grew but also acted as fuel to the tigerish economic growth: at its peak (2006) the construction sector in Ireland contributed circa 25 per cent to Irish GNP and employed one in eight people in the workforce (Forfás, 2015).

Economic growth and the property market became self-reinforcing over the 1990s and early 2000s in Ireland. Through the latter part of the boom, the role played by access to finance became more influential. Ireland's accession to the euro in 2001 alongside a subscription to centralised European monetary policy saw a small country, that ran countercyclical to the larger European economies,

with access to cheap money. From 2000 the numbers of lenders and mortgage products expanded significantly while the onus on repayments became laxer (Kelly & Everett, 2004; Murphy, 2004). In 2004, 100 per cent mortgages first became available, as did mortgage equity withdrawal products (Hogan & O'Sullivan, 2007; Norris & Coates, 2014), all serving to massively fuel the market for property in Ireland.

Thus, between 1991 and 2011 housing stock increased by 834,596, equivalent to 71.9 per cent (Central Statistics Office, 2011). Yet the rate of increase in house prices over the same period shows that the increase in supply was less than demand. In Galway city the average new house was €61,000 in 1990. This saw a fivefold increase to reach €325,000 in 2007 (this was over ten times the average industrial wage). The increased demand and increased prices pushed the city east towards Oranmore and west towards Barna. The greatest increase in new houses (and population) was experienced in the city wards at both ends of the city (Figure 1). This increase is only part of the story. Outlying villages such as Moycullen and Claregalway, beyond the boundaries of the city, saw populations double and triple. The functional region of Galway also altered dramatically over the course of this period. Towns such as Gort, Athenry and Loughrea saw the construction of housing estates that would house the city's workers. The stretching of the city far beyond its boundaries would have knock-on effects in terms of travel to work (Galway county ranked the highest in commuting times outside of the Dublin commuter region) and traffic congestion on the streets of the small medieval city (Central Statistics Office, 2019).

The role played by the state in the making of cities like Galway in the 2000s can be described as complicit. According to Kitchin et al. (2014, p. 1070), 'The thrust of property policy to private benefit was driven by a neoliberal policy agenda of promoting the free market, minimizing regulation, privatizing public goods and retreating from state services such as public housing, framed within a political system in which localism, clientelism and cronyism existed to varying degrees across the modes and scales of governance.' From financial regulation to infrastructure development, the state's ceding of responsibility to the market was actively shaping cities and towns across Ireland.

Throughout the property boom, several attempts were made to address the schisms that arose from property speculation. The Planning and Development Acts, 2000 to 2006, included acknowledgement of the need for affordable housing or social housing

supports for those who were unable to afford the ever-escalating price of housing in Ireland. Rather than the state intervening through the construction of houses, Part V of the Planning Act simply placed the onus on the delivery of social/affordable housing on private developers (20 per cent of all new builds). According to Mahon (2014), after intensive lobbying from the construction industry, the legislative onus on developers was revoked, giving them alternatives such as cash contributions (see also Norris & Byrne, 2015).

The overheated Irish property market, fuelled by access to cheap credit and lax governmental regulation, coincided with the global economic crash of 2008, leaving the country amongst those most exposed. The bursting of the bubble saw the contraction of the construction industry and dealt a massive blow to state finances, leading to the bailing out of the Irish economy in 2010. In the same year average new house prices in Galway were half the value of their height in 2007. Most exposed were those built on the edge of the city. The fiscal contraction saw a change in the mortgage market and the beginning of the phenomenon of negative equity in Ireland. In Galway the edges of the city and the commuter belt (especially to the east and south) between fifteen and forty kilometres from the city centre were worst hit (AIRO, 2015). The patterns of unfinished housing, primarily in commuting regions, were seen in the rise of the ghost estates, the real remnants of the collapse of a property bubble (for more on this see Hearne et al., 2014).

A final trend visible in Figure 1 is the continued decline in non-private house building. Across the state, between 1961 and 2011 the proportion of social housing stock relative to all housing fell from 18.4 per cent to 7.8 per cent (Central Statistics Office, 2011). What is obvious from the maps is that little social housing was constructed over the course of the boom in Galway. There is some evidence of units funded through public-private partnerships, but in the main, these were replacements. The Irish government sought to replace the construction of houses with faith in the property market by use of the rent supplement allowance (95,000 households in 2010 receiving such supplements) (Kitchin et al., 2014). With the recent upturn and as a result of increasing rent prices, many landlords can choose private renters over state-supported ones. The result of these phenomena contributes directly to the homeless crisis that has occurred across the country. In Galway alone, households accessing homeless services increased 20 per cent over the year between 2017 and 2018 (Simon, 2019).

Discussion: Galway, from here to the future

Key lessons from the recent past include the role of developers' levies in the making of places in Ireland. An enduring mark of the Celtic tiger was urban sprawl and the ghost estate phenomenon. The country was scarred by local authorities forced to fund themselves through these levies in the absence of any significant funding from the state. Tax incentivisation was a policy that initially took hold in industrial development circles that then became central to the Irish planning playbook. Over the course of five decades industrial policy has finetuned its incentivisation, more latterly favouring higher value-added activities. This kind of linear thinking that sees development as moving up the value chain of more specialised activities has also transferred across to the state's approach to housing over the last ten years, and brought with it the entrance of investment funds into the Irish housing market.

Looking to the future, two pressing issues need to be considered. The first is that according to the national development plan, Galway city will be home to a further 50,000 people by 2040. An increase of this magnitude will have very real consequences. Simply put, the Galway that has been made over the past thirty years cannot continue. Linear cities are high carbon emitters. Environmentally, Galway needs to be made better. This requires not just a change in incentives but a fundamental shift away from linear thinking and an embracing of the complexity of the interplay between all policies, industrial, education, social and environmental, in the making of places. At the time of writing, cranes are reappearing in the skyline of the city. Notable areas of potential development adjacent to the city harbor, as well as the old industrial heartland of the city (Nuns' Island), offer the city and the state an opportunity to move development from the edges back to the centre. Galway needs to make more Galway. It needs to look to its history and context, because the Galway City that is pictured in bid books for the European Capital of Culture and featured in Lonely Planet guides is not the Galway that was made in the past thirty years.

The second is that without a recognition of this complexity, laudable initiatives like a *National Development Plan* will only follow the same direction of their predecessors (Kenny and Buchanan reports) into obscurity. Galway and other Irish cities have been made firstly by economic/industrial policy and secondly by housing. The reality is that market returns have determined the kind of development Ireland has witnessed over the past forty years. One

approach to addressing this is to rethink the role played by the state. Markets make the kind of cities we live in. Often the goal of the market is short-term gain without any thought to long-term consequence. Sometimes the goals of the market can be shaped to reflect those of the citizens of a place. What is needed then is a revaluation of how power is administered in the state. National development with any level of social or environmental equality will require power being placed in the hands of those that are in the place. Decentralised growth requires the decentralisation of power.

Conclusions

The making of a city is a complex and nuanced process. This paper does not claim to do anything other than take a very broad view of the primary factors affecting the making of a city over time. In it we see the roles played firstly by the British colonial powers, secondly by the Irish state and more recently by the market and private developers. These roles are interrelated and the lines delineating them are unclear. However, from the above mapping, we can attribute broad associations to each particular influence. Adopting a historical lens to understand place development is applied to the case of Galway as through it we can see the complex interrelationships between many different actors that contribute to the making of the place.

Space plays an obvious role in place development. Modern Galway is built on the manipulation of geophysical space, morphing it into an accessible and navigable place. Other significant investments in space include the reclamation of lands that helped the city cope better with natural events, though recent changes in climate patterns might force the need to address them further. The economic and industrial development of the city is path-dependent and relational. The emergence of an internationally recognised cluster of medical device and high-tech companies is the result of a complex interplay between education, industrial and taxation policies. They are related to the space they are in through previously established engineering skills and through the knowledge development of key institutions and older industries that demonstrate a related variety of skills.

The purpose of the above mapping exercise is to highlight the high correlation and possible causation between industrial decisions and decisions regarding housing policy and the making of the city of Galway. Notable by its absence is any influence of spatial or locally attuned policy. This point is extremely pertinent for a country that is

looking to grow significantly over the coming decades. Ultimately, who makes the city is a complex question. The answer requires an appropriate theoretical lens. It requires a more systemic and holistic understanding of spatial economic evolution. This involves considering a change in the broader context of economic, institutional and socio-spatial structures. The theoretical framework of EEG enables a deeper contextualisation that promotes the analysis of development downwards (role of agency and propulsive behaviour) as well as upwards and outwards (the broader socio-institutional structures) (Gong & Hassink, 2017; Martin & Sunley, 2015).

From the mapping exercise above we can see how the state was an active author of the city. In it we see the kind of city that was made. More latterly we see what kind of city was made as the state receded, and in its place the market (through private development) began to make the city. Development in Galway (as in many other cities and towns across Ireland) became a synonym for economic advance and profitability. This radically altered how the city was made. Land on the outskirts brought higher returns. The kind of city that was made, owing to its place and the tacit influence from the state, was linear. Linearity in policymaking has made Galway a linear city.

Development over time better identifies the nuances in city-making. Rather than private development replacing public investment, it is a path-dependent process, where related practices in industrial, educational and social areas filtered across into place-making. The divestment in social housing and the market-led development of Galway are not diametrically opposite but part of a more intricate co-evolving process of city-making. Nor is the local scale the one at which we can identify all the actors involved. The broader pursuit of neoliberalisation has filtered down from the national and international level. The Galway that has been made results not only from decisions made in its city hall but from national policy decisions by successive Irish governments, as well as the actions decided on in boardrooms in Brussels, Frankfurt, London and New York.

Questions also have to be asked as to how willing central government is to cede power to cities and regions. This debate came into focus in May 2019 when citizens in Waterford, Cork and Limerick were offered the opportunity to vote in plebiscites on proposals for directly elected mayors (Galway City and County Council have to be amalgamated before Galway citizens have their say). This was touted by the government as an opportunity for the real devolution of power

to Irish cities. However, a closer reading of the guidelines published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government shows that this devolution of power will have little material effect on the functioning of any other statutory bodies, notably the National Transport Authority or the newly formed Land Development Agency. Directly elected mayors in this format do not go far enough to ensure local, place-based leadership.

The 2014 Local Government Act was timely. A country that was emerging out of a decade of economic recession needed to adopt a spatial framework for future growth. While it can be considered a step in the right direction, it is a small step that does not go far enough. Ireland remains one of the most centralised states in Europe, the political infrastructure in place is unsuitable for the devolution of any real power to cities or regions. Responses to the homeless crisis in Galway require sanction in Dublin; the same can be said for addressing the city's well-known traffic problems. The case of Galway, as can be seen in most cities and large towns across Ireland, has demonstrated the powerful influence of market speculation on the making of cities. The response from the state cannot be placeless; it has to be attended to the local context (see Hambleton, 2015). For this reason, the government needs to resist any centralising tendencies and place more trust in the local. The scale of the local here is also important, we need to move away from constituency boundaries and personality politics towards functional cities/regions with tailored policies to enable places to grow more effectively, efficiently and sustainably.

References

- AIRO (2015). *All Island Research Observatory: Galway city*. Retrieved from <http://airo.maynoothuniversity.ie/external-content/galway-city> [11 April 2020].
- Araghi, F. (2012). The invisible hand and the visible foot: Peasants, dispossession and globalization. In A. H. Akram-Lodhi & C. Kay, *Peasants and globalization* (pp. 123–59). Oxfordshire: Routledge.
- Barry, F. (2019). Ireland and the changing global foreign direct investment landscape. *Administration*, 67 (3), 93–110.
- Boschma, R. (2017). Relatedness as driver of regional diversification: A research agenda. *Regional Studies*, 51 (3), 351–64.
- Buchanan, C. (1968) *Regional studies in Ireland*. Dublin: An Foras Forbartha.
- Central Statistics Office (2011). *Census 2011: Principal demographic results*. Cork: Central Statistics Office.

- Central Statistics Office (2019). *Community in Ireland*. Cork: Central Statistics Office.
- Collins, P. (2007). Policy approaches to developing the region in the information age: Evidence from Ireland and Europe. *Irish Geography*, 40 (2), 146–67.
- Collins, P., & Grimes, S. (2011). Cost-competitive places: Shifting fortunes and the closure of Dell’s manufacturing facility in Ireland. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 18 (4), 406–26.
- Collins, P., & Power, D. (2019). A co-evolving cultural cluster in the periphery: Film and TV production in Galway, Ireland. *City, Culture and Society*, 18. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2019.05.003>
- Committee on the Price of Building Land (1973) *Report to the Minister for Local Government*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- Comunian, R. (2011). Rethinking the creative city: The role of complexity, networks and interactions in the urban creative economy. *Urban studies*, 48 (6), 1157–79.
- Construction Industry Federation. (2014) *Construction Industry Federation annual report*. Dublin: Construction Industry Federation.
- Cunningham, J., Collins, P., & Giblin, M. (forthcoming) Science, education and industrial policy. *Annals of Science*.
- Department of Communication, Climate Action and Environment (2018) *The national development plan 2040*. Dublin: Government of Ireland.
- Forfás (2015) *Ireland’s construction sector: Outlook and strategic plan to 2015*. Dublin: Government of Ireland.
- Garvin, T. (1977). Nationalist elites, Irish voters and Irish political development: A comparative perspective. *Economic and Social Review*, 8 (3), 161–86.
- Gong, H., & Hassink, R. (2017). Regional resilience: The critique revisited. In N. Williams & T. Worley, *Creating resilient economies*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Grillitsch, M., & Sotarauta, M. (2018). Regional growth paths: From structure to agency and back. *Papers in Innovation Studies*, 1, 1–23
- Hambleton, R. (2015). Place-based collaboration: Leadership for a changing world. *Administration*, 63 (3), 5–25.
- Hearne, R., Kitchin, R., & O’Callaghan, C. (2014). Spatial justice and housing in Ireland. In G. Kearnes, D. Meredith & J. Morrissey (Eds), *Spatial justice and the Irish crisis* (pp. 57–77). Dublin: RIA.
- Henry, W. (2011). *Hidden Galway*. Cork: Mercier Press.
- Hogan, V., & O’Sullivan, P. (2007). Consumption and house prices in Ireland. *Quarterly Economic Commentary*, Autumn.
- Houriham, K. (1989). Urban change in the Republic of Ireland: The search for policies. *Cities*, 6 (3), 209–26.
- Kelly, J., & Everett, M. (2004). Financial liberalisation and economic growth in Ireland. *Central Bank Quarterly Bulletin*, 4, 91–112.

- Kenna, P. (2006). *Housing law and policy in Ireland*. Dublin: Clarus Press.
- Kitchin, R., O'Callaghan, C., & Gleeson, J. (2014). The new ruins of Ireland? Unfinished estates in the post Celtic tiger era. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 38 (3), 1069–80.
- Lee, J. J. (Ed.). (1985). *Ireland: Towards a sense of place*. Cork: Cork University Press.
- Lysaght, C. (2013). *Keynes revisited*. Retrieved from <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/ireland/keynes-revisited-1.1358760> [11 April 2020].
- Mahon, M. (2014). Planning gain. In G. Kearnes, D. Meredith, & J. Morrissey (Eds), *Spatial justice and the Irish crisis* (pp. 78–89). Dublin: RIA.
- Martin, R., & Sunley, P. (2015). On the notion of regional economic resilience: Conceptualization and explanation. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 15 (1), 1–42.
- Meredith, D., & van Egeraat, C. (2013). Revisiting the National Spatial Strategy ten years on. *Administration*, 60 (3), 3–9.
- Murphy, L. (2004). Mortgage finance and housing provision in Ireland, 1970–90. *Urban Studies*, 32, 135–54.
- Norris, M., & Byrne, M. (2015). Asset price Keynesianism, regional imbalances and the Irish and Spanish housing booms and busts. *Built Environment*, 41 (2), 227–43.
- Norris, M., & Coates, D. (2014). How housing killed the Celtic tiger: Anatomy and consequences of Ireland's housing boom and bust. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 29 (2), 299–315.
- Ó Grada, C. (1995). *Ireland: A new economic history 1780–1939*. Oxford: OUP Catalogue.
- O'Riain, S. (2004). The politics of mobility in technology-driven commodity chains: Developmental coalitions in the Irish software industry. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 28 (3), 642–63.
- Simon (2019) *Locked out of the market XV: The gap between rent supplement/HAP limits and market rents*. Dublin: Simon.
- Storper, M., & Walker, R. (1989). *The capitalist imperative*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- van Egeraat, C., & Doyle, E. (2018). Rethinking Irish cluster policy. *Administration*, 66 (1), 107–28.
- Weckler, A. (2019, 20 September) Google willing to build Irish homes to ease accommodation crisis, says company CEO Sundar Pichai. *Irish Independent*. Retrieved from <https://www.independent.ie/business/personal-finance/property-mortgages/google-willing-to-build-irish-homes-to-ease-accommodation-crisis-says-company-ceo-sundar-pichai-38516031.html> [20 April 2020].