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RESISTANCE AND MOBILISATION OF POWER: THE CASE OF IRISH SENIOR CITIZENS

Martin Javornicky

A thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD to National University of Ireland, Galway

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National University of Ireland,
Galway

September 2018
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Declaration of originality

I, Martin Javornicky, declare that this thesis is entirely my own work. I have not obtained a degree in this university, or elsewhere, on the basis of this work.

Martin Javornicky

__________________

Date:

__________________
Acknowledgements

‘Ph.D. is a long haul with uncertain outcome’ these words sent me off along with a book 5 years ago with a vague idea that turned into this project. Now, seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Mark Haugaard for his unwavering support since. Mark, your guidance, encouragement, honesty and friendship has made past four years an instance of ideal-type mentor-student relationship, at least in my book, I don’t think it can be put it any better, Thank You. It’s a gift, and I will try to pass it on.

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Abstract

In October 2008, the Irish pensioners engaged in nation-wide public campaign of dissent in response to the government decision to abolish the universal access to medical card for the over-70s, which culminated in the largest public demonstration Ireland had seen in decades and forced almost complete reversal of the policy. Using the event as empirical case, the thesis focuses on the problem of resistance, the exercise of social and political power by disempowered groups in the face of existing power structures and following pages present theoretically-driven sociological investigation of the operation of power in the context of this ‘Silver Revolution’.

The OAPs resistance is interpreted as reaction triggered in response to government decision to target a universal benefit. This was perceived by the OAPs as unforgivable violation of social contract which undermined their practical understanding of their symbolic position in Irish society, thus disrupting their sense of ontological security they derived from it. The success of the protests will be discussed in terms of the confluence between several factors. The importance of the benefit to for the OAPs’ everyday functioning. Discrepancy between the government decision and the public perception of the OAPs status in terms of the relationship to the state which resonated strongly with OAPs’ own understanding and helped to build up momentum for public support. Capacity of OAPs and OAP NGOs to come up with a coherent counter-narrative to government discourse and mobilise a public response extent, speed, and severity of which has not been seen in Ireland in decades.

The thesis locates its contribution to knowledge in three ways. Empirically, drawing upon wide array of data the thesis provides both factual and experiential accounts of the event. Thus, expanding the, scarce but growing, body of literature about the pensioners’ protests in Irish social science. Theoretically, it seeks to re-activate the foundations of Mark Haugaard’s four-dimensional model of power rooted in the theory of (re)structuration. And to apply this lens to interpretation of the old age pensioners resistance. And, methodologically, the thesis makes a theoretical case for the inclusion of the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, into the methodological repertoire of interpretive sociology in general, and four-dimensional model in particular.
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAI .................................................................Age Action Ireland
ARI ..............................................................Active Retirement Ireland
ISCP ...........................................................Irish Senior Citizens’ Parliament
IMF ...............................................................International Monetary Fund
EU .................................................................European Union
FF .................................................................Fianna Fáil
FG .................................................................Fine Gael
IMO .............................................................Irish Medical Organization
PR-STV .... Proportional Representation by means of Single Transferable Vote
Introduction

This PhD investigates the processes of social and political power\(^1\) in the context of the resistance of Irish Old Age Pensioners (OAPs) against the government’s decision to abolish the universal access to healthcare, embodied in the institution of the medical card, for the pensioners over-70 years old. Despite its occasional disciplinary transgressions into a range of social sciences including political theory, psychology, health promotion, demographics, philosophy, social gerontology and, no doubt, others, the following pages are, or purport to be, a work of sociology following the direction set out for the discipline by Max Weber. Even if it uses different conceptual tools than he might have imagined. Weber envisaged sociology as an ‘empirical science of action’ tasked with the interpretation of meaning, process and effects (as opposed to searching for absolute truth) of social action. In his own words:

'Sociology' is a word which is used in many different senses. In the sense adopted here, it means the science whose object is to interpret the meaning of social action and thereby give a causal explanation of the way in which the action proceeds and the effects which it produces. By ‘action’ this definition is meant human behaviour when and to the extent that the agent or agents see it as subjectively meaningful, the behaviour may be either internal or external, and may consist in the agent's doing something, omitting to do something, or having something done to him. By 'social' action is meant an action in which the meaning intended by the agent or agents involves a relation to another person's behaviour and in which that relation determines the way in which the action proceeds.

(Weber 1995, p. 7)

The thesis builds on Weber’s intent to understand and interpret the social action as embedded in social systems and local forms of understanding shared by social groups under observation and focuses the analysis along the same lines. That is, interpretation of specific instance of resistance as social action in a specific historical and socio-cultural context (Ireland on the verge of financial collapse in 2008), as meaningful to specific social groups (Irish Old Age Pensioners). But, it does so with a definite intention to provide an interpretive, theoretical, analysis of power using Haugaard’s four-dimensional model of power, one of the contemporary theoretical accounts of

\(^1\) Or socio-political power, or even just power, it will, be argued that all exercises of social power have tacit normative and often political, dimension. This holds even if the agents are, to a large extent not discursively aware of the inherently political aspects of social action because it is contained on the level of practical consciousness. But, we are skipping ahead here and return to this point somewhere in chapter 1.
power seeking to reconcile the conflicting interpretations of power as either domination or empowerment, which has inspired this project as well as oriented the search for an empirical case. Before we move on to the explicit agenda of the thesis, let’s take a look at the empirical case of the OAPs protest.

**The Event – Silver Revolution**

In October 2008, facing the quickly deteriorating economy in the context of the global financial crisis, the Irish Government was forced to implement a series of austerity measures intended to cut public spending. One of those measures was the abolition of the universal entitlement to a medical card for all citizens over 70 years of age. The medical card is a welfare benefit which affords access to comprehensive healthcare free of charge to those who cannot afford it and was, at the time, awarded on the basis of means-testing for all citizens under 70 years of age and, since 2001, automatically available to all over-70s who applied for it. When the Government decided to revoke the universal access for this group, the OAPs responded swiftly and organised a nationwide week-long campaign of resistance which culminated in two public protest events, even after the government announced a significant increase of the means-test threshold in the face of the growing public disquiet. One, a public meeting in St. Andrew’s church where almost 2000 OAPs expressed their dissatisfaction by shouting so vehemently they drowned the government-sent officials’ voices and did not allow them to speak and even physically confronted one of the politicians. And second, a public protest outside of the Dáil attended by more than 15000 people where the situation repeated and a government minister was silenced by angry booing and heckling of thousands of OAPs who did not allow her to speak. The outcome of the enterprise was that the government altered the means-test thresholds from the initial 201 EUR (285 for couples) to 700 EUR (1400 for couples). A change so significant that the projected number of OAPs who were to retain their medical card increased, in a week, from 15,000 to 123,000. This rollback effectively constituted a near complete reversal of the measure in practice since the number of OAPs affected by the new means-test fell to a fraction of its original intention. However, the principle of universality of the benefit for the over-70s was still abolished. And, the way in which the government handled the issue has left the OAPs with a feeling of insult and injustice that ultimately, following two more years of austerity measures which affected all areas of government service provisions and disgruntled much of Irish electorate,
contributed to Fianna Fáil’s (leading government party) demise in power after 14 consecutive years.

The OAPs protests were chosen because they represent a fascinating case whereby a cohort of society which was, up to that point, politically fragmented and quiescent in general suddenly erupted into nationwide open dissent and culminated in two protest events of unprecedented magnitude. It was the first time that Irish old age pensioners organised protests and it was the largest protests the country had seen in almost three decades. The events have been described in the media in terms of metaphors of empowerment as ‘silver revolution’ (Anderson 2008a), revenge of the ‘grey panthers’ (Ingle 2008) and are often constructed as the awakening of grey vote, the moment when the OAPs became a political force to be reckoned with, which is invoked more-or-less consistently in political discussions around the times of the budgetary discussions.

The case in the context of Irish social science

In the context of Irish social inquiry, the investigations into the Senior Citizens Protests are sparse but highlight the emancipatory, empowering and out-of-the-ordinary nature of the event and further articulate imminent need to examine the power dynamics at play. And yes, you guessed it, we will now move on to review those contributions in the effort to situate my work. Beginning widely and zooming in, the events appeared briefly at the end of Burke’s (2009) account of the Irish two-tier ‘apartheid’ healthcare system written just as the protests unfolded. Her discussion highlighted the political nature of the emergence of the over-70s medical card at the time of its institution and argued that the crisis is an outcome of a combination of factors, most prominent of which was governments underestimation of costs of the benefit and its importance for the OAPs symptomatic of the quick adaptation to its universal status. The OAPs protests also featured in the phenomenological investigation of the older people’s experience of activism in the work of Jackie Fox and Sarah Quinn who briefly examined the OAPs perceptions of the protests in a subset of questions while concentrating on the OAPs experiences of activism in general. They argued that the protesters themselves considered the government move very unjust, and worthy of public challenge and viewed the day of the protest and the

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1 I am indebted to Dr. Michal Molcho, in NUI Galway department of Health Promotion for bringing the case into my attention.
government rollback as a display of the political power of older adults and a ‘victory achieved by the collective’ resulting in increasing sense of self efficacy among the interviewed activists (Fox and Quinn 2012, p. 367).

Fealy et al. (2012) used critical discourse analysis to examine how the newspaper coverage (Irish Independent and Irish Daily Star) produced the discursive constructions of OAPs subjectivity during the event. Categorizing the newspaper representations into five different discursive articulations (in italics below). They argued that while the media coverage was predominately sympathetic to the OAPs cause, presenting the OAPs as deserving old, a group that deserves to be cared for by the state for their contributions to the state and families over their lifetimes, and framed them as victims of unjust government move. This sympathy was premised upon the implicit age-related biases, which portrayed this age group as frail, infirm and vulnerable (p.91) due to the advanced age and multiple health problems, thus discursively constructing ‘identities of implied dependency and otherness, thereby placing older people outside mainstream Irish society’ (ibid p.85).

Once the OAPs engaged in public resistance, they became framed as radicalised citizens on the march, which became interpreted as an anomaly and celebrated almost as heroic or mythical achievement which is well beyond the capabilities of this cohort. However, they also argue the OAPs resistance could have, paradoxically, weakened their claim to the universality of benefit since it broke with the established prevalent discourse of OAPs as a dependable, frail and vulnerable group deserving of the state support. Moreover, opened the door for the discursive articulation of the category of undeserving old, as a small minority of well to do pensioners who are too arrogant to relinquish their medical card at the expense of younger populations even though they can easily afford private healthcare. The authors observe this final category was textually related to the category of radicalised citizen, justified the government’s move and tacitly (and in minority of cases very explicitly) called on the OAPs to give up their medical card (ibid p.96).

Acheson(2010), drawing on social movement scholarship, addressed the issue from the perspective of the agency of the voluntary sector organisations in influencing the government policy in response to the opportunities for action which can be provided by the political configurations of the relationships between various actors in the voluntary sector and the state. But, also, in the Irish case, the opportunities that open
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up when state’s attempts to change the given welfare relationship with its citizens. He argued that the government decision to target the universal medical card for the over-70s stimulated a broad public discussion about the meaning of the citizenship and rights in response to the wide-spread anxiety of the OAPs. This, in turn, provided the OAP organisations with an opportunity to direct the OAPs’ energy, shape the public discourse and ultimately the government policy. Describing the role of the organisations and their success as follows:

The political pressure initially came from the thousands of calls to phone-in programmes on local and national radio and an avalanche of calls, letters and emails to the constituency offices of TDs. The role of civil society organisations appears to have been to shape this anger into a plausible narrative around universality and citizen entitlement and, in the case of the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament to provide the organisational base for the mass demonstration. In this sense, they were forced to respond to events as much as the parliamentarians. But once engaged they articulated a clear narrative of citizenship rights that in effect has achieved the status of a non-negotiable bottom line that at the same time changed the relationship between civil society and government, breaking the mould of consensual and partnership governance and changed the nature of welfare discourse. It was a singular triumph for mass action from an unlikely source, whose effectiveness seems to have been related to its unlikeliness. (Acheson 2010, pp. 28–29)

Acheson goes on to argue that the OAPs protests have been successful to the extent that other OAPs benefits have been protected from retrenchment in the two subsequent austerity budgets. He maintains that such outcomes represented a significant achievement for the OAP NGO organisations (Age Action Ireland and Senior Citizens’ Parliament) which have been attempting to influence the policy-making process through formal partnerships with the Irish state for some time with relatively little success.

Gemma Carney (2010) examined the differences between the capacity of the Irish and American OAPs to influence the government policy using Schneider and Ingram’s (1993) ‘Target Populations’ framework. This model seeks to explain the differential power between social groups in terms of the interplay between the capacity of the elites to influence others’ perceptions of specific groups or identities through socially constructing them as either worthy or unworthy of government’s investments. Carney argued that compared to their American counterparts, whom Ingram and Schneider (1993, p. p.336) characterised as members of what they call ‘advantaged’ group. That is a group which is socially constructed as deserving and worthy of
government investment, as well as enjoying the capacity to influence the policymaking process through active political participation. In short in possession of political power, even if by reputation. By contrast, Carney claims that the Irish OAPs cannot be characterised as ‘advantaged’, or powerful, group, but as ‘dependants’. A group which, while still being socially constructed in a positive light by the public discourse as deserving and worthy of public investment, is ‘perceived as needy and helpless, the responsibility of the private sector, politically passive and have little potential for mobilisation’ (Schneider and Ingram 1993, p. 341). This political quiescence leaves them open to stereotyping, and continuous disempowerment as the elected officials construct the older people as deserving, but dependable, and tend to respond more proactively to the demands of the groups they know are politically mobilised.

Carney seeks to explain this disparity in political power (or the lack of it) through the comparison between the elected officials’ approach to policy-making on both sides of the Atlantic. Drawing on the research focused on the possibility of certain policies to influence the capacity of OAPs for political mobilisation (Campbell 2003, Schneider and Ingram 2005), she argues the American OAPs’ tended to benefit from the history of universal age-related benefits. This access, in turn, fostered their capacity for political mobilisation regarding lobbying for their age-related benefits through political action rooted in their socially constructed status as a deserving as well as a powerful political group. The Irish policies towards the OAPs are, by contrast, a result of fragmented policy-making process placing very little emphasis on universal service provisions in favour of minimising the costs of welfare, contracting its provision to private sector and reliance on charities to make the welfare needs. All of which stem from the enthusiastic embracement of the neo-liberal agenda by the Irish state during the economic boom period. Extending upon Schneider and Ingram’s model Carney argued that such state of affairs produced a state of ‘structured dependency’ (Townsend 1981, Baars et al. 2006) among the Irish OAPs whereby the provision of state services which are in the American context rooted in the age-related and rights-based universalism become

…individualised into a list of personal needs, from chiropody through transport and community services to higher pensions and long-term care. Government responds with piecemeal projects which appear to have no clear set of principles other than to minimise the costs of ageing to the State. (Carney 2010 p.240)
The schematic outline of this argument along with the relevant references can be found in the table below:

<table>
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<th>Dependent groups are ...</th>
<th>Examples from public policy for older people in the Republic of Ireland</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dependants’ issues are rarely of ‘national importance’.</td>
<td>Policymaking for older people in the Republic of Ireland is piecemeal and ad hoc. Older people have been waiting for a National Positive Ageing Strategy for some years now (O’Shea 2006b: 4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic policies allow political leaders to show concern without actually investing in dependent people.</td>
<td>History of symbolic gestures and policy announcements which later emerge as pilots or local projects with little funding (e.g. home-care packages; Carney 2007). Large gaps between stated government policy and actual policy outcomes (O’Shea 2006b).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policies tend to be contracted out or left as the responsibility of lower levels of government.</td>
<td>Services for older people are administered by State agencies such as the Health Service Executive. Long-term care has been privatised. The number of beds in private and voluntary nursing homes increased from 6,092 in 1997 to 13,078 by the end of 2003 (Mangan 2006: 8) reaching 18,883 by the end of 2007 (Nursing Homes Ireland 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependents have little or no say in policy design.</td>
<td>A platform of older people’s organisations and geriatricians united to urge government to engage in meaningful consultation with older people before introducing a system of co-payment for long-term care entitled “The Fair Deal” (Donnellan 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in these groups are seen as the responsibility of family, charities, the Church or the private sector.</td>
<td>The question of whether Church, State, family, individual, community or social partners is responsible for creating an ‘age-friendly society’ is undecided (National Council on Ageing and Older People 2005). O’Shea (2006b) argues that policy for older people has been developed in a ‘vacuum’ where families are left to fill the gap.</td>
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Table 1 The Irish OAPs as a dependent group by target population model from Carney (2010 p.239)

Carney maintains that such experience of ad-hoc policymaking at the expense of universality-based approach has led to the relationships of dependency of OAPs upon a number of disconnected and means-tested services. Moreover, it shaped their expectations of the state as citizens and their capacity to effectively influence public policy. This circumscribed capacity is portrayed as a function of the struggle for the development of collective political identity since the OAPs political representation tends to be fragmented and oriented towards individualised issues of health, income or mobility and ultimately leads to de-politicisation of the situation of older people in favour of the economic. Turning the attention towards the OAPs protests, Carney posits the scarcity of universal OAP benefits in Ireland as an important factor in OAPs mobilisation in the attempt to preserve one of the very few universal benefits for the
elderly. Moreover, she locates the success of the protests in the support from other, politically stronger, societal groups, the Irish Medical Association in this case. And argues that even though the principle of universality has been lost, the OAPs might have increased their further political influence through the enhancement of their reputations for political power in the eyes of the policy-makers in the wake of their massive mobilisation.

Together, these studies highlighted several aspects of the situation which are central to the thesis. First, that the Irish OAPs were, up to that point, a group which was, relatively powerless regarding their influence on the policymaking. Second, that the protests were an improbable and out-of-the-ordinary event, given that the Irish OAPs were not a politically mobilised group and had, hitherto, been thought of as passive and quiescent cohort which is not likely to challenge the state. Third, that the protests were effective and the near-complete reversal of the government's original proposal was a successful exercise of power by the OAPs and constitute the moment of transition from disempowerment of OAPs as a political group into empowerment.

Regarding wider societal perceptions, OAPs self-perceptions and impact. While providing numerous useful insights into the operation of power regarding the process, the focus of these studies is nonetheless oriented away from its explicit investigation in the context of the case. To be clear, this is not intended as a critique - neither of those studies had set out to investigate the phenomenon of power - but merely an emphasis of the difference in foci and articulation of the need for a focused analysis of power relations and resistance, which was acknowledged by the authors.

One such account can be found in Meade’s (2014, 2015) work which explicitly set out to investigate the strategic aspects of the over-70s medical card and the forms of OAPs resistance along with some of their consequences in the context of Irish political climate. Meade, in concurrence with the above, claims that the Irish successive governments’ had historically shied away from the principle of universalism when it came to the healthcare and other social policies in favour of a discretionary resource targeting. Premised upon the costs of services in the context of the government-perceived economic capacity of the state rather than available on the basis of right. Drawing upon work of Clarke (2007 in Meade 2015), Meade sees this development as a symptom of the progressive *subordination of social policy to the
economic rationalities’ perpetuated by the neo-liberal system of rationality which is increasingly gaining a foothold in government discourse. (2015, p. 162).

Given the overall historical tendency of Irish policy to move away from the universal provision of social services. Meade frames the institution of the over-70s medical card as a universal benefit in 2001 as an anomaly which ran counter to the Irish successive governments ‘historical unease over universal healthcare’ (ibid) and that the extension of healthcare to all over-70s has been politicized from its inception to serve the strategic interest of the Fianna Fáil party in re-election. While the government officials presented the extension in terms the commitments of the Irish state to a fairer society and reward for the OAPs contributions to the state, thus, securing their vote. The 2001 Budget has also articulated the government bottom line which implied, in line with the subordination of the social thesis, that the provision of the benefit is premised upon the ‘over-riding need to keep the economy competitive’ (McCreevy in Dáil Éireann 2000 in Meade 2014). And, it was this bottom line which became exposed with response to the financial crisis of 2008. The government officials’ intent to withdraw the automatic access to medical cards in 2008 Budget was rationalised and justified with the appeal to notions of patriotic duty, fairness and nation-wide solidarity. Each re-inscribed in terms of personal sacrifice on the part of the citizens for the re-invigoration of Ireland’s economic competitiveness.

Meade argued that the OAPs’ response revealed a nation-wide refusal of this government discourse of ‘virtuous necessity’ on the part of the OAPs. They have defended the medical card as resource that enables them to lead dignified lives and challenged the discourse of necessity by pointing out that the decision was taken after the government agreed to provide a guarantee for the banks which was, at the time, worth several dozens more than the intended 100 million savings on the medical cards withdrawal. And re-articulated the crisis as a result of mismanagement of public finances by the Fianna Fáil. Using the Foucauldian concept of counter-conduct (Foucault 2009, Death 2010), Meade frames the OAPs resistance as engaged in a mutually constitutive relationship with the individuals in a subject position of governmental power that is embedded broader social system which sets out the conditions of the possible through the interplay between constraining and productive aspects of the power/knowledge dyad. She argues that the OAPs have articulated their
Introduction

case with the appeal to their own vulnerability and thus reproduced their status as a dependent and vulnerable group.

Moreover, the way in which they engaged the politicians has been entirely consistent with what she calls the ‘clientelist culture of Irish politics’ in which the citizens make personal claims to the government officials in their constituencies in exchange for the electoral support (Meade 2015 p.167). She illustrates this quid-pro-quo relationship in the account of OAPs pressuring the officials during their weekend return to their constituency offices as well as in explicit threats by the OAPs to vote the Fianna Fáil party out of the government. Leading to the reproduction of the overall personality-fixed system of clientelist politics characteristic of the Irish system. As well as the reaffirmation of the status of the government officials as the authoritative policy decision makers. She argues that despite the success of the resistance in preserving he benefit for many of those who would have otherwise lost it, it has also resulted in the loss of the principle of universality, indicating that:

The uprising was an expression of countervailing power by protester who sought to conduct the conduct of their elected representatives. They adroitly adopted tactics and techniques that won the attention of the wider public, mass media and political elites. But power relationships and politics in Ireland had not changed drastically; instead, clientelist traditions were refracted through protest tactics, and afterwards ministers still behaved as if social policy is an after-thought to economic and electoral consideration. (Meade 2015 p.174)

Following Thompson (1990 in Meade 2014 p.171), Meade argues that such outcome was enabled via elaborate process of ideological dissimulation in which the government officials sought to re-inscribe the public debate about nature, substance and objective of social policy solely in terms of its subordination to the economic considerations firmly rooted in the neo-liberal paradigm along.

The aim and research problems

My project engaged with most of the aspects of the OAPs’ protests outlined above and integrates the insights from in the analysis of power which shares Meade’s interest in the conduct, the strategic interaction between two ideal-type identities attached to subject positions of the OAPs and the Government officials, nested within the specific epistemic system. However, the analysis presented here is focused explicitly on the relationships of social and political power, uses different (although not incompatible) combination of theoretical and methodological approaches to interpret the event, and
draws upon more diverse sources of data. In the light of the above, the central (and compound) research problem this thesis sets out to address can be formulated as follows:

To examine how and why do disempowered social groups mobilize and exercise collective social and political power against existing power structures in the context of the case of the over-70s medical card protests.

This problem can be further divided into two sub-questions which will be answered in the two respective parts of the thesis:

1) How can we study the relationships of social and political power?
   a. How can we approach the study of social and political power on the level of the theory?
   b. How do we access the phenomena of social and political power empirically?

2) How did the relationships of power operate in the concrete context of OAPs mobilisation and resistance against the government decision to abolish the universal aspect of the over-70s medical card?
   c. Why did the OAPs mobilise in response to this specific measure?
   d. How did the OAPs exercise power in the face of existing power structures?
   e. What were the effects of OAPs campaign of resistance?
Structure of the thesis

Part I

The first sub-question is concerned with the epistemic aspects of the phenomena of power. What is power? Where does it come from? Is it normatively desirable or undesirable? Can it be stored, if so where, and how can it be measured? How is it different from other forms of social interaction? How is it exercised? Is it exercised at all? These are all questions for the theory. And it was the interest in theory, or more explicitly in the sociological theories of power, which has been central to this project its very inception, oriented the selection of the empirical case, and sustained my energy throughout.

Chapters 1 and 2 will address those issues and conceptualize power via Haugaard’s four-dimensional model of power, developed on the foot of the three-dimensional power debate (Dahl 1957, 1958, Bachrach and Baratz 1962, Lukes 1974, 2005) and Digeser’s (Digeser 1992) extension of the model using the Foucauldian account of power. It is important to stress that while Haugaard’s framework used the three-dimensional debate for its starting point, it is quite different from what these authors might have imagined due to its strong theoretical connections to the thought of Giddens and Wittgenstein. Leading him to conceptualise power as family resemblance concept. Very briefly (there are two chapters devoted to the topic) the model sees the power and agency as operating simultaneously on four analytically distinct levels, practice, structure, knowledge, and ontological disposition which enables a complex, multi-layered analysis of power that focuses on the central element of Weber’s analysis – social action. The four-dimensional model represents a relatively recent development in Haugaard’s continuous investigation of power, agency and modernity which spans more than two decades and has, so far, been formulated in several articles (Haugaard 2012a, 2015a, 2016). These articles provide an unambiguous account of the model, the relationships between the individual dimensions, and, in some cases, the pointers for normative analysis of power, and are in themselves enough to gain a comprehensive understanding of the 4D model. But, at the same time, they are built upon a theoretical foundation rooted in Haugaard’s reconstructive reading of Giddens

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1 Haugaard actually makes distinction between sociological and normative analysis of power, while the former has been the subject of his work for some time. The latter is more prominent in recent work. See further (Haugaard 2010a)
inspired by Wittgenstein which provides a theoretical lens through which Haugaard re-inscribes the four dimensions of power into a coherent, interrelated, model, with the help of other theorists like Barnes, Arendt or Bourdieu. And, it is this implicit foundation which lends the analysis its theoretical depth and makes the conceptual clockwork of a 4D model of power tick. It is also this foundation which has gradually became implicit to the point that it can be recovered only in fragments from any individual piece of later (post-4D model of power) writing. Given the fact that Haugaard did not, as of yet (I know one such project is currently in progress), provide an account that would unify those elements of his work. The genesis of this account by excavating these implicit theoretical foundations of Haugaard’s sociological project and drawing more explicit connections to the present work could be considered, if not original, at least a contribution of this project to the theory of power.

In addition to the epistemic aspects of the phenomena of power, the first question – *how can we study the relationships of social and political power?* - Also demands recourse to the epistemological. The nature of knowledge, its objectivity and relationship to the external reality. Such considerations have direct implications in terms of how the research is conducted, what counts as a legitimate source of data, how are they to be analysed and what kinds of conclusions they can furnish. All of which translates, in the context of the present work, into the questions for methodology. Chapter 3 addresses the methodological issues in terms of both the theory of research and the explicit design of the study. The chapter begins with the general discussion of the interpretive paradigm in social sciences and moves on to examine the philosophical underpinnings of the chosen method of inquiry – Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al. 1997) - to demonstrate their resonance with the ontological and epistemological premises of Haugaard’s project. It will be argued that given the central aims of the thesis and the theoretical focus on social action as meaningful to those who engage in it, the IPA constitutes an appropriate methodology for the project. At the same time, it will be argued that the IPA was developed in the context of health psychology with a definite intent to engage explicitly with individuals’ experience and understanding in detail thus producing contextualised self-interpretations. However, such accounts, while of immense theoretical value, are not enough to furnish a sociological account of the event sought here and the analysis must, therefore, be extended to wider sources of data. Moving on to the design of this exploratory,
theory-driven, interpretative study the chapter discusses the various sources of data and their collection—interviews, newspaper articles, National television and Radio archives, government policy documents before moving on to describe the individual steps in the analytic process of the IPA alongside the alterations which stem from shifting the focus of the method towards sociology as well as from using the QSR International’s nVivo 11 software for its analysis.

Part II

The second part of the thesis is concerned with the application of the theoretical framework to the analysis of the empirical case of the OAPs’ protests against the withdrawal of the automatic entitlement of the over-70s medical cards. Tracing the events of OAPs resistance from the day of the budget hearing, through the period of OAPs unrest and the protests, until the motion was passed in the Dáil two weeks later. The three empirical chapters are intended to contextualise the event by providing an empirical, temporal and sequential account of the way in which the events in this controversy unfolded.

Chapter 4 begins with the interpretative phenomenological analysis of the importance of the over-70s medical card for the OAPs. The main argument is that in addition to its obvious value as an essential resource enabling access to health for the OAPs and so providing them with an important source of psychological security in relation to health. It was also understood and interpreted as a symbolic token of recognition of the value of their contributions to Irish state over their lifetime. The latter was an outcome of its extension to all over-70s in 2001 which has discursively equated the medical card with other universal age-related benefits. This has effectively transformed an income-related state support into a right in the eyes of the elderly, as well as provided them with a sense of ontological security in relation to their status in Irish society because it embodied a number of meanings which upheld the discursive perception of OAPs as valuable members of society whose past and ongoing contributions deserve the recognition and support from younger generations. This perception shattered in 2008 when the government decided to revoke the principle of universality as a cost-saving measure in response to the financial crisis. The Budget hearing triggered a process of dislocation which has disrupted the OAPs perception of selves as a group whose contributions and authority is recognised on all levels of Irish society, thus inducing strong feelings of ontological insecurity. This has led them to
interpret the government move as an outright attack on their rights and engage in resistance.

Chapter 5 provides a sociological interpretation of the OAPs resistance as an exercise of social and political power which took place between the announcement of the intention to target the over-70s medical card and the OAPs protests. Framing the issue in terms of conflict between ideal-type groups, it traces the various practices by which the OAPs and the OAP’s NGOs and pressured the government officials into retreat. The OAPs resistance started with the individual expressions of dissatisfaction and concern. But as soon as the extent of the measure and the numbers affected by anxiety became the matter of public discourse, the OAPs realized they are not alone; they began a more coherent campaign of resistance. This consisted of public articulation of the importance of the medical card, challenging the government discourse of economic necessity, encouraging each other to petition their local government politicians in their constituency offices, threats to vote the Fianna Fáil party out of the government, and rallying calls for public demonstrations in response to what they perceived as the government ministers abuse of authority. Once the Age Action Ireland and Senior Citizens’ Parliament, responding to the impulse from the OAPs, announced the public events, the OAPs calls for public dissent grew louder and the language of dissent sharper. The chapter then moves on to argue that the OAPs’ claims and resistance were deemed felicitous relative to the understanding of intergenerational solidarity embedded in interpretive horizon(s) and sustained by habitus (plural) of other social groups present in wider Irish public, including that of some politicians. And it was this felicity of their plight, which won the public support for their case and ultimately compelled the politicians to increase the means-tests threshold to more than triple of the original value, before the either of the heavily medialized protests took place. Thus, preserving the benefits for many who would have otherwise lost it.

Chapter 6 turns the attention to the protest events themselves and attempts to convey the extraordinary experience it constituted for the OAPs. Focusing the attention on three aspects identified as central by the participants: the large numbers, OAPs’ anger, and atmosphere of common purpose, it will be argued that the events constituted an experience of resonance and enabled the OAPs to restore their sense of ontological security related to their standing in society because their self-perception as citizens-
with-right-to-healthcare-premised-upon-their-contributions-to-society became publicly confirm-structured nationwide. The discussion then turns to investigate the wider effects of the OAPs’ week-long campaign of resistance. Here, it will be argued that the capacity to organise the largest political mobilisation in decades on short notice, engage wide-spread public support and force the government into such significant retreat on the means-test threshold led to the public construction of OAPs as a political force. This construction enhanced their reputation for political power and propelled the politicians to treat the OAPs issues and benefits with utmost sensitivity. Thus, protecting the core universal benefits valued by OAPs in subsequent austerity budget cuts. At which point, we will move on to the conclusion.
PART I: THEORY, CONCEPTS, METHODOLOGY
Preface to the theoretical part

The fundamental concept in social sciences is Power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in physics. (Russell 2004, p. 4)

Even though various iterations of Bertrand Russell’s assertion of the centrality of power to understanding human beings appear regularly throughout the social science literature, the notion or idea of power is not one that can be easily pinned down. This holds for the colloquial use of the term Merriam-Webster dictionary (www.merriam-webster.com 2018) provides nine basic definitions, further subdivided into dozens of disparate uses across many aspects of human existence to which it has been put), and it holds doubly so for the theoretical investigation of the phenomenon. Even a brief excursus into the literature of sociology power reveals the fragmented nature of the field riddled with conflicting and often mutually incompatible perspectives on the nature and definition of power.

On the broadest level, we can distinguish between the conceptions that follow the conflictual understanding of power as the ability of one set of actors prevailing over another set of actors and constrain their behaviour to their own will. Further subdivided can further be realized through direct interaction (Weber, Dahl), non-decisions and systemic bias (Bachrach and Baratz), epistemic manipulation of agents’ knowledge (Lukes, Forst), or even through production of agents’ ontological dispositions (Bourdieu, Foucault) to make them act in a way consistent with the wishes of the dominant. By and large, the tendency within this stream of thought is to equate power with domination or zero-sum conflict where the powerful exercise power over the subaltern to their disadvantage. However, as Allen, following Wartenberg (1990), observes, the power-over others can be exercised to the advantage of the prevailed-upon agents, such as in the cases of the mother-child relationship. Or with the consent of the prevailed-upon agents as in the case of a basketball coach over her trainees (Allen 1999a, p. 125). A point which already appeared in the work of Dahl and which we will pick up in the second chapter.

In contradistinction to power-over, proponents of the alternative stream of thought conceptualise it as power-to. These perspectives do not conceive of power in terms of conflict between agents, but in terms of capacity to act, to bring about the desired
consequences in the agents’ social world. This capacity is thought to be premised upon individual characteristics in combination with contextual opportunities (Morris), shared knowledge (Barnes), communication (Habermas), membership in the social system (Parsons), or simply the intersubjective interactions (Arendt). Here, although there are exceptions, the tendency is to think of power in more normatively commendable terms as it denotes a dispositional capacity rather than domination.

Alternately, there are also contemporary perspectives which have tried to integrate the two opposing perspectives and conceive of power in terms of a complex interplay between the enablement and constraint, which at the same time enables agents to achieve their goals while simultaneously constraining them into particular modes of being or acting. Here we can include Foucault’s account of disciplinary power, Giddens’ account of structuration, Elias’s civilising process, Clegg’s frameworks of power, Allen’s analytical integration of the two previously discussed power-over and power-to with alongside what she calls power-with (Allen 1999a, p. 126). This term will be reserved, in the following discussion, to denote the collective exercise of power.

This list is by no means exhaustive. In fact, it hardly scratches the surface of the field, and it does not say much about any of the perspectives listed. But, that was not the intention. The intention was to give the reader a glimpse of the complexity of the field which we are about to enter through exhaustive (at least I hope) investigation of one of its later appendages - Haugard’s four-dimensional model of power.

Given the complexity of the field, Lukes (2005, p. 30) argued that power is an essentially contested concept. The notion of essentially contested concepts was introduced by Gallie to denote concepts ‘… proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users’ (Gallie 1955, p. 169). The term refers to highly abstract, complex and inherently evaluative concepts that cannot be precisely defined, such as fairness or justice, because their conflicting characterisations of what constitutes the ‘essence’ of a concept involve the implicit recourse to normative evaluations (as opposed to straightforward descriptions) which tend to be contingent upon the contexts in which they are used and persons using them. This leads Lukes to claim that a search for a
'generally satisfying definition applicable to all cases' is a mistake (Lukes 1986, p. 5). It should follow that because the disagreement rests upon the (subjectively) normative evaluation and contextual specificity of the theorists' interest, the search for a 'generally satisfying definition the authors 'agree to disagree', but, more often than not, attempt to hypostatize their particular local interpretation as being superior to others and approximating this ideal.

There is, however, another (and to an extent similar) way of thinking about the polysemy of the concept, which has been recognised by Lukes (2005, p. 63) but discarded in favour of its essential contestedness. That is, through the notions of language games and family resemblances developed by Wittgenstein and implemented into the theory of power by Haugaard, who proposed that we should abandon the quest for finding the single, essential, definition of power in favour of thinking about it along those terms.

Following Wittgenstein, I argue that power is a family resemblance concept, which entails that there is no single 'best' definition of power. Furthermore, I also make a second related, but independent, claim that these family members can legitimately change their meaning depending upon which language games are being played. (Haugaard 2010a, p. 420 italics original).

Beginning with sociological and normative language games. The notion of a language game was popularised by Wittgenstein (1968) who characterised it as forms of localised languages within larger linguistic systems which may confer differential meaning on words and concepts relative to the contexts in which they are uttered. The meaning of the specific words is constituted relationally, that is with reference to the meaning of other elements in the micro-system and rooted in the local way of understanding the world and doing things which are pertinent to the group using the language game. An example of a very circumscribed, localised and relational system is a game of Chess where each piece acquires meaning not from its name, but from its membership in the system of rules which guide the game. In other words, we must understand the whole system of chess, the meaning of each piece in relation to others, before we can use them appropriately. Wittgenstein (Wittgenstein 1968, para. §23) argues that any larger linguistic system contains a multiplicity of local language games. Describing an object is different from giving orders, which is different from making...
up a story. While each may use the same words, they might shift meaning relative to the context of the language game being played.

Extending this metaphor beyond linguistics, Haugaard argues that normative and sociological analyses represent two major interests when it comes to study of power and thus constitute two most prominent language games in the field. One is concerned with the study of how power operates, another with its normative evaluation: ‘understanding how relations of empowerment and domination are recreated as a fact (sociological analytic) and how power should be (normative political theory)’ (Haugaard 2010a, p. 432). Although sharing the interest in power, these language games follow very different purposes and use different conceptual toolboxes. This has important implications for the kind of conclusions and critique that they can reach about nature, legitimacy and evaluation of given power relations. For example, in the case of legitimacy, the normative theoretical perspective evaluates and critiques given instance of power with respect to the ethical grounding of the observer. While the sociological (analytical, interpretative) perspective considers given instance of power legitimate to the extent that social actors over whom power is exercised do so too. Haugaard further argues that the tension between these two language games, is and ought, can (and does) create considerable problems for the analysis of power. Even in works of some of the most profound authors in the field of power theory such as Foucault, Lukes or Arendt. This is not to claim that the two language games are incompatible or that one is better than the other. Quite the contrary, Haugaard acknowledges the importance and validity of the respective power language games but maintains that we should be conceptually clear about which language game is being played (Haugaard 2008a, 2010a). That being said, he also maintains that the normative interrogation of power, the evaluation of existing power relations, is (or should be) premised on the on the sociological (analytical) understanding of how it operates.

Moving on, the notion of family resemblances was introduced by Wittgenstein (1968, para. §67) to capture the words and concepts that cannot be precisely defined because their instances have too many meanings that divert from one another. This difficulty can be captured in his often-cited example of the concept of a ‘Game’. Rather than

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4 C.f. Haugaard, (2008a, p.100) and the discussion of Lukes’s confusion between sociological analysis and normative conception of power in chapter 2 section 2.2 in this thesis.
trying to capture a single, universal (and essential), definition that would fit every context, Wittgenstein proposed to look for a set of characteristics that capture the general similarities of the concept in question means across contexts. At the same time, none of the context-specific or local expressions of that concept will exhibit all of its characteristics. Wittgenstein uses the metaphor of family resemblances where it is possible to identify members of a family due to a shared set of physical characteristics rather than exact correspondence.

Consider for example the proceedings that we call "games". I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? -- Don't say: "There must be something common, or they would not be called 'games' " -- but look and see whether there is anything common to all. -- For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look! …. I can think of no better expression to characterise these similarities than "family resemblances"; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and cries-cross in the same way. - And I shall say: 'games' form a family (Wittgenstein 1968, para. §66-67).

In line, Haugaard argues that discussions of power in works of major authors and paradigms in social and political theory, that are often perceived as contradictory, for example power as domination as opposed to power as empowerment actually describe different aspects or facets, of the workings of power in everyday life and that rather than attempting to capture a single essence of the phenomenon to the exclusion of other theoretical approaches ‘…we should acknowledge that these perspectives all contain acute observations concerning significant aspects of power’ (Haugaard 2010a, p. 420). Thinking about power in terms of language games and family resemblances enables Haugaard to integrate elements of several theoretical perspectives on power into a framework that draws on work of the theorists of power from diverse and seemingly incompatible traditions. Working within such a wide theoretical terrain comprising disparate perspectives, purposes and foci of empirical investigations implicitly carries a risk of conflating potentially incompatible positions, a point thoroughly recognised by Haugaard. However, the

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5 Power as domination - Bachrach and Baratz, Lukes and Weber; Power as consensus and capacity to act - Arendt, Barnes, Parsons, Morris; Power as both enabling and constraining - Giddens, Clegg, Allen, Foucault and Bourdieu.
pragmatic interest in understanding power from multiple perspectives leads him to argue that:

Of course, it has to be conceded that we cannot simply put these perceptions together in a straightforward way, as each is working within a different theoretical framework. But the opposite position, in which one excludes the other, is a case of throwing the baby out with the bath water (Haugaard 2010a, p. 421).

Accepting the notion of power as family resemblance implicitly entails the recognition of the complexity of the concept. The purpose of Haugaard’s project is to provide a synthesizing account that allows for examination of the workings of power from the viewpoint of these multiple perspectives in a way that sees them as complementary rather than incommensurable. With the emphasis of focus on sociological understanding that can be gained, rather than on theoretical problems within each tradition.

While the relationship between concept and referent changes from language game to language game, it is important not to exaggerate these differences. While perfect translation may be impossible, the fact that these are not private languages means that it is possible to move from language game to language game with some consistency of referent. ….

In a comparison of uses from different paradigms, it has to be acknowledged that with these two family members, exact isomorphism of meaning will be impossible. However, understanding is never impossible, as none of them is speaking a private language. While we may reject the paradigm that a given theorist uses, their work may still contain important insights into the working of certain family members (Haugaard 2010a, p. 432).

It follows that these theoretical positions are not brought together tout-court. Instead, what is foregrounded is the understanding of different family members as kind of ideal types which may find their empirical expressions only in rare cases, and yet, can illuminate some aspect of the phenomena under investigation (ibid). This synthesis between the elements of the differing approaches involves their re-articulation in a way that renders their understanding commensurable. Haugaard establishes this common ground through their re-inscription in terms of the interplay between structural constraint and enablement in social interactions developed through the reconstructive critique of Giddens’s account through the lens of Wittgenstein’s (1968) systemic language theory and Austin’s (1975) performatives. This theoretical position, which will be called here (re)structuration, extends Giddens’ account and introduces the conceptual vocabulary of modalities that social interaction can take (confirm-structuration, de-structuration, non, and absent structuration) (Haugaard 1992,
Javornicky 2016) and serves as underlying framework through which Haugaard understands individual members of power family and relates them together.

Haugaard’s early work (1997, 2003) was explicitly concerned with re-inscription of the main power debates from within this perspective and introduces each as tracing the operation of power in terms of agency, discursive and practical consciousness and the constitution of agents themselves. These were later integrated into a theoretical framework that broadly follows the three-dimensional power debate (Dahl 1957, 1958, Bachrach and Baratz 1962, 1970, Lukes 1974, 2005) with the Digeser’s (1992) extension that includes the incorporation of Foucauldian analysis of subjectivity as its fourth dimension (Haugaard 2012a).

The four-dimensional model represents a relatively recent development in Haugaard’s continuous investigation of power, agency and modernity which spans more than two decades and has, so far, been formulated in several articles (Haugaard 2012a, 2015b, 2016). These articles provide a clear account of the model, the relationships between the individual dimensions, and, in some cases, the pointers for normative analysis of power and they are in themselves enough to gain understanding of the 4D model. At the same time, as Haugaard’s work progressed and the focus of analysis shifted from concern with individual acts of social interaction to broader sociological, as well as normative, discussions of power, the underlying dimension of (re)structuration theory gradually became more implicit. Even to the point that it cannot be recovered from any individual piece of later writing. And yet, this theoretical perspective threads through Haugaard’s work and provides the foundation that allows him to integrate elements of disparate theoretical perspectives into a coherent whole.

In what follows I will introduce Haugaard’s four-dimensional model of social power and attempt to make the underlying conceptual language of the theory of (re)structuration more explicit than he does in order to shift its focus on agents. And in doing so, outline the conceptual lens of this project. This discussion proceeds in two chapters that can be broadly described as moving from ontology through the theoretical conceptualisation of the four-dimensional model, which then connects to methodology, research design and the concrete steps of data collections and analysis in chapter three.
We begin by outlining the ontological presuppositions regarding the nature of the self in relation to social structures and agency in the theory of structuration which sees structures as inherent in, and reproduced by, agency. After which we will move on to Haugaard’s reconstructive critique of Giddens’ model which claims that while the theory explains societal reproduction on the level of the individual, it leaves the intersubjective and relational dimension of human existence undertheorized. In short, Giddens does not pay sufficient attention to the importance of structuring others. Thus, creating problems when it is put to the task of explaining stability or (and) change in social systems as well as confusing the understanding of social power. Haugaard seeks to overcome this deficit by focusing the attention on the intersubjective and systemic aspects of the theory and on the existence of structuring others in the social systems. He introduces the conceptual vocabulary of *confirm-structure* and *de-structure* to discern between the successful and unsuccessful reproduction of structures and allow for a more complex understanding of how individual practices can either promote or hinder the change in social structures. The remainder of the chapter will be devoted to characterising the nature and operation of social power within the framework of (re)structuration theory. Again, this will be done through the exposition of the concept of power in Giddens’ theory of structuration, which sees power, much like agency, to be actualised in practice, flowing in the social system and being exercised through asymmetrical access to structured resources. Before moving on to Haugaard’s critique, focused on the inconsistency in the treatment of power as actualized in action and, at the same time, having material existence in time-space, which creates problems for Giddens’ classification of resources and the inability of theory of structuration to account for structural changes in configuration of power resources.

The second chapter introduces the four-dimensional model of power which brings together the theoretical insights from a number of disparate perspectives within the field of sociology of power into a synthetic model that conceptually and analytically divides the operation of power into four distinct, yet interrelated dimensions: agency, structure, knowledge, and ontology of agents. At the same time attempting to re-activate and make explicit the underlying foundations of (re)structuration theory and its role in translating the insights of other theoretical positions into the 4D model. And use its conceptual toolbox to develop an agent-centred reading of structural
reproduction along the four dimensions of power. This discussion will follow a certain structure for each dimension of power that proceeds from the initial formulation of the original authors and towards its interpretation through the lens of the (re)structuration theory in the context of praxiological interactions between agents. Before considering them together on the level of the individual.

After which, the discussion moves on to outline the methodological parameters of the thesis. Given the fact that the four-dimensional model, while theoretically sophisticated, does not come with methodological ‘how-to’ directions for empirical work and, moreover, the studies using the model are scant. This undertaking will begin with a somewhat lengthy theoretical discussion of the interpretive paradigm in social sciences as well as the ontological and epistemological assumption of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al. 1997). This discussion is necessary in order to establish the onto-epistemic affinity (rather than exact correspondence) between Haugaard’s theory, interpretive paradigm, and IPA which, even though not implemented in full, has lent this project its methodological marching order. Before moving on to the design of the study and individual research steps.
1. Foundations


1.1.1. The duality of agency and structure

Giddens’s (1984) Theory of Structuration is framed against structuralist and functionalist traditions which sought to explain the relationship between individual agency and social structures in terms of dichotomy, or dualism between two independently constituted elements. While critically interrogating the works of Durkheim and Parsons, Giddens argues against any perspective that makes ontological distinctions between social structures and agents and portrays structures as some kind of external force that propels agents to act in a particular manner.

This is often naively conceived of in terms of visual imagery, akin to the skeleton or morphology of an organism or to the girders of a building. Such conceptions are closely connected to the dualism of subject and social object: ‘structure’ here appears as ‘external’ to human action, as a source of constraint on the free initiative of the independently constituted subject (Giddens 1984, p. 16).

While agreeing in principle with the basic description of structures as patterning of social interactions or phenomena that constrain agents into specific modes of action and make the same social interactions possible across time-space, Giddens rejects the conceptual separation between agency and structure on the level of ontology in favour of the concept of duality which, drawing upon work of Heidegger and Wittgenstein, posits the agency and structure as inseparable and mutually constitutive of the social reality through the agents’ practices embedded in the shared systems of meaning. The concepts of agents and agency are central to the theory of structuration; the agency is facilitated by structures however it is not determined by them completely. Structures cannot physically force agents to act alongside some structurally prescribed path because they do not have a material existence outside of agents’ consciousness. Structures exist as one form of knowledge that informs the agents’ understanding of their world and become external to agents only in the moments they become instantiated and in action, which is also a moment of structural reproduction. This points to the core of Giddens’ concept of duality (as opposed to dualism) between structure and agency.
The constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represent a duality. According to the notion of the duality of structure, the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize, Structure is not external to individuals: as memory traces, and as instantiated in social practices, it is in a certain sense more 'internal' than exterior to their activities...(Giddens 1984, p. 25).

Giddens (ibid, p.3) argues that conceptual separation between agency and structure on the level of ontology runs the risk of reducing the agency into the effect of social structures, which leads to underestimation of the knowledgeability of the agents as well as their capacity for self-reflection. And seeks to advance a perspective that pays closer attention to the role that agents’ own understanding of the world, embedded in shared systems of meaning, plays in the reproduction of social structures and systems through practice.

1.1.2. Discursive and practical consciousness in the context of agency

On an individual level, agents' conduct is mediated by their knowledge of the world which is acquired in the process of their social integration. The agents routinely use this knowledge in order to function in their social context, monitor their environment and attune their behaviour into the demands of social situations. Even though this monitoring is an ongoing process, the agents are not always aware of its operation. This is an important point that enables Giddens to argue that while the agents do possess the knowledge of social structures, they reproduce them without being aware of the process itself. Giddens’ creates the conceptual space by incorporating the elements of the psychoanalytic theory, specifically the works of Freud and Eriksson into his model of the self. Even though rooted in the works of psychological theory, Giddens’ model of an individual departs from the classical psychoanalytic distinction between Id, Ego, and Super-ego and proposes in its place the distinction between three levels of consciousness: discursive consciousness (discursive consciousness further in the text), practical consciousness (practical consciousness further in the text) and the unconscious. While the first two are, to an extent, accessible to agents, the unconscious remains outside of the discursive reach of an individual (Giddens 1984, 45).
Discursive consciousness refers to cognitions and knowledge that agents are explicitly aware of when realising their agency. It may consist of, intentions, goals, strategies and all the other information that agents actively consider when they pursue day-to-day goals. They can verbalise the information on this level and give discursive explanations of their action. Practical consciousness, by contrast, comprises of all information the agents have about their world. It represents the ‘tacit’ knowledge that agents utilise without being discursively aware of the process itself, to ‘...‘go on’ within the routines of social life’ (Giddens 1984, p. 4). By definition, the practical consciousness contains much more information about the social world than discursive consciousness does. The body of practical consciousness knowledge acquired through the lifetime is enormous in terms of both, scope and detail and encompasses the information about the physical and social world as well as manual and mental skills (Giddens 1984, pp. 4, 26). The human brain is continuously processing impressive amounts of information, and the agents are, more often than not, discursively aware only of a fraction of this process. For example, imagine trying to describe all the nuances of asking a friend for a favour, grammatical rules of a local argot or writing a step-by-step guide on how to tie your shoelaces. This knowledge guides agents’ interpretations of and interactions with the world, regardless of being discursively registered by them.

The practical and discursive consciousness are not mutually exclusive, and there is a constant flow of information between the two levels of consciousness as the agents move from encounter to encounter. This position allows for the transfer of knowledge from discursive to practical consciousness and vice versa. The example of shoelaces mentioned above can serve to demonstrate the mechanics of this process. A child learns to tie her shoelaces by someone else’s demonstration. Then, for a time, she will do it in a step-by-step fashion, discursively concentrating on each step of the process. Once the technique is mastered, concentration on each step is no longer required -

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6 The term ‘tacit knowledge’ is often described in contradistinction to formal, codified or explicit knowledge. It is the kind of knowledge that is transferred through experience and observation rather than symbolically through the language. Even though agents can use this knowledge they cannot codify it in language without difficulties (c.f. Polanyi 1966). The distinction between practical and discursive consciousness finds corresponding reflections in the theory psychology of memory and cognition, as the distinctions between implicit/explicit or procedural/declarative memory (c.f. Schacter, 1992; Ullman, 2004). Regardless of the precise definitions within each of these models, the crux of the difference lies in the distinction between two modes of cognition, one requiring explicit attention of the agents in execution of action and capacity to translate it into language. And another enabling agents to carry out their routine tasks without the requirement of the conscious cognitive attention.
the discursively acquired knowledge has become a practical consciousness knowledge through recursive practice. Now, in case this person needs to explain this process, she has to transform the practical consciousness knowledge back into the discursive consciousness in order to be able to verbalise it. Although rather simplistically, this example outlines the mechanics of the transfer of knowledge between discursive consciousness and practical consciousness. A similar process can be observed in the acquisition of grammar, particularly in cases of the second language where it is possible to animate a set of new rules against the background of already formed first language. Compared to a single motoric skill, the information that agents process in social interactions is much more complex and extensive, comprising (to mention a few) of knowledge about physical surroundings, social contexts, others and rules that guide interpersonal interaction. Agents routinely draw upon this practical consciousness knowledge, and successful interactions require the ability to utilise this knowledge. While agents do this routinely, they do not question the contingent nature of their practical knowledge.

The possibility of transfer between practical and discursive consciousness also opens the space for the theorisation of discursive examination of even the most routine aspects of practical consciousness knowledge on the part of the agent. Giddens, following Heidegger, argues that finding oneself in unusual circumstances where agents’ can no longer rely on their practical consciousness knowledge to guide their actions, this knowledge can rapidly become available for discursive evaluation that can expose its contingency. Garfinkel’s (1984) breaching experiments, where participants were instructed to challenge routine social conventions can demonstrate this rapid transfer in situations that have potential to undermine the contextual validity of already established structures. The main point here is that agents are, to a large extent, aware of their social context. They know their world and have a very good idea on how to go on living in it. They can predict the outcomes of their actions and reactions of others within their social system.

Moreover, when prompted, they can give discursive explanations of the rules that guide their social world, recall the practical knowledge that pertains to it and re-evaluate its character. Hence, the claim that all competent social agents are ‘expert sociologists’ (Giddens 1984, 26). One important qualification has to be made here, which is that while sociologists by trade make it their business to discursively examine
their own, and others’ implicit understanding of the world, the social agents are ‘expert’ sociologists at the level of practical consciousness (Haugaard 1992, p. 78). The concept of practical consciousness is crucial for Giddens’ explanation of intentionality and agency that is still shaped by structural relations. Structures exist as a form of knowledge, memory traces of rules on the level of practical consciousness, outside of the moments of their instantiation in action. This enables Giddens to argue that agency, while being an outcome of purposive intentions and planning, is nonetheless a product, as well as medium of reproduction, of structural constraint and enablement (Giddens 1984, p.5).

1.1.3. Unconscious, ontological security and structural reproduction

In addition to conscious reflexivity of discursive consciousness and potentially conscious reflexivity of practical consciousness, the agency is influenced by the unconscious consisting of: ‘those forms of cognition and impulsion which are either wholly repressed from consciousness or appear only in distorted form’ (ibid). The unconscious constitutes a motivational component of action that commits the agents to integrate their practices across time-space for the sake of safeguarding their sense of ontological security, which he posits as central to human motivation. Ontological security, for Giddens, can be characterised as a sense of trust in their being-in-the-world, kind of a feeling that agents know their social milieu and confidence in their ability to function in it competently because it is meaningful to them. Following the theories of psychosocial development, humans develop this basic security system in early childhood, when the only response to unfamiliar circumstances is anxiety, and learn to overcome it by the establishment of routines with their primary carers7. Later in life, this trust extends to the wider world by learning its regularities. While the discursive examination of practical consciousness knowledge is relatively unproblematic, the agents cannot directly access their unconscious. As its development takes place very early in the childhood before the development of language, agents cannot examine it discursively. Rather, agents are motivated by the unconscious drive towards the reduction of this elementary anxiety

7 C.f. Ainsworth and Bell (1970) and Erikson (1963) which outline the premises of the theory of attachment upon which Giddens builds his model.
or ontological insecurity through the establishment of routines which allows them some degree of predictability in their existence (Giddens 1984, pp. 7-9).

The state of ontological security is an important factor in agents’ conduct and reflexive monitoring of action. Moving through their day-to-day activities, agents are unconsciously motivated towards maintaining their sense of ontological security which is secure as long as they are able to tune in and to interpret and predict the outcome of their own and others’ actions. What makes these interpretations possible is the shared knowledge of the social context and routinised character of human interaction derived from that context. It is the habitual, recursive characteristic of routine, resulting in (more-or-less) consistent outcomes that help to continuously re-create the sense of ontological security. At the same time, the routine or routinised practices are central to the theory of structuration. The actors derive their knowledge from the process of societal and systemic integration and use it recursively in a routinised manner, and in the process, they also unintentionally reproduce the very conditions implicated in the constitution of the system in which they are integrated.

The process of structuration, then, entails the reproduction of structures in practice. Agents come to reproduce the social structures according to the memory blueprints concerning social interactions they acquired during the process of social and systemic integration. While still being influenced by structures, the agents retain a degree of autonomy in agency that enables them to manoeuvre within structural constraint. This autonomy is premised upon the discursive and practical consciousness knowledge of their social world which allows them to predict outcomes of actions of others. Agency is influenced by all levels of consciousness. Motivated by the unconscious drives, the agents pursue their day-to-day goals. In doing so, they draw upon their knowledge, in order to choose the best success strategy, without disturbing their sense of ontological security. Because the sense of ontological security is derived from the trust in the predictability of the world, they come to act in concordance with the structural blueprints. Thus, the very conditions implicated in the constitution of the system in which agents are integrated, become unintentionally transmitted and reproduced across time-space with every act of structuration.
1.2. (Re)structuration, systemic stability and change

1.2.1. Haugaard’s reconstructive critique of structuration theory

Haugaard’s reconstructive critique of structuration theory raises two important issues. One is related to the reproduction of structures in the context of systemic stability and change, the other to the theoretical confusions in Giddens’ account of power. Beginning with the issues of systemic stability and change, the argument revolves around two points: the tendency of structuration theory towards emphasising systemic stability, and the theoretical independence of structuring agents from the others in the social system. Although the structuration theory presents coherent, and internally consistent, account of social reproduction via individual agency, ‘...it suffers from inherent lack in terms of the claims made for it with regard to the reproduction of structures’ (Haugaard 1992, pp. 101–102). This lack manifests itself in the theoretical independence of the process of structural reproduction from the existence of other social agents which has implications for the ability of the theory to explain the societal change. In other words, structuration theory explains the reproduction of social structures too well (Haugaard 1997). The notions of the routine and ontological security become important at this point. Agents learn to trust in their social world by learning its rules and observing patterns of social interactions that bring about desired consequences. This trust contributes to the maintenance of their sense of ontological security and reinforces agents’ tendency to reproduce the structures in similar contexts across time-space routinely. The double emphasis on routine, as a mechanism of reduction of ontological insecurity and as the driving force behind recursive structuration practices also renders this model static. Agents learn and continue to structure in specific ways while enjoying the agency and predictability facilitated by the structural constraint. They derive the sense of ontological security from reproducing conditioned structural relations through recursive practices. As a result, it becomes difficult to explain why agents would engage in novel structuration practices and induce social change even though Giddens keeps this theoretical avenue open (Giddens 1984, p. 27).
Routine is also central to the second criticism raised by Haugaard, that the concept of structures is theoretically independent of the existence of others. Agents come to reconstitute structures through recursive actions which, over time, become cast into a pattern that will be recreated in another time-space. Conceptualized like this, structures are an unintended outcome of individual agency. However: ‘...what is not clear is how structures, as Giddens describes the production of them, through structuration practices, inherently pertain to systemic forms reproduced by others’ (Haugaard 1992, p. 104). Structuration and reproduction of social structures do not take place in a social vacuum but in the context of social systems full other agents pursuing their own goals, which is a point not sufficiently acknowledged by Giddens. Haugaard introduces Berger and Luckmann’s claim that ‘any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, …’ and an example of a solitary person living on a deserted island that may engage in actions that will, over time, develop into a pattern (Berger and Luckmann 1967, p. 70). When interpreted against the theory of structuration, this example describes the establishment and recreation of structures through recursive practice, even in the absence of others (Haugaard 1992). The change in structuration practices is possible when agents come to discursively examine the contents of their practical consciousness knowledge of social rules and decide to structure in novel ways. However, it appears that once the barrier between practical and discursive consciousness is overcome, the agents are free to change their structuration practices at will. The only thing standing in the way is the sense of ontological security that agents derive from the recreation of established structures. As it stands, structuration theory describes agency-structure in a manner that is theoretically analogous to a solitary individual on a deserted island.

Such position is theoretically incommensurable with Giddens’ description of structures as ‘... a virtual order of differences produced and reproduced in social interaction’ (Giddens 1979, p. 3). Here, Giddens acknowledges that structures derive their meaning from the system as the virtual order of differences. That is, they become meaningful only in relation to other structures within the system of meaning which is shared by others. Yet, he does not provide enough theoretical space for this vital structural characteristic. Haugaard observes the conceptual gap between structures as an ideal and as a property of social systems. Structures, existing as memory traces, are ultimately an outcome of individual actions.
As a consequence, it becomes difficult to theorise the difference between rules that are created and reproduced socially and those irrelevant to social systems, both of which appear to be an outcome of the same process – individual structuration. This gap parallels the Wittgenstein’s distinction between language as a socially constituted system of meaning and ‘private language’ denoting the language that is comprehensive and meaningful only to an individual agent (Wittgenstein 1968). Following this distinction, Haugaard terms these non-socially systemic structures ‘private structures’ as distinct from ‘social structures’. And maintains that while both qualify as structures per Giddens’ definition. It is theoretically problematic, from the perspective of social theory, that there is an absence of a mechanism that allows for a distinction between the reproduction of socially-systemic structures from the private structures which are reproduced without the recourse to the system upheld by others (Haugaard 1992, p. 105).

Haugaard surmises that Giddens’s account suffers from a lack in terms of conceptual space for the theorisation of societal change as an outcome of preoccupation with individual recursive structuration practices. As well as insufficient attention to its intersubjective dimension. Given the central status ascribed to recursive practice and its role in the maintenance of ontological security, it is unclear how the agents become motivated to change the structuration practice. Even if they confront their practical knowledge and overcome the sense of ontological insecurity related to novel structuration practice, it is not clear how this individual change translates into a systemic change in the social context (Haugaard 1992, p. 106). Indeed, once the agents make up their mind to overcome their ontological insecurity and change the structuration practice, it appears that nothing else stands in their way to initiate systemic change. While this may hold in the case of ‘private structuration’ of a solitary individual without a membership to the social system, this picture becomes more complicated in the context of structuring others.

In contrast to the hypothetical marooned individual, social actors are subject to another, crucial, source of constraint which is derived from the necessity of interaction with others. These others are also structuring agents with particular practical and discursive consciousness knowledge of the social system they have been integrated into. Successful social interactions require commensurable knowledge on both sides.
as well as mutual willingness to reproduce specific structural practice. In sum, then, the structural reproduction depends on three factors:

- 1) constraint derived from A’s [actor initiating interaction] practical consciousness and discursive consciousness knowledge of rules,
- 2) constraint based upon B’s [agent responding to interaction] practical consciousness and discursive consciousness knowledge of rules and
- 3) constraint derived from B’s willingness to accept new rule as valid (Haugaard 1992, p. 102).

Since Giddens does not examine the structuration practice with respect to B in relationship to A, Haugaard argues it is difficult to theorise the transition from individual novel structuration practice into a systemic change. Thus, highlighting the need for: ‘…built-in mechanism whereby some innovative structuration practices are introduced (system change) and others are rejected (system stability)’ (Haugaard 1992, 110 italics original).

1.2.2. Importance of structuring others - production and reproduction of structures in social interaction

Haugaard seeks to overcome this deficit by the introduction of structuring others into the equation of societal reproduction - through the theorisation of the constraint derived from the structuring others’ knowledge of structures and willingness to engage in structured interaction. The process of structuration takes place within the context of already established social systems allowing for a degree of predictability of agents’ social world. The reproduction of structures in social interactions involves multiple structuring individuals in possession of different degrees of practical and discursive consciousness knowledge of social systems and with different goals. When the actor A engages in structured interaction with actor B, it is not enough that A instantiates the memory trace of structure-as-rule in action. Insofar as social structures facilitate predictability of others through the production of consistent outcomes in pertinent contexts, social action should be followed by a predictable consequence in the behaviour of others. In other words, the structuring agent B must confirm A’s structuration by engagement in the predictable behaviour. (Haugaard 1992, p. 127).

Expanding upon Austin’s (1975) distinction between felicitous and infelicitous speech acts, Haugaard discerns between four modalities that structured social interactions can take. These modalities represent mechanisms of praxiological (re)production of structures allowing social theorists to distinguish between successful and unsuccessful
instances of structuration. This is done through theorisation of constraint imposed upon the structuring agent by structuring others implicated in social interaction. These modalities are restructuration (confirm-structuration), de-structuration, non-restructuration and absent restructuration (Haugaard 1992, pp. 101–102). But, before we turn to the individual analyses of these modalities, we need to explicate what is covered under the term social interaction.

What makes action specifically classifiable as social action is the probability that others will behave in a particular fashion and a consequent taking account of that probability in your action (Haugaard 1992, p. 123).

This sociability goes beyond simple stimulus-response relationship found in the animal kingdom and presupposes shared socialised meaning between interacting agents. Both, in the case of A, who initiates meaningful interaction with the aim to produce B’s behavioural outcome; and in the case of B who understands the meaning of A’s action and takes it into account in her behaviour. This operational definition allows social theorist to make a distinction between meaningful, structured, social interaction towards others and collective non-social action in relation to outside phenomena.

1.2.2.1. Confirm-structuration (restructuration)

Restructuration or confirm-structuration refers to a situation where the structured social interaction initiated by actor A achieves the predictable outcome in B. The interacting agents perceive the interaction as meaningful and possess commensurable conceptions of rules of given interaction. Since the structuration theory allows for a significant degree of the agency of individuals relative to the structural relations, it is not sufficient that both agents understand the meaning of interaction. They must also have interest in, and be motivated to engage in it. In case of hypothetical exchange between A and B, A’s commitment to interaction becomes evident by her initiation of interaction, while B’s willingness to interact manifests in her structured response. The process whereby structural properties of interaction become reproduced has been termed ‘restructuration’. ‘It is with the act of restructuration that social structures are reproduced. Without restructuration there are no social structures, just rules’ (Haugaard 1992, p. 127 italics original). This term was later changed to ‘confirm-structuration’ because the initial use of term re-structuration
is somewhat ambiguous and implies re-doing and hence change (Haugaard 2003). In line with this theoretical development, he proposes an altered definition of social structures as

...essentially, a form of regularity which is reciprocally recognized as meaningful because different actors see it as ‘the same’ as other actions performed in different time and space. In that sense it is, to use Giddens’ words, a ‘recursive’ stretching of ‘time–space patterning’ but, to alter Giddens’ premises significantly, this is not simply a recursive act from the perspective of self (structuration) but presupposes confirm-structuring from others (Haugaard 2003, p. 93).

Thus, highlighting the importance of the active (even if sub- or pre-conscious) reproduction of structures through acts of confirm-structuration, rather than passive, unintended and self-propelled structuration. Most of the routinised social exchanges of everyday life are structured in this manner. For example, phatic communion, or ‘small talk’, whereby speech is used to perform social task (e.g. the phrase ‘hello, how are you?’ in place of a greeting rather than expression of genuine interest in other person’s wellbeing), or buying a kilogram of sugar, represent routinized structured interactions. These forms of social exchange are characteristic of interaction between agents exposed to similar processes of societal and systemic integration, whereby agents internalise the rules guiding these structured interactions early and reproduce them (almost automatically) on a level of practical consciousness. Thereby, bringing about the unintended effect of structural reproduction in practice.

1.2.2.2. De-structuration, non-restructuration and absent restructuration

What about the cases where the agent B does not reproduce the structures accordingly? Building on the theorem of constraint derived from the existence of structuring others, this situation can be an outcome of several possible modalities of interaction. It may either come as result of a situation whereby B understands the rules pertinent to A’s structuring but decides not to reproduce the structure. Or, B does not understand the rule guiding A’s action and consequently cannot reproduce the structured interaction; Alternately, B cannot even register and take account of A’s structuration practice and fails to respond altogether. The first variant, whereby agent

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While I agree that restructuration is not as clear in denoting the moment of structural reproduction as confirm-structuration, I would like to propose to reserve the term (re)structuration for the general theoretical framework from within which Haugaard understands the remaining theoretical contributions of power theory. This is because it captures both, the nature of the phenomenon it describes and its relationship towards its theoretical origins.
B understands the rule (and its context) according to which A is structuring the interaction, but decides not to confirm the structure was termed ‘de-structuration’, due to the high degree of intentionality. This intentional characteristic differentiates it from the cases where B does not understand the rules guiding A’s interaction or ‘non-restructuration’. And, from the cases where B fails to react because she is unable to register the A’s structuration practice - termed ‘absent restructuration’ (Haugaard 1992, pp.129-130).

The cases of both non-restructuration and absent restructuration represent cases whereby the agents A and B have incommensurable knowledge of rules or capacity to engage in a given interaction regardless of their hypothetical willingness to do so. In the first case, the agent B takes A’s attempt to engage in social interaction into account but lacks the knowledge of rules allowing her to confirm-structure. In the second case, it may very well be that B possesses the knowledge of rules guiding the interaction, however, cannot respond because she did or could not register A’s attempt to structure. The example of non-restructuration would be a misrecognition of a phatic aspect of the greeting phrase 'Hello, how are you?' as a literal request about one’s wellbeing (which is actually a case of many individuals who find themselves in English speaking environment for the first time). And, the example of non-restructuration could be seen in failure to respond to the greeting phrase at all because of one’s inability to hear or understand the spoken language.

The case of de-structuration presents us with an interesting example whereby both agents understand the rules guiding the structured interaction. But, the respondent agent B decides, for whatever reason, not to follow the structural blueprint for interaction set out by A. It is important to note that B thoroughly recognises A’s action as an invitation to structured interaction, and she is well able to reproduce the rules in structured practice. However, is not willing to structure in this way and chooses to respond in the way that takes account of the other but does not reproduce the structures guiding the original (from the perspective of A’s intent) interaction. In the absence of the constraint derived from the limited knowledge of rules on the part of the actor B, the willingness or unwillingness to confirm structure can only be attributed to an individual agency. An example in point can be found in Haugaard’s (1992, p. 124) analytical use of Garfinkel’s breaching experiments whereby
participants were instructed to interpret the phatic communication from others as literal requests, and to systematically de-structure the conversations in this manner:

The victim waved his hand cheerily.

(A) How are you?
(B) How am I in regard to what? My health, my finances, my school work, my peace of mind?
(A) (Red in the face and suddenly out of control) Look! I was just trying to be polite. Frankly, I don’t give a damn about how you are!

(Garfinkel 1984, p. 44).

In this case, A’s attempt to structure according to the rules concerning phatic communion was recognised as such by B, yet B decided to structure according to rules of normal communication aimed at the exchange of information. Both agents engaged in social interaction, that is, action directed toward and taking account of others. Both agents also engaged in structuration insofar as their conduct was guided by rules pertaining to interaction with other. Yet, neither of these attempts can be classified as a reproduction of social structure (confirm-structuration) with regard to this particular use of communication because each of the involved agents falsified the expectations inherent in the others’ perspective. ‘Rules do not become structures purely through orientation towards other or through recursive application in structuration. Rules become structures in the moment that the rule-governed expectations are fulfilled’ (Haugaard 1992, p. 126). The theorisation of these different possible mechanisms of structural (non)reproduction underlines the importance of constant reflexive monitoring of one’s surroundings and actions. Haugaard contends that this monitoring also involves the evaluation of the appropriateness of others’ attempts to structure relative to one’s knowledge of rules of given interaction. This evaluation then determines the success or failure of structural reproduction. Therefore, every single act of restructuration or de-structuration represents a political decision of either active acceptance or rejection of the validity of a given rule in the specific situation. Even if it is a subconscious political act occurring on the level of practical consciousness. This point will be revisited in the discussion of the third and fourth dimensions of power in next chapter.
1.2.3. Systemic stability and change

When the attempt to convert the rule into the social structure in interaction meets with confirm-structuration, the structure is reproduced as socially meaningful, even if the structural reproduction is an unintended consequence of intentional action. Both agents’ knowledge of the rule become reiterated as valid within a given context as yielding specific outcomes. Consequentially, the probability that agents will draw upon this rule, and reproduce the structure further, increases. In the opposite case, where structuration fails to meet with confirm-structuration. Not only the rules do not translate into structures as elements in the system of meaning. The very rule guiding the initial act of structuration is violated. This outcome has high potential to disrupt the sense of ontological security, at least in cases where the agents have commensurable knowledge of the social world, as the agents no longer can rely on this rule in similar social circumstances and the likelihood that they use this rule again decreases.

While confirm-structuration is central to systemic stability, it can be seen, at the same time, as a crucial component in the explanation of the systemic change. This is a case in situations whereby novel rules and structuration practices become introduced and taken up by others who then recreate them in a different time-space. Haugaard uses the example of a Christmas card inventor, Henry Cole, who printed the first 1000 pieces in 1843 (Bunday 1964). This initial act of structuration, considered as merely ephemeral business endeavour at the time, has been taken up (confirm-structured) on an incredible scale and became translated into a widespread systemic feature of Christmas in many western societies (Haugaard 1992, pp. 137-138). Following this conceptual strain of thought, the practices of de-structuration are related to systemic stability and change in similar, albeit somehow inverted, manner. On the one hand, the practice of de-structuration represents an attempt to introduce systemic change. Agents who are discursively aware of the structured practice come to attempt to introduce a change in practice or its meaning through intentional de-structuration. On the other hand, the practice of de-structuration can serve to maintain systemic stability whereby novel attempts as structuration practice become intentionally de-structured

According to Haugaard’s theoretical position, the structural reproduction does not occur at random or by accident even if it is an unintended outcome of the intentional action. The modalities of structured interaction outlined above serve to elucidate the conditions under which social structures become reproduced.
in favour of the already existing practices. The need to distinguish between individually meaningful structured behaviour and socially meaningful behaviour of an individual that contributes to systemic reproduction leads Haugaard to expand on the usage of the term ‘private’ structuration practices. Which, in the context of the theory of restructuration, designate ‘any action, including social action, that fails to meet with restructuration’ as well as ‘social behaviour which fails to contribute to the fabric of social system’. (Haugaard 1992, p. 134).

Although rooted in Wittgenstein’s (1968) notion of private language, the concept of private structure is much less restrictive and includes any structured action that can be meaningful to an individual or others, yet fails to contribute to the reproduction of social system.

The theorisation of systemic stability or change through the modalities of structured interaction and the distinction between private and social structuration practices is closely intertwined with the concept of ontological security. In cases whereby an attempt at structured interaction fails to meet with an appropriate response, not only the agents’ knowledge concerning behaviour in particular context becomes violated, but their practices are also effectively rendered private by the others. That is, rendered irrelevant in a given context of practice. Their sense of ontological security becomes thereby disrupted, and agents’ feelings of insecurity come flooding in. Hence the adverse reactions to de-structuration practices in Garfinkel’s (1984) experiments.

One of the most profound examples in point can be found in the practice of ostracism, or ‘snubbing someone’ whereby a group of people completely ignores another human being(s) to the point that they de-structure most of their attempts at communication. This practice was shown to induce very strong feelings of what could be thought of as ontological insecurity and is correlated to a number of psychosocial maladjustments including depression, anxiety disorders or random acts of violence against others (Williams 2007, Newman et al. 2008). At the same time, such situations of a breakdown in structuration routine can provide an opportunity to discursively reflect on the practical consciousness knowledge of a given rule. And, as such present agents with a possibility to introduce systemic change.

So far, I have schematically outlined Haugaard’s reconstructive reading of Giddens’ account of the structural reproduction in the context of social systems. The introduction of modalities that interaction between multiple structuring agents can
take overcomes the conceptual gap between the structuration as an individual activity and structure as systemically constituted. Accepting the above arguments involves re-inscription of the relationship between the unconscious and systemic change. While the sense of ontological (in)security can be still seen as the direct motivating factor of the agency, it is no longer the paramount barrier standing in the way of societal change. The discussion of constraint derived from the existence of others highlights the fact that structuration practices are continuously evaluated (and enforced) by the others in the social system even if only on the level of practical consciousness. And the conceptual toolbox introduced so far is representative of the underlying theoretical language which enabled Haugaard to examine the relationship between societal transformation, power and modernity. Thus, allowing for a more explicit sociological understanding of the intersubjective interactions that either maintain systemic stability or induce change. At this point, the discussion turns towards relationships of power which are awarded central status in the theory of structuration and have been fundamental to Haugaard’s work for last two decades.
1.3. Social Power

1.3.1. Social Power in the context of the theory of structuration

Since Haugaard’s conception of social power has developed through the critique of Giddens’s account, the next section will briefly situate power in the context of the theory of structuration. For Giddens, power represents transformative capacity - a capacity to achieve the outcomes and make a difference in the world through action. As such, power is inherent in the action whereby an individual is the cause of the outcome ‘Whatever happened would not have happened if that individual had not intervened’ (Giddens 1984, p.9).

Contrary to the view of many theorists viewing power as a tangible resource, Giddens argues that power as a property of social systems is not to be equated with power resources, although it is exercised through them (1979, p. 91). So, power, like structures, does not have an ‘out there’ existence and becomes instantiated in action. In addition to being relational, power is not linked to interests. A person may have the power to do something that is against her interests (ibid, p. 90). If it is not related to interests, it follows that it will not be linked exclusively to conflict and therefore the conception that Giddens deals with is a nonzero-sum account of power.

Furthermore, because of the emphasis on the unintended consequences of action, power’s link to intentionality is entirely contingent (Giddens 1984 p. 257). As being inherent in the agency, the generation of power is facilitated by the structural interplay between enablement and constraint. Structures are experienced as rules that agents draw upon these to facilitate their agency in social systems. It is the enabling aspect of structures that make them central to the power as the capacity to achieve outcomes. When the structures are utilised in this way, they constitute resources that agents can draw upon. Resources ‘make possible the intentional content of action, with the unintentional effect of being reconstituted as resources’ (Giddens 1981, p. 52). And the existence of structures as resources becomes central to the generation of power, which is realised through their mobilisation.

Resources are conceived of as transformative capacity generating command over material goods and agents. Allocative resources refer to the capacity to transform the
physical environment and produce material goods, raw materials, produced goods as well as means of material production (technology). Authoritative resources than generate command over the constitution of agents, their organisation in time-space and distribution of life-chances (Giddens, 1984 p. 258). While allocative resources have, as a rule, material existence in time-space, authoritative resources exist as structures and institutions. Both types of resources do not exist as resources on their own. The meaning of a specific material thing or social structure existent as a resource on the level of the ontic is conferred by the social system and relationship to other systemic elements which ascribe meaning to physical things. This also means that the ‘resourceness’, the ontic quality of a thing as a resource for the sake of those who utilise it, is contingent upon continued reproduction of its meaning in the acts of structuration.

Power thus becomes generated by the social system through the expansion of resources. Giddens finds a middle ground and does not accord primacy to either form of resource but argues that generation of power in society is a result of the interaction between the allocative and authoritative form, which allowed increasing time-space distanitation between the elements of a system. This increasing capacity to incorporate more and even temporally and spatially distant elements into a social system is a feature of societal transformation from oral to modern societies (Haugaard, 1992 p. 99). The nature and status of resources is not fixed, but subject to change as new resources become incorporated into social systems during its time-space expansion. It also means that relative hierarchical configurations of specific resources can differ from one system of meaning to another. Consider for example status and power of literacy as a resource throughout the course of history or a difference between the status of a cow in western world and India.

Unlike the zero-sum theories of power, the agents do always have some resources at their disposal that they can draw upon in relationships of power which presuppose relationships between autonomous and interdependent agents. The process of domination then involves agents bringing the asymmetries in the access to structured resources to bear upon each other. Domination, in the context of the theory of structuration refers to the ‘...structured asymmetries of resources drawn upon and reconstituted in ...power relations’ (Giddens 1981, p. 51). This implies that power is never exercised over entirely powerless subjects. Although the
resources available to each side in the conflict can be heavily asymmetrical, they are never absent entirely. What is at stake are the relative costs attached to use of those resources whereby some actions might be costlier than others. It also presupposes mutual dependence of agents involved in power relationship since the fact that A wishes B to do X implies two things, that B has resources to achieve X and that A is dependent upon B’ agency to do X (Haugaard 1997, p. 109).

This conception presents structural constraint in a much weaker version than that of structuralist theory. Structures are not some independently existing phenomena that mechanistically grind the individuals along some pre-constituted path. Structural constraint works rather by making some actions costlier. Agents can imagine different possible course of action and potentially decide to act otherwise but choose to comply because of the high costs associated with noncompliance. Giddens (1984) acknowledges that there are cases where this power asymmetry is extreme, for example in the cases of prison incarceration, mental hospitals, or slavery. But even in those cases, there are some resources which confer some degree of agency. It is not that prisoners or slaves cannot act otherwise, slaves can rebel and prisoners engage in a hunger strike or dirty protests. However, the power asymmetry of these situations means that there is a very high cost attached to these actions, which include the threat of violence or death. As long as a person maintains a degree of agency, it is exercising power of some form. When this capacity for autonomous agency becomes curtailed, for example, if a prisoner on hunger strike becomes restrained and force-fed, he or she loses the capacity to act and becomes manipulable in a way akin to a physical object. If social power is to be exercised through another social agent, he or she has to retain the capacity to act.

1.3.2. Social Power in the context of the theory of (re)structuration

Haugaard’s critique of this conception of power revolves around two points. First is the inconsistency in the treatment of power as flowing in a system and actualised only in action and, at the same time, having a material existence in time-space, which creates problems for Giddens’ classification of resources. Second is related to the inability of the theory of structuration to account for structural changes in the configuration of power resources on the praxiological level of interaction between agents. As already mentioned, the ephemeral existence of structures inside agents’
practical consciousness knowledge outside of the moment of their reproduction in action allows Giddens to overcome the dualism between structure and agency and replace it with the concept of duality. Structures are experienced ontically as resources that agents draw on in the realization of their agency. When this knowledge of social rules (structures) is utilized in action, it achieves the intentional outcome (power production) and unintentionally reproduces the meaning of the structure within a given system. ‘When theorized as such, neither structure, nor power can be conceptualized as having a time-space existence outside of the moment of social action.’ (Haugaard 1992, p. 111). Yet, Haugaard observes that while Giddens foregrounds precisely these postulates, he also argues that power also exists in time-space in the form of resources that can be accumulated:

Unlike the communication of meaning, power does not come into being only when being ‘exercised’, even if ultimately there is no other criterion whereby one can demonstrate what power actors possess. This is important because we can talk of power being ‘stored up’ for future occasion of use (Giddens 1976, pp. 111–112).

Giddens expresses the fusion between these two modes of existence of power as the claim that power is not produced, but manifest in action, thus positing power as prior to subjectivity (GIDDENS 1986). Haugaard (1997 p. 107) argues that, given the postulates of the theory of structuration, Giddens cannot have it both ways. The treatment of power as both, having a continuous existence in time-space and existent only in the moment of action poses further problems for the theory of structuration. If power is conceptualized as having storable quality, then the theory implies places in which it is stockpiled. Since it cannot be stored in structures as they have no enduring existence in time-space, Giddens locates this storage in the social system itself via conceptualising power as storable systemic flow arrived at by fusion between Dahl’s, Parsons’ and Foucault’s accounts of power (Giddens 1984). This allows him to theorise phenomena such as Mumford’s (1961) account of the importance of the city as a power container. However, what is not clear is how exactly this flow is stored? Or, to formulate it in another way: ‘given the ontological status of structure and system, what is the ontological status of power?’(Haugaard 1992, p. 112). In his own words:

Commenting upon such formula, I would say that it is as unsatisfactory as arguing that structure exists in time and is only manifest in social action. Such a position leaves the recreation of structure in social action as untheorizable. Similarly, a theoretical position, which premises the
creation of the social agency and praxis cannot provide a theoretical space for ‘out there’ power. In other words, the premises of structuration theory demand that Giddens either drop the concept of power outside of action or that he abandon the structuration perspective. I recommend the former rather than the latter (Haugaard 1992, pp. 111-112).

Furthermore, the conception of power as a storable entity weakens the distinction between power and power resources and renders the theoretical status of power resources problematic. Giddens argues that power resources are not power, but power is actualised in action through them. According to Giddens it is mistaken ‘to treat power as a resource as many theorists do’ (1979, p. 91). However, if power can be stored and used in the same manner as resources, what differentiates it from the latter? Haugaard argues that while the conception of allocative resources as material objects incorporated into the system as power resources via structuration is relatively unproblematic, this confusion becomes evident in Giddens’ account of authoritative resources (1992, p. 112). To reiterate, Giddens (1984, p. 258) conceptualized authoritative resources as: 1) Organization of social time-space (temporal-spatial constitution of paths and regions); 2) Production/reproduction of the body (organization and relation of human beings in mutual association); and, 3) Organization of life chances (constitution of chances of self-development and self-expression). Haugaard observes that rather than explicating the nature of the resources that allow some agents authoritative control over others, these categories refer to the effects of power. As already mentioned, power becomes exercised through the asymmetry in the access to resources available to agents that enable them to alter the course of action of others.

“These resources are not power in the abstract (even if it exists as a ‘flow’ in the system) nor are they the effects of an already constituted exercise of power. Any attempt to describe them as such is a treatment of power as a resource. … the resources that enable actor A to exercise this power must be something other than this observed ability’ (Haugaard 1992, pp. 113-114).

Giddens lists the process of expansion of power resources as one of the possible ways by which societal change is brought about. However, the theorisation of societal change in the context of the theory of structuration suffers several shortcomings in relation to the reproduction of structures on the level of individual agents. These deficits create further problems for the theorisation of power, because social (power) resources are analytically distinct from material things and phenomena by virtue of being incorporated in the shared systems of meaning. That is, they are being structured
as power resources relative to the social system (Giddens, 1984 p.15). Haugaard argues that ‘Consequently, there can be no such thing as unstructured power resources. … Hence, the creation of new power resources is inherently linked to the creation of social structures’ (1992, p. 14). As a result, Giddens’ account of power resources and the process of expansion of power suffers from the same ‘…inability to theorize praxiological basis for social change’ (ibid) rooted in the lack of the attention the structuration theory pays to the intersubjective and systemic aspects of structuration practice discussed in the first part of the chapter.

Consequently, there is no conceptual space for the theorization of the structural change when it comes to introduction of new resources or their contestation. When we understand the power resources as ontic embodiment of structures, the meaning of which is constituted systemically, then we can repeat the critique levelled at Giddens’ account of structural change. To recapitulate, Haugaard argues that other agents must understand the meaning of novel structuration practice as potential reproducers of the structure. In short, the success of novel, or indeed any structuration practice is subject to three forms of constraint: ‘1) constraint derived from A’s p.c and discursive consciousness knowledge of rules, 2) constraint based upon B’s practical consciousness and discursive consciousness knowledge of rules and 3) constraint derived from B’s willingness to accept new rule as valid’ (Haugaard 1992, p. 102). The latter two are phenomena left untheorized by Giddens.

Successful acts of reproduction of structure are dependent upon interaction. The structures are experienced as rules as well as resources. Meaning of a structure is derived from social system. Thus, the utilization of structures as resources demands that dominant agents recognize the structured thing as a power resource and that they have access to it. It also demands that the subaltern agents recognize the legitimacy of a status of given thing as a power resource. If we understand domination, in line with Giddens, as asymmetries in access to structured power resources, then it becomes difficult to theorize structural changes on the level of individuals’ praxis. Or to put it differently, it is not clear how and why some things become systemically constituted as power resources through individual acts of structuration given that ‘described as
storables flow, power becomes an almost metaphysical force that is conceptually divorced from individual action’ (Haugaard 1992, p. 115).

Consequently, this perspective overlooks the contribution of individual structuration practices to systemic reproduction, expansion of power resources, and advances overly consensual model. It appears that even severely dominated agents consent to their domination since the only barrier to overcoming existing configurations of power relations is rooted in their knowledge. While this may be the case of a solitary individual on a deserted island, such position ignores the conflict and contestation that accompanies the exercise of power and processes of (re)constitution and enlargement of power resources. Commenting upon the inability of the theory to account for the issue of vested interests, Haugaard (1992, pp. 115-116) observes that even apparent stability of a system and its power resources is a result of continuous struggles and negotiations. Here, those with limited access to established power resources have an interest in introducing new ones that would alter the systemic configurations in their favour, while those currently in power have an interest in keeping the status quo intact. In the light of the above, an adequate theory of power should be able to explain these processes. This is where we move on to the four-dimensional model of power.
2. Four – Dimensional model of power

2.1. 1D

The first dimension of power is conceptualised as operating on the level of agency or practice (Haugaard 2012a). This position builds on Dahl’s intuitive definition of power: ‘A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do’ (Dahl 1957, p. 203). While Dahl’s commitment to the principles of behaviourism and logical empiricism is at odds with the epistemic orientation of Haugaard’s project, the understanding of power as the direct relation between the interacting agents is not. Dahl’s (1958) focus on the agency of individuals in social interactions remains central to explaining the operation of power. I would like to, at this point, qualify the first dimension as operating on the level of agents’ practices rather than agency. The latter is a term that Haugaard sometimes uses interchangeably with power, and rightly so given the strong overlap between the concepts. But, at the same time, it is also the case that all four dimensions are concerned with explicating different aspects, or dimensions, of power. Designating practices as the first and most obvious analytical aspect or dimension of power makes its distinction from the overall phenomenon of interest – power (as agency) easier. When talking about power on this level, we are thinking about the social interaction between multiple agents - the capacity of one agent to do something that brings about a change in other’s behaviour. What is important here is the salience of the relationship between agents. The parties involved are aware of the engagement in interaction over conflicting goals. Agent A is consciously trying to get B to do something, and agent B is fully aware of the fact that she is being constrained into doing something other than what she would want to do.

Dahl’s conception usually invites the discussion of power relation as a zero-sum concept. However, as Baldwin (2015) has argued, this is not inherent to Dahl’s definition. It was Dahl’s critics, Bachrach and Baratz (1962), and especially Lukes
who related power to interests and thus put the normatively negative spin on it. According to this position, if B wants to do something, but is compelled to do otherwise by A, A’s gain came at the expense of B’s interests, and therefore, B can appear to be coerced or dominated. Haugaard (2012a) observes that this is the case only in the instances of coercive interactions and, drawing on Parsons’ (1963) analogy between the creation of wealth and concept of power as a positive-sum phenomenon\(^{10}\), argues that such exercise of power can also result in enhanced capacity to act for those involved. Expanding upon the idea of power as non-zero sum, Haugaard uses the work of Gellner (1989) to argue that the modernity entails a move from predation to taxation, where the subaltern agents exchange part of their product for the protection of their stronger peers instead of having the product coerced from them. While the exchange might still be unequal and coercion often plays a major part, this exercise of power enables a greater degree of agency for the subaltern than previous modes and the conflict ceases to be zero-sum in many cases. Furthermore, this move towards modernity also entails new forms of disciplinary power which involve a shift from external coercion to internal restraint and discipline as discussed extensively also by Foucault (1977) in his study of the spread of disciplinary power and Elias (1994) work on the civilising process. Even though the premises of these perspectives differ, Haugaard argues that what they have in common is that they trace the transformations of conflict from direct coercion towards structural constraint.

The move from feudal coercion to democratic process constitutes a move of conflict to structuring. In essence, democracy and modern bureaucracy, including the judiciary, educational system, and so on, constitute assembled sets of structural constraints that actors use for the purposes of prevailing over each other. As an ideal type, democracy constitutes a real-life game in which players want to win. Yet only some can at any moment in time (Haugaard 2015a, p. 149).

It is precisely the structural constraint, the rules of the many interrelated real-life games that enable agents to routinely prevail, or exercise power, over each other momentarily while still reproducing the structural properties of the overall social system. Structures constrain possible courses of action in any given social interaction and thereby make the social world predictable. This predictability, this structured

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\(^{10}\) It is important to stress at this point that when Haugaard uses the conception of power as zero or positive sum phenomenon, he has in mind the sociological and descriptive, rather than normative, use of the terms zero and positive which are well in line with Parsons’ discussion of the differences of amount of power rather than its normative valence. To be sure Parsons has since been interpreted as a theorist of power as power-to, which ascribes a positive normative valence to the phenomenon of power, but Haugaard argues that such reading actually goes against the grain of Parsons’ article (Haugaard 2012 p 36).
nature of social interactions, affords actors a degree of social agency. While the configuration of the system situates certain actors in a position enabling them to routinely exercise greater power over others in practice, these relations do not have to come entirely at the expense of subalterns’ capacity to act (zero-sum game). Giddens (1984) used the example of a capitalist mode of production where the positions of the capitalist and the worker are of very unequal standing relative to access to resources. And yet, this system affords agency to both. While the capitalist’ capacity to act is enhanced by the exchange, the worker’s agency is not entirely curtailed. The participation in capitalist exchange enables (gives the power to act) her to choose how to spend time outside of her working hours. In fact, as the hierarchical distance between subject positions within a system shrinks, for example, that between the company owner and company manager as opposed to a distance between the owner and the worker, the capacity of the dominant to realise agency increasingly comes to rest upon the agency of the subaltern. Even though this agency is admittedly of a lower magnitude. Despite the fact that social system can confer disproportionately asymmetrical capacities for action, it is very seldom the case that engagement in systemically structured power exchange leaves one of the parties entirely powerless and unable to act. Giddens argues that once agent loses the capacity to act, for example by being physically restrained, she ceases to be an agent and becomes a physical object to be handled. Echoing Foucault’s (1982, p. 789) image of power as the ‘conduct of conduct’ of others, it can only be exercised over an agent endowed with the capacity to act.

It may very well be the case that individuals allow themselves to be prevailed upon because they perceive the interaction as part of their social order. What we have here, in terms of the theory of (re)structuration, is the first modality of interaction, confirm-structuration. The actor B confirms the meaning of the A’s act of structuration and thus reproduces the structure. Of course, confirming structuration is never isomorphic in meaning between the two agents, so slippages may take place, which is a source of change and constraint. In the interactive moment, when social structure is reproduced, agent A draws upon her knowledge of the rules of the social system in attempting to exercise power over the course of B’s actions, Agent B perceives the interaction as part of the normal social order and acts in compliance with the directive. Sociologically speaking, the exercise of power can be considered legitimate to the
extent that the interacting agents themselves consider it so. If agents willingly allow themselves to be prevailed upon, it is safe to assume that the request resonates with their understanding of what is possible and appropriate in the given social system. In such cases, both agents understand the social setting and its rules pertaining to interaction and the Agent B complies because she perceives the request as legitimate within this localised system of meaning. If the structured interaction succeeds, A’s goal will be realised through B’s agency (power-to-act) and the structural aspects of the system, which enabled the interaction in the first place, become reproduced in practice. Thus, maintaining the capacities of the overall system to facilitate agency of individuals at a later stage, resulting in a positive-sum power.

This type of exercise of power, dependent upon the reproduction of structural aspects of the system, should be distinguished from the exercise of power that does not entail structural reproduction, such as in the cases of purely coercive exchanges. ‘If A prevails over B in an election, it is different (both empirically and normatively) from A prevailing over B by using a gun – ‘your money or I shoot’ (Haugaard 2012a, p. 36). In the latter case, the compliance is not secured due to a mutual commitment to the rules of the social system but through the direct threat of violence. Thus, making the interaction an instance of a zero-sum power phenomenon. While it may be the case that coercive interactions have structural aspects, it is difficult to imagine that coerced agents would consider them a legitimate part of their social system and reproduce them willingly in the absence of a threat.

It is important to stress again that agents are not, for the most part, fully consciously aware of the process of monitoring whether an action is felicitous in the given circumstances or not. This monitoring is processed on the level of practical rather than discursive consciousness and therefore tends to be highly routinized and habitual to the point of being taken for granted by agents. Every meaningful social interaction has two analytically separable aspects, the goal-oriented and the structural. The goal-oriented aspect refers to the intentional objectives of the action. This is the facet of the action that agents are aware of on the level of discursive consciousness. They have consciously chosen a particular goal and are intentionally trying to achieve it. The structural aspect, then, makes the action part of the social system. ‘To be systemically structured an action contains meaning, which makes it interpretable as equivalent to another action at a different time and
space’ (Haugaard 2010b, p. 1054). What makes the action meaningful in the system is the set of relational differences which sets it apart from every other meaningful action in the system. This means that in order to understand and engage in social action, an agent needs to understand the system and know its rules. And, as already mentioned, this knowledge is confined largely to the level of practical consciousness which means that agents are, for the most part, unaware of it even though they routinely use it in daily interactions while pursuing their discursively chosen goals. Every time an agent engages in a successful goal-oriented social interaction the structural aspects of the interaction become reproduced across time-space as an unintended consequence. And the structural features of the overall system are reproduced with it (Haugaard 1997, pp. 119-162). This notion of awareness of brings us to the discussion of the second dimension of power.

2.2. 2D

The notion of the second face of power was developed by Bachrach and Baratz, who following Schattschneider’s well-known observation regarding the mobilisation of bias that: ‘… Some issues are organized into politics while others are organized out’ (Schattschneider 1960, p. 71) defined power as the ability to set the agenda of a decision-making process in a way that mobilises the bias of an institution or system against the interests of the dominated group. The concept of the second face focuses on the agency that secures compliance by suppressing the declaration of conflict. It is not directly coercive, but it nonetheless implies a threat. The members of dominated groups are aware of the potential sanctions incurred by noncompliance and judge those to be more costly than compliance (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962)

As a coherent whole, the theory of the second face of power is incompatible with Haugaard’s project on the same grounds that can be levelled against Dahl. Because it is overly concerned with observable behaviour, as well as theorising power as a zero-sum phenomenon, thus equating it with domination. Yet, several aspects of this

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11 The full, often used, quote is: “All forms of political organization have a bias in favour of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others because organization is the mobilization of bias. Some issues are organized into politics while others are organized out” (Schattschneider 1960, p. 71)

12 The exhaustive account of Bachrach and Baratz position is beyond the scope of this chapter. The interested reader can find more in the two seminal papers (1962 and 1963)

13 See Lukes (1974) for a detailed discussion of this point.
framework are central to Haugaard’s extended theorisation of the second dimension, which includes mutual empowerment. According to Haugaard (2016, p. 49), the second dimension of power revolves around the issue of the agents’ discursive awareness. As in the case of the First dimension, agents are aware of the conflict between being constrained and their interests. But in contradistinction to 1D, the compliance is not necessarily secured by another agent’s practice. The dominated choose to act in a way that conforms to and reproduces their domination even in the absence of the direct threat by another because of they are conscious of the bias in the configuration of the system. The issue of awareness, or more precisely, the conscious and intentional awareness of social situation required in this form of strategic (in the sociological sense) compliance marks the distinction between the second and third dimension. To return to the language game of the (re)structuration theory, the second dimension of power operates on the level of discursive consciousness, which differentiates it, analytically, from the third dimension located on deeper, more habitual and reflexive, level of practical consciousness.

As already mentioned, agents possess a detailed understanding of their social world on the level of practical consciousness. Even if it might not be highly articulated. The amount of information processed by the human brain at any time is immense and we are, at any given moment, aware only of a fraction of this process on the level of discursive consciousness. The interplay between those two forms of consciousness constitute what Haugaard (Haugaard 2012a, p. 43) calls interpretative horizon which is commensurable with and draws on aspects of Bourdieu’s (1984, 1990) understanding of habitus, Elias’s (1994) second nature or the elements of Foucault’s (1970) episteme. An embodied system(s) of knowledge, both discursive and tacit or practical, from which agents render the world meaningful and generate social practices. Insofar as the knowledge (both practical and discursive) of structures facilitates the predictability of social action, it constitutes the context of possibilities for action open to agents that Haugaard talks about. However, since agents can only consider the aspects of the situation they are discursively aware of, the array of possible options that agents actively perceive as viable in any given moment is limited to the operation of discursive consciousness.

What we have so far is a case where agents are discursively aware of the fact that the structures are biased against them (2D) and understand their situation as
subordination. Yet, they are compelled to reproduce the structures of domination (1D) because of the perceived asymmetry of power. To take a concrete example from Scott’s work (1990, 2013) focused on the severely uneven relationships of power such as that between a master and a slave. It is safe to assume, with Scott, that the slaves were aware that the system of slave relations is heavily biased against them. This is evident from his analysis of the vernacular lore expressing their grievances. Yet, Scott shows that they often displayed signs of deference and rebelled very seldom even when they had a significant advantage in numbers. The slaves were aware of the fact (2D) that even if they managed to seize the plantation, the rest of the slave owners would work together to efface their rebellion and the perpetrators would be severely punished (1D). The decision not to openly question the status quo, carry on labouring and mimicking their content is an instance of strategic compliance that is rooted in their knowledge of social system which facilitates its predictability. Alignment of their actions with this bias allows them to survive, but it is also an act of confirm-structuration that reproduces their relations of domination.

So far, I have attempted to re-inscribe the boundaries of the second dimension of power more in line with the language of restructuration theory while keeping the spotlight on the constraining nature of the structures of domination. However, conceptualising power solely in terms of zero-sum conflict would be against the premises of the theory of (re)structuration. Its commitment to the theorising structural enablement alongside constraint demands discussion of the enabling aspects of the same process. The above discussion shows that the second dimension of power, as zero-sum domination, operates when agents discursively exclude certain possibilities for action in favour of others. They do so because they actively consider their options relative to their knowledge of the social system and see the compliance as the lesser evil and, as an unintended consequence, the agents are confirm-structuring the relationship of domination. However, empirically the same process of discursive exclusion of some forms of action in favour of others on the part of the agents is also central to societal reproduction more generally. Which includes the instances of positive-sum power relations: ‘Structural constraint creates power by precluding random reactions, allowing actors to reciprocate in a predictable way’ (Haugaard 2015a, p. 151). Structures facilitate agency by making the social world predictable. Remember that they exist as the knowledge of the rules
of social interaction that enable agents to interpret actions as having the same meaning in different time-space. Expanding upon Saussure and Wittgenstein, insofar as the action or structure can only be meaningful with reference to the system and must be defined in terms of relational differences between the elements of the system, the meaning-making process is inextricably bound up with exclusion. So is every action that utilises this meaning. Structural constraint facilitates the predictability of social existence precisely by the introduction of bias towards specific forms of action at the expense of others. Structures limit the scope of action that agents may take if they want the interaction to succeed. Agents may very well be able to imagine a different course of action. However their knowledge (both practical and discursive) of social system constrains them to conform to the structural blueprint of the interaction. That is if they want others to interpret their action as socially meaningful.

It is not that actors cannot act outside this but when they do their actions will not be validated by others. Conversely, if they act in ways considered reasonable by others, those others also find themselves constrained to respond appropriately, unless they want to be considered unreasonable, or idiots, in the Athenian sense (Haugaard 2010b, p. 1059).

The reference to reasonableness should not be understood in terms of some neutral, logical or positivistic sense, rather ‘...it is reasonable in the sense of being felicitous (Austin 1975) relative to a local system of meaning and being-in-the-world’ (Haugaard 2012a, p. 45). The word idiot here, then, denotes someone speaking the private language or engaging in a private structuration practice. That is in the sense of engaging in an action which does not take account of, or contribute to the reproduction of the social system. Someone who cannot be relied on to function appropriately within the parameters of the system. Actions of such private individuals are often not taken seriously; they become subject of de-structuration. This can lead to a heightened sense of ontological insecurity as agents’ actions cease to be validated by others. It has to be stressed that the reasonable/unreasonable or felicitous/infelicitous distinction are scalar rather than binary oppositions. There are degrees to which an action can be considered infelicitous. But, as Garfinkel’s (1984) breaching experiments show, even seemingly banal violations of social norms can have significant consequences for agents’ ontological security both from within and from the other agents. Being considered

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14 See the Haugaard’s discussion of private language in chapter 1, section 1.2.2.
reasonable is a suggestive sign of social competence, as well as a source of ontological security. It is therefore in the interest of agents to attune their behaviour to the biases they are aware of in the given context. In normal interaction both social actors spend considerable energy in preventing the other from feeling ontological insecurity. Much of phatic communion politeness is precisely about each actor acknowledging the social competence of another, which is why the inappropriate response to the phrase ‘Hello how are you’, as anything other than a greeting elicited such a hostile reaction in Garfinkel’s experiments.

A contemporary example can be found in the practice of switching the phone to silent mode before a meeting, a lecture or a conference. This is an active and pre-emptive action that prevents agents from feelings of ontological insecurity should the phone ring and draw the attention to the fact that they are the ones who are disrupting the established flow of things. In addition to safeguarding the sense of ontological security, ostensible discursive conformity to societal biases also contributes to the image of competent social agents in the eyes of the other ‘potential non-confirm structuring beholder’ (Haugaard 2003, p. 94), which, in turn, can enable agents to achieve their discursively chosen goals within the rules of the system at the later stage. Often through the agency of others.

Implicit in this is Haugaard’s insight that structural reproduction is a contingent event and Structuration does not necessarily line up with confirming structuration. In this context 2D power is an attempt to line them up. To make sure that the status quo acts of structuration will be met by confirming structuration. In Giddens, the external source of stability is ontological security. In Haugaard, there are two other sources of constraint. First is the mutual desire for agency, if structures are not reproduced agency fails, which links back to 1D. Secondly, influenced by Wittgenstein’s private language argument, Austin on felicity/infelicity, and Foucault on truth, social actors are theorised as striving to have their acts of structural and confirming-structuration considered meaningful - this aspect of 2D links forward to 3D and 4D. Social actors want others to interpret their action as socially meaningful and thus conform their actions to the structural features of a situation if they want the interaction to succeed. This process of intentional and strategic exclusion of certain forms of action based

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15 This is also central to Goffman’s account of the presentation of self in everyday life
upon a discursive understanding of the biases of the social world is no different from the one implicated in the reproduction of relationships of zero-sum domination. The distinction between its positive or negative normative valence becomes important only when we switch to language game of normative political theory. Sociologically speaking, the system, structure or practice can be considered legitimate to the extent that the involved agents consider it so. Which, within the framework of restructuration theory, is when agents’ understanding on the level of discursive consciousness resonates with their deeper, more habitual and reflexive understanding on the level of practical consciousness (Haugaard 2008b), bringing us to the discussion of the third dimension of power.

2.3. 3D

Lukes’ (1974) account of power was developed through the critique of the first two faces, which he deemed insufficient because of their attention to the observable conflict alone. He reformulated first and second face as dimensions and added a third, much more insidious one which focuses on the capacity to manipulate others: ‘…to have the desires you want them to have that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires’ (Lukes 1974, p. 23). This conception highlights the absence of conflict between the goals of the dominant and subordinate agents. And yet, claims domination. The compliance does not have to be secured through overt or implicit coercion because the dominated are not even aware of the fact that they are being dominated. Drawing upon Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, Lukes (2005) shows this is possible when the dominant influence the tacit knowledge of the subordinate group into believing that their domination is, in fact, beneficial by preventing them from realising their own interests. Thus, invoking the concept of false consciousness, albeit in a manner that is different from its use in Marxist theory, which has been criticised for privileging the perspective of the observer in regard to what counts as the real interests. To overcome this, Lukes does not propose a single prescriptive account of what real interests are. Rather, drawing upon theorists like Nussbaum (2000) and Sen (2001), he advocates for a conception of real interests as ‘…a way of identifying ‘basic’ or ‘central’ capabilities which existing arrangements preclude’ (Lukes 2005, p.148). That is by identifying some set of
external criteria for human flourishing that can be considered agreeable to the agents under investigation if their knowledge was not misled. And proposes that it can be empirically shown by looking for cases where some members of the dominated group attempt to remedy their situation in a way which shows they consider their situation illegitimate. This paradoxically leads him to look ‘…for symptomatic behaviour that the social subjects are not really suffering from false consciousness’ (Haugaard 2008a, p. 103). But, when it comes to evaluation of the genuine cases of false consciousness, Lukes’ position commits him to appeal to a normative conception of real interests and legitimacy external to the dominated group, which is in tension with his explicitly sociological account of the operation of 3D power (ibid).

As already argued, there is a significant tension between the normative and sociological conception of the legitimacy of power (Haugaard 2008a). The sociological perspective considers the relationship of power legitimate to the extent that the implicated agents do so and seeks to understand it, while the normative one evaluates it accordingly to the criteria of the observer and seeks to critique. It is this tension that creates problems for Lukes. As it stands, Lukes’ normative conception of power as domination describes the sociological account of legitimacy from the perspective of agents in what can be considered genuine cases of false consciousness. His description of the relationship between knowledge and willing subordination is explicitly sociological, but his definition of power is deeply normative and concerned explicitly with domination (ibid). Furthermore, his intention to relate power to accountability and differentiate it normatively from structural constraint, fleshed out in conversation with Clarissa Hayward (Hayward and Lukes 2008), is incommensurable with the premises of Haugaard’s project which conceptualises power as the interplay between enablement and constraint in the context of practice facilitated by social structures.

Bracketing this normative tension, it is Lukes’ sociological understanding of the relationship between agents’ knowledge of the world and the extent to which they consider their situation legitimate which is central to Haugaard’s conception of the third dimension of power as the ‘epistemic context of meaning, which shapes conditions of possibility’ (Dagg and Haugaard 2016, p. 8). Located on the level of practical consciousness insofar as the analytic distinction between second and third dimension revolves around the issue of agents’ awareness (Haugaard 2016, p. 49). In distinction to discursive consciousness, practical consciousness comprises all the
information agents have about their world. Including its meanings and rules. This knowledge constitutes the system of meaning through which agents perceive their world and informs their discursive understanding of it. The acquisition of the practical consciousness is a continuous process of socialisation and guides agents’ worldview, which is constructed in line with structures in their environment and expresses itself in their dispositions towards particular forms of action. Despite its underlying influence, agents tend to take their practical consciousness knowledge for granted and use it without being reflexively aware of the process. Imagine how much information becomes utilised in an everyday interaction of buying a cup of coffee from a local shop. The meanings associated with money, social interactions in the shop or grammatical rules of language in which we ask for that coffee are but a few of the more obvious ones implicated in the exchange. Yet the agents are rarely aware of most of the meanings they habitually draw on, and reproduce, in routine social interactions.

Every meaningful social interaction has two analytically separable aspects, the goal-oriented and the structural. The goal-oriented aspect refers to the intentional objectives of the action. This is the facet of the action that agents are aware of on the level of discursive consciousness. The structural aspect, then, makes the action part of the social system. ‘To be systemically structured an action contains meaning, which makes it interpretable as equivalent to another action at a different time and space’ (Haugaard 2010b, p. 1054). What makes the action meaningful in the system is the set of relational differences which sets it apart from every other meaningful action in the system. To engage in social action, an agent needs to understand the system and know its rules. And, this knowledge is confined largely to the level of practical consciousness which means that agents are, for the most part, unaware of it even though they routinely use it in daily interactions while pursuing their discursively chosen goals. Every time agents engage in a successful goal-oriented social interaction the structural aspects of the interaction become reproduced across time-space as an unintended consequence (Haugaard 1997).

What we have in the cases of Lukes’ 3D power is the instance where the subaltern agents continue to reproduce the relations of domination (either through confirm-structuring the dominant structures or through de-structuring novel attempts at resistance) because their practical consciousness has been manipulated. This knowledge structures their discursive understanding of themselves within their world,
which in turn structures their expectations, hopes, desires, and ultimately propels them to act in a way that the elites want them to. However, contrary to Lukes’s claim: ‘This is not the instilling of ‘false knowledge’ but the internalization of routine into the actor whereby structuration automatically elicits confirming-structuration through the careful deliberate socialization of agents’ (Haugaard 2003, p. 105).

Following on, the (re)structuration theory allows for the theorisation of the transfer of information from practical consciousness to discursive consciousness and vice versa. The process of conversion of discursive consciousness into practical consciousness, whereby a novel, discursively animated, set of structures becomes part of the tacit functioning through habitual recursive practice, takes time - lots of time. As with any aspect of (re)structuration theory, its consequences can either be beneficial or catastrophic, depending on how far the process goes. A benign example of this would be the process of learning a new language where the necessity to concentrate discursively on the new rules of grammar gradually diminishes as the person becomes more fluent. But it can also come about as consequence of coercive interventions where the specific system of meaning becomes imposed on agents and enforced to the point that they begin to reproduce it without reflexive thought over time. This is a process whereby what begins as 1D and 2D power relations, where agents’ discursive awareness of the conflict, shades, over time, into 3D as agents come to habitually reproduce the imposed meanings to the point that they are sacralised, placed outside of the field of contestation\footnote{It even has the potential to shade into the 4D (ontological dispositions) as the unavoidability of the conflict becomes embodied in sort of emotional apathy. This is evident in Gaventa’s (1982) classic study of the mining communities (even though his analysis was framed between second and third dimension at the time), or in the research conducted on learned helplessness (Hiroto and Seligman 1975, Abramson \textit{et al.} 1978) which shown that in some cases the discursive barriers can be internalized into kind of embodied pessimism that prevents agents from even attempting to overcome them.} in a process called reification. At the same time, sociologically speaking, both instances are subject to the same processes of gradual sedimentation of knowledge and thus difficult to evaluate normatively without the recourse to the concrete. In a way, the whole process of socialisation could be described as an instance of this conversion that combines the enabling and constraining aspects. The agents internalise the meanings pertaining to the system and come to reproduce it on the level of practical consciousness over time through recursive practice.
While the sedimentation of discursive knowledge or conduct into the practical consciousness takes time, the opposite process, the discursive examination of practical consciousness knowledge tends to be momentary and spurred by the external disruptions in the ordinary flow of agents’ lives and entail experience of ontological insecurity. These are the moments of Heidegger’s broken hammer when the tacit understanding of the world no longer makes sense and agents are forced to reflect on their own system of meaning (Heidegger 1996). A useful metaphor for thinking this process through can be found in the post-structuralist concept of dislocation developed by Laclau and Mouffe (2001) which can be described in terms of the above process of discursification of practical knowledge in response to an external event. Describing the relationship between the dislocation and structures Marchart writes:

> Seen from the perspective of the sedimented structures of the social, every dislocation is perceived as an event that cannot immediately be integrated into the horizon of expectations: it is something we did not expect and which therefore threatens the sedimented routines and processes of social institutions (Marchart 2014, p. 227).

The effect of dislocation is the disruption of the taken-for-granted systems of meaning which at the same time presents a threat to identities and provides a foundation upon which subjects construct new identities (Laclau 1990, p. 39). In other words, the agents’ routine and habitual identity no longer makes sense to them because a novel experience forced them to examine it in a different way, they are no longer able to derive the sense of ontological security from the symbolic system which sustains it, and are therefore forced to forge new identity which makes their existence meaningful. This theoretical detour was not arbitrary. While the (re)structuration theory does have a term denoting the process of gradual sedimentation of knowledge towards the deep practical consciousness which effectively places it beyond the possibility of discursive contestation on the part of the agents – reification. It is missing the conceptual shortcut that would denote the opposite process and, given the overlap between the meaning and use to which it is used in post-structuralist theory, the concept of dislocation fits the purpose well. However, incorporating the term into the conceptual terminology of the (re)structuration theory still requires some tweaking. I would like to propose a semi-isomorphic extraction (however violent to the original) of the process of dislocation and its effects on social structures captured neatly in Marchart’s quote above. And, shifting the focus on its effects from identity to social
structures as understood by (re)structuration theory as meanings embodied in agents’
habitus and reproduced in practice.

Following on, dislocation, then, refers to the moments where agents are faced with
the situation where they can no longer rely on their pre-reflexive (tacit) understanding
of the world on the level of practical consciousness in their interaction with the world
around them because it fails to interpret the immediate experience as part of that
symbolic system of meaning. Such situations effectively render the world illegible in
terms of their taken-for-granted knowledge. This forces agents to reflexively examine
the contents of their own taken for granted knowledge concerning the encountered
counterfactual between their practical consciousness and the event.

At the same time, this process generates ontological insecurity because the reflexive
self-examination of practical consciousness entails self-doubt. Now, of course, this is
not an all or nothing phenomenon but a continuum regarding both the intensity of the
experience and the severity of response. There will be, on one end, instances where
the dislocation and resulting reflexive examination results in none or minor
disruptions of the sense of ontological security to which an agent can adapt with
relatively little damage to the original meaning. Such as in the case of a non-native
speaker realising that she or he has been introducing himself in a manner very amusing
to the locals at the end of the holidays. Alternatively, on the other end, its
consequences regarding ontological insecurity can be so profound they affect the very
pillars of agents’ symbolic system and lead them to a complete rejection of previous
modes of existence premised upon that system in favour of the search for another
which brings them a sense of ontological security. Here, the image of entering or
breaking off from a religious cult springs to mind since both of these instances are an
outcome of disruptions of established and sedimented orders of meaning which, before
they happened, furnished the believers with a strong sense of ontological security.

Drawing upon the breaching experiments of Garfinkel (1984), as well as on the
insights provided by the theory of (re)structuration, it is my contention that the more
sedimented the meanings and practices are in agents’ practical consciousness, the more
costly will their discursive examination be for agents in terms of their ontological
insecurity. As with any analytically heuristic continua, the specific details should be
left to be teased out in the context of the concrete cases rather than aprioristically.
Returning to the third dimension of power, Haugaard proposes to drop the concept of false consciousness and instead, drawing upon Foucault’s (1977, 1980a) accounts of the relationship between power and knowledge, re-inscribes the third dimension of power as operating on the level of tacit understanding of the world which structures the possibilities of agents’ discursive engagement with it:

The third dimension of power constitutes practical consciousness knowledge from which actors make sense of structuration practices. These practices are embedded in systems of meaning that make certain acts appear reasonable and others unreasonable, thus they legitimate a particular economy of inclusion and exclusion. (Haugaard 2012a, p. 45)

This position abandons the appeals to some transcendental objective reason (which tends to be readily available to the theorists that do the appealing) in favour of localised reasonableness, bounded by the limits of agents’ system of meaning. Foucault’s work shows us how the local system of meaning, the episteme, influence the regimes of truth which determine what can be considered possible or reasonable and thus reinforce certain relations of power while excluding others. (ibid).

What is critical here it that dominated agents come to discursively perceive certain aspects of their situation as legitimate because it makes sense relative to their practical consciousness knowledge acquired through their socialisation. There is no dissonance between what they tacitly know about the world and their relationship to the dominant on the level of practical consciousness (3D), and therefore, they see no conflict between the goals of the elites and their interests on the level of the discursive consciousness knowledge (2D). Extending this resonance further, it is reasonable to expect that they might even struggle to maintain the status quo by de-structuring (1D) novel attempts aimed at the undermining of their present configuration of the system even if it ultimately works to their disadvantage. Haugaard is implicitly supplementing the Foucauldian insight upon truth/power with his concern over the contingency of structural reproduction. Simply put, if an act of structuration has the force of the commonly accepted Truth (is felicitous in the given epistemic configuration) behind it, confirming structuration will follow. The cost of de-structuring is high, it is to deny the Truth (with capital T), and so be socially constructed, metaphorically, as mad or unreasonable.

While it is the case that in some instances, where practical consciousness knowledge reifies the social structures which perpetuate extreme asymmetry of power as
reasonable, and thus legitimate for agents on the level of discursive consciousness - this is at the heart of the relation of zero-sum power understood normatively as domination. It is also the case that reproduction of all social structures rests on the same relationship between the practical consciousness and discursive consciousness knowledge, including structures that maintain positive-sum power relations. Implicit in this move is, again, Haugaard’s concern over the contingency of social order, based upon the necessity for interactive commensurability of practical consciousness Once an actor learns to take certain structural practices for granted, as routinised pc, they can then be relied upon to confirm structure appropriately. Having a reflexive understanding of practical consciousness knowledge is enabling because actors know how to reproduce structure to facilitate mutual empowerment collaboratively. However, if there is not reflexivity the relatively powerless can also be relied upon to confirm-structure the structural relations that disempower them. Again, we see the Janus face of structure/power and the crucial aspect that interactive nature of structural reproduction plays in Haugaard’s theory. Thus, the same empirical process is the key to both, normatively desirable and reprehensible relations of power (Haugaard 2015a). Sociologically speaking, the difference between the two can be attributed to the mode of agent’ reflexive (or un-reflexive) engagement with their own practical and discursive consciousness knowledge constituted in the process of socialisation, which brings us to the discussion of the fourth dimension.

2.4. 4D

The fourth dimension of power is concerned with the capacity to mould the dispositions of agents on the level of their ontology which, in Haugaard’s re-inscription, draws mainly on two aspects of Foucault’s work, subjectification and discipline. The extension of the three-dimensional model was originally made by Digeser (1992) who attempts to bring the Foucauldian conception of power into the dialogue with the three-dimensional power debate.

The first three faces agree at some level that A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B’s interests (Lukes 1974, 27): the A’s and B’s are taken as given. In contrast, the fourth face of power does not take as presupposed the subjects (the A’s and B’s) of the other three faces,…. Power4 postulates that subjectivity or individuality is not
biologically given. Subjects are understood as social constructions, whose formation can be historically described (Digeser 1992, p. 980).

The fourth dimension is posited as the logical extension of the 3D model that helps to illuminate the way social subjects become constituted through power relations which are, following Foucault, productive and repressive at the same time. Rather than displacing the 3D conceptions of power, it provides a different level of analysis by focusing on the process of ‘…forging of reasonable, responsible subjects willing and able to sustain the other conceptions of power’ (ibid p.991).

Foucault argues that modernity entailed the epistemic shift which turned human beings into objects of knowledge. This shift is traced from socialization as more-or-less vicarious process in pre-modern periods towards its modern explicit operationalization as an instrument of transmission of specific modes of disciplined subjectivity through the institutions of mass socialization, thus anchoring the power in the tissues of the mind rather than external coercion (Foucault 1971, p. 246, 1977, p. 202). Haugaard (Haugaard 2012a) brings this account on a par with Gellner’s (1983) understanding of the success of modern state which was facilitated, among other things, by the control over the institutions of mass socialisation. At the same time, this process spurred the discussions of what does it mean to fall within the boundaries of the normal. This latter effort, coupled with greater insights into the process of socialisation afforded by the new sciences of men, triggered societal endeavours to mould the individuals into the newly established casts of normalcy on a mass scale.

Foucault identified discipline as a modern form of power characterised by internalisation of the external restraint which produces subjects who are at the same time enabled and constrained by the system into which they have been socialised. This process is explained using the metaphor of Bentham’s panopticon as essentially a socialisation machine (Haugaard 2008b). And traced through multiple institutions with the overall argument that modern disciplinary power flows through the whole social body and produces docile bodies that transmit its effects almost automatically with increasing efficiency and scale (Foucault 1977). The objective was to understand the process of making human individuals into social subjects through relations of power which:

…applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own
identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him (Foucault 1982, p. 781)

There are two distinct aspects of this process which correspond to two meanings that Foucault ascribed to the word subject: ‘...subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge’ (Foucault 1982, p. 781). One refers to the process of systemic integration where the agents gradually internalise specific system of meaning which orders all aspects of agents’ social existence. This, in turn, constrains them to make sense of themselves and the world from within this system (Giddens 1984, Haugaard 2012b). And the other to the necessity to recognise and to be recognised as a social subject within the parameters of their systems, the imposed ‘law of truth’. If agents are to be perceived as competent or reasonable and consequently realise their goals relative to others, their interaction with others must conform to the norms of the system by following the structural blueprint for the interaction – recognition of the law of truth by subjects. Indicating to others that they are dealing with adequately socialised, reasonable, and therefore, socially predictable agent – the recognition of the law of truth in the subject by others. Insofar as agents internalise the norms of the social system and conform to (and reproduce) its social structures, they are subjects (in both senses) of the system into which they have been socialised. As well as dependent on the system for their own identity (Dagg and Haugaard 2016, p. 6).

Haugaard observes similarities between the importance ascribed to discipline as the internalization of constraint by Foucault and the accounts of its role in Weber’s (1958) discussion of the elective affinity between Calvinism and the development of early rational capitalism. Similar emphasis can also be seen in the work of Elias (1994) who observes the increasing importance placed upon the role of internal restraint during the civilising process which allowed the dominating classes to maintain superior status. A similar trend (to an extent) can be seen in Bourdieu’s (1984) account of distinction. These accounts converge on the characterisation of discipline as the internalization of external constraint. However, in contradistinction to Foucault’s account, where it leads to the production of docile, disciplined automatons, the latter three see it in a different light, as a source of the further agency which is achieved through strategic deferral of gratification (Hauggaard 2012a). Weber (1978) also discussed discipline as central to the capacity of functioning in the context of modernity, marked by complexification of social roles. This, in the context of bureaucratic rationality,
demands that agents abide by the principles of a rational instrumentality of the law and bracket their affective or otherwise ‘irrational’ sentiments out of this performance for limited periods of time. Haugaard argues that such bracketing has become a routine feature of everyday life in modernity. The functioning of a modern democratic state is, in its ideal form, premised upon highly disciplined subjects who can exercise self-restraint while enacting the subject positions of authority as well as those who are disciplined enough to let themselves being prevailed upon by said authority. In short, ‘disciplinary deferral of gratification constitutes a condition of possibility for modern democracy’ (Haugaard 2015, p. 156). Haugaard (ibid) uses an example of an engaged scientist exhibiting massive disciplined self-restraint for the purposes that she has set for herself as normatively commendable ideal. He even designates discipline as one of the possible avenues for the further theorisation of Foucauldian ethics as being potentially transformative of one’s own subjectivity (Haugaard 2016).

As observed by Haugaard (2015), many elements make the respective theories (Lukes and Foucault) paradigmatically incommensurable. Especially the relationship between truth, knowledge and power. While Digeser (1992) used the Foucault’s discussion of relationship between power and knowledge to problematize the central epistemological assumptions of 3D debate regarding the nature of power in relation to agency, interests, objective truth, intentionality or subjectivity, it was used to point an inadequacy in the 3D power debate and thus create an opening for fourth dimension. His account did not go far enough in facilitating the dialogue between the two theoretical streams on this level, and it is not clear what the theoretical implications of this extension are for the previous dimensions of power.

In contrast to implicit, normatively negative, connotations ascribed to this process by Foucault and Digeser, Haugaard sees it as normatively Janus faced (Allen et al. 2014). One of Bentham’s imagined uses for panopticon can serve us here as a metaphor. The intention was to use panopticon to subjectify two groups of children, one with felicitous and another with completely infelicitous knowledge (that two and two make five and moon is made of green cheese), and then observe what happens when they

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17 Weber (1978) speaks of the traditional, value-rational, and affective types of social action as being in some way conflicted with the instrumental rationality of modern bureaucratic state.
interact (Foucault 1977). Note that the process of panoptical subjectification was to be used in both instances, what changed from one group to another was the system of meaning instilled through this process.

The Panopticon creates social subjects that can be relied upon to confirm-structure in an ordered way. In a way, the self-surveillance, of the Panopticon is a way of making the individual see themselves in the light of the generalised powerful other, potentially non-confirm-structuring beholder. Because agential power is not top-down but mutually interactive, the powerful actor A requires that B will collaborate in structural

Jeremy Bentham in his panoptical writings conceived of the panopticon not just as a correctional facility, but also sought to extend its principles to other institutions like poorhouses, workhouses, hospitals and schools. One of the imagined uses of the facility was experimental socialisation of children into completely mistaken knowledge of the world and then observing the interaction with other groups of children socialized into conventional forms of knowledge. He writes:

“We are told, somewhere or other, of a King of Egypt (Psammitichus, I think, is his name) who thinking to re-discover the lost original of language, contrived to breed up two children in a sequestered spot, secluded, from the hour of their birth, from all converse with the rest of humankind. No great matters were, I believe, collected from this experiment. An inspection-house, to which a set of children had been consigned from their birth, might afford experiments enough that would be rather more interesting. What say you to a foundling hospital upon this principle? Would **’s manes give you leave to let your present school and build another upon this ground? If I do not miscollect, your brethren in that trust have gone so far as to make a point, where it can be effected, of taking the children out of the [sic] hands of their parents as much as possible, and even, if possible, altogether. If you have gone thus far, you have passed the Rubicon; you may even clap them up in an inspection-house, and then you make of them what you please. You need never grudge the parents a peep behind the curtain in the master’s lodge. There, as often as they had a mind, they might see their children thriving and learning, if that would satisfy them, without interrupting business or counteracting discipline. Improving upon Psammitichus’s experiment, you might keep up a sixteen or eighteen years separation between the male and female part of your young subjects; and at the end of that period see what the language of love would be, when Father Francis’s Ganders were turned into Father Francis’s Geese. I know who would have been delighted to set up an inspection-school, if it were only for the experiment’s sake, and that is Helvetius: at least, if he had been steady to his principles, which he was said to be: for by that contrivance, and by that alone, he might have been enabled to give an experimental proof of the truth of his position (supposing it to be true) that anybody may be taught anything, one person as well as another. It would have been his fault, if what he requires as a condition, viz. that the subjects of the experiment be placed in circumstances exactly similar, were not fulfilled. A rare field for discovery in metaphysics: a science which, now for the first time, may be put to the test of experiment, like any other. Books, conversation, sensible objects, everything, might be given. The genealogy of each observable idea might be traced through all its degrees with the utmost nicety: the parent stocks being all known and numbered. Party men, controversialists of every description, and all other such epicsures, whose mouth waters at the mammon of power, might here give themselves a rich treat, adapted to their several tastes, unembittered by contradiction. Two and two might here be less than four, or the moon might be made of green cheese; if any pious founder, who were rich enough, chose to have her of that material. Surrounded by a circle of pupils, obsequious beyond anything as yet known under the name of obsequiousness, their happiness might in such a mansion be complete, if any moderate number of adherents could content them; which unhappily is not the case. At the end of some twenty or five-and-twenty years, introduce the scholars of the different schools to one another (observing first to tie their hands behind them) and you will see good sport; though perhaps you may think there is enough of that kind of sport already. (Bentham 1995, pp. 91–92)
reproduction. In order to ensure that this takes place, B must have appropriate dispositions. In the Panoptical account of subject formation, Foucault appears to intentionalise this project. Despite stating that power has no centre he still appears to think in terms of the powerful creating disciplinary practices, which are then internalized by the subaltern, and no longer require the powerful, which is why power is capillary (Kurylo 2017). However, if Foucault’s account is supplemented with Weber and Elias, we decentralise even more. We see that the confirming structuration is ensured through very subtle practices of competition between actors. In Weber’s account of Calvinism, we see agent driven to incredible lengths of self-regulation driven by the avoidance of sin and ontological anxiety related to the Calvinist concept of pre-destination, and (maybe less emphasised by Weber) the competitive desire to be more elect than their neighbour. The moralising superiority of belonging to the saved can only be achieved through self-restraint and control. In Elias’ and Bourdieu’s work, we see the internalisation of self-restraint driven by a desire for distinction from those lower in the social hierarchy. Social actors accumulate cultural capital, as self-restraint, to set themselves apart. This creates an internalisation of constraint that makes them highly reliable confirm-structurers. Even when confirm-structuration is against their immediate interests, they persevere. This also has an enabling aspect. As Haugaard (2015) argues, the democratic system is a complex system of turn-taking which is premised upon social actors who are highly self-disciplined. It requires social actors who are willing to value process over the outcome – the democratic process over their momentary gains.

So, the question should not be whether the process of subjectification is normatively good or bad in principle, but what kind of subjectivity is being produced, how is produced, and to what purpose? On the one hand, the process of subjectification has the potential to curtail agents’ reflexivity regarding their knowledge. Such instances typically entail a simple, disciplined stimulus-response relationship between structuration and confirm-structuration which by-passes the agents’ reflexive understanding entirely and leads to the production of docile, disciplined automatons who will continue to confirm-structure given relationships of power (or de-structure novel attempts at augmentation) without ever attempting to examine their epistemic foundations discursively. Thus, creating a type of agent whose ontological disposition is conducive to the reproduction of relationships of domination. On the other hand,
the process of subjectification has potential to foster reflexivity and produce highly independent and disciplined subjects that have the capacities to question, to examine discursively, the contents of their own practical consciousness practices in the context of the social system, decide whether to accept them or not and set the goals for themselves. What can be termed as Kantian courage to enlightenment which propels agents to confront the taken-for-granted aspects of one’s being reflexive with reason before allowing them to guide one’ being. Such reflexive mode of engagement with one’s knowledge either translates into a practice of reproduction of social systems premised on agents’ understanding and acceptance of the given societal configuration where agents continue to confirm-structure the features of a given system precisely because they have examined their practical consciousness reflexively and found it acceptable. Or, this reflexive evaluation of one’s knowledge can lead to active attempts at de-structuring of the taken-for-granted aspects of the system agents find unpalatable, even at the risk of being constructed as unreasonable within given system of meaning. Note that societal reproduction is, in both cases, contingent on the same empirical process – confirm structuration. What differentiates the latter from the former is the ontological disposition towards reflexivity acquired in the process of socialisation.

2.5. Bringing the dimensions together.

Even though the four dimensions of power were discussed in separation, this distinction is strictly analytical. While the analytical separation of power into dimensions makes sense for the purposes of theory building and understanding the operation of power on multiple, qualitatively different, levels. All four dimensions operate simultaneously in real life. Although, in certain specific instances, the social theorist may perceive that one dimension is more crucial than the others, and so designate a specific interaction as, for instance, 2D power. Such a designation suggests that 2D was determinate of the outcome of the interaction, but it does not imply that the other dimensions were absent. As we saw, each dimension of power nests theoretically within the next, moving from simple interaction on the level of practice (1D), to structural constraint (2D), social knowledge (3D) and ontological
dispositions (4D). This simultaneous operation is exemplified in Haugaard’s discussion of Habitus to which we turn shortly.

Haugaard arrives at the notion of Habitus through family-resentblancing the living hell out of the commensurable perspectives of Searle (1995) background, Elias’s (1994) second nature and, of course, Bourdieu’s (1984, 1990) work through the prism of (re)structuration theory. Habitus is here understood as both epistemological and ontological embodiment of the knowledge of social system sedimented on the level of the individual through the process of socialisation that enables agents to make sense of their world and constitutes the nexus from which they generate their practices. It is thus dispositional concept which is at the same time enabling and constraining. As a product of a particular socio-cultural figuration/field/sets-of-rules-of-interaction/ring-of-reference, it predisposes the agents towards certain modes of being which affords them capacity, power-to, act, to felicitously interact with others and induce their confirm-structuration, within that socio-cultural figuration/field/sets-of-rules-of-interaction/ring-of-reference but might preclude them from achieving the same in others (Haugaard 2008b). The epistemological aspects include the taken-for-granted knowledge of social world sedimented into practical consciousness which, in turn, structures the discursive consciousness of agents.

Insofar as the theory centres on agents as knowledgeable experts on their social world, if only on the level of practical consciousness, as well as reproducers of social system in the course of wielding social power over one another, all four dimensions operate through the individual and the theory thus needs a four-dimensional account of the self. To be sure it is not the case that theoretical resources for such endeavour are lacking. Quite the contrary, Haugaard offers numerous indicia in his discussion of 4D power and habitus (which was developed before the 4D model) that enable us to sketch out the contours of such account which can then be coloured in with the recourse to the elements of (re)structuration 4D model of power outlined so far. I believe that much of this work has already been achieved in the previous discussion which sought to flesh out each dimension with explicit reference to the praxiological reproduction of structures by agents in the context of (re)structuration theory. All that remains is their explicit joint articulation which should not take long since the theoretical heavy lifting has already been done.
When read against the background of what has already been said about the four dimensions of power, the correspondence between the first three dimensions of power becomes obvious. The first dimension, interaction through practice, needs no further discussion. The second dimension brings a slight shift in emphasis from structures in general to the structural conditions of possibility afforded by the social system and perceived on the level of agent’s discursive consciousness. Again this is not to discard the second dimension, but to read the agent into it. The third dimension refers to the boundaries of the above which are set out by the agents’ tacit, knowledge of the world sedimented on the level of practical consciousness. Together these epistemic aspects constitute what Haugaard calls interpretive horizon, the knowledge-based aspect of habitus which is determined by the constant interplay between the discursive and practical consciousness.

But, the correspondence between habitus and fourth, ontological, dimension of power requires further discussion. The 4D model of power conceptualised power as a discipline, the capacity to create the ontological dispositions towards particular forms of self-constraint which bind agents to particular modes of engagement with the world. Rooted predominantly in Foucault’s account of subjectivity, which makes the agents doubly subject to the system in which they were integrated through the productive capacity to act felicitously and their own identity.

For Bourdieu, the habitus also has also another, less clear and tangible, element somewhat lyrically described as attempting: ‘...to capture the intentionality without intention, the knowledge without cognitive intent, the prereflective, infraconscious mastery that agents acquire of their social world by way of durable immersion with it’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 19). The acquisition of such bodily disposition is marked by continuous affective transactions with the environment, which appear to be guided by the principle of the aversion of negative emotions:

It is because the body is exposed and endangered in the world, faced with the risk of emotion, lesion, suffering, sometimes death and therefore obliged to take the world seriously (and nothing is more serious than emotion, which touches the depths of our organic being) that it is able to acquire dispositions that are themselves openness to the world, to the very structures of the world of which they are an incorporated form...We learn bodily. The social order inscribes itself in bodies through this permanent confrontation, which may be more or less dramatic but it is
always largely marked by affectivity and, more precisely, by affective transactions with the environment (Bourdieu 2000, p. 140).

At the same time, as discussed in the section on 4D power, the acquisition of the bodily dispositions also enables the agents to take up a position within the field and derives a sense of mastery and accomplishment which, although not explicitly stated by Bourdieu, is dangerously close to the concept of ontological security (ibid, pp. 141 - 160).

Giddens’ model also presupposes an element of the self that is beyond the epistemic reach of the individual - the unconscious - referring to those motivational aspects of existence that are: ‘...either wholly repressed from consciousness or appear only in distorted form’ (Giddens 1984, 5). This acquired ‘prerreflective’ aspect, is something outside of the epistemic reach of the individuals, and yet exerts influence over their action on a deeply ontological level that agents themselves rarely understand. And includes a strong drive towards the maintenance of ontological security, or rather the avoidance of ontological insecurity. From this perspective, the processes described above are essentially premised upon long-term reification of the certain aspects of the epistemic system and the bodily inscription of the extra-discursive rules of social interaction which takes place through ongoing interaction. And a significant part of this process is the establishment of the sense of ontological security derived from the habitual reproduction of the reified structures.

Following this overlap in understanding (rather than explicit commensurability of the theoretical positions), I propose to posit the fourth dimension of power as operating on those aspects of the habitus which are, following Giddens, influencing agency in a way that either bypasses the agent’s epistemic (both practical and discursive consciousness) horizon completely or becomes registered by them only in a very distorted manner. And encompasses both the agents’ disciplinary dispositions towards particular modes of being and engagement with knowledge. As well as the role of ontological security the agents derive from the alignment between their taken-for-granted knowledge of the world and their capacity function competently in it as reflected in the reactions of others.

Together, this theoretical lens provides us with a set of conceptual and analytical tools that enable us to characterise any given social interaction along a continuum with a situation of pure consensus on one end and pure conflict on the other. It
follows that both ends constitute ideal types which will rarely be exemplified in real life situations. It is more likely that those will involve a combination of consensus and conflict on both sides either with regards to the structures that guide the interaction or with regards to the goals of involved agents. Thus, the real world situations tend to fall somewhere between those two poles as either predominantly consensual or predominantly conflictual (Haugaard 1997, p. 144). Haugaard (ibid) has outlined the possible permutations of interaction along those lines (presented in the abbreviated form in the table below)

Table 2: Possible modalities of interaction, adapted from Haugaard (1997, pp. 144-145)

And the four-dimensional model can help us to proliferate the analysis further. However, instead of making six possible permutations into a much higher number (sorry my math is bad) and proceeding with a detailed (and unlike the rest of the thesis, boring) theoretical discussion of the possible mismatches and conflicts between individual dimensions within every possibility. All I wish to state at this point is that any interaction falls between the two ideal type poles which involve either a perfect resonance across the four dimensions between the interacting agents’ habitus (plural) - pure consensus, or a perfect dissonance across the dimensions of habitus - (pure conflict). And that the details regarding the relationship between goals and structures have to be teased out, using the theoretical model developed above, in the context of the concrete empirical cases, which brings me to the next chapter - methodology.
3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

Previous chapters have introduced the ontological and epistemological positioning of Haugard’s project which locates the social in the practices of agents enmeshed in local systems of meaning which affords them agency. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodology, the how in terms of overcoming the distance between the theory and the empirical case before they can be brought together. Returning to the intention of the project to follow the path concerned with understanding and interpretation of social action as meaningful to subjects embedded in their social context set out by Weber in the introduction, this study makes use of the interpretive paradigm in social sciences in general. From its inception the interpretive tradition is marked by a series of schisms and fractions resulting in a field that is criss-crossed with overlapping approaches that share certain ontological and epistemological assumptions. But diverge on the theories used as well as exact process of analyses, which is why the chapter begins with a general discussion of the interpretive paradigm before moving on to introduce the specific methodology guiding the project – Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith 1996). The IPA is a methodological approach originating in the field of qualitative health psychology and was designed to interpret the participant’s understanding of experience in relation to phenomena of researchers’ interests. While the choice of an explicitly psychological method to do sociology might seem odd given the differing foci of investigation between the disciplines. It was not arbitrary, and I will argue that its ontological and epistemological assumptions make it a fitting tool given the theoretical and empirical interests of this project. At the same time, it must be recognised that the IPA was developed for the purpose of understanding of the individuals’ experience, and its successful integration into a sociological study requires some tweaking with regard to widening the analytical frame to capture much more of the socio-cultural context under study. After this method-theoretical gymnastic, the chapter moves on to describe the overall research design and outline the analytical steps taken in the process of this study.
3.2. Characterizing the Interpretive Paradigm

Interpretive approaches represent one of the major methodological paradigms in social sciences, origins of which can be traced to the work of Neo-Kantians Wilhelm Dilthey (1991) and Heinrich Rickert (1962). As well as to the work of Mead (1934) which developed in parallel with the European interpretive tradition (Etzrodt 2008). The interpretive paradigm is closely intertwined with sociology from its early stages through the work of its founding figures Weber (1978, 1981) and Simmel (1910, 1977) and was since subject to numerous reinterpretations as it developed and branched out alongside the discipline itself. Some of the main approaches associated with the interpretive project are Symbolic Interactionism, formulated by Blumer (1986) and further elaborated by Becker (1953, 1963), Goffman (1959, 1968), Glaser and Strauss (1964) and Denzin (1969). Ethnomethodology which is traced to Garfinkel’s (1984) reading of Weber alongside the phenomenology of Schutz (1962, 1967). And, Interpretive Anthropology of Clifford Geertz (1973), as well as Peter Winch (2008) who brought it into the dialogue with the linguistic approach of Wittgenstein (1968). This list is by no means exclusive, and the influence of interpretive paradigm can be felt across the spectrum of social sciences (David 2010).

It follows that being subject to so many reinterpretations, the interpretive tradition entails a range of discipline-specific theoretical and methodological assumptions rather than a singular, unifying paradigm. Such state of affairs is seldom possible without a degree of internal tensions between respective perspectives, which can be traced, in the case of interpretive sociology, to the relationship between Weber and Simmel’s work (c.f. Lichtblau 1991).

While the proper genealogy of various strands of interpretive sociology and discussion of its internal disagreements is beyond the scope of the argument being developed here, the above paragraph helps us to grasp the variety of approaches under the umbrella of interpretive sociology. At the same time, these schools of thought would not congregate under the banner of interpretive paradigm if they did not have something in common. Following Wittgenstein (1968), I would suggest treating the interpretive paradigm as a family resemblance concept and propose to look for a set
of characteristics that capture the general similarities of the concept across contexts without the recourse to privileging a single specific iteration at the expense of others. Drawing out these general characteristics will enable us to establish the ontological and epistemological commensurability between Haugaard’s framework, the interpretive paradigm and the IPA as one of the members of the interpretive family.

One way to begin the characterisation of the interpretive project is through the distinction to the positivist approaches which tend to occupy the hegemonic position within scientific communities today. The latter are characterised by a firm belief in the existence of external, physical, reality guided by underlying laws and mechanisms and conviction that knowledge of this reality can be uncovered using appropriate scientific method (Clarke 2009). The positivist perspective originates in the realm of natural sciences where it met with success in discovering underlying causal principles. It was perhaps this success in Physics, Mathematics and other natural disciplines that precipitated the emulation of positivist approaches to enquiry in social and human sciences as their proponents attempted to establish their disciplines as scientific. Proponents of the interpretive paradigm, on the other hand, assume that there is a difference between objective ‘out there’ reality of physical objects subjected to natural forces and the socially constructed system of relationships that exists between humans in society. In this world-view, socially constructed knowledge mediates the access to objective reality (Wai Fong Chua 1988). The task of the researcher is not arriving at some transcendental truth which allows for the generation of universal laws but seeking to understand and interpret the social reality in terms of this socially constructed knowledge. Willis (Willis 2007, p. 72) highlights five aspects of research that can help us hinge the distinction between interpretive and positivist paradigmatic worldviews: the nature of reality, the purpose of research, acceptable methods and data, meaning and interpretation of the data and relationship between research and practice.

3.2.1.1. Nature of reality

The positivist paradigm assumes the existence of objective external reality in both the natural and social realms. Because this reality exists outside of our symbolic preconceptions about it, its ontological dimension can be accessed empirically. And this access can be objective, unmediated and relatively unproblematic given that
adequate method of inquiry and empirical data are used (Lin 1998). While the interpretive position accepts the existence of external reality, it presents a significant challenge for the positivist claim that we can come to know this reality objectively. The individuals approach and interpret the external reality through cognitive constructs and categories of meaning which are, in themselves, an outcome of social interactions in which they find themselves (Rabinow 1987). Two important things stand out here. First, that we do not have a direct, unmediated, access to the objective reality - if the experience of external reality is mediated by categories and constructs, then the implicit assumption, particularly in the realm of social science where the focus is often upon people’s interpretations of reality, is that we cannot uncover the objective knowledge (Denzin and Lincoln 2008). And second, the process of construction of social reality is not an individual oeuvre, but an intersubjective process. People do not construct the meaning of reality in isolation from others. Meaning is constituted in interaction whereby phenomena become meaningful because members of the group uphold and reproduce them together (Willis, 2007).

Interpretive paradigm then operates with the notion of multiple possible realities embedded in multiple symbolic systems which confer meaning upon the external world for agents.

3.2.1.2. Purpose of research

The positivist belief in objective social reality translates into the conviction that it can be accessed through scientific method and sees the purpose of research in uncovering the formal and universal aspects of this reality, which, in turn, allows for generalizations and formulations of causal relationships that will ultimately facilitate prediction of future phenomena through experience, observation and hypothesis testing (Clarke, 2009). By contrast, the interpretive perspective challenges the possibility of unmediated access to the social reality of people under investigation. If the attempts to discover objective reality are next to futile, then the interpretive perspective entails a reconceptualisation of the role and purpose of research, which is viewed as a socially constructed activity. Any method of inquiry is unavoidably rooted in specific theoretical positions which are meaningful and acceptable to the extent that a group of scholars agree upon them (Willis, 2007). Drawing upon several philosophical movements that highlight construction of meaning and understanding as central aims of scholarship such as hermeneutics and phenomenology, the proponents
of interpretive approach argue that search for universal law-like explanations should be abandoned in favour of the generation of situated knowledge. That is, the research should concentrate on the understanding of the given phenomena or situations in their immediate contexts. This intent is expressed in Weber’s work concerned with ‘verstehen’. A concept which, in the context of the original work, translates to both understanding and interpretation (David, 2010). The purpose of the research is, then, understanding of the given social phenomenon from within the standpoint of those who experience it. Such effort entails the proverbial mile in someone else’s shoes, the detailed examination of the local-communal systems of meaning that guide their social action as well as their context. And their subsequent interpretation, or translation of this knowledge into the system of meaning of the audience for which the research is intended.

3.2.1.3. Acceptable methodology and data

Positivist attempts to uncover causal relationships is a formidable aspiration. To this end, the researchers accept and employ only a rigorous scientific method that adheres to strict technical standards. Where possible, the positivist intent requires researchers to attempt to control the research situation as much as possible so the formal aspects and relationships can be isolated and separated from the confounding ones (Ebring 2015). As such, the whole research situation is meticulously planned in line with pre-existing theoretical frameworks, and, there is a strong drive towards implementation fidelity to the research plan. The data for such analyses tend to be predominantly of quantitative character due to a great emphasis on the standards of objectivity, falsifiability, generalizability and validity attributed to Campbell and Stanley (1963). In contradistinction to the central role that positivist tradition ascribes to the correct scientific methodology, the shift towards particularistic contextual understanding as the goal of research in the interpretive paradigm allows for a significant degree of variation in the use of individual methods, as well as in the sources of data admissible for analysis. There are very little restrictions on the data that can be used, and the Interpretive researchers have applied a number of methods rooted in both qualitative and quantitative traditions to even more diverse sources of data with the aim to capture the contextual complexities that are present in any sociological problem. Including (but not limited to) ethnography, participant observation, discourse analysis, case studies, narrative analysis and phenomenology. In addition to the employment of this
varied methodology, interpretive research strives to examine given phenomena from the standpoint of multiple theoretical perspectives (Rabinow 1987, Denzin and Lincoln 2011, Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2015).

3.2.1.4. Meaning of the data

While the positivist search of the universals relies on using data analysis to test theoretical propositions through verification or falsification of very focused hypotheses, subscription to the premises aspirations and a methodological plurality of interpretive paradigm also entails a shift in the expectations imposed upon research itself. It is the understanding of phenomena situated in their local and historical contexts orienting the analysis in interpretive paradigm. Not the search for the universal laws. Moreover, this position rejects the possibility of objective, unmediated knowledge divorced from subjective preconception and therefore the possibility of finding absolute truth (Gadamer et al. 2004). Thus, even the goal of understanding a specific situation and its subsequent interpretation is thought to be subjective. That is, the interpretation takes place from the perspective of the researcher informed by her scholastic, social and personal background (Christopher et al. 2003). These influences are often made explicit through the process of reflexivity which potentially counterbalance the subjectivity of the research. The scepticism held towards the search for generalisations and universal principles in the interpretive perspective does not mean that the locally generated knowledge cannot transcend its context. However, there are important differences between the perspectives. Positivism usually (ideally) employs what is termed ‘technical rationality’. At the risk of oversimplification, this term denotes a process where the research leads to the generation of laws and rules that are later applied to other contexts (c.f. Schön 2002). Interpretivists would, on the other hand, argue that the application of pre-existing research findings to new contexts is not a matter of the simple instrumental application of the principles because the new situation may not be easily understood. The application of previous research finding is posed as a matter of reflexivity, rather than technical rationality (Smith 1989, 1993). This process allows researchers and practitioners to draw upon rich contextual knowledge build around particular cases, often from multiple perspectives. And to adapt it accordingly to their judgement and knowledge of the phenomena under investigation that enables them to identify points of overlap between elements of their and other cases.
3.2.1.5. Relationship of research and practice

When it comes to the relationship between research and practice, the positivist paradigm maintains a strict distinction between the two, largely on the grounds of objectivity of research. While the practice is done by interested, subjective, agents and takes place in natural settings. The research should be done by objective, disinterested, researchers in a controlled situation in the attempt to find the universals then to be used to guide practice (Willis 2007). The interpretive position, on the other hand, advocates more reciprocal relationships between research and practice. The practitioners themselves can make ideal researchers because of particularly rich contextual knowledge they already possess, or researchers in pursuit of understanding can approach them. However, the resulting knowledge is not the truth with capital T. It is understanding. The essential difference between the two is that while particularistic understanding informs a decision maker and forms a part of the deliberative, reflexive process on the grounds of contextual similarity. The positivist truth can be extrapolated to other contexts directly as a rule without reflection (Willis 1997, p. 121). So, interpretive research aspires to provide adaptable guidelines that orient practice, while maintaining the possibility or reciprocal feedback between practice and research (Thorne 2016).

3.2.2. Something in common

While these paradigmatic positions embody rather different sets of beliefs, characteristics and objectives of research, they are not entirely incompatible. Proponents of interpretive paradigm have often incorporated findings and methods (as opposed to full methodologies) of the positivist paradigm. This inter-paradigmatic flow of knowledge, however, tends to be unidirectional. The premises of positivism are much more restrictive when it comes to acceptance of diverse methodologies and findings of interpretive paradigm than is the case in the opposite direction (Willis 2007). If this transfer is possible, then some overlap must exist. Yanow identified two attributes of research pertinent to both perspectives, even if they are dealt with quite differently within the boundaries of respective paradigms. One concerns the attitude of doubt and the other procedural systematicity (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2015). The attitude of doubt can be seen in both positivist self-doubt expressed in the shift from theory verification to Popper’s falsification (Sassower 2014, Ebringer 2015) and in the interpretive assertion that any specific interpretation of a phenomenon is inevitably
influenced by the researchers’ subjectivity (Bonner 2001). The procedural systematicity, while relevant to both, is also addressed differently within each tradition. The positivist tradition tends to judge the quality of research relative to a set of what they perceive to be objective criteria embodied in the notions of falsifiability, validity or generalizability. Given the aims of the interpretive tradition, its proponents would have little use for criteria based upon positivist belief in the objective knowledge. However, as the fields of qualitative, and particularly interpretive research proliferated and developed their own institutions, the need for some kind of criteria of quality have developed with it (Denzin and Lincoln 2008). The quality of interpretive research is considered in terms of alternative concepts of thick description, reflexivity and triangulation (Creswell and Miller 2000).

3.2.2.1. Thick description

The concept of thick description made its way into wider social research from the field of anthropological ethnography through the work of Clifford Geertz (1973). He argued that notion of thick description, elaborated by Gilbert Ryle (1971 in Geertz 1973), best characterises the nature and interpretation of ethnographic work. This effort is not content with the mere surface description but emphasises exhaustive descriptions of studied phenomena in their socials context with the aim to allow even complete outsiders to interpret the meaning of a concrete situation. Or, in other words: ‘produce for the readers the feeling that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described in a study’ (Creswell and Miller, 2000 p.129).

This effort has several interrelated aspects that can be teased out of Geertz’s account. Rich and detailed characterisations of the studied group and its symbolic system. Elaboration of possible ways that particular behaviour (phenomenon) can be interpreted within this symbolic system. And the comprehensive description of the context of a particular phenomenon and its likely interpretation on the part of the agents under study. Geertz uses Ryle’s example of the wink to demonstrate this point. Wink can be described as the twitching movement of the muscles in the eye. This would be what Geertz (1973) refers to as ‘thin’, superficial description. However, while this twitching movement may well be an involuntary reflex, it can also encompass several meanings that differ in relation to the context in which it occurs. It
for Ryle, it can represent a sign of conspiracy, mockery, or even a fake sign of conspiracy (Ryle 1971, in Geertz 1973 pp. 6-7). If we take, for example, a wink in the context of conspiracy:

The winker is communicating, and indeed communicating in a quite precise and special way: (1) deliberately, (2) to someone in particular, (3) to impart a particular message, (4) according to a socially established code, and (5) without cognizance to the rest of the company (ibid, p. 8).

Such wink is physically indistinguishable from the involuntary twitching eye movement. There is little basis for distinguishing between the meaning of a wink in a particular situation unless we know the possible meanings it can take on and have access to the particular context in which it took place. This notion has been adopted in the wider field of qualitative research where it serves as an alternative form of support to claims of credibility and generalizability. The credibility becomes established through the process of exhaustive contextualization of the phenomena that allow the reader to interpret the reports as authentic. And the detailed contextual descriptions can facilitate generalizability or transferability to other settings based upon resemblances between contexts or their elements (Creswell and Miller 2000, p. 129).

3.2.2.2. Reflexivity

The notion of reflexivity is often inflected in relation to qualitative research across different paradigms. As a result, its use changes with the context of research and the concept itself can mean anything from mild methodological self-criticism to full-blown ontology (c.f. Lynch 2000). I believe, following Wittgenstein, that treatment of reflexivity as family resemblance concept can be very helpful in the face of such diversity. It will allow me to identify how reflexivity will be used in my project without recourse to a set of necessary characteristics that would fit all of its instances. My project will make use of two variations of this concept that are closely related to the premises of interpretive tradition.

First, reflexivity can be described as an ontological category, sort of permanent condition of existence that treats agents themselves as reflexive. They are continuously aware of their circumstances and well able to interpret the particularities of their situation in a wider social context and adapt their actions. This reflexive monitoring of contexts occurs on multiple levels of consciousness (discursive, practical and
unconscious) and agents might not be actively aware of the process (Giddens 1984). Thus, rather than treating agents under study as autonomous, rational and acting independently, they will be considered as situated in and reflexive of their social contexts (including power relations they find themselves in) which in itself is an outcome of societal interactions. And the process whereby actors reflected and acted upon the specificities of their situations will be made explicit where applicable.

Extending this ontological conception of reflexivity to the researcher and research process itself as subjective endeavour brings us to the second sense that is more often discussed in the context of methodology - the notion of reflexivity as an epistemological issue. This entails acknowledgement of the recursive nature of the relationship between a phenomenon, researcher and interpretation. As well as the role and power of the researcher (in all her subjectivity) as the main analytical tool of research (Scheurich and Bell McKenzie 2008, p. 332). Such position demands that researchers disclose the theoretical and personal influences they bring into the study with them, this allows the readers to understand and/or bracket the researcher’s position if necessary (Creswell and Miller 2000, p. 127). I believe I have accomplished this intention in the two preceding chapters and will strive to make my own perspective and role in the research process explicit throughout the empirical part.

3.2.2.3. Triangulation

Triangulation in qualitative research, much like in geometry, concerns the corroboration of the point in question from different angles. Amounting, in the context of interpretive research paradigm, to the use of multiple sources of data, methods of data-collection, analytical tools, as well as multiple researchers, theories or paradigms in the attempt to ‘decrease, negate, or counterbalance the deficiency of a single strategy, thereby increasing the ability to interpret the findings’ (Thurmond 2001, p. 254). Aimed at safeguarding the trustworthiness and multidimensionality of the research and enhancing the overall explanatory capacity of the interpretation (Creswell and Miller 2000, Willis 2007). This project makes use of a number of those strategies. First, as will be specified in section 3.4, I have used multiple sources of data and applied both inductive and retroductive (in this particular aspect it is a bi-angulation) analytical processes to different data. Second, Haugaard’s theoretical framework can in itself be considered triangulatory due to its family-
resemblance-driven approach to integration of disparate theories, and I have used elements from others, such as Laclau’s (1990) concept of dislocation and Rosa’s (2014) concept of resonance. And third, while the analytical process was a work of a lone researcher, the emerging results and interpretations were regularly reviewed against the raw data by my supervisor.

3.3. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

IPA emerged in the mid-1990s in the field of health psychology as a response to growing divide between phenomenological and positivist approaches, and the perceived hegemony of quantitative, positivist stream of thought concerned with the search for generalisations and laws of human behaviour. According to Jonathan Smith, author of the seminal work on IPA (Smith 1996), this positivist stream took a foothold in psychology to the extent that it marginalized alternative approaches concerned with understanding of the individual experiences envisaged by, for example, William James (1890) or Gordon Allport (1940). Smith argued that while the quantitative approaches enable researchers to examine large segments of the population in a manner akin to hard sciences, there is also a need for an approach that will enable them to engage with individual experience in more depth. The rationale for such approach was to allow the researchers to ground the more formal and theoretical accounts of positivist psychology in the lived experience in order to determine the boundaries of illness on the level of the individual body. Thus, opening a space for dialogue with more positivist approaches (Smith 1996, pp. 264–269). Inspired by the qualitative work in medical sociology concerned with patient experience and constructions of chronic illness (Anderson & Bury, 1988; Conrad, 1990; Silverman, 1985), he utilized the phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions of thought that have been underrepresented in psychology even though they connect to long-standing intellectual developments in social sciences more generally. What intrigued him about these approaches was that they did not attempt to test predefined theoretical hypotheses, but engaged with the constructions, meanings and issues of concern that emerged from a close inductive reading of participants’ accounts.
3.3.1. Aims of IPA

IPA is concerned with capturing the quality, texture and meaning of participants’ experience while acknowledging the experience itself is not directly accessible to the researcher. So, every account of the experience is already an interpretation. An interpretation by the participant, who is attempting to make sense of the phenomenon in question in the accounts they provide. And, the researchers’ interpretations of that account. ‘As a result, the researcher is engaged in a ‘double hermeneutic’ as (s)he ‘is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them’ (Smith et al. 2009, p. 9). IPA engages with participants’ accounts with two aims. First is to understand and communicate the experience of the participant. Here, the intention is to examine the process of construction of meaning in relation to a phenomenon under study. What was the experience like for the participants, how they engaged with it and what they felt (Brocki and Wearden 2006). The second aim is to provide an interpretation of the phenomenological account situating it in a wider social and cultural context. This interpretative aspect intends to take the analysis beyond the lived experience and understanding of the participants into a more speculative terrain of second-order analysis that re-describes the individual experience in terms of socio-cultural processes and theoretical constructs relevant to the research problem. This engagement with theoretical constructs at the later stages of analysis is what differentiates IPA from related descriptive phenomenological approaches such as grounded theory (Larkin et al. 2006). It is important to stress that while the analysis goes beyond the participant’s own words, and perhaps understanding (the language of theoretical psychology or sociology can be daunting to a layperson even when discussing common sense phenomena), the idiographic commitment of IPA to the particular over the general requires researchers to ground the analysis in participants’ accounts. Thus, any emerging speculative inferences are to be checked in participants’ transcripts (Eatough and Smith 2017).

Another important feature of IPA is explicit recognition of the role of the researcher at all stages of the research process (Smith et al., 2009). The issue of researcher reflexivity in IPA will be discussed throughout the chapter, but it will be useful to outline its importance in relation to the two main aims of IPA now. IPA accepts that the analytic process cannot access the experience directly and that:
‘Access is both dependant on, and complicated by, the researcher’s own conceptions which are required in order to make sense of that other personal world through a process of interpretative activity’ (Smith 1996, p. 264). Or, in other words, the best that can be achieved at the phenomenological account is a third-person interpretation trying to get as close as possible to first-person interpretation of an experience that is always mediated by their own socio-cultural categories of meaning (Larkin et al. 2006).

3.3.2. Theoretical underpinnings

Even though the IPA does not present completely unified theoretical framework, it is firmly rooted in three intellectual traditions prominent in interpretive social sciences: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith 2004). The full account of these traditions is beyond the scope of this chapter, but they will be discussed briefly in order to show how they relate to IPA process and to demonstrate the onto-epistemological commensurability with the (re)structuration theory.

3.3.2.1. Phenomenology

Phenomenology represents a philosophical approach to the study of experience from the perspective of those who live through it. This endeavour began with Husserl’s (1970) philosophical engagement with his own experience. He was interested in uncovering the essential features of experience on its own terms. This process involved suspension, or bracketing, of the taken-for-granted preconceptions and focusing on the process of experience itself in a series of reductive steps intended to uncover its general essence through reflection. While the IPA has more in common with the later reformulations of phenomenological thought, embodied most notably in the work of Heidegger, its founders acknowledge an intellectual debt to Husserl’s work. This is with respect to setting out the agenda for systematic examination of experience and its perception as well as the idea of bracketing individual preconceptions that allow the investigator to step outside his or her taken-for-granted world (Smith et al. 2009, p. 16). Husserl’s project was concerned with uncovering the essential features and processes of experience undistorted by individual preconceptions. In contrast: Heidegger is more concerned ‘with the ontological question of existence itself and with the practical activities and relationships which we are caught up in, and through which the world
appears to us, and is made meaningful’ (ibid). Heidegger questioned the possibility of the existence of such independent knowledge because humans are, for him, always situated in already existing systems of meanings that establish relationships between the elements of the external world.

This situated quality is captured by the term ‘dasein’ that Heidegger (Heidegger 1996) uses when discussing human being. It is often translated as being-in-the-world but literally means ‘being there’ and has a definite temporal element (Spinelli 1989, p. 108). What it means is that individuals are always persons-in-context, situated in an already existing system of meaning, and using the categories of that system to experience and make sense of the world. These categories of understanding and engagement with the world then afford the agents a kind of an interpretative horizon that determines what is possible and what is meaningful in a given context.

The possibilities that the external world affords to agents are not some intrinsic qualities inherent in the physical things themselves. They are a product of the systems of meaning individuals are enmeshed in which confer particular significance and utility upon the elements of the external world. For example, an independently existing mountain (I am already drawing upon my categories of meaning) can be perceived as a natural obstacle by someone who is planning roads, or it can be an object of religious significance as is the case of the Sinai or Fuji mountains in Christian and Japanese traditions respectively. Alternatively, it can be perceived as an object of scientific interest or a challenge to be conquered by mountaineers. All these meanings can be projected on to an externally existing mountain depending on who engages with it. These meanings are not invented anew by the individual; they are a property of a social system that is transmitted through our engagement with others and embodied on a level of the individual. Heidegger also considers the intersubjective dimension which enables him to theorise human capacity to understand, communicate with and make sense of each other through ‘shared, overlapping and relational nature of our engagement with the world’ (Smith et al., 2009, p. 17).

What repeatedly emerges as Heidegger’s contribution to the phenomenological foundation of IPA is the contention that individuals are always situated in the existing system of meaning. As well as the claim that our being-in-the-world is always temporal, perspectival and relational which places the human meaning-making
activities at the centre of phenomenological research (ibid p.18). Heidegger’s work will also be discussed further in the next section on hermeneutics.

In addition to Husserl and Heidegger, IPA traces its phenomenological roots to the works of Merleau-Ponty and Sartre (Shinebourne 2011). Merleau-Ponty (1962) emphasised the embodied nature of individuals’ subjective perspective in engagement with the world. According to this position, each individual represents a unique configuration of meanings acquired in the process of their own interaction with commonly shared and meaningful world. As a result, our own understanding of the others develops from within this unique embodied perspective that privileges our personal worldview. We can only relate to the other through this subjective understanding: ‘The grief and the anger of another have never quite the same significance for him as they have for me. For him these situations are lived through, for me, they are displayed’ (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 415). What is important here is that while it is possible for us to imagine how we would feel in a place of another, we can never entirely share their experience because it is a product of their unique embodied position in the world. (Smith et al. 2009).

The phenomenological works of Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty highlight the importance of focusing upon experience and meaning-making process. They also direct the IPA researchers to recognise that each individual is embedded within a system of meanings, purposes and relationships with others and the world. It also commits the researchers to see each individual’ perspective as engaging with the world in a personal manner that cannot be completely captured and therefore highlights the importance of intersubjective understanding and interpretation (Smith et al. 2009). Bringing us to the discussion of hermeneutics and its importance for the IPA.

3.3.2.2. Hermeneutics

The discipline of hermeneutics was originally concerned with theory and method of interpretation of religious texts. The meaning of the term was, over time, extended to cover the interpretation of meaning across social sciences (Grondin 1994). This effort entailed the examination of ancient texts with respect to the meaning of particular segments of the text in relation to other sections of the text, other documents and social and political context of the era in which it was written (Willis, 2007). Social sciences adapted the hermeneutic tradition in order to examine and
interpret the meaning of human action in its context. As is the case with phenomenology, there are many hermeneutic strands of thought. For example, Smith (1989) identified three versions: philosophical, (focused on understanding), critical (focused on critique of relations of oppression) and validation (focused on positivist testing of predefined hypotheses) hermeneutics, and argued that they converge on two points, the importance of language in understanding and the emphasis on context as being central to the interpretation of meaning. The IPA draws mainly on the work of philosophical hermeneutics, in particular, Schleiermacher, Heidegger and Gadamer (Smith et al., 2009).

Schleiermacher was one of the first thinkers that engaged with the theory and process of interpretation systematically and sought to apply hermeneutics beyond its original concern with religious texts. He proposed a distinction between grammatical and psychological interpretation and argued for a complementary approach that utilises both aspects. Grammatical interpretation is concerned with the understanding of the text regarding the totality of language. The psychological interpretation reveals the author’s individuality in terms of his or her engagement with the language that impresses particular meaning upon the text. Thus, an interpretation seeks to understand both, the text, as well as the author and such understanding, must resonate with the context in which it was written. According to Schleiermacher, such analysis can provide ‘an understanding of the utterer better than he understands himself’ (Schleiermacher 1998, p. 266). This is because the hermeneutic analysis concentrates on the implicit processes of engagement with language in particular contexts that might not be obvious to the author (ibid). Such understanding (and consequently, communication) is facilitated by the possibility of shared meaning between the interpreter and the interpreted. And our capacity for that is premised upon ‘...the fact everyone carries a minimum of everyone else within themself, and divination is consequently excited by comparison with oneself’ (ibid, pp. 92-93). Thus, alluding to the intersubjective dimension of meaning discussed by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty above.

Heidegger was already discussed in the context of phenomenology and IPA. But, his major contribution can be seen in integrating the phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches which ultimately places him in opposition to Husserl. He saw the hermeneutic condition as an inevitable fact of human existence on the level of ontology
(being) and became concerned with the phenomenological explication of dasein (Schwandt 1994). Because our dasein, or situated and contextualised existence, is always embedded in already existing systems of meaning, our experience of the world is interpreted in light of this system of meaning. Moreover, the individuals might not even be aware of the process. According to Heidegger, our engagement with the world takes place on several levels of reflexivity. Because of the immersion in it, we tend to take the system of meaning and presuppositions for granted and can operate within them without reflexive thought which becomes important only when the taken-for-granted system of meaning breaks down, and the individual is compelled to examine this system reflexively.

Heidegger is interested in drawing out the process by which we come to interpret the objects of the external world as meaningful. And they can only become meaningful in the context of an encounter with the system of meaning embodied in an individual:

It must be stated that the entity as an entity is ‘in itself’ and independent of any apprehension of it; yet, the being of the entity is found only in encounter and can be explained, made understandable, only from the phenomenal exhibition and interpretation of the structure of encounter. (Heidegger 1992, p. 217).

So, this appearance of an independent entity as something that exists in a way that makes sense to us, makes it a part of our embodied system meaning, is always based upon us experiencing and interpreting the phenomenon in terms of that system. When the hermeneutic phenomenology approaches a phenomenon it is important to remember that: ‘An interpretation is never a pre-suppositionless apprehending of something presented to us’ (Heidegger 1962, p. 192). Our understanding of any novel phenomenon can only be situated within the framework of meaning that we already possess. These ‘fore-conceptions’ (prior understanding of the world) might obscure the nature of the thing in question itself. Heidegger (ibid p. 195) urges the analysts never to take their own fore-conceptions for granted, but to examine them in terms of the phenomenon under investigation. Meaning that we cannot know which aspects of our implicit and taken-for-granted understanding of the world become relevant in relation to new phenomenon before we engage with it, but they can only be examined reflexively when we begin to draw on them in the process. This idea whereby our engagement with the thing reveals something about aspects our own understanding. Which, in turn, allows us to comprehend the thing itself becomes
central to Heidegger’s conception of hermeneutic circle and appears in some form or the other in most modern hermeneutic schools of thought (Smith et al. 2009).

The concept of hermeneutic cycle can capture this idea of hermeneutic understanding as iterative, recurrent process. The concept originating in the work of Heidegger and further developed by Gadamer in the context of his work on the interpretation of texts. His work picked up on the relationship between our fore-structures and the new object at hand. However, in contrast to Heidegger who sought to explicate the interpretation of meaning in terms of our own aprioristic fore-conceptions, Gadamer envisaged this process as transformative of the fore-structures themselves (ibid.). While the fore-structures project the embodied meaning towards the text at hand, these can become reciprocally augmented as the new meaning of the text emerges and the reader (interpreter) moves between the old fore-conceptions and new understanding. According to Gadamer (2004), such an endeavour requires an open mindset and willingness to examine one’s own preconceptions in light of the novel phenomenon at hand. The idea suggests that people come to understand the whole in all of its complexity in relation to their fore-conceptions about the meaning of its parts and their interrelationship and vice versa. As is the case, for example, in understanding a sentence where it is necessary to understand the individual parts (words) before we can understand the whole sentence. At the same time, each of the words of the sentence takes on a particular meaning relative to the meaning of the sentence as a whole (Willis 2007). The idea of a hermeneutic circle can be extended to capture the relationship between the part and the whole at different levels. It can be applied to the relationship between the word and a sentence, consider the significance and meaning of a single episode for the life of an individual, and extended to the interpersonal dimension. What is important from the perspective of IPA is the iterative process of understanding that involves circular movement between our preconceptions and the new phenomenon at hand which provides a useful way of thinking about the methodology (Smith et al. 2009).

The hermeneutical tradition, then, provides the IPA important insights into the analysis of experience. The work of Schleiermacher attends to the possibility of understanding both the author and the text he produced through the process of careful contextualised analysis. Such a process can also generate understanding that goes beyond the explicit claims of the individual. Heidegger’s formulation of
phenomenology and hermeneutics as explicitly ontological conditions of being then point to the interpretative nature of process of experiencing itself. The individuals are always situated in the meaningful world and interpret what is happening to them in terms of their aprioristic understanding. If every experience is already an interpretation, then any consequent attempt to engage with it can only result in further interpretation. The IPA research is thus engaged in the process of double hermeneutics, of researchers interpreting the participants’ interpretations of the phenomenon at hand (Eatough and Smith 2017). The work of Heidegger and Gadamer provides the IPA with important insights into the dynamic process of interpretation. In particular, the evolving relationship between the situated, contextualised categories of understanding and the phenomenon at hand which contributed to the understanding and development of more systematic research process.

3.3.2.3. Idiography

Third major influence in IPA is idiography. The term denotes, very generally, the study of particular, which is often contrasted to the study of the universals, or nomothetics. These terms were coined by Wilhelm Windelband (1921, 1980) with the aim to differentiate between two different kinds of scientific knowledge. Even though Windleband originally considered these forms of inquiry both, complementary and scientific, designating scientific endeavour to oscillate between the concrete instances of empirical phenomena and abstract generalisations in its quest for refinement. The nomothetic-idiographic continuum became polarised over the last century and came to represent the conflict over what is considered the ‘scientific’ knowledge of universal laws associated with natural sciences as opposed to more qualitative approaches to human experience (Lamiell 1998).

The commitment to idiography flows directly from the IPA’s engagement with the hermeneutics and phenomenology, or rather hermeneutic phenomenology. Indeed, it would be baffling if it would subscribe to the premises of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty or Gadamer discussed above and then advocated the search for universal laws through positivistic abstractions. Following Allport (1940), IPA is not only concerned with the idiographic knowledge of the particular but does so in a manner that resonates with its original formulation of Windelband. This is because the IPA envisages both approaches as complementary and is argued to be able to mediate between them and explicitly
engages the researchers to draw on more general theoretical frameworks at the later stages of the interpretation (Larkin et al. 2006). IPA’s conceptual authors describe its idiographic focus as operating on two levels:

Firstly, there is a commitment to the particular, in the sense of detail, and therefore the depth of analysis. … Secondly, IPA is committed to understanding how particular experiential phenomena (an event, process or relationship) from the perspective of particular people, in a particular context (Smith et al. 2009, p. 29).

This has important methodological implications. In relation to first claim above, IPA strives to provide comprehensive and thorough analysis of individual accounts. And, in the context of the latter allowing the individual cases to describe the phenomenon as much as possible from their own perspective (ibid.) This involves working with smaller, purposefully selected samples of participants chosen precisely because they have experienced some significant phenomena that researchers are interested in. The smaller sample size is also due to the intensive analysis process that attempts to get as close to participants’ experience as possible before moving on to other cases and towards more general interpretations (Smith 2004). It is, therefore, not the case that IPA has given up on generalisations altogether, it follows Harré (1979) and argues for a different route of the establishment of these generalisations. This process involves the gradual ‘climb up the level of generality’ (ibid p. 137), where the researcher moves away from the particulars, and towards discussing the interpretations more generally. It is again important to stress the iterative nature of the process where the researcher checks the increasingly more general interpretations directly in participants’ accounts. As a result, IPA research tends to be more careful and modest about the generalisations made.

3.3.3. Process of IPA

The analytic process in IPA follows a certain marching order in the direction from participants own account towards more general interpretation. It can be said to operate on two levels. The first, phenomenological, attempts to get as close to the participant’s experience as possible and the second, interpretative, seeks to more critically interrogate the participants account in relation to a phenomenon under investigation. Useful way of thinking between the two different ways of interpretation at different stages of IPA analysis can be found in Ricoeur (1970) distinction between ‘hermeneutics of meaning recollection’ or empathy, where the intention is to
nearly uncritically accept the participants as experts on their own position and develop an account that captures their experience. And, the ‘**hermeneutics of suspicion**’ that allow the interpreter to engage with the aspects of meanings that participants ‘**would be unlikely, unable or unwilling to see or acknowledge themselves**’ (Smith 2004, p. 46). While most of the interpretative activity of IPA can be broadly identified with the former approach, as the participant’s meaning is always used to ground the interpretation. Both contribute to a more complete understanding of a phenomenon in question and the critical, interrogative hermeneutics of suspicion has its place at later stages of the analysis (Shinebourne 2011). Establishing a common ground between those two analytical approaches can be a daunting task, especially in the context of systematic and in-depth analyses advocated by the proponents of IPA. Its proponents recognise that researchers have different ways of following the process of analysis. And, strive to present a set of methodological guidelines that allows researchers to do justice to the systematic, iterative nature of the analytical process which was very helpful in my case, as an inexperienced qualitative researcher to get the analysis going and to keep it rigorous. This availability of a detailed and systematic overview of the inductive analytical process is perhaps one of the reasons for the increasing popularity of the method in psychology and health research. However, the authors explicitly state that these guidelines are just that, guidelines (Smith 2010). Their provision is intended to facilitate access to the IPA, and they are designed to be flexible and adaptable to the research problem at hand and the discipline in which it is used. Not to stagnate the development of the approach (Smith 2004). Indeed, Larkin et al. argue that it ‘**may be more appropriate to understand IPA as a ‘stance’ or perspective from which to approach the task of qualitative data analysis, rather than as a distinct ‘method’.**’ (2006 p. 104). And, it is important to treat them as tentative guidelines which, while being very detailed are there to help orient the research process in line with the premises and requirements of IPA rather than to set the process in stone and make it a Maslow’s hammer.

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19 c.f. Smith (2011) and Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008) for more extended discussion of this point.
3.3.4. Extending the scope

The IPA provides the researcher with a set of assumptions that are highly commensurate with the premises of the interpretative paradigm in social sciences in terms of its apprehension of reality, the purpose of research, acceptable methods, meaning and interpretation of the data and relationship of research and practice outlined in the beginning of the chapter. It also explicitly strives to conform to the evaluative criteria of researcher reflexivity and thick description. IPA assumes that the individuals experience the external reality through the categories of the system of meaning in which they are integrated. While this understanding is, to an extent, unique for every individual, it is also a product of intersubjective creation of meaning and therefore can be communicated to others. The task of the researcher is to facilitate this in a way that allows the participants’ experience to emerge as closely as possible. This requires ‘thick description’ that allows the reader to understand the experience in its context. While at the same time recognising the fact that any such attempt can only result in a secondary interpretation. IPA is very explicit about the interpretative nature of the whole analytical process and therefore places researcher at the centre of research process. This makes researcher reflexivity one of the central issues of IPA (Eatough & Smith 2017). The assumption here that a particular researcher conducts research with a particular aim in mind. This purpose then guides the whole research process, from selecting participants and data collection, through processes of analysis and final articulation. The researchers are therefore incited to be reflexive about their interpretation at each step of the process. IPA idiographic stance also resonates with the interpretive tradition’s expectations of the research where the intention is not to discover general laws but to provide a rich, contextual understanding that illuminates a specific instance of a more general phenomenon. While the generalisations are not impossible, they are made carefully and with explicit reference to participants’ accounts. Consequently, the research becomes transferable on the basis of commonality between aspects of the phenomena under study.

More importantly, the theoretical underpinnings of IPA resonate strongly with the ontological and epistemological commitments of Haugaard’s framework set out in first two chapters which also sees the individuals as embedded in the local-communal systems of meaning guiding their interaction with the world. Like the (re)structuration framework, IPA assumes that the individuals apprehend and experience the external
reality through the categories of the system of meaning in which they are situated. They understand the world in terms of those symbolic systems and can, for the most part, use this understanding to function in their world. Both frameworks follow Heidegger in the claim that the engagement with the reality takes place on multiple planes of reflexivity. Translated into the language of structuration as ranging from complete awareness of reflexivity embodied in the concept of discursive consciousness, through semi, or pre-conscious, the operation of practical consciousness right down to the unconscious. While the IPAs’ underlying ontological and epistemological position is theorised extensively with reference to phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. These assumptions are broad enough to accommodate a number of theoretical approaches which subscribe to the premises of interpretive tradition, and the onto-epistemological commensurability between the two frameworks enabled me to integrate Haugaard’s theoretical model of power with the inductive analysis of the data at the later stages of the analytical process.

The IPA’s assumptions make it suitable to examine phenomena that are of existential significance for the participants. ‘These matters are often transformative, bringing change and demanding reflection and (re)interpretation for the individuals concerned’ (Eatough and Smith 2017, p. 205). One could almost say dislocatory or resonant experiences. In psychology, the IPA has been applied widely. To the study of a range of existential issues from lower back pain (Smith and Osborn 2007, Osborn and Smith 2015), cancer (Reynolds and Lim 2007), concern with HIV and unprotected sex in gay men (Flowers et al. 1997) or recreational drug use and engagement in dangerous sports (Larkin and Griffiths 2004). Demonstrating the suitability of IPA for examination of participant’s experience of significant events (Smith 2011).

And, it is this capacity to interpret the experience that makes the IPA suitable for approaching the protests of Irish Senior Citizens insofar as the focus of the theoretical framework revolves around the interpretation of social action along the lines set out by Weber. That is as meaningful relative to the local system of meaning. Note of caution, when using the IPA in sociology, it must be recognized that it has been developed for the purpose for psychological inquiry which is oriented much more

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20 The concept of resonance constitutes the final theoretical addition to the framework that was stimulated by data analysis and will be discussed in chapter 6.
towards the understanding of an individual experience rather than the wider, socio-cultural aspects which are the focus of sociological inquiry.

No matter how well analysed and theorised the individual accounts of experience may be, they alone are not sufficient to furnish a sociological account. The contextualised interpretations of self-interpretations generated in the course of doing IPA are very useful in engaging with experience and grounding the analysis in participants’ accounts. But, an adequate sociological explanation needs to pay equal attention to the historical and socio-cultural aspects of the phenomena under study. As C. Wright Mills (Mills 1956, p. 6) reminds us ‘the sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society’. Luckily, this is not a case of either or phenomenon, but an issue of emphasis. Or, even more precisely, a continuum. Larkin et al. (2006) explicitly urge researchers to take the analysis higher up the level of abstraction by making ever wider theoretical connections that can be still traced back to the individual accounts at the later stages of IPA. At some point, this analysis must transgress the disciplinary boundaries and shift the focus from the experience to its socio-cultural context. I see this project as an attempt at such transgression. As is the case of many transgressions, they entail disruption, which in the case of this project takes two forms. A slight of erosion of the idiographic and subjective focus on the individual experience in the final analysis in favour of the more sociological account which foregrounds the intersubjective understanding. And, the alterations to the actual process of IPA regarding extending the scope of data collection and analysis to fit the task at hand. So far, the chapter has been concerned with the logos (or logy), the theoretical aspect of using particular research choreography in order to approach specific research problem in somewhat ontologically and epistemologically consistent manner. The next section will turn to the method aspect of the project, the discussion of the actual process of IPA alongside my own alteration and, in doing so, introduce the overall research design of the study.
3.4. Design of the study and research process

The IPA studies are, almost by design, exploratory and oriented towards understanding and interrogation of particular experience from the standpoint of the participants rather than attempting to facilitate the law-like generalisations with predictive capacity. My project builds on this intent and aims at theoretically-driven sociological understanding and interpretation of social practice of the older people uprising as meaningful within a local system of meaning and subsequent theoretical interrogation of this understanding. Because IPA is interested in specific phenomena that are meaningful to particular cohorts in society, the sampling tends to be very purposive, and the participants are selected because of their relationship to the issue of researchers’ interests. Participant samples are also smaller in size, (authors suggest between three and six interviews) as the theoretical commitments of IPA presuppose working with large quantity of data generated by every participant (Smith et al. 2009, p. 49). Since the IPA is concerned exclusively with the participants’ own understanding, the data collection and analysis tend to be oriented towards participants own accounts and sees the qualitative interviews with participants as the primary source of data. This aspect of IPA remained unchanged and unstructured qualitative interviews with participants who directly experienced the protests remained the principal source of data for this project.

However, since the focus of my project is oriented much more towards the sociological interpretation of a conflictual situation between various groups, it has drawn on one of the ‘bolder’ variations of IPA research designs – multi-perspectival studies (Smith et al. 2009, p. 52). These designs are intended to examine the experience of the phenomenon of interest from the standpoint of multiple groups of participants rather than concentrating on a homogenous sample of participants. This heterogeneity sampling was so far, utilised in the study of coping with Alzheimer’s disease among the patients and their partners (Clare 2002), and examination of risk-taking behaviour from the viewpoint of the Ecstasy users and extreme sport enthusiasts (Larkin and Griffiths 2004). And, in its attempt to push the interpretation (perhaps even more boldly) towards the sociology of power, the study has also drawn on a
number of other sources of data: audio-visual material from the period of the protests, newspaper articles and government documents. Not all of these data sources were intended to be used from the project’s beginning but were incorporated into the study gradually as it evolved in a process that can be best described as ‘analysis governed purposeful sampling’ (Coyne 1997, p. 629). A method that falls somewhere in between the purposeful sampling whereby the data are selected with reference to the interests and purpose of the study and theoretical sampling where the data collection process moves from one source to the next which is selected accordingly to the emerging theory which arises in the context of ongoing analysis (Coyne 1997). Although, the term ‘theoretical’ requires further qualification. Glaser and Strauss (1967) conceptualised the theoretical sampling in the context of the grounded theory. Without going into too much detail about the approach itself, the term theoretical here denotes the emergent theory which is supposed to emerge inductively from the data analysis alone (the researchers are required to refrain from consulting theoretical texts before analysis) and help the researcher identify data to be collected next. By contrast, while my own approach made use of the adaptable process of data collection controlled by the emergent analysis, it did so with recourse to the specific theoretical framework - 4D model of power and (re)structuration theory.

The data collection process itself began shortly after the project started with the review of the relevant literature of concerned with the case which identified several potential sources of data, most of which were utilized in the context of the study. The table below outlines the order in which the different forms of data were collected and analysed throughout the project and provides a temporal roadmap to the description of the process of data collection, organisation and analysis in the next sections.
3.4.1. Sources and Data collection

3.4.1.1. Newspapers

A number of studies (Acheson 2010, Fealy et al. 2012) focused on the OAP protests have used the analysis of newspaper articles to examine the protests, and this is where I have begun my familiarisation with the case. Following Acheson (2010), two Irish newspapers, Irish Times and The Irish Independent, along with their Sunday editions, were selected for in-depth examination. And, given the fact that the OAP’s protests emerged, were organised and took place between 14th and 23rd October 2008, the data collection focused on the period between 1st and 31st October 2008. The Irish Independent archives were accessed online via Irish Newspaper Archive (www.irishnewsarchive.com) access to which was facilitated by James Hardiman Library, NUI Galway. The Irish Times, in contrast, was accessed through the James Hardiman Library, NUI Galway microfilm collection. In both cases, every issue was examined page-by-page for any articles related to the Budget and over-70s medical card and the protests, and the articles were saved in PDF format for further analysis. The second phase involved sorting through this material in order to identify the articles relevant to the research question and exclude the rest. This became especially important after the Budget hearing (14th Oct 2008) after which the number of articles grew as most of the newspaper content became focused on the Budget or its impact and it was necessary to limit the scope to the mentions and discussions of the Budget and over-70s medical card together. This effort yielded together 463 articles (230 in Irish Times and 233 in Irish Independent) which were imported to QSR International’s NVivo 11 Software and read again in more detail. This close reading was not yet
analytical (at least discursively on my part) but falls into the data collection phase because it was directed at identification of potential participants and facilitated the preparation for interviews by providing a diachronic empirical outline of the event. After which the data were sorted into three groups based on temporality, (pre-Budget, between Budget and protests, after the protests) for more convenience in further analysis and left aside as I began the interviews.

3.4.1.2. National Television and Radio Archives

TV Archives:
The study has also drawn on the audio-visual data from the Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ), the national radio and television archives. Before, I move on to description of the data consulted this way, I would like to thank the RTÉ Archives division for facilitating the access; and extend warmest thanks to Patricia Sweeney for her help in locating the requested material, directing me to other, sometimes even more relevant, material, and for her patience in compensating my own technological ineptitude when it came to the operation of the viewing machinery available in the archives.

The television archives material examined included the three major daily news programmes of RTÉ: **RTÉ News: One O’clock; RTÉ News: Six One; RTÉ News: Nine O’Clock**; from the two weeks between the date of the Budget (14th Oct 2008) and the end of the week in which the Protest events took place (26th Oct 2008). The daily news programmes were complemented by the selection of the current political affairs programmes that discussed the over-70s medical card crisis and were aired during the same period: **Prime Time** (4 episodes) and **The Week in Politics** (2 episodes). The details of the dates in which the programmes were aired can be found in the table below:
Table 4 - RTÉ TV Archives, collected material

Because the reproduction of the audio-visual archive material was not allowed during the archival research, the data collection process was limited exclusively to extensive note taking during the examination of the material that was sensitised by the set of themes, relevant to the research question, which emerged from the inductive analysis of the interviews. These notes were then imported to QSR International’s NVivo 11 Software for further analysis.

Radio
In addition to taking advantage of the RTÉ’s audio-visual archive, the study has also drawn on audio recordings of radio programmes aired during the period between 14th and 26th October 2008 that were identified as potentially resourceful in other sources of data (mainly newspapers and interviews). These were obtained through the RTÉ Archives under an educational/research licence and I would like to thank the RTÉ Archives for facilitating the access. And to the Irish Research Council, for providing me with the funds necessary to do so.

These recordings included nine episodes of Liveline (14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 Oct), a widely listened to radio programme on current affairs with just under 400,000 daily listeners at the time (Healy 2008a), which was devoted exclusively to the issue of medical cards for the duration of the controversy and provided a public forum where OAPs could express their views and opinions. And contained 131 calls expressing the opinions of the OAPs, their relatives, and professionals working with
the OAPs on the matter. Along with two other programmes containing lengthy interviews with the leading political figures of the controversy. This Week programme from 19th October 2008 with Brian Cowan (Taoiseach at the time) and Today with Pat Kenny Show from October 15th containing the interview with Brian Lennihan on the day after the Budget.

Unlike the access to the RTÉ’s audio-visual archive, where I had one chance, so to speak, to capture the complexity of the material and distil it into notes as I went along. Obtaining the licence to the radio recordings meant that I was able to re-listen to them again. At this stage it was not feasible, due to the time constraints, to transcribe all of the interviews and they were, imported into QSR International’s NVivo 11 Software as audio files to be analysed later.

3.4.1.3. Participant selection and interviews.

Given the aims of the project and its interest in specific phenomenon from multiple standpoints of involved actors, participant sample can be described in terms of overlap between the purposive, theoretical and diversity sampling oriented towards the recruitment of participants from the ranks of the main groups identified as central to the event in the previous literature (OAPs, OAP NGO representatives, politicians).

The baseline criteria for the inclusion of OAPs were the participation in the protest event, and the age over 70 at the time of the protest. As well as the ability to give competent, informed and voluntary consent. At the same time, in order to ensure participants’ safety, the participants suffering from acute or chronic medical conditions that could be further aggravated by participation in the study were not included in the study. Participants were also excluded from this study if they suffered from a cognitive impairment that could potentially interfere with the recall of the data. The criteria for the inclusion of the other significant groups were less stringent and included belonging to the NGOs involved in organising the event at the time and participation in the protests in the case of the OAP NGO representatives. And involvement in the government coalition at the time for the politicians. With the same exclusion criteria as for the OAPs.
According to the "Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse National Policy & Procedures" (HSE Social Care Division, 2014). Elderly persons are considered to fall into the category of vulnerable persons that are particularly susceptible to issues of dependence on others for personal and intimate care, impaired capacity to report, sensory difficulties, isolation, power differentials that are subject to special consideration when dealing with this group. The issues of cognitive and sensory impairments also interfere with the intention of this research and identification of participants at risk is a part of the process of selection of participants (particularly the exclusion of participants if they cannot provide competent, voluntary informed consent). In order to ensure the safety and dignity of the participants that pass the selection process and accept participation, the researcher has obtained Garda Vetting and the interviews were conducted with special attention to the rights of vulnerable persons to ‘Liberty, Privacy, Respect and Dignity, Freedom to Choose, Opportunities to fulfil personal aspirations and realize potential in their daily lives, Opportunity to live safely without fear of abuse in any form and Respect for possessions.’ (HSE Social Care Division, 2014 p.10).

Process of participant recruitment utilized number of strategies outlined in the IPA manual, ‘referrals from various kinds of gatekeepers; opportunities, as a result of one’s own contacts; or snowballing (which amounts to referral from participants) (Smith et al. 2009, pp. 48-49 emphasis original), and attempted to tailor those strategies to secure enough participants from each group. With various degrees of success.

The most straightforward recruitment process was with the representatives from the OAP NGO sector. Their names and voices regularly appeared in the media from the time (discussed in next section) and thus were relatively easy to identify and contact directly via email requests for participation through the OAP NGOs. This effort resulted in a total of three interviews, and fourth was added at a later stage in response to an opportunity which arose in the context of personal meeting with a key representative of one of the OAP NGOs facilitated by the NUI Galway’s Irish Centre for Social Gerontology. (https://www.nuigalway.ie/our-research/listings/social-gerontology.html).

As in the case of the OAP NGO representatives, the identity of the main political actors involved in the controversy were a matter of public knowledge as they belonged to the upper echelons of the Government coalition at the time. However, despite
several repeated attempts to contact members of this cohort, the number of participants in this group was significantly curtailed through their own self-exclusion and I was only able to secure two interviews. One with Joe Behan a backbench TD at the time who resigned on the matter of principle in response to the measure, and the other (rather a brief one) with a Government Minister at the time who wished to remain anonymous.

One initial, and unexpected, drawback came during the recruitment of the OAP protesters. Although the criteria for inclusion above might look very broad, it is necessary to emphasize that the data collection phase began 7 years after the OAPs protests took place, which limited the participant selection to a cohort nearing threshold of life expectancy which stood, in 2015, at 81.5 years at birth (countryeconomy.com 2018). A value which was lower for those born in 1938 (taking the age of 70 in 2008 as a point of departure). This has shrunk the potential pool of participants (consisting of 15000 OAP protesters at the time) as many of them have become seriously ill or passed away in the meantime. And required a combination of recruitment strategies described by Smith et al. above, which has resulted in 5 participant interviews. Two participants were recruited via referral from the OAP NGO representatives, two others through opportunities available to the researcher through personal contacts, and one via snowballing whereby one OAP participant referred me to her/his friend. However (and unfortunately), two of those had to be dropped from the analysis. One because it was a pilot interview that, as I discovered upon re-listening, contained too many leading questions and I did not feel that I would be able to justify methodologically. And second was withdrawn, after a joint agreement between the participant and the researcher, in response to an incident occurring during the interview that has thrown the participant’s suitability, premised upon satisfaction of the inclusion criteria, into question. The final participant sample consisted of nine interviews that can be divided into three groups, the OAPs protesters (n=3); the OAP NGO representatives (n=4) and the government coalition politicians (n=2).

31 Since the episode occurred in public setting, I have chosen this rather convoluted and vague justification and deliberately steered away from explicating the incident or the specific criterion out of the respect for the participant, and on the off-chance (however slim) that she or he might be identified from the discussion.
Interviews

The IPA analysis presupposes working with a large quantity of the data generated from each participant’s account and the data collection, therefore, takes the form of either semi-structured or unstructured interviews which explore the participant’s experience in a way that allows them to speak as much as possible. According to the authors:

The plan for IPA interviews is an attempt to come at the research question ‘sideways’. Often, research questions are pitched at the abstract level and so it is not usually helpful or effective to ask them directly of the participants. Instead we aim to set up the interview as an event which facilitates the discussion of relevant topics, and which will allow the research question to be answered subsequently, via analysis. (Smith et al. 2009, p. 58)

This process is facilitated by an interviewer whose task is to gently navigate the participant towards the phenomenon in question without asking leading questions while probing deeper for the aspects of experience he or she is interested in. At the same time, the researcher should keep an open mind and allow the participants to express their concerns and probe deeper even on the matters and topics raised by participants that appear unconnected to the research because they might raise an issue of particular experiential importance for the participants and so illuminate an aspect of the situation the researchers might not anticipate as such (Smith et al. 2009). For these reasons, the thesis opted for in-depth interviews that can be characterised as attempting to find a middle ground between completely unstructured and semi-structured interviews as recommended by the IPA.

The interviews were conducted in as unstructured manner as possible and developed onwards from the first, and central, question asked after the establishment of rapport, which was the same for all participants: ‘tell me about the protests?’ and designed to elicit descriptive feedback from the participants that allowed the researcher to react and probe further on the issues of interest already raised by the participants. All the while intervening as little as possible and only prompting the participants when they appeared to have exhausted their topic.

The semi-structured aspect here refers to the overall direction of the interview. As recommended by the IPA authors (ibid.), I have prepared a tentative interview guide which was intentionally kept vague and consisted of a list of potential issues of interest,
along with potential prompts, to be probed in more depth if the participants bring them up in the attempt to prioritise the issues of importance for the participants. At the same time, I have also prepared for the possibility that the participants will not raise any of the above, and prepared open-ended questions which would allow for a change of direction of the interview if necessary.

Prior to each interview, the participants were provided with the study information sheet (APPENDIX A) outlining the aims of the study, its data protection policy, what is required, possible risks to participants and likely benefits of the study, possible duration of the interview. And stressed, repeatedly, the voluntary nature of the participation and rights of the participants to withdraw at any time and for any reason. Participant information sheet was accompanied by the study consent form (APPENDIX B) that, in line with the NUI Galway Ethics Committee policy, reiterated the rights of the participants and sought written consent of voluntary participation from them.

In order to minimise the discomfort to participants and possible interference that could stem from unfamiliar surroundings the choice of setting for the interviews was left entirely at the convenience of the participants. After the initial introductions, the researcher made sure that the participant has read and understood the study information sheet, answered any questions and offered the participants an opportunity to pick a pseudonym, which was in most cases not taken up. At this stage, several participants from the OAP NGOs and one politician waived their confidentiality, because they were, and are, public figures. Although the consent form did not anticipate this, I have secured their consent on audio recording, and they will be quoted in the excerpts. After that both, participant and researcher signed two copies of the consent form, one for the participant and one for the researcher, and began the interview.

Brief notes were taken during the interview, and more extensive notes were compiled immediately after each interview which were focused on capturing the researcher’s initial impressions of the interviews. Each interview was audio recorded, and no video was used in order to protect the identity of the participants. The interviews and their transcriptions were stored only under the pseudonym, and the master-list linking the
identities of participants to their data was stored apart, along with the raw data (recordings and notes), in a locked cabinet.

**3.4.2. Data Analysis**

The previous section outlined the forms of data used in this study and the process of their collection and preparation for final analysis, description of which will constitute our last stop before we turn to the empirical part of the thesis.

The process of analysis began with the most substantive part of the data collected explicitly to answer the empirical question - the interviews which, for the most part, followed the analytical steps of the IPA outlined by Smith et al. (2009). But, with a technological twist as QSR International’s NVivo 11 Software for Windows was used instead of using a hard copy of the transcript with extended marginal space on each side to accommodate both initial notes and development of emergent themes recommended by the IPA authors (Smith et al. 2009 p. 87). Although the conceptual authors of IPA did not discuss computer software-assisted analysis beyond compiling transcript extracts (ibid, p. 99), several researchers (Wagstaff et al. 2014, Trinkowsky 2015) have used QSR International’s NVivo (unknown version) Software to conduct the IPA and avail of its advanced coding and thematic tools.

Before we move on, it must be stressed that in using computer-assisted qualitative analysis software, the researcher is not relegating the task of the analysis itself to the software. Instead the software is used to store and handle multiple forms of data, much like a binder or scrapbook, enables researchers to transcribe, examine, annotate and code these multiple types of data (or assign multiple codes to a single chunk of data) and facilitates quick movement between the individual chunks of data, whole documents, codes and themes that emerge from the analysis. All the while leaving the researcher in charge of (and responsible for) the analysis (Richards 1999a, 1999b, Bazeley 2009). The analysis itself was conducted separately for each participant and consisted of a series of steps that followed the inductive path outlined by the IPA.

Step 1 - reading and re-reading

Once transcribed, the interviews were read alongside the recordings in order to identify any inconsistencies and to refresh the researcher’s memory of the context and participant’s intonation and other prosodic, or phonological, features of participant’s account. This was done in order to facilitate the familiarization with the participant’s
account through simultaneous auditory and visual immersion in the text. At this stage, the transcript was read (and listened to) in its entirety and without any specific intent, purely to get a ‘feel’ for the participant’s story as a whole and its structure.

Step 2 — initial noting

The second step flowed directly from the first and continued to develop the familiarity with the text as the researcher moved from reading the text as a whole to examine its parts. The aim here was to isolate units of meaning within the text and examine them in detail while keeping their relationship to the overall meaning in mind. This process was facilitated by making comments on the units of meaning which can range quite widely from a single word to a whole section of the document. Smith et al. (2009, p. 83) identified three distinctive kinds of comments that researchers are likely to produce. Descriptive, with clear phenomenological focus on participant experience, the things that matter and their meaning. Linguistic, concerned with the specific use of prosodic features of the language in order to communicate the meaning of the text accurately, as well as with the use of metaphors and other figures of speech in order to communicate meaning. And, Conceptual, focused on engaging with the text in a more interrogative and abstract level which takes the analysis beyond the participant’s explicit claims and into a more theoretical terrain. As for using the QSR International’s NVivo 11 Software, the comments function was used to log the initial notes related to the texts.

Step 3 – developing emergent themes

The next step in the analysis involved a shift from analysing the text as a whole to working with the discrete units of meaning, identified in step 2 and searching relationships between them in a way that disrupts the flow of participant account in order to group similarly noted units together. This fragmentation allows the researcher to re-integrate the units of meaning and exploratory notes into emergent themes in a process that simultaneously ‘attempts to reduce the volume of the detail (the transcripts and the initial notes) while maintaining complexity in terms of mapping the interrelationships, connections and patterns between exploratory notes’ (Smith et al 2009, p. 91). According to the authors, this process is a collaborative endeavour between the participant and the researcher and a theme should reflect this quality. Therefore, a theme should capture
participants’ units of meaning from the whole text in relation to a particular issue of significance for either the participant or researcher. The themes should be grounded in the particularities of the data, and yet, be abstract enough to be conceptual, they should ‘feel like they have captured and reflect an understanding’ (ibid, p. 92). This step is intended to move the researcher away from participant’s explicit claims and bring the analysis to a more interpretative terrain where the researcher’s perspective becomes central to both identifying central issues of interest for the participant and facilitating their interpretation. At this stage, the coding was developed very close to participants’ accounts and used, as much as possible, their own words, or phrases that were approximate, to capture the significance of the meaning units.

When it comes to QSR International’s NVivo 11 Software. For this, and most subsequent steps, I have availed of the coding function which enables the researchers to select a portion of analysed data (of whatever length or duration) and to assign a ‘node’ which stores the name and description of the code along with the assigned extracts, much like an index-card system does, while preserving the meta-data that allow researchers to access the extract in its original position of the analyzed text, and enables them to move around and edit, split or merge either the text or codes without losing these original connections. The final product of this stage was a list of emergent themes.

Step 4 - searching for connections across the emergent themes - thematic integration.

The next, and final, stage of individual transcript analysis was concerned with the introduction of the structure into the analysis of emergent themes. A process that involved searching for clusters of themes (as opposed to the individual units of meaning) that somehow (at that stage) fit together and explicating relationships between them. It is important to note at this point that the authors explicitly avoid discussing the appropriate number of themes (either emergent or master themes). This is a highly individual feature that will be established between the analyst, participant’s account and the research problem at hand. The authors offer a useful rule of thumb here in stating that the process should continue until all the emergent themes have been either integrated into or dropped from the analysis.

Smith et al. (2009) argued that graphic techniques of mapping the relationship between emergent themes can be very helpful at the initial stages of this process. And
I have found this technique (facilitated by the QSR International’s NVivo 11 Software’s concept mapping function) useful in getting the analysis going, and used it throughout to represent the clusters of themes for every participant graphically.

Once the emergent themes were clustered I have utilized most of the strategies for working with the data recommended by the IPA’s authors to arrive at a number of themes (as opposed to emergent themes) and to explicate the relationships between them. These included: abstraction (creating a superordinate theme for a cluster of similar emergent themes), subsumption (positioning one of the emergent themes from a cluster as superordinate one), polarization (identification of themes that are in opposing relationships), numeration (tracing frequencies of a theme), function (identification of the function of a theme in the context of participants account) and contextualization (attending to a temporal, narrative and cultural aspects of a theme) (Smith et al 2009, pp. 96-100).

This stage culminated in the development of a graphic representation of the overall analysis. Although authors suggest a summary table, listing all the superordinate and cluster themes together with participant quotations that illustrate their grounding in the data (ibid.), I did not find this approach particularly useful as the QSR International’s NVivo 11 Software, allows for a synoptic review of both at any given time. Instead, I opted for writing, and produced a written account that incorporated all of these elements in a single account for each participant, which was accompanied by a conceptual map, two examples can be found below:
Step 5 - moving on to the next case

The IPA’s theoretical commitments demand that each individual case is allowed expression before it becomes interpreted. While earlier methodological discussions considered using the list of themes generated in the course of the first transcript to be used in subsequent analyses (Smith et al. 1999). Recent discussions point to the need for researchers to bracket the previous analyses and approach each subsequent account naively and without preconceptions so that the new themes are allowed to emerge (Pringle et al. 2011). Smith et al. (2009) argue that the possibility of the emergence of new themes in subsequent cases is an important feature of IPA. While the researchers will inevitably be influenced by their previous analysis, following the systematic process of gradual interpretative induction outlined in the previous steps will ensure
that new themes can emerge in each subsequent case. The next step consisted of setting up a new file for the next interview transcript and beginning the analytical cycle again anew. In order to facilitate the emergence of the new issues (and maintain my sanity) I took a short break between the analyses (usually around a week) and worked on other tasks which were never in short supply during the past years. And, I have developed the first set of notes and codes (steps 1-3) as close to participant’s account as possible and using their own words to describe codes, in order to facilitate the inductive analysis at the later stage.

Step 6 - Looking for patterns across cases

Once the individual analyses were complete, or good enough, it was time to integrate findings. This process was essentially similar to the development of a structured account of themes within a single transcript regarding the strategies employed to explicate the relationships between the themes (step 4), but extended to cover the whole group. This integration proceeded by examination of the structured thematic accounts for each case and development of the final file of themes and sub-themes for the research group as a whole while keeping them grounded in the individual accounts. Again, this was an iterative process that required frequent movement between the whole and the and re-examine the individual analyses and rework the already structured sets of themes in the individual accounts as the relationships in one case began to illuminate some aspects of another that were previously missed. This constant comparison allows researchers to distinguish whether newly emerging themes are genuinely novel or just new manifestations of already established ones (Willig 2013). Once completed, I have proceeded as in the case of step 4, that is by a graphic representation of the themes along with superordinate themes. And by producing a table of themes of relevance to the research questions.

Step 7 - (heresy) - moving on to different datasets.

Had this been a faithful IPA study, the discussion would now be moving towards the process of writing up larger-sample studies. However, that is not the case and it is at this point that the analysis shifted from the focus on the individuals’ experience.

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22 To put things into perspective, the IPA analysis is a very time-consuming process that, in its initial stages can take weeks to complete for every participant transcript, given the meticulous inductive process of analysis. While I was able to complete an analysis in about 10 days (including transcription) by the time I got through the fourth transcript, the process was still very labour-intensive and demanding.
towards its sociological contextualization, which included analysis of the newspapers, Television archive notes and the Radio programmes collected for the study. On top of the shift in the object of analysis, there was also a shift in the mode of analysis. While the analysis of the interviews was developed as inductively as possible (steps 1-4), moving from participants’ accounts towards more general, yet heavily grounded, themes. The analysis of the other sources of data was much more retroductive and used the list of themes (both sub, and superordinate) developed in the context of the analysis of the interviews as a sensitising device (rather than a complete set of themes intended to facilitate deductive analysis) to approach all other data.

This analysis began with the newspaper data sets which have been read again (two years have passed in the meantime), and the list of themes developed through the analysis of the interviews was used to direct the coding process to the thematic areas of interest.

A similar process was used to code the audio recordings obtained from the RTÉ Radio Archive. Here, instead of transcribing the passages, I have availed of the QSR International’s NVivo 11 Software’s function to select and code segments of audio files, again with reference to the themes developed in the analysis.

And finally, the analysis of the Television News programmes data set had to be done in two cycles. The first had to be done ‘on the spot’ as I was reviewing the material in the archives, here the list of themes served to orient the note-taking. And in the second cycle, where, as in the case of newspapers and radio interviews, the notes were imported into QSR International’s NVivo 11 Software for further and more detailed analysis.

In each case the analytical cycle began with initial familiarization with the data and proceeded through the process of initial noting, (abductive) identification of themes, and mapping out the relationship between them in a manner similar to what has been described in the steps 1-4 of the analysis above (with the difference of already existing aprioristic coding framework). Yielding a series of mini-analyses of the case from each data set that illuminated different aspects of the situation.
Step - 8 - searching for connection across datasets - answering research question - theorising - writing up.

This last few laps of the project consisted of a series of steps which have already been covered in steps 4 and 6, but this time the thematic integration included the comparison of themes across the whole corpus of data, rather than within individual cases or data sets. In the attempt to preserve the interpretative and the phenomenological aspects of the study, the analysis began with the, already completed interpretations of participants’ accounts and moved ‘higher up the level of generality’ towards the sociological interpretation through gradual contextualization of the phenomenological accounts with the help of the other data for each theme.

At this stage, the actual process of analysis moved from the QSR International’s NVivo 11 Software into the text editor and writing became its main tool as I began to push the analysis toward the explicit theorization in terms of the 4D model, (re)structuration theory and the research questions, all of which were, up to that point used implicitly to guide and structure the analysis rather than its integral part.

As the summary-writing-analytical-theorization progressed though individual themes it has gradually transformed into a write-up. The IPA authors suggest that acceptable write-up of studies with larger samples should contain evidence-based summary of the researcher’s interpretation of the participant’s experience, illustrated by the extracts from participants’ transcripts that are representative of the claims made by the researcher. And their integration in a way that links the individual themes, preferably in a narrative fashion and answers the research question. (Smith et al., pp. 114-117).

I have attempted to follow these instructions and integrate them with the sociological and theoretical analysis that took place at the later stage, while preserving the phenomenological, agent-centred, focus as much as possible.
PART II – EMPIRICAL
4. From social support to right and back - Interpretative phenomenology of the over-70s medical card.

4.1. Introduction

Interpretation of the OAPs resistance in 2008 necessarily involves the discussion of their understanding of and relationship to the over-70s medical card. This discussion will proceed through theorising the following topics in relation to the case: health in the context of the old age, utility of the medical card, the institution of the over-70s medical card as universal benefit in 2001, and, abolishment of the principle of universality in 2008 which triggered strong feelings of ontological insecurity in OAPs and ultimately set off their resistance. But before we begin, let me spoil the ending and start with the summary of the central thread of argument so it can serve as a road-map through the following pages which may, at times, appear loosely connected. It will be argued that in addition to its obvious value as a resource enabling access to health for the OAPs and so providing them with an important source of psychological security in relation to access to health. It was also understood and interpreted as a symbolic token of recognition of the value of their contributions to Irish state over their lifetime. The latter was an outcome of its extension to all over-70s in 2001 which has discursively equated the medical card with other universal age-related benefits. Effectively transforming an income-related benefit into a right in the eyes of the elderly. Thus providing them with a sense of ontological security regarding their status in Irish society because it embodied a set of meanings which upheld the discursive perception of OAPs as valuable members of society whose past and ongoing contributions deserve the recognition and support from younger generations. This perception shattered in 2008 when the government decided to revoke the principle of universality as a cost-saving measure in response to the financial crisis. The Budget hearing triggered a process of dislocation which has disrupted the OAPs perception of selves as a group whose contributions and authority is recognised on all levels of Irish society, thus inducing strong feelings of ontological insecurity. This has led them to
interpret the government move as an outright attack on their rights and engage in resistance. At that point, we will move on to the next theme.

4.2. Importance of the Medical card

4.2.1. Health and old age

Taking Haugaard’s subscription to analytical treatment of social action and social power in the context of the case seriously warrants a brief theoretical discussion of health before moving on the interpretation of the importance of the medical card for the OAPs. We have seen that the social action involves action oriented towards other social agents in a way that takes the social context into account in the attempt to achieve the intended outcome through the interplay between structuration and confirm-structuration. And that social power constitutes the capacity to achieve outcomes through the structured interactions with others. Both processes are subject to a set of constraints involving the agents’ cognitive understanding and willingness (however conditional) to engage in interaction in a meaningful way\(^\text{23}\). At the same time, it is premised upon the agents’ physical capacity to act since, as Giddens reminds us, once the agent loses the capacity to act, if for example she becomes physically restrained, she is no longer an agent but a physical object to be acted upon. Viewed through this lens the physical and mental health, the capacity to understand and act upon the social world constitute a fundamental condition of social action. The health, by virtue of its status as a necessary ingredient of social and, indeed, even antisocial or private (non-socially systemic) action, can be thought of as a resource. Not just regarding actual physical capacity to act, or power-to but also through its incorporation in symbolic systems of meaning and values. This makes it implicated in relations of domination, or power-over, such as those seen in mental hospitals, age relations or the neo-liberal discourse which favours the economic productivity and energy of the younger generations. Moreover, it is a resource that becomes scarcer with passing age. Older people suffer from more, and more chronic, health problems as well as increased co-morbidity of illnesses (Stenholm et al. 2015, Held et al. 2016). The participants from all groups converged on this point and brought the issue of health in old age up early in the interview. The participants from the OAP NGO sector

\(^{23}\) To recapitulate ‘1) constraint derived from A’s practical and discursive consciousness knowledge of rules, 2) constraint based upon B’s practical and discursive consciousness knowledge of rules and 3) constraint derived from B’s willingness to accept new rule as valid’ (Haugaard, 1992 p.102). c.f. Chapter 1, section 1.2.2.
argued, from the position of access to a larger number of OAPs, that the health problems tend to be very common in old age, which is why the access to health services becomes more important with age.

*Older people, going to the doctor, it’s just a fact of life, it’s just something that you have to do. Multiple morbidities are increased hugely in older people. What I mean is when you get old, you don’t just get sick, you get multiple illnesses at the same time. And you get multiple chronic illnesses at the same time. (Peter Kavanagh, ARI)*

But, it was the older people who were acutely aware of the fact that the old age brought health problems and fleshed out the experience of ill health in old age. All the interviewed OAPs were suffering from a long-term, chronic, illnesses and highlighted the need for ongoing medical attention. Even though OAP participants did not discuss their preoccupation with health directly, it can be inferred that due to chronic conditions that require ongoing medical supervision and daily medications, the OAPs tend to think about their health often and perceive the access to medical services as essential. It allows them to maintain their health, and they perceive health as central to all other activities, it is a precondition for their normal functioning.

*Because once you reach 70, there are so many things that go wrong.*

You mean healthwise?

*Healthwise, exactly (pause) right. So all the things which need constant supervision and attention. So therefore, is that you need to go to the doctor. And you need to take medicine, you need to have access to the hospitals. (Participant 1 - OAP Protester)*

*As you know, and as I know, as people get older, they can get sicker more often, have to report to doctors more often, the doctors that come to them. You get more health problems the older you get. You know. (Participant 2 - OAP Protester)*

*It was vital when you get older to have a medical card because you have also - I’ve three leaking values out of four in my heart. But I am still functioning and - but I’m functioning with medication, and this is why the government are so short-sighted for older people. (Participant 3 - OAP Protester)*
Participants’ accounts point to a discrepancy between the image of old age and retirement as a new stage of life associated with leisure and enjoyment of one’s interests after a lifetime of work. A part of the Irish discourse on ageing since the institutionalisation of retirement as a social and economic institution, accompanied by the introduction of public pensions and still forms a strong influence in the discourse of positive ageing prevalent in Irish society (Pierce 2008). As opposed to the individual experience of old age as a period of deterioration of health and increasing dependency on others for its maintenance in the preservation of one’s capacity for further agency, shared by many, which places very concrete limitations upon the kinds of leisure one can engage in.

Moreover, the ageing process does not stop but continues unto the life’s logical conclusion. And with it, the associated deterioration of health. As we have seen, the OAP participants have suffered from chronic age-related illnesses which required ongoing medical attention. Read against the (re) structuration theory, the ongoing necessity to focus on the maintenance of health and management of illness in old age leads to a greater awareness of one’s current health condition. As well as the importance of health for everyday functioning on the level of discursive consciousness (the process of discursification of practical consciousness knowledge, or dislocation, regarding the practical understanding of the importance of one’s health). Greater discursive awareness of one’s health coupled with further complications of their current health conditions, likely to be expected as they age, introduces an element of uncertainty into the OAPs lives.

The process of transfer of knowledge from practical to discursive consciousness, what Haugard refers to as consciousness raising, constitutes a precondition of resistance, or indeed any contestation of structures. The awareness of one health with passing age is a curious instance, in the sense that critical reflection is forced upon these agents through physical/material circumstances. As a younger interviewer, I was struck by the fact that when in good health, these issues are pre-discursive, while once a social actor has multiple morbidities of this kind, health becomes a discursive consciousness preoccupation. To paraphrase the Marxist theory, they become a health-class-for-itself out of circumstances.

They have already experienced age-related deterioration of health and, given the ongoing medical treatments which focus on maintenance of current conditions, as well
as prevention of further complications, the OAPs are acutely aware of the fact that the next week, next month or next year can bring more, and more serious, health problems on top of already existing medical conditions. They may be conservative on many issues, but they will be sensitised on this issue. With the realisation of the importance of health comes the discursive appreciation of the importance of the medical care, as well as its costs. Thinking about health along those lines reveals an interesting paradox. On the one hand, health, or health condition, constitutes the ultimate constraint upon the individual capacity for action. On the other, it can be conceptualised as necessary, perhaps fundamental, precondition and resource for the realisation of the agency, of power-to. Thus, in the context of broader power relations, health constitutes the point of division between the haves and have-nots in material or economic terms because it requires access to more and more resources, agency and effort, often from others, to maintain when it fails or wanes away with age. Therefore, the importance of the medical card for the OAPs must not be underestimated.

4.2.2. Medical card

Medical Card entitlement, as issued by the Health Service Executive, confirms that the person and his or her dependants are entitled to a range of Health Services free of charge, which include:

• General Medical Surgical and outpatient services in a public ward in a public hospital (including consultant services).

• A choice of General Medical Practitioner from those doctors who have a contact with the Health Service Executive.

• Supply of prescribed approved medicines and appliances.

• Certain Dental, Ophthalmic, and Aural services.

(HSE - Health Service Executive 2016, p. 4)

While subsidising public health system alongside private insurance, Ireland does not have universal health service provision available to all free of charge and the costs of medical care are expensive. The medical card is one of the income-indexed supplemental services intended to mitigate the high costs of medical care. Given the central status of health to all other forms of action, social or otherwise, the medical card constituted a vital resource in the hands of those on low incomes since it allowed them access to a broad range of medical services free of charge and thus maintain their capacity to participate in social life.
Moreover, it did so without the economic concerns which are likely to be numerous given the low-income status of the recipients, particularly in the case of old age when the opportunities for generating additional income decline significantly. It was in the context of this economic stress-free access to health that the medical card represented an essential source of psychological security for the OAP holders. It enabled those affected by chronic conditions to receive the treatments and encouraged those who might put the GP visit off for financial reasons to attend and thus diagnose and treat conditions before they become acute (Nolan and Smith 2012, McNamara *et al.* 2013). At the same time providing the healthy OAPs with the sense of security that they will be able to receive the treatment regardless of their financial situation if the need arises in the future.

{PAR}Because it [medical card] was very, very important treasure [pause] that we could hold on to. That if we were sick, we then were able to consult without fear about money (Participant 1 - OAP Protester)

* 

{PAR} it was something that people really cherished. You know, at the stage of life, when you’re more likely to use health services and really primary care and regular check-ups and low-level kind of primary care treatments which should be and are available to your GP. That’s where you need to be. It wasn’t about entitlement to high expensive medical needs. It was about very very primary care (Eamon Timmins AAI)

From the perspective of the individual medical card holders, the medical card constitutes a radically empowering resource because it takes the money out of the equation of access to health care. This effect is particularly evident in the case population of the over-70s when the opportunities to generate extra income decrease significantly. The possibility of the free access to medical treatment leaves the OAPs with greater economic resources which amount to the greater agency, power-to, in almost all aspects of human existence in the neo-liberal systems.

At the same time, the medical card resource was incorporated in the broader societal system of meaning as a conditional means-tested benefit, social support for those on low incomes with strong discursive links to economic challenges is presents for state’s finances. An image intensified with the proliferation of discourses painting the prognoses of an ageing population as demographic time-bomb (Pierce 2008). A process that Carney (2010) associated with the government’s ad-hoc and sectional
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approach towards the ageing policy taken by the successive Irish governments. And, which enabled the discursive articulation of OAPs as deserving but dependant, vulnerable and ultimately powerless group, whose claim to those services ultimately rests, and must be made, on the acknowledgement of their own vulnerability and disempowerment. Thus, positioning those claiming or availing of the benefit into a disempowered position of structured dependency on the state’s discretionary power to grant or withdraw specific benefits, which is in turn influences mainly by the size of the dent it makes in state’s coffers (ibid). And which contributed to the perception ‘that past a certain age an individual’s social worth was diminished’ (Pierce 2008, p. 7). Speaking bluntly, they were portrayed as a deserving group, while essentially a burdensome population that has little to contribute to society. Such characterisations, if they are ingrained in public discourse, can and do lead to the practice of exclusion based on the age alone which is not something that went unnoticed by the OAPs and leaving them with feelings of inferiority.

But old age is no joke (laughs heartily) at all and what’s worse is you’re ignored, as if you didn’t (pause) And people when we were doing various things, and they wouldn’t see me at all, and I’d say ’I’m here too’ and they’d say ‘Oh I didn’t see you’ I’d say ‘Are you blind?’ But it’s no use it’s just you shrink which is bad.

* 

You feel you’re not what you were, you’re something less because you’re old and what’s worse you do shrink, this is the really irritating thing (laughs heartily). (Participant 3 - OAP Protester)

Moreover, the act of applying for the medical card or its renewal involved a discursive admission of the OAPs powerlessness in which the applicant must assume and officially perform the subject position of the poor, powerless and vulnerable subject in the form of form-filling (which is not unlike begging). Such admissions tend to disrupt one’s sense of ontological security no matter how empowering the consequences.24

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24 this last point constitutes a much more speculative and retrospective inference than the rest of the claims I have and will make throughout as it has not been addressed in interviews, but emerged as a recurrent but marginal and side-lined topic among the callers into the radio shows and has been briefly reported on in other media. My interpretation of this point differs from that of Fealy et al. (2012 p.92) who interpreted the reportage of OAPs’ fear of form-filling in the newspapers as an aspect of the discursive construction of the OAPs as inept, frail and vulnerable. While I agree with the Fealy’s assessment of the function of the claim in the discursive formation, my own reading is focused much more on the experience, which I did not have a chance to explore in depth.
Crucial here is the way social identity is constructed and reproduced by others. A social actor may structure in a certain way, but it is the confirm-structurer who validates. Furthermore, if the other persist in reproducing an identity in a certain way, this leads to a sense of exclusion. The elderly will have a heightened consciousness and sensitivity toward the way people perceive them. When that is at variance with the way they perceive themselves, to receive confirm-structuration to perceptions of self, this creates deep existential anxiety, which feeds into a deep overall predisposition to 4D ontological insecurity.

4.3. Over-70s Medical card, from social support to right...

However, this changed for the OAPs, in 2001 with the extension of the medical card to all over-70s which has effectively transformed it from social support into right in the eyes of the OAPs. At the time of the decision, the Fianna Fáil came under the criticisms from the opposition as well as some media commentators who portrayed the measure as an attempt to secure the electoral favour of the better-off OAPs before the 2002 elections and accused the government of misdirecting the country’s finances (Donnellan 2008a, Whelan 2008). In retrospect, this criticism was not far off the mark. The work of Carney (2010, 2015) and Burke (2009) shows that the successive Irish governments have historically moved away from the universal provision of healthcare in favour of piecemeal means-tested support service provision dependent on the state of public finances. And, given this historical unease over universal access, Meade has framed the institution of the universal medical card for the over-70s as an ‘anomaly’ and ‘Archetypical Fianna Fáil stroke: a pre-emptive attempt to buy off older voters and boost party PR in advance of the 2002 elections’ (Meade 2015, p. 167).

Moreover, the decision has been publicly announced hastily, without the proper policy deliberations, and without the negotiation with the government’s strategic partner, the Irish Medical Organization opposed to the measure at the time. Resulting in a deal that tied the government to a €640 fee per patient per annum for the universal over-70s medical card holder, this was nearly four times higher than that of the fee for a
low-income patient on a means-tested medical card averaged at €162, and resulted in a disproportionate costs of the over-70s medical cards for the state (Sullivan 2008). Summarizing the bare strategic political intent of the institution of the over-70s medical card in 2001 to the point of disregard of all other relevant considerations, Burke writes:

Medical cards were introduced for all over 70 in 2001 as a purely political ploy to attract the grey vote in the run-up to the 2002 general election. Charlie McCreevy, the then Minister for Finance only told Micheal Martin, then Minister for Health, about the manoeuvre the night before Budget. The extension of the medical cards to all over 70 was not in line with health policy. It was not in the 2001 health strategy that was the blueprint of health policy in Ireland for the decade ahead. It was not costed. There was no evidence base informing this policy-making sop. No deal had been done with the IMO to ensure that the new over 70-years-old who did not qualify on the low-income criteria would be provided with ‘free’ primary care services on the same basis as those on the basis of their low income. It was purely a device to get Fianna Fáil – Progressive Democratic government re-elected. The government went to the electorate in 2002 looking for time to implement their fantastic new health strategy. And it worked. It also worked for those over 70. Like the free public transport given the old-age pensioners by Charlie Haughey in the late 1960, it was a very popular move. The country was in the middle of an economic boom. It could afford to provide ‘free’ healthcare for those over 70. These were the people who had worked hard to create the environment for the Celtic tiger. As people get older, they need more healthcare, surely this was a rational measure. (Burke 2009, pp. 297–298)

The above paragraph highlights several aspects of the situation that will become important in the theoretical discussion of the case using the four-dimensional model of power and framing the institution of the over-70s medical cards regarding the interaction between two ideal-type groups, the OAPs and the and the government.

The government ministers, in pursuit of the discursively chosen goal of re-election, chose to exercise power over the OAPs capacity to access the medical card by its extension to all population over 70 through the practice (1D) of policymaking, even at the costs of negotiating very unfavourable economic conditions for the state. This practice was rooted in the perceived (from the perspective of government) structural configuration afforded by the system (2D), which was, at the time in 2001, driven by strong optimism of the economic miracle of the Celtic tiger and firm belief in the neoliberal worldview shaping the thinking of the individual government ministers on the level of the practical consciousness (3D).
The strategic interest in re-election has led the government officials to justify the decision in terms of the social contract, in a way that emphasised the reciprocal relations between the citizen's contributions and the duty of the state. Or at least the state under the leadership of the Fianna Fáil, to help and protect its citizens in old age, rather than to admit that it is being implemented solely for re-election and without proper policy considerations. Or, in other words, to present the issue in a way that was commensurable with OAPs' disciplinary dispositions (4D), practical consciousness knowledge (3D) and discursive understanding of the structural order of the world (2D) embodied on the level of their habitus. Understood as embodied knowledge going beyond the language or discursive cognition in the interplay along the continuum between the unconscious dispositions, practical and discursive consciousness, from which the agents generate their practices.

The Republic of Ireland represents an intricate case whereby a country experienced rapid shift from traditional to late modern forms of social organization which has transformed the relatively closed agricultural island nation-state with high levels of emigration to an open global and cosmopolitan economy with high levels of immigration and strong affiliations towards neo-liberal principles in the space of several decades (Kuhling and Keohane 2007). With it came the transformation of the traditional, Gemeinschaft-like, forms of solidarity between the generations, premised on strong social ties and cohesion between generations, into a late-modern (liquid, or post-modern) forms of organization of intergenerational solidarity facilitated by the state. Writing about the transformation of the state welfare supports between those two periods, Kennedy argues that:

> Economic development, accompanied by a shift away from agriculture, led to a weakening of the economic imperatives that bound together the family members, often at considerable cost to individuals. Economic development provided greater occupational opportunities and lifestyle choices for individual men and women, while greatly extended educational opportunities meant that children could achieve levels of education far above those of their parents. At the same time, economic prosperity meant that the state, via welfare payments and other schemes, could replace certain activities of families. Thus the state, in endeavouring to support family members, modified the responsibilities of the family. (Kennedy 2001, p. 4)

Accepting this, the generation coming to the pension age at the time of the institution of the over-70s medical card has been socialised to a very different societal system than we can see since the first leap of the Celtic tiger. It was a society marked by strong
family and community ties which emphasised the solidarity among different generations and the duty of the family to take care of their older relatives. An obligatory feature that was legally enshrined as a liability of children to take care of their parents in the Public Assistance Act, 1939 (Oireachtas 1939):

(a) every legitimate person shall be liable to maintain his or her father and mother

(b) every illegitimate person shall be liable to maintain his or her mother

And which, as Kennedy (2001, p. 9) argues was dropped in the Social Welfare (Supplementary Welfare Allowances) Act, 1975 (Oireachtas 1975)\(^{25}\).

The generation of silver revolutionaries internalised this interpretive horizon through both, the immersion in the social system, as well as through explicit discursive instruction. Over time, it has become sedimented into practical consciousness knowledge through recursive structuring and confirm-structuring of these rules of social interaction in the context of their everyday lives. To the point that agents were no longer aware of its operation. This internalised sub or pre-conscious knowledge on the level of practical consciousness (3D) sustained the disciplinary dispositions verging on the level of the unconscious (4D) which obliged the individuals to take care of their elders. As the country became more economically viable and the state became more involved in the care for the elderly through the provision of some age-related benefits, the OAPs have come to perceive the process as the extension of this duty from the family to the state. Subsequently, the institution of the medical card as a universal benefit resonated strongly with this understanding of the world because it symbolically emphasised the appreciation of the OAPs contributions and recognised them as valuable members of society.

*And good things have happened like we had the free travel .. free travel, we didn’t have to pay television licences, there was supplement on the telephone bills. So in that sense … And also that the pension went up. So in that sense, to a certain extent, yes in particular of the previous government of Charlie Haughey had recognised the value of our age group.* (Participant 1 - OAP Protester)

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\(^{25}\) I am indebted to a friend - Sarah O’Leary for directing me to this fascinating instance of legal enshrinement of the traditional family values and intergenerational solidarity in the Irish policy.
When the over-70s medical card was extended to all over-70s, it was presented explicitly in line with the OAPs self-understanding, as a reward for the OAPs lifetime contributions to the Irish state. Especially during the difficult period of very rapid increases in taxation between the 1960s and late 1980s which saw the average income tax for a single person rise from 16.6% in 1960 to 49.4% in 1985, a figure that inflates to 62% in 1985 once the social insurance contributions and levies were taken into account (Hardiman 2000, p. 824). The measure was presented as a part of a gradual process intended to improve the quality of life of older people which, over time, saw the increasing pensions, free travel allowance and other age-related benefits.

In my 1999 Budget, I announced that the income limits for Medical Cards for people aged 70 years or over would be doubled over three years, commencing in 1999. That process will be completed next March, and it is now proposed to take the next step. I am pleased to announce that from 1 July 2001, entitlement to the Medical Card is being extended to all those aged 70 years or over. (Houses of the Oireachtas 2000)

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We are delivering a package of measures to ensure that they benefit from the booming Ireland which they made. Everyone over 70 is now entitled to the medical card and to all the free schemes (electricity, telephone rental, TV licence) regardless of their income or who lives with them. (Dermot Ahern 2001)

The government officials’ alignment of the justification of the introduction of the over-70s medical card with the OAPs habitus has made the decision felicitous in the eyes of the OAPs and resulted in compliance in the form of electoral support (1D) which, in turn, achieved the outcome intended by the government coalition – its re-election. Although driven by a strategic interest in re-election on the part of the government, the introduction of the over-70s medical resulted in considerable enhancement of the capacity of all OAPs to access the medical care, thus resulting in positive-sum power.

At the same time, the extension of the medical cards to all over-70s and its discursive equation with other universal age-related benefits, like a pension or free travel, has conferred a new meaning structure on the institution of medical card for this age group. The strategic presentation of the medical card as a reward for OAPs contribution have transformed it from a discretionary benefit intended to mitigate the
economic hardship in the context of healthcare to a symbolic token of recognition for the services to the state. In was, in other words, elevated into a position of right.

And, it picked up quickly among the OAPs. Returning to the conceptual vocabulary of the (re)structuration theory, the attempt to introduce a different meaning of a given practice can be seen as a discursive attempt at novel structuring of the medical card aimed at a specific age group which has met with the confirm-structuration from that group. The success of the social interaction and resulting structural reproduction is premised upon the responding agents’ capacity to understand the new structuration practice as meaningful and their willingness to participate.

In addition to the obvious utility of the medical card as a resource which has done away with the economic stress and afforded the OAPs the sense of psychological security about their health on the level of discursive consciousness (2D). The discursive elevation of the medical card from benefit into right resonated strongly with their practical consciousness knowledge of the world (3D) as well as unconscious disciplinary dispositions towards intergenerational solidarity (4D). The Irish OAPs have accepted the government attempt at structuration because it resonated with their own understanding of the world embodied in their habitus.

Compared to the discourse of dependency associated with the medical card as means-tested social support which paints the beneficiaries as a burden on state and involves the implicit and explicit admission of one’s diminished social worth in the process of application, thus creating internal tension and ontological insecurity. The discursive articulation of the medical card as right enabled the OAPs to exercise further agency via the maintenance of their health as well as enhancing their economic resources. Moreover, it did so in a way that avoided internal conflict between the agents’ unconscious disciplinary dispositions towards particular societal configurations favouring intergenerational solidarity, their understanding of their world and themselves in it on the level of practical consciousness, and discursive sense of justified entitlement based on the social contract between the generations. Thus, re-affirming the status or authority of the OAPs as valuable members of Irish society and further reinforcing the sense of ontological security they derived from it.

So, the government attempt at novel structuration (for whatever strategic reasons) has met with OAPs confirm-structuration, the structured interaction was successful and
the OAPs began to reproduce all the meanings associated with the over-70s medical card through the practice of using it as a resource to maintain their health in order to retain their capacity to act.

Another important aspect of this process was the establishment of the sense of ontological security which the OAPs derived from the recursive reliance on the medical card on all levels of consciousness as well as practice. Once the institution or structure, of the over-70s medical card, became integrated into the local-communal system of meaning through recursive practices of its members, the discursively appreciated benefit gradually sedimented into practical consciousness, and the OAPs began to take the medical card, and the sense of ontological security it generated, for granted with habitual use. The cognitive link between health and medical card as a means of its maintenance was so strong that, in some cases, the terms became synonymous for the participants. Note the following passage from one of the participants:

So what was the point of all the benefits!? What was the point of free travel.. if we are too ill to go on a bus? What is the point of the television if we are too ill to watch television? So all these benefits cancelled out .. when we realised that the primary thing which is our health, because if our health is taken away, we don’t exist, we die. Participant 1 - OAP Protester.

Note that in the last sentence she has referred to government move of possible withdrawal of medical cards as health being ‘taken away’ from OAPs. It would be prudent to state at this point that participant 1 was not facing the danger of losing the benefit because she qualified for the medical card on the basis of means-testing before the introduction of the universal scheme. Yet, the cognitive bridge between the access to healthcare, medical card and psychological (ontological) security is evident. And it was this bridge that began to tremble with the government announcement of the decision to revoke the universal nature of the entitlement and re-introduce the means test in 2008.

4.4.1. Conflict

If the institution of the over-70s medical card in 2001 represented a felicitous exercise of positive-sum power in the interaction between the government and the OAPs premised upon the commensurability between the initial act of novel structuration on the part of the government and the OAPs’ habitus, almost pure consensus. The 2008 attempt to remove it represents a very different situation nearing its opposite pole – pure conflict, in which the government decision was in direct conflict with their understanding of the world, which disrupted their sense of ontological security associated with symbolic and existential aspects of the medical card.

The government decision to abolish the universal access to the medical card for over-70s was taken against the backdrop of a complicated economic situation for Ireland. Following a period of unprecedented economic growth of the Celtic Tiger era, the Irish economy came to an abrupt stop with the global financial meltdown in 2008 which saw some global investment companies announce major losses and even saw Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. filed for bankruptcy (Dukelow 2015). The global crisis had a significant knock-on effect on the Irish banks because a large proportion of their assets was tied in high-risk property speculations which collapsed with the global market, leaving them on the verge of bankruptcy. Irish government, in response, agreed to provide a guarantee for all liabilities for six banks, exceeding in total of 440 billion EUR, more than twice the total amount of Irish GDP (European Commission 2011), which lead to the necessity for the Irish state to avail of the EU/ECB/IMF financial aid in 2010 and ultimately costing the Irish taxpayers 64.1 Billion, nearly doubling the national debt (Dukelow 2015). Thus, plunging Ireland into ‘the costliest banking crisis in advanced economies since at least the great depression’ (Laeven and Valencia 2013, p. 247, in Dukelow 2015 p.149).  

26 The term ‘Celtic Tiger’ refers to the period between mid-1990s and the economic collapse of 2008 in which the Irish economy became one of the fastest growing economies in the world. The origins of the term can be traced to a Morgan Stanley report in 1994 (Kirby et al. 2002, p. 17)

27 The Irish Financial crisis was an outcome of interaction between several factors. The increasing de-regulation of the banking sector, over-investment in property, and close ties between the politicians, bankers and property developers leading to state stimuli in private property markets. Providing an account of its origins is beyond the scope of this project and my own expertise on the subject. The topic has been covered extensively in academic and non-academic literature and the interested reader can find more in O’Toole 2010, Kelly 2011, Taylor 2011, Allen 2012, Dukelow 2015.
the emerging fiscal crisis, the government officials moved the upcoming Budget hearing for the year 2009 from December to October 14th and began preparing the public for difficult economic measures ahead. Government officials stressed the severity of the financial situation and argued for the necessity of severe austerity measures if Ireland’s economy is to recover. Brian Cowen, Irish Taoiseach at the time, called the upcoming crisis and budget a ‘defining moment in our nation’s history’ given the extraordinary economic circumstances, arguing that citizens of Ireland, and implicitly the government, ‘…face stark choices’ with potentially ‘catastrophic consequences’ and claimed the government will make the necessary decisions, ‘no matter how unpalatable’ (B. Cowen in Collins et al. 2008, p. 1). And expressed the conviction that the public would not want the government to avoid difficult decisions that will set the course of Ireland’s economy towards the recovery.

“I don’t believe that the Irish people would want us to shy away from the difficult decisions we must now make … We will make the necessary tough choices so that we can chart a course for economic renewal to bring us beyond the current short-term difficulties towards a stable long-term growth rate” (B.Cowen in Kerr 2008a, p. 9)

This context imposed severe constraint upon the government’s capacity to fund the current level of state services and so limited the array of the possible courses of action discursively available to the government ministers (2D) to a number of austerity measures in an effort to differentiate Ireland from Portugal and Greece (countries that also found themselves in need of financial aid) and to assume the role of the ‘model pupil’ in terms of swift implementation of the EU, IMF and TROIKA recommendations rather than resistance to them (Allen 2012a). These austerity measures were framed as reasonable relative to strong commitments to a neoliberal worldview that shaped the Irish (and global) politics as well as public discourses for the decades past and became embedded, to various extents, in the government officials’ and wider public’s practical consciousness (3D). And, again speculatively, perhaps sustained by the overall dispositions towards a very rational, instrumental and positivistic (R.I.P. :) disposition to interpret all aspects of the policy solely in terms of economic categories (4D). Thus, leading to a portrayal of the universality of the over-70s medical card as excessive costs the state cannot afford and, implicitly, the OAPs about to lose the benefit as a burden on society. Such perception was at almost perfect
odds with the OAPs’ understanding of the medical card along the continuum of their habitus.

Beginning on the level of discursive consciousness, the OAPs were suddenly confronted with the possibility of losing the medical card and the necessity to pay for the medical care, respite care and a host of other services facilitated by the card. Moreover, in response to the 2001 extension of the benefit to all over-70s and Government assurances that they will be able to retain their card until the end of their lives. Many of the OAPs cancelled their private health insurance and were now being told by insurance companies they either had to pay the insurance for several years before their medical expenses will be covered, or to pay back the previous seven years in premium insurance which posed a further economic challenge on the OAPs (Liveline 2008a).

The OAPs anxiety about the economic consequences the measure was going to inflect on their capacity to engage in their everyday lives was not quelled by the two benefits intended for those who no longer qualify. The OAPs have pointed out that the GP visit the only card and the cash payment of €400 is far from sufficient given the high costs of the medical care beyond the GP as well as auxiliary services. However, it was not only the anxiety about the economic side of the access. Even if the OAPs would be able to afford the costs of medical care, they were losing the access to a wide network of support system they were already familiar with. The medical card system facilitated easy access to those services within a single system. Losing the medical card meant that the OAPs would have to look for many of the services and their providers themselves and lose already established relationships with the professionals in the system. One caller to radio on behalf of his father put it succinctly:

*Everything [medical care] he got was through the medical card, and I am talking about the nurse, the diabetic clinic, the kidney clinic, the chiropodist. But, what I have lost now, what has been kicked from under us, is his support network. This was all, I could pick up the phone, we have been in the system so long they know him, they know his case. Now there is no chiropodist, I have to find a private one. A simple thing like getting in and out of the bath, which would be impossible. If the [inaudible] breaks it has done, where do I go? This has all been closed, taken away from me. … This makes it easy for me, just the ease of access and being in the system, once you’re in it its superb* (Liveline 2008, runtime 00:36:22).
The experience of worry and anxiety about the possibility of losing the medical card was further exacerbated by the lack of clarity surrounding the issue since it was announced. While the extent and severity of the Budget were being reiterated daily with certainty, there was a dearth of concrete information about the specific measures the government will take. The government officials did not provide any concrete details other than reassurances that the government is working hard towards meeting the requirements of the difficult situation and invoking the difficulty of the fiscal situation. Faced with the vacuum of confirmed information, the media coverage of the Budget measures was, in the weeks before the hearing, predominantly composed of speculations on the options available to government and opinion pieces outlining the potential course of action. But very vague on specifics, relying on the anonymous government sources conveying the atmosphere of determination to implement severe cutbacks across all areas of government spending.

*Asked if income tax rates could go up, a Government source replied: “I don’t think anything is off the table.” “Everything is up for grabs,” according to one Government source. “Some of the cutbacks are going to be deep.” (De Breen and Roche 2008)*

*The government insiders say ministers accept Finance Minister Brian Lenihan’s Budget is going to be a real hard sell with no silver lining. “It’s going to be vicious. There’s a wide level resignation among them all that it has to be done. There’s arguably a mood to do it all in one go, ‘a source said” (Sheahan 2008)*

The issue of over-70s medical cards received very little media attention among those speculations. There were just three newspaper articles concerned with the topic in the two weeks leading up to the Budget in the newspapers surveyed for this project. First was a pre-emptive public appeal from Age Action Ireland which highlighted the importance of the medical cards for the over-70s and its benefits for this population since it was introduced and urged the government not to tamper with it (Irish Independent 2008). The second was a report of a chairman of Anglo-Irish bank S. Fitzpatrick urging the government to ‘tackle the sacred cow’ of universal entitlements mentioning the state pension, child benefit and over-70s medical card together as a waste of resources that should be assessed on the basis of wealth (O’Brien 2008). None of these, however, provided any indication that the government is, in fact, considering
such measure. Only mention was a short sentence that targeting the medical card is an idea ‘floated by the observers’ among other measures attributed to a government source (De Bredun and Roche 2008). As the date of the Budget grew near, more concrete information began to seep through, and most of the government measures became announced in the media by the morning edition of Budget day newspapers.

Given the absence of any concrete information from the officials for the first few days of the controversy, and the conflicting interpretations of the few vague statements given by the government officials. It is reasonable to expect that a large number of the OAPs, who were not going to be affected by the measure because they have received the card on the basis of means-testing before 2001, were unnecessarily exposed to the experience of the ontological insecurity described above.

And what upset them more was that we couldn’t even get very much clarification on how exactly this measure was going to be implemented, because what the government said was that the automatic right to a medical card for people over 70 was going to be taken away, but they were going to introduce means test. So there was no clarity about how this means test was going to be operated. So people couldn’t even find out, well maybe they might still hold onto their medical card depending on their income, because the income levels were very fluid the first day or two after the announcement was made. (Joe Behan, TD)

Even after the details of the scheme became publicly known, the income limits were arguably set very low and were going to affect a large number of over-70s medical cards holders. The first two sets of thresholds released in the space of hours have set the cut-off point in such a way that of the total of approximately 140,000 holders of the over-70s medical card, an estimated 125,000 OAPs, nearly a third of all the OAPs in the country, were going to lose the benefit.

Moving on to a deeper level of practical consciousness. While the concerns over access to health explain why such a large number of OAPs became distressed by the government decision, it does not tell the whole story. Especially once we consider the final government rollback which more than tripled the initial means-test levels which effectively inverted the number of affected OAPs set by previous two thresholds, from 125,000 losing the medical card and 15,000 retaining it, to just 15,000 of the wealthiest OAPs losing the benefit before the protests began. And yet, failed to appease the OAPs. If we understood the importance of the medical card for the OAPs solely regarding the discursive preoccupation with the economic aspect of the access
to health care. Such significant reversal should potentially quell the public disquiet since most of the OAPs who were going to be affected in the initial two rounds of the means-tests thresholds were now going to keep their medical card. However, this did not happen, and many of the OAPs who were going to retain the card were still outraged at the decision and continued to press for the reinstatement of the principle of universality. This suggests that the medical card, or some of its aspects, was important to OAPs beyond its apparent capacity to facilitate the access to health services.

The government decision did not just trigger the concerns and anxiety about the future capacity to access health services; it also breached the OAPs’ understanding of their standing in society ingrained in their habitus. Despite the short existence of the measure, the OAPs have, come to think of the medical card as a part of their retirement package and the meanings associated with it gradually became sedimented into the level of practical consciousness. And with a habitual practice involving continual confirm-structuration from others, came to derive the sense of ontological security from their reliance on the benefit. Not just as a means of accessing medical services, but also as a token of recognition of the value of the older people in the language of the social contract.

So, the seven years it had been in play was enough time for people to, you know consider it part of their retirement benefits package. You know, for example if they were to cut the pension, it doesn’t matter for how long we’ve had the state pension at this amount, people would be angry. There is a social contract at play that you go in, you work, you pay tax, and you get this when you retire. (Peter Kavanagh, ARI)

The OAPs themselves articulated this point very strongly, both in the participant interviews and across all other sources of data collected. When the government decided to abolish the universal access to medical cards, the OAPs perceived this as injustice, or breach of the social contract they internalised on the level of practical consciousness. They felt that they were the generation that lived through the difficult economic times in the history of the state and it was their hard work and their taxes that helped to build the country into what it was today. And this valuable contribution deserves recognition. The government discourse, focusing exclusively on the costs of the medical cards in the context of austerity, did very little to calm this sentiment.
Quite the opposite, the OAPs have interpreted the government’s narrow preoccupation with costs as a sign that the OAPs are considered a burden on the state.

Anyway, and that, more or less, met with opposition. And people said it wasn’t fair, that the senior citizens worked all their life, they paid their contributions. More or less it was a … it wasn’t … it was a very impolite way of rewarding them as well.

I think that people themselves in like seniors, I hate to say old people, senior citizens felt “Well, look what they’re doing to us, we have worked all our lives, we have paid our contributions and that, we have paid our way in society (Participant 2 - OAP Protester).

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They had come to this protest because we were so annoyed at what the government were doing against old people. We felt they had demeaned us completely and we had given our lives working and wanted to keep working, and suddenly we were a burden on a State. We didn’t feel a burden, we felt we were good for the State to have older people minding children without charging, minding their grandchildren, teaching, we did all sorts of work (Participant 3 - OAP Protester)

Such perception was in stark conflict with the OAPs practical understanding of selves as a deserving group, not just for their contributions to the state’s coffers, but also because they have brought up the future generations and were still, in many cases, active in their communities and helping their families by taking on unpaid work. Again, they were able to do this because of their health premised on the continuous access to health services which became synonymised with the over-70s medical card. Even though OAPs participants did not explicitly make the unsolicited connection between medical card and rights, their accounts suggest that they have come to think of the medical card in this way. This is not surprising given the centrality of health in old age and the fact that the medical card came, over time, to mean access to health for all over-70s. This articulation of health as a right backed up by social contract and embodied in the institution of the medical card is nicely captured, almost in its ideal-type form, in the following passages from Participant 1

And it … you know so this if how, why it was so important that suddenly people realized: we have the right to live on this earth, we are the ones with our labour who build up the state. And for them suddenly to come along and say “you are expendable” was absolutely shocking, absolutely shocking. You know.
I understand that, I absolutely understand that you work... yes... You pay taxes...

...and to bring up the children, you go along with everything. In the thirties that you experience poverty, you experienced how to manage without any money. And suddenly, you have your medical card and you have free access to the health. To take something like that away, it's not that we didn't have the medical card before, but you cannot take something away from somebody]. (Participant 1 - OAP Protester)

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But, why do you think it wouldn't work. Why do you think that the pensioners still, like you say the country is kind of divided?

Yes, but for the medical card no, because everyone felt the same, everyone felt the same, even the barristers, they felt the same. So therefore, why were they excluded from health. Because as we know what happened later with the collapse of the Celtic tiger, so it might look as if they got lots of money in the beginning, but all that money can disappear. And because you're rich one day, it does not mean to say that the next day, suddenly you might be poor. And to have to pay. And also, remember, it's going to the doctor costs lots of money.

Plus, they have done the same thing, they have spent their whole life working, paying taxes...

Absolutely, and so what the old people collectively felt is that we are the generation that have worked, we are the generation who paid their taxes, and we are the generation who deserve respect. And I think that it was the lack of respect that actually really was the trigger.

The lack of respect for your rights?

Had no respect for us whatsoever, no respect for all the work that our generation have done into building up the country to what is it now. (Participant 1 - OAP Protester)

4.4.2. Dislocation,

A number of indicia in the collected data suggest that the government decision to target the medical cards as a budgetary measure triggered a process of dislocation among the OAPs regarding their practical understanding of their own position and status in society. First of all, the sudden and unexpected nature of the government decision. Unlike other austerity measures for which the Irish public has been tenderized for some time before the protests, the decision to target the universality of the over-70s medical card in the Budget cuts came with a minimal warning and only
became publicly known a day before the Budget. The participants emphasised the sudden, shocking, nature of the moment when they realised that the medical card, a benefit and resource (and sedimented configuration of meanings) they took for granted and relied on without reflexive thought was being targeted. And, argued that this shock had prompted them to re-evaluate the meanings associated with the medical card on the level of discursive consciousness.

And it … you know so this if how, why it was so important that suddenly people realized: we have the right to live on this earth, we are the ones with our labour who build up the state. And for them suddenly to come along and say “you are expendable” was absolutely shocking, absolutely shocking. You know. (Participant 1 - OAP Protester)

Second, the government decision constituted an external event that was, if not incomprehensible from the perspective of OAPs’ habitus. Once the meanings of the social status of older people in society, associated with the over-70s medical card on the level of practical consciousness, became discursively available in response to a sudden dislocatory moment. The OAPs could not make sense of the government move in a way that would resonate with their understanding of the world. They could not understand why the government officials would target the pensioners given their lifetime contributions to Irish society, the discourse of respect towards the aged and intergenerational solidarity they understood to be embedded in Irish society and emphasised by the previous Fianna Fáil governments. In other words, it was unreasonable, or idiotic in Haugaard’s sense. That is completely outside of the boundaries of the range of possible and meaningful afforded by their habitus. This

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28 See section 2.2 in chapter 2 for more discussion of the idiotic action as conduct which, although oriented towards another in interactive manner, does not draw upon or contribute to reproduction of social system.
quality of the experience is captured in the almost unanimous dismissal of the government move as a mistake among the participants from all groups as well as in their inability to explain, or even speculate about, the government’s reasons for targeting the medical card. This difficulty manifested itself in the prosodic features of spoken language, particularly pauses and (what I perceived as) uncertain tone, during interviews which are very difficult to capture in transcription.

*I mean in Dublin, on platform the politicians were there and we just boooed them [pause] we did not want [pause] …they could not in reasonable way explain to us why the medical cards were taken away.*

*Yes, they hadn’t …. [pause] …. I don’t know …[pause] I don’t know what their thinking was.*

**The government?**

*You know [pause] …it’s that they did not think it through. (Margareta)*

*So they hadn’t thought it out properly, they hadn’t justified it clearly and they certainly hadn’t justified it to the older population, (Robin Webster)*

*So, they just haven’t thought the whole thing through?*

*They had, I don’t think they thought it through. (Robin Webster AAI)*

Although perceived as infelicitous regarding their own understanding, the government decision was nonetheless real for the OAPs. It was a part of the Budget, the country was in financial crisis, verging on a breakdown, and the government officials have indicated firm intention to move forward with the austerity measures despite what was perceived by the OAPs as devastating effects on their existence. The OAPs, a group promised the security of access to health for the rest of their lives once they reach 70 years of age, were suddenly confronted with the possibility of losing a benefit which they took for granted.

The ontological insecurity triggered by government decision’s utter violation of the OAPs discursive, practical and dispositional understanding of the symbolic meanings embodied in medical card revealed the discrepancy between the OAPs’ understanding of the medical card as right, which was to a large extent facilitated by the Government
officials’ strategic presentation of the issue in 2001 which has framed it using the language of rights and social contract in the pursuit of the electoral favour from this group. Moreover, the fact, that despite the language of rights used by the politicians the measure was viewed and intended as an extension of social support premised upon the economic growth rather than right, in the sense of something inalienable and beyond contestation, which is enshrined in law or policy. Thus, exposing duplicitous and instrumental aspects of the discursive construction of the over-70s medical card at the time of its institution. The result of this event was a process of 3D consciousness rising which enabled discursive examination of multiple meanings associated with the over-70s medical card and reproduced hitherto on the level of practical consciousness. This process had a knock-on effect on OAPs’ discursive evaluation of their own relationship to the government officials on the level of habitual functioning pre-reflexive functioning and ultimately led to a profound dislocation of the government’s authority in the eyes of the OAPs. In other words, how could they go on legitimating the authority of the government which was acting directly against their own interest and, in a manner which was completely unacceptable and illegitimate relative to the OAPs habitus? Understood like this, the OAPs have interpreted the government’s decision as unjust attempt to curtail the rights of the elderly at best and deliberate attack on the OAPs at worst.

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And if that security is taken away … it really … its that we felt … as if they wanted to exterminate us …(interjection both laugh) … and I think that some protesters did feel like that. It had a feeling of the Nazi regime that we had no value whatsoever, and the sooner we all died off, the better. (Participant 1 - OAP Protester)

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“What do they want the people to actually do now? To die at 69 or before?” (Liveline 2008b runtime 00:24:17)

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“And her opinion is that this is the the kind of final solution. This is the easy way to get rid of a old age pensioners.” (Caller on behalf of his mother in Liveline 2008c runtime 00:25:24)

The signifiers that alert the sociologist to 4D are the words referring to fear or anxiety. In these quotations the words ‘security is taken away’, and the references to the final
solution all suggest 4D deep ontological insecurity brought by dislocation. Although I have chosen some of the most extreme examples to illustrate the point, the themes of OAPs contribution and breach of social contract emerge consistently from the OAP camp across all data collected, suggesting the wide-spread prevalence of the feeling among the OAPs at the time. And with the perception of their rights and existence, being under attack, the OAPs saw no other option but to react, which brings us to the next theme.
5. Uproar and mobilisation

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the process of reification of the over-70s medical card for the OAPs as the symbolic representation of their right to health (and health care) in the wake of the extension of the medical care to cover every person over the 70 years of age in 2001. This understanding became shattered with the (same party) government officials’ decision to revoke the same universal access. This, in turn, had a dislocatory effect on the OAPs understanding of their own position and value in Irish society, which induced strong feelings of ontological insecurity and ultimately led them to interpret the government officials’ decision as an attack on their right to access to healthcare, and therefore, health. Present chapter shifts the focus from the inward phenomenological/sociological interrogation of the experience of shock and ontological insecurity the OAPs felt in response to the government measure to its outward expressions. The chapter examines the various practices by which the OAPs and OAP NGOs challenged the government discourse and mobilised for collective political action with more explicit sociological intent.

This theme is slightly different from the other two in its use of data sources because when I started the project and the interviews, the focus was entirely on the examination of the OAPs’ experience related to participants' experience of the protests, which, given its strong impact, (discussed later) took precedence in their accounts. The importance of the period between the announcement of the measure and the protests itself gradually emerged throughout the process of analysis of the accounts of OAP NGO representatives in conjunction with the media, radio and newspapers articles towards the end of the analysis, which is why the OAP protesters accounts remain by and large silent throughout, and the chapter draws on the data from other sources.

It will be argued that the resistance began with almost immediate and nation-wide outburst of concern, anxiety and anger from individual OAPs and gradually refined into a symbolic construction of the retrenchment of the medical card in line with the OAPs understanding. That is as illegitimate attempt to curtail the rights of deserving
citizens. And given the severity of the infringement, presented the issue in terms of a binary opposition between the government elites, acting in their own (or those close to them) interest, and the Irish people who invested them with authority which was being used to the citizens’ disadvantage. In response, the OAPs began to confront their local politicians directly in their constituency offices. Incited others to do the same and initiated a call for public demonstrations against the measure, which has been heard by both Age Action Ireland and Senior Citizens Parliament. This construction and response were received as entirely consistent and felicitous relative to the interpretive horizon(s), sustained by habitus (plural) of other social groups present in Irish public, and intensified by the financial crisis. Leading to the widespread public support for the OAPs cause, which further stimulated their mobilisation and amplified the pressure on the government officials, ultimately pressured the government into scaling back the means-test thresholds before the protests. Thus, preserving benefits for many OAPs who would have otherwise lost it. While, at the same time, losing the principle of universality. This point will mark the transition to the final chapter.

5.2. Clarity and tangibility of medical card as a catalyst for mobilisation.

5.2.1. Fast response

Contemporary public and media recollections of the older people’s resistance against the measure tend to emphasise two protests events. The Age Action Ireland meeting in St Andrew’s on Oct 21st and Senior Citizens’ Parliament protest outside of the Dáil on Oct 22nd, as the uprising or resistance of the Irish old age pensioners that forced the government to a significant rollback on the decision to target the medical cards. Portraying the event as a ’silver revolution’(MacGuill 2014) in which the ‘Grey Army’ ‘The many thousands of elderly people who protested so vehemently forced the then-Government into a hasty retraction of that unpopular measure’ (O’Carroll 2015). Similarly, the OAP protesters interviewed for this project were all convinced that it was those two events changing the government decision.
So it was quite extraordinary, and I think that the government learned a lesson. But they rolled back later.

**They rolled back later?**
Yes, they did. Because we went to the ... senior citizens parliament and they rolled back later.

I mean you know the fact is, the next day (laughs) ... the next day (laughs even more). They suddenly said “all right, keep your medical cards” (both laugh). I mean it was astonishing, there was no big debate in the Dáil or anything like that, they were shocked. (Participant 1 - OAP Protester)

*Anyway, they decided then after ... and a lots of talk and everything. They rolled back on it and said that people in 2008, the people that have the medical card now, they can hold on to it, but new applicants will have to be assessed. So that’s like (inaudible)*

**This was after the protests?**

*Oh, this was after the protests.* (P)

However, the recollections positing those two protests events as the cause of the government retreat are problematic because they are at odds with the temporal order in which the events unfolded. While those two events undoubtedly occupy a prominent position among the most significant public mobilisations the country has seen since the Tax Marches in the 80s and represent the first public protest of OAPs in the history of Ireland. They were not the cause of the government officials’ retreat. The government held the press conference announcing significant rollback on the measure on the morning of Tuesday 21st before either of the protest events took place. And, it did so in response to a week-long country-wide campaign of public resistance to the measure, speed scale and severity of which was unprecedented in the Irish context.

The mobilisation of OAPs’ social and political power in response to the government decision to target the universality of the over-70s medical card happened quickly. The government decision was followed by an almost immediate nation-wide upsurge of worry and anger among the OAPs. The OAPs NGO’s and TDs constituency offices started receiving phone calls, expressing anxiety about the possibility of losing the medical card and anger at the government decision, from the concerned OAPs about the medical cards very shortly after the live broadcast of budget address. OAP NGO
representatives and politicians interviewed for this project expressed surprise at the speed with which the concerned OAPs have let themselves known, as well as at the volume of calls indicating the extent of the concern among the population.

Um, so when it was announced, there was uproar. And the uproar continued (inaudible) the protest. Was it Tuesday? ... Yes ... I think is was on Tuesday, (inaudible, participant looking up the day) ... the phones here were in meltdown. Um, we were in a house across ... we had two offices, here and we had an office in the (inaudible) [pause] the phones were literally in meltdown. You couldn’t, the phones were blocked, there was just [pause] as fast as you pick hang them up, pick them up. (Eamon Timmins, AAI)

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I first realised how strongly people felt when the budgetary measure was announced in the Dáil by the Minister for Finance, when he announced that the automatic right to a medical card for people over 70 was going to be withdrawn, that within I’d say a half an hour, 30 minutes of him finishing his speech, my phone started ringing in my office, I started getting emails, so did my colleagues. Because I knew when he said it, I actually knew when he said it, this was going to cause a lot of upset for a lot of people. But the evidence came in very quickly when TDs such as myself started receiving calls from our constituents, and I knew by the volume of calls and how angry people were, even on that first day, that this was going to be a huge issue for the country.

So it was really so fast?

Very, very quickly. (Joe Behan, a FF TD at the time)

These two participants were by no means in a unique position, many other OAPs NGOs have reported high levels of concern among the OAPs and increased volume of phone calls ‘with anxious inquiries’ (Joe Little in RTÉ Six One News 2008a 15 Oct). The newspapers were in the following days replete with references to a flood of calls and statements from backbench TDs claiming to have received hundreds of calls (Kerr 2008b, O’REGAN and Kelleher 2008, Siggins 2008). In addition to calling the constituency offices and OAP NGOs, the OAPs have also used number media outlets to express their dissatisfaction, wrote open letters to the newspapers and called into radio interviews with politicians and talk-shows. In particular, Joe Duffy’s Liveline, a widely listened to radio programme on current affairs with just under 400,000 Dáil listeners at the time (Healy 2008a), was devoted exclusively to the issue of medical cards for the duration of the controversy (for the first time in the history of the
programme) and provided a public forum where OAPs could voice their concern and vent anger.

“I was genuinely concerned, as someone who sat here watching the screens for a few years at this stage. I was genuinely surprised that seven days later, seven days later on liveline, despite what the government was saying, the tsunami just built up and built up. I think everyone was taken aback by the level of anger. I don’t think Liveline has ever done seven days on with one item to the exclusion of others.” (Liveline 2008d runtime 00:17:03)

The theoretical significance of the extent and speed of response is multiple. To begin with, it shows that government measure indeed induced feelings of ontological insecurity in a large number of OAPs. Probably even in the much larger proportion of the OAPs, than the actual number of the affected given the very vague way in which the politicians framed the decision and the dearth of any concrete information about the details of the measure.

The speed of the response also shows that the OAPs have immediately understood the impact of the measure. They did not need a translation from the, often complex, policy language as the issue of the medical card was very clear from the outset, and its importance and potential consequences of its loss were acutely apparent to this age group. This was facilitated by the discursive awareness of the importance of the access to health services in old age stemming from the increased necessity of its maintenance. These aspects of the medical card, its singularity, clarity and tangibility, were underscored as an important factor in OAPs mobilisation by the participants from OAP NGOs working with the OAPs on the level of policy:

I think the other issue is .. say something .. I think the other thing about the medical card is .. it was very clear, and people could understand it very easily. You had the medical card in your hand, you had access, and then suddenly you didn’t. In terms of access to GP and the medical care and all the rest of it. And it really .. it was a huge, I think it is a .. healthcare costs are a huge concern as they age, there is no question about that. And I think that many of the other things that happened in relation to older people, or the other debates and so on. They are more detailed .. they are very detailed, they are complex, and actually, translating it into something that would mobilise people, in the same way, is, you know, it’s more difficult. And so it’s [pause] I think the other thing that was really important there was just the clarity of people’s situation. While they had the medical card and if they were going to lose the medical card. It was very tangible, it was very clear, and it was very immediate. It didn’t need
to be explained, translated or mediated in any way. Whereas, many other policy changes, the implications become clear later. Or a smaller number affected. And you are trying to get [pause], so you are not going to mobilise larger numbers in the same way. (Participant 4, Policy Expert)

One of the participants from the OAP NGOs compared the medical card protests with another smaller protests organised by the OAP NGOs in response to multiple government cutbacks in range of provision of services in 2013. The increases in charges for medicine prescriptions, reduction in the fuel allowance for the OAPs, abolishment of the telephone allowance and bereavement grant for or the elderly alongside further retrenchment of the medical cards thresholds (Duffy 2013) and argued that this particular protest failed to present a unified message.

One of the factors behind it, one of the key reasons it worked was that there was a single uniting issue – the medical card. Single uniting issue, the medical cards … when we hit the streets again several years later, there was hastily organised protest for a day or two after a budget when the .. telephone allowance was taken, the bereavement grant was cut and the winter fuel allowance was shortened. All of a sudden you had .. similar amount of people, you had 8 or 9 thousand people on the streets … according to some. Some would say three or four thousand, I don’t know I was in the middle of it ..(inaudible 34:12-34:14). there was a palpable anger in the air, but there was anger over so many different things. Some people wanted the telephone allowance restored, some people wanted the bereavement grant restored, and some people wanted you know .. increase in the carers respite grant and yet more wanted you know more facilities for disabled older people in certain parts of the country. So there was no one uniting voice, and there was no one uniting issue. And that was where that one failed ultimately as a protest. (Peter Kavanagh ARI)

Staying for a moment with the second protests which provide an interesting contrast, it can be argued the stakes were not as high as in 2008 from the perspective of the OAPs. While some of the benefits (telephone allowance and bereavement grant) have been abolished altogether, others were preserved even if in a circumscribed nominal value and the OAPs were going to be able to access them further. This suggests that a significant mobilisation of resistance is more likely to occur when they are triggered by an issue that is perceived to be of existential importance to all the members of the subordinate group. To put it crudely, in what they see as the fight-or-flight situations.

Unlike most of the above benefits, which, although not insignificant for the OAPs, do not reach the existential importance of the medical card. The existential element
points to the way in which this issue affected the four-dimension of power. The interpretative difference between medical card as a social support and as a right was reached to deeper levels of habitus (3D and 4D). The 2D aspect concerns the change of bias and 1D the conflict itself.

Finally, the above discussion points to the fact that the initial impulse for the campaign of resistance came from the OAPs themselves. And, it came spontaneously, bottom-up. It was what Arendt (1970) would call power, and Allen (1999b, 1999a) describes as power-with. The capacity to act together for a common purpose. The more plural the issues (or purpose), the less the unity, as we see in the contrast above. The moment of coming together was made more effective by the unity of a single issue. The capacity for action is never generalised, to be effective. So, a clear focus to channel the power-to into, to realise power-over the government. In a sense we can say that there was a unique coming together of the four dimensions of power.

The temporal delay between the Budget hearing and the OAPs outcry was too short for the OAP NGOs or the Media to spread the alarming interpretations of the measure and incite resistance. The participants from the interviewed OAP NGOs were rather adamant on this point.

Now in terms of the event, a couple of important things, first of all, this event was demanded by and organised by members, not Age Action, our members said, ‘We’re so upset about this, we want you to do something about it’, so we were responding to our members rather than professional people saying we want to organise it, so that’s a very important thing. (Robin Webster AAI)

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So this was a turning point when suddenly people said: “Hang on a sec, you can’t take that card from us, you don’t know what you’re doing. We’re not going to stay quiet we are going to come forward”. Um.. and I think then once it began to get ahead with steam, more people, who might have been quiet otherwise, came forward and say “yeah, I agree with them” this is a huge thing and it shouldn’t happen. And I think there’s also every once in a while a sense, once a campaign gets going and people say “maybe if we keep this going we might be able to reverse it” and the pressure was building and it [pause] towards the end, the bandwagon was rolling and everybody was on. But it was the elderly people who stepped up and, you know, it’s hard to get a campaign going. (Eamon Timmins AAI)
5.2.2. Role of OAP advocacy organisations

At the same time, it would be a mistake to take credit away from the two OAPs advocacy NGOs, Age Action Ireland and Senior Citizen’s Parliament, whose members’ involvement in the affair was pivotal. In the broadest sense, these organisations provided vocal support for the OAPs call, argued for the benefits of the medical cards and further reiterated the levels of anxiety and distress among the OAPs in public statements and media appearances.

Both organisations have been involved with the policymaking process since 1996 through the institutions of community pillar of National Partnership Council and National Economic and Social Forum, public-private partnerships intended to make a recommendation on policy options (Acheson and Harvey 2008). However, despite the presence of these voices on the fora, they have had no noticeable impact on the situation of the levels of inequality and poverty among the OAPs. As demonstrated in the relative decline of their income during the period of Celtic Tiger, as well as in the fact that Ireland ‘has by far the lowest relative social expenditure on older people among the 15 member states of the European Union before the 2004 enlargement’ (Acheson 2010, p. 23). Despite their minimal impact on the policymaking process, the long-standing experience provided the OAPs NGO members with a repository of practical consciousness understanding of the field of politics which enabled them to discursively recognise the political opportunity afforded by the situation and direct the energy of the OAPs directly towards the politicians. While the impulse for the resistance came from the OAPs, members of these organisations, possessing considerable (practical and discursive) knowledge of the way in which the Irish political system works have strategically directed the energy of the OAPs towards the individual politicians in their local constituency offices in the attempt to have the measure reversed.

It was very much a grass roots, we didn’t [pause] what we did was .. So you just .. we facilitated it. We didn’t say to people I mean suddenly people ringing in and when they were, we said “ring your TD, there is no point ringing us. Definitely we’re onto them, but you know need to ring your TD, we will say that about all sorts of issues. And people are, well I think very, slow to contact their TD. (Eamon Timmins AAI)

Similarly, the Senior Citizens Parliament issued several calls to action inciting the OAPs to contact their local TDs: ‘You, the members, are critical to the success
of this campaign. You must go to your local representatives and ask them to have this measure withdrawn. This issue is so vital for Older People' (Hayes 2008).

And finally, the OAP NGOs were also instrumental in the organisation of the two public protest events which stimulated this research and will be examined in next chapter – public meeting with the politicians organised by Age Action Ireland and the OAPs Protests outside of the Dáil set up by Senior citizens parliament and supported by the Older and Bolder an alliance of organisations working with the elderly comprising of Active Retirement Ireland Age & Opportunity, Irish Senior Citizens Parliament, The Senior Help Line and the Irish Hospice Foundation (LaMarche 2007). These organisations, although responding to the impulse that came from the OAPs, provided the organisational support, channelled and focused, up to that point, the diffused campaign of individual dissent to a specific time and space. In this sense, the OAP NGOs outlined a roadmap for the OAPs resistance. Thus, in addition to presenting a discursive challenge to government’s justification, they have also conducted the OAPs to target the pressure-points of Irish politics, local TD constituencies. Thus, utilising the personal nature of the structures of the Irish political system to the advantage of the OAPs.

5.3. De-structuring the government’s claim to authority

5.3.1. Description of the impact

The OAP resistance initially took the form of individual public expressions of their existential concerns discussed in the previous chapter. The anxiety over the consequences the medical card withdrawal will have on their own capacity to access health services and thus maintain their capacity for agency and thus power-to. Giving personal accounts of health problems associated with old age, the callers have sharply rejected the government’s intention to replace the benefit with either of the two supplementary schemes, the GP visit card only and the supplementary grant of €400 per year. Instead, argued for the importance of the medical card because it enabled them to access a range of medical services without having to worry about costs of healthcare and medicine, which provided them with a source of security about economic resources neither the GP visit card nor the Health support payment could.
Being acutely aware of the amount of resources required for the maintenance of their own health, the OAPs argued that even with a GP visit card, which they admitted is better than nothing, they will hardly be able to meet the costs of the medication and, despite the government’s Drug Payment Scheme which set a maximum limit on the amount that an individual or family can spend on prescribed drugs which was €100 at the time (HSE - Health Service Executive 2018), they will end up paying €1200 per year for medication their lives depend on alone. Plus, other auxiliary services such as physiotherapy, outpatient care, home-help services for which they now had to pay for. While the government offer of the GP visit card for those who no longer would qualify for the full medical card received cold reception, the OAPs have dismissed the Health support payment of €400 as unsatisfactory given the costs of health care and argued that they will not be able to afford their medical care. Consider the following exchange from TV interview:

**OAP:** I am saying that what the government has done is not acceptable in any way. You can’t give and take back like that. I calculated that I am going to lose about 2000 gross, but if I get back the 400 from the government for the medication I lose a 1600 out of my pension.

**INTERVIEWER:** but the principle, Sean, of this move is, representing the government’s position is that those who can afford to pay, will pay now...

**OAP:** well, no I don’t think so. Because I can’t afford to pay and I am going to pay.

**INTERVIEWER:** but the government is obviously saying that you can afford to pay

**OAP:** well, they can say that, but I can’t afford to pay.

(RTÉ The Week in Politics 2008 16 Oct runtime 00:04:20)

Theoretically speaking, the OAPs articulation of the difference between the medical card and the other two benefits is understandable. While the medical card constituted structured resource, which enabled them to access health services in the absence of any other economic resources they might or might not have access to. Thus, making them equal, at least regarding the economic resources, to younger persons whose health does not require ongoing medical attention. The GP visit card, and the Health support payment did not even come close. Although better than nothing, either of
those benefits meant that the OAPs would be structurally constrained into using large proportion of their own financial resources to maintain their health, leaving them with diminished capacity in order exercise agency, or power-to, (again in terms of economic resources, which are central to neo-liberal systems) in all other areas of their lives. This sense of economic security was especially important to them because, given that the capacity to generate extra income decreases with age, the only economic resources available to the OAPs were their pensions and their savings. Since the government has decided to factor the saving into the means-test formula, the OAPs felt they are being penalised for their savings.

My Husband is ill for the past five years and he qualified for the medical card at 70, now he’s 77. I am 73 and I am his sole carer. And the doctor came once a month to check his blood. And that means, now we’re losing our medical card, where am I going to find the money to pay for his blood, to pay for his medicines? He is on 23 tablets a day ... and I am on physiotherapy since last year, I have to have it on regular basis, that is €800 a year. And he paid his full taxes, he gave 46 years of unblemished service to the state and while he was working he would pay the max for the medicines. Because he was on medication as well when he was working.

[Being asked if she has savings]

We have that, unfortunately. And we didn’t, I have a 96 car in the driveway, we didn’t go out to the pub, we didn’t go for foreign holidays. We saved for what we thought was going to be our golden years. Unfortunately, I have savings because I won’t get my medical card. I am losing my medical card on the strength of our hard-earned savings” (Liveline 2008a runtime 00:28:32)

Throughout the controversy, the government officials attempted to frame the revocation of the universal access to the over-70s medical card as a measure that will have minimal impact on the OAP population. Even though only 15,000 of the 140,000 non-means-tested over-70s were going to retain their existing benefit, the proportions of the affected were presented in positive light by the government officials who argued either that more than two thirds of pensioners will retain their medical card, (which was incidentally just about the number of already means-tested OAPs who were not affected by the measure, plus the 15 000 automatic medical card holders who were going to retain the card), or that 94 per cent of OAPs will receive one of the government benefits (Brian Cowen in RTÉ 9 O’Clock News 2008a runtime 00:19:45).
Let’s be clear, two thirds of the over 70s retain their medical cards after the application of the means-test. Of the remainder, all but a few thousand of them will receive a direct grant from the government of 400 euro for (inaudible) medical expenses. (Brian Lenihan in RTÉ PRIME TIME 2008a, runtime 00:13:46)

The latter was a strategy which involved the articulation of the medical card with the other two proposed benefits together in the attempt to forge a discursive equivalence between them so the measure can be presented as affecting just a small percentage of the OAPs already in possession of the medical card. Read through the theoretical lens developed in chapters 1 and 2, we can interpret this strategy as an attempt to deflect the attention away from the fact that the measure constituted a drastic change of structural configuration of the system of rules (2D) of distribution of resources, in this case, over-70s medical card among the population. This change included an introduction of bias towards a significant portion of the OAPs, which operated, unlike the bias in favour of the group instituted in 2001, to their disadvantage. And re-interpret this move as a legitimate exercise of power within the existing structural configuration that, according to the politicians’ understanding, framed the over-70s medical card as discretionary social support which, although it was extended to all OAPs, was still that. Social support the provision of which was entirely in the purview of the government.

Another government defence strategy related to presenting the measure in a positive light, and undermined by the above, was the claim to be protecting the vulnerable, repeatedly stated in the Budget address and the government officials’ statements. While framing those who were going to lose the benefit as very wealthy and thus in little need of the state support, which the politicians could target at those who need it more.

Yes, the government, the government decided in the budget that we should target the resources at those who need them most. And the corollary of that is that persons who are very wealthy should not have medical cards. Yes, that is the position. (B. Lenihan, RTÉ The week in politics 19 Oct 2008)

A practice which, Meade argues, was oriented towards the deposition of the principle of universality in favour of the neoliberal re-articulation of fairness in terms of the deserving/undeserving binary and fostered competition instead of building solidarity among the OAPs (Meade 2015, p. 171).
We can interpret these attempts as an act of structuration on the part of the government, which was intended to strategically misrepresent the reality to make the measure more palatable to the public. Had they been successfully reproduced, they would constitute an exercise of power on the level of the 3D as domination, given the significant discrepancy between the medical card and the other benefits as well as between the claim to target the wealthy and the economic situation of the measure’s victims. However, despite qualifying for the second condition of Haugaard’s criteria for structural reproduction – the capacity of others to understand and confirm-structure the initial structuration – the government attempts at structuration failed to satisfy the third criterion as the OAPs were not willing to confirm-structure. Not just because of the incompatibility between the respective habitus which rendered the government’s justifications infelicitous in the eyes of the OAPs. But, and perhaps precisely because the OAPs public expressions of anxiety in such extent and their explicit de-structuring of the claim that it will only affect wealthy OAPs through personal, idiographic, accounts put the veracity of the government officials’ representations into question, thus exposing the government officials’ attempts as dissimulation (Meade 2014). This was a 3D strategy of binary framing that was intended to build upon the people versus elites logic. If effective, this would divide the elderly, thus decrease their capacity for power-with mobilisation. However, in the early stages, the 3D counter-strategy to mobilisation was ineffective.

A situation that worsened, for the government, with the revelation of the fact that income limits for the means-test were set even lower than before the introduction of the over-70s medical card 2001. The measure was thus going to affect retired teachers, nurses and gardai (RTÉ PRIME TIME 2008b, runtime 00:08:05), rendering the government efforts to frame its targets as very wealthy a self-defeating exercise, which undermined the legitimacy of the government move further.

While the descriptions of the impact the withdrawal of the medical card will have on the OAPs provided a plethora of first-hand idiographic counter-arguments to the government’s claims that the measure will affect only the wealthy and leave vulnerable protected. The main portion of the OAPs contestation of the measure focused on the discursive articulation of sense of injustice and 3D consciousness-raising, in response to what they perceived and illegitimate breach of social contract.
5.3.2. Breach of the social contract as the moral basis for rejection of government authority

The OAPs further underscored their contribution to the state over their lifetimes and spoke of decades of service. They argued that it was their generation that lived through the difficult economic times in Irish history with punitive levels of taxation in the 60s and 70 and it was their hard work and their taxes that helped to build the country into what it was today. In doing so, the OAPs have confirmed-structured their status authority, as citizens-with-rights-to-healthcare rooted in their lifelong fulfilment of obligations towards the state. Thus, legitimating their claim with the appeal to the language of social contract used by the Fianna Fáil representatives at the time of the institution of the over-70s medical card in 2001 with the strategic intent to gain electoral favour from the OAPs.

And, at the same time, took the government officials to task for a serious infraction of this contract. In the same breath contesting the Brain Lennihan’s ‘call to patriotic action’ (B Lenihan in Dáil Éireann 2008a) as insulting given the fact that it came in in response to the financial crisis, which, they argued was not of their own making. But, an outcome of what was perceived as irresponsible fiscal management of the more than a decade of the Fianna Fáil rule. This is theoretically interesting as altruistic power-with action presupposes a common collective We identity. However, as the politicians were busy not blaming themselves, but attributing the blame to the international finance market. They have divided the communal We and Them, and so it was irrational to call for the OAPS to sacrifice for Them. Moreover, pointing to the fact that it was the very same government officials who presided over the disintegration of public finances and allowed the financial crisis to reach a point where the ordinary citizens had to pay for the government’s mistakes. Now, instead of honouring the social contract and fulfilling their reciprocal obligations to provide the OAPS with access to healthcare, the government officials were attempting to bind them into new obligations.

*by the virtue of our age, we are unlikely to have had any hand or part in the downturn spiral now being experienced (Liveline 2008c runtime 00:00:19)*

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Resistance and mobilisation of power: The case of Irish senior citizens

What I am very annoyed about is, he called on us to do our patriotic duty, which angered me. We have done our patriotic duty. We paid taxes, I think it was at one stage, I think it was about 84p in the Pound if you did any bit of overtime which you had to do ... I think I have done my patriotic duty. I mean how dare he! How dare he say that? We have all done it, we have all worked hard, all this generation. We put the Celtic tiger there Joe, we did. And then they squandered it. They squandered our money and now they are asking us to ... I mean [pause] (Liveline 2008c runtime 00:36:17)

We have seen, in Haugaard use of Garfinkel’s and Milgram's breaching experiments, that even minor violations of seemingly banal social norms can lead to an adverse reaction from others and de-structuration of the violators’ status as reasonable relative to the local-communal interpretative horizon. While in some instances such breaches can be attributed to the perpetrators’ inability to comprehend the local system of meaning because they are not familiar with it. This was not one of them. And the OAPs used the fact that Fianna Fáil was responsible for the institution of the over-70s medical card seven years earlier to argue that the government move represented a betrayal of trust which disregarded lifetimes of their contributions. Moreover it disregarded it in such an underhand manner, given the central status of health in old age, the existential importance of the medical card in its maintenance the fact that the OAPs were promised the medical cards for the rest of their lives and have come to rely entirely on the medical card for all their medical needs.

This serious infraction of social obligations provided a basis for the OAPs further de-structuration of the government officials’ authority to exercise power over its citizens which, as they pointed out, was premised upon public consent. De-structuring not just the legitimacy of retrenchment of the medical card because it failed to uphold the promise on which many OAPs supported the Fianna Fáil/ Green Party coalition in previous elections. But also, their authority as leaders with a legitimate claim to exercise power over the OAPs premised upon public consent, which in turn depended on politicians running the country to the benefit of its citizens rather than to the benefit of elites. Pointing to the fact that it was the very same government which presided over the fiscal crisis and have in the same month agreed to guarantee bank liabilities which, at the time, were estimated in the media at €400 billion (a 4000 times more than the intended savings of €100,000,000 sought by the retrenchment of the medical card)(Nyberg 2011).
They promised they would look after the old and the vulnerable, what a load of rubbish. They are telling lies left right and centre. They are not standing by their principles. They are standing by what they got elected in their office to do. They were elected to run this country for the benefit of the people and all they are doing is running it to the ground. (Liveline 2008e runtime 00:38:12)

This provided the OAPs with enough ammunition to take the discursive refusal of government officials beyond constructing them as unreasonable or idiotic (in the sense of engaging in non-socially-systemic practice towards another) agents whose capacity to function appropriately in social context became compromised. And towards the more unfavourable portrayal of the government officials as perpetrating an unjust and deliberate attack on the OAPs. Effectively framing the government ministers (and all the backbench TDs with them) as corrupted elites who while enjoying the privileges of authority to rule (and very generous financial remuneration that comes with it) are running the country to the benefit of other elites. Like bankers calling on the government to be brave and tackle the ‘sacred cow’ of the universal medical card (O’Brien 2008, O’Regan 2008). Thus, constructing the conflict in terms of binary opposition between the government and the people.

5.4. Beautiful in the eyes of the potentially non-confirm-structuring-beholder, public reception of the OAPs’ backlash.

5.4.1. Relatives

The OAPs concerns were amplified by their relatives who were the first ones to register their anxiety and anger about the government measure. The voices of dissatisfaction from this group began simultaneously with the OAPs even before the Budget hearing. Joe Duffy’s Liveline on RTÉ Radio devoted better half of the programme to the concerns over the medical card and the relatives of the OAPs made up a significant portion of the callers and continued feature in the show in large numbers for the duration of the affair. Throughout the controversy, approximately one-third\(^\text{29}\) of the calls made to Liveline between 14\(^{th}\) and 23\(^{rd}\) October was from

\(^{29}\) For those interested in numbers: Male OAP callers (n=36); Female OAP Callers (n=30); Male relative callers (n=11); Female relative callers (n=17); other callers (n=37)
relatives calling on behalf of or expressing concern about the high levels of anxiety the
decision elicited among the OAPs. Those voices reiterated, from a different
perspective, the importance of the medical cards for their parents. In addition to
highlighting the economic advantages, they talked about the ease of access to many
support services facilitated by the medical card. Majority underscored the OAPs
contribution to the Irish state during the difficult times in the 70s and 80s and their
sacrifices in bringing up their families. Thus, framing the OAPs as a group deserving
of the medical card and expressing strong feelings of solidarity related to the fact that
it is their parents, and everybody’s parents, being affected. Thus we can see how what
was an issue for a specific sector created power-with solidarity with much larger
groups. So, not only do we have undivided group solidarity on a single issue, we have
this single issue drawing in groups who are not directly affected, which is a powerful
combination of social forces. The following is typical:

It’s my mother, my father. It’s your mother your father. These are the
people who stayed in the country during the 70s and the 80s when it was
tough. These are the people that were paying 60p in the Pound when
Charlie Haughey was flying with his mistress to Paris and wearing those
beautiful shirts. These are the people that tried to educate us, that gave
us their lives. And the government had just turned on them. The elderly
aren’t out there on their own. They are not the elderly, they are the
parents, the family! We all belong together, and the young people should
be supporting the older people now because what they do to them today,
they have us lined up to do tomorrow (Liveline 2008c runtime 00:51:08)

Much like the OAPs themselves, their relatives also vocally, and in some cases very
angrily condemned the government move as an attack on the rights of the OAPs and
a breach of social contract. Pointed out that the government officials are effectively
employees of the people, demanded that they act like it and encouraged the wider
populace to demand the reversal of the government decision through political action.

my point is this, I am not over-70, I understand those are tough times, I
know that. But, terrorising, as some of your callers have said, is not the
way to go. And what I would ask, if you would permit me, is to do what
I have done. I’ve written to the Taoiseach, I’ve written to minister for
finance, I’ve written to Mary Harney, I’ve written to the TDs in my
constituency asking them to reconsider this decision. And I would ask
everybody who is listening today, if they feel like I do that the older people
should not be dealt like this, would they write to their TDs and earnestly
request them that they would reconsider this decision. (Liveline 2008c
runtime 00:45:30)
Chapter 5: Uproar and Mobilisation

The wider public’s (consisting to a large extent of family members of the OAPs), de-structuration of the government discourse, took the same path as that of OAPs themselves, appealing to the notion of social contract and intergenerational solidarity in legitimating the claim. This is indicative of the commensurability between the aspects of their own and their older relatives’ habitus (3D practical consciousness and 4D disciplinary dispositions), which should not be surprising given the fact the social norms and values are transmitted through the process of socialization which comprises both discursive instruction as well as a kind of osmosis, or vicarious engagement with the rules of the social world, beginning, by and large, in the context of the immediate family setting. Moreover, the vast majority of the relatives challenging the state were the children of the OAPs. This puts them into the age-bracket of the generation whose socialization began before the transition from the traditional to the post-modern mode of societal organization experienced in Ireland with period of the unprecedented economic growth in the Celtic Tiger era described by Kuhling and Keohane (2007) and Kennedy (2000) (see chapter 4, section 4.2). Thus, their habitus sustained the same normative system of values related to the intergenerational solidarity as the habitus of the OAPs.

5.4.2. Wider NGO sector

The government decision came under criticism from a number of organisations working with the elderly which reinforced the OAPs resistance further. Most vocal were the OAP advocacy organisations which argued for the benefits of the medical cards and further reiterated the levels of anxiety and distress among the OAPs. Mairead Hayes from the Senior Citizens’ Parliament deplored the decision and argued that the medical card was responsible for improving the health of elderly population and reducing the necessity for long-term care and claimed that taking it away from OAPs will cause ‘further hardship and uncertainty to already sick and frail older people’ (Donnellan 2008b). Eamon Timmins from Age Action Ireland called the measure a setback for community care in Ireland and argued that the decision to introduce means-test would make it much more difficult for many OAPs to remain in their own homes. Moreover, he argued that the decision is also a political mistake, given the angry response the decision has provoked in OAPs. ‘I can’t remember in my time in age action, the people being as angry at any policy’ (RTÉ PRIME TIME 2008b runtime 00:04:59).
The voices coming from those two most politicised OAP NGOs were reinforced by a number of other organisations working with the OAPs on other than advocacy level. For example, Chief executive of the Nursing Homes Ireland condemned the measure for creating distress among the OAPs and St. Vincent DePaul, while being critical of the universal aspect of medical cards, declined the measure as ‘cruel’ and reiterated the high levels of anxiety among the OAPs (Newenham 2008). Again, this list is by no means exclusive, but exemplary since the full account of all the professional organisation releasing statements of support for the OAP cause and their content would take up too much space and add little empirical flesh to the arguments already made (some of it is repetitive already). Again, we see a fortuitous ability to create power-with that draws in organisational groups, already with the skills necessary for political mobilisation. As already mentioned, this widening of the support gave the protestors access to organisation skills at political action, which intensified the capacity, power-to, of the OAPs for political agency.

5.4.3. Opposition

The government decision received sharp criticism from the opposition as soon as it was announced. Michael Ring, a Fine Gael TD immediately condemned the measure as an ‘attack on the elderly’ (Michael Ring in Dáil Éireann 2008a). And the footage of the Minister’s address shows vocal dissent from the opposition TDs who began to voice their protest so loud that the minister had to raise his voice for the first time during the hearing (Brennan 2008a, RTÉ PRIME TIME 2008a).

However, the issue of medical card did not take centre stage in the opposition’s critique until two days later when the extent of the OAPs distress became widely apparent. Until then, the Opposition focused on criticising the government for bringing the state’s economy to the verge of the collapse during the fifteen years they have been in power. For failing to protect the vulnerable in the current budget which introduced a number spending cuts targeted at the whole population with the medical card being one of the major components of the critique along with the introduction of 1pc levy, charges in education and increases in hospital fees (Dáil Éireann 2008b). In short, the target of the critique was the budget as a whole set of decisions rather than
an issue of the medical card which became central to opposition’s critique after the politically explosive potential of the measure became apparent.

Once the OAPs’ distress gained traction in public discourse, the opposition’s critique of the measure in the Dáil became much more vocal and sharper. Invoking the OAPs’ contributions over their lifetimes, Enda Kenny (FG) called the measure ‘the most stupid, callous own goal ever perpetrated by a Government on elderly folk’ (E. Kenny, FG, in Dáil Éireann 2008c), and the opposition began to criticise every aspect of the over-70s medical cards controversy. And they had plenty of ammunition. The introduction of the universal over-70s medical cards in 2001 without the proper negotiation with Irish Medical Association, which resulted in the fees that the state had to pay to the doctors being several times higher than the fees for means-tested medical card, denouncing the measure as a ploy by Fianna Fáil and Progressive Democrats to ‘…get elected as rapidly as possible … There was no principled commitment to universal health care, they were simply using and manipulating the elderly for political gain’ (Alan Shatter in Dáil Éireann 2008d). Lack of clarity over the details of the measure confusing the population. The income limits themselves which were going to affect retired nurses, Gardaí and teachers, whose pensions are far off from the wealthy people the government officials spoke about. The fact that the OAPs were promised the automatic access to the over-70s medical card for the rest of their life, which lulled them into a false sense of security and led them to cancel their private health insurance for which they now will have to wait for several years before being able to avail of it. And, of course, the amount of distress caused to the OAPs, were all reiterated by the opposition in Dáil Debates and the media as the controversy unfolded. Outside of the Dáil, the opposition used harsh language decrying the measure as ‘Terrorism on the elderly’ (Brennan 2008b). The opposition also used every available opportunity to put a negative spin on the numbers presented by the government by emphasising the numbers of OAPs who will lose the medical card. Moreover, even promised the wider populace that if elected, they will attempt to institute the medical card as an automatic entitlement for everyone (Smyth 2008a). The opposition’s opposition to the measure culminated in the initiation of the motion to have the government decision reversed the following week, which took place on the same day as the Irish Senior Citizens’ Parliament protest (Molony and Kerr 2008).
Although the opposition stood firmly behind the OAPs throughout the controversy, it is possible, and in retrospect feasible, to argue that their firm stance was as strategic as the Fianna Fáil attempts to secure the electoral favour by the introduction of the over-70s medical card in 2001. That is attempting to attune their performance in line with the wider public sentiment which was vehemently on the side of the OAPs in the attempt to shift the balance of electoral support in their favour and take up the position of legitimate authority through the perlocutionary use of language rather than a serious commitment to such policy. This can be clearly demonstrated by the legislative steps taken after the opposition parties took the position of power in the subsequent elections, which not only saw the abandonment of the intention to introduce universal healthcare for all but also delivered a significant reduction in the over-70s medical card means-test threshold, thus reducing the number of eligible OAPs further. A point to which we will return towards the end of the next chapter.

5.5. Confrontation

Given that, due to the foggy presentation of the measure by the government officials and lack of details about its implementation, the initial wave of anxiety triggered by the decision to target the over-70s medical card affected a large proportion of the OAPs. Thus increasing ontological insecurity even in those not affected. Considering the strong support of their relatives exemplified above, it becomes plausible to argue that the relatives’ expressions of solidarity with OAPs plight bolstered the extent of public resistance regarding both numbers and intensity significantly. At the same time, this campaign of de-structuration enabled the OAPs to moderate their sense of ontological security. The feelings of ontological insecurity are personal experiences which involve confusion and uncertainty about one’s own understanding of the social world. And it is the confusion and uncertainty which make the experience difficult to bear and induce feelings of anxiety and anger. The government move on the over-70s medical card triggered this individual experience in a large number of OAPs who although perceiving it as a something completely illegitimate and unjust, were nonetheless trapped in this state for a time, attempting to reconcile their inner certainty about the status of their claim to right to healthcare and the outside reality of facing the possibility of the loss of this right. It was with the nation-wide eruption of the dissent and vocal resistance to the measure from the more outspoken OAPs, the
wider public and the OAP NGOs that publicly confirm-structured their understanding of medical card as a right and reproduced their status authority as citizens-with-rights-to-healthcare. Once reassured, the OAPs were again able to derive the sense of ontological security (we will revisit this point in more detail in the next chapter) from a habitual understanding of the structural configuration of the world in which they have the right to medical care on the level of their practical consciousness. And rally to its defence, which, for now, took several forms, mobilisation for protests and confrontation of the politicians in their constituency offices.

5.5.1. Mobilization for protests

Responding to what became publicly constructed as an unjust and illegitimate exercise of power over the structures regulating their capacity to access healthcare and thus to exercise power-to. Many of the OAPs and their sympathisers self-identified as loyal lifetime supporters of Fianna Fáil who became disenchanted with their party’s role in the current downturn and angered that their party would even consider such measure, given its discursive appeals to the protection of the elderly, young and vulnerable. And threatened to pay the Fianna Fáil back in the next elections if the measure will not be reversed.

*And when you get to that age, you’re sick, you’re not well. There is all, loads of things that happen to you, you rear the family, you bring them up, you send them to college. It unbelievable! And Fianna Fáil has done this? I can’t believe they’d do it, there has only ever been one party here, Fianna Fáil, in this family and this is going to be the end of it. (Liveline 2008a runtime 00:54:30)*

And they began to call for some form of public confrontation with the government very soon after the budget hearing. For example, consider the following incitement to public resistance which resonated in the airwaves in days after Budget address:

*I think it’s an absolute disgrace, and I think everybody in Ireland should get out and walk and have a march. And get all that crowd out of the Dáil, because they’re load of rubbish, absolutely rubbish. (Liveline 2008a runtime 00:12:42).*

*In response to being told that B. Lenihan was adamant there is no going back on the measure (angrily, shouting) But, how dare he be so arrogant? He works for me and you Joe... and it has happened all over*
the world when people told the government No. Now, we are the people! I am begging somebody to pick a day [for protesting the decision], because I certainly would take my day off from work and go to Dublin (Liveline 2008c runtime 00:55:45)

When the Age Action Ireland and Senior Citizens Parliament announced the two public events for the next week intended to pressure the government further, rallying the OAPs to defend their medical card was not a difficult task for the OAP NGOs given the fact that many OAPs were already poised for resistance and began to incite others to attend.

I heard on the radio this morning there is going to be … Age Action is organising a meeting in Dublin for Tuesday next. Now, all those of us who are affected by this, we all have free travel. And let’s all be in Dublin when we hear the details of the meeting. There is no excuse for those of us, 90 percent of us are retired fully. Get into the tram, get into the bus, arrive in Dublin and show the government that we are not going to be kicked around. (Liveline 2008c runtime 00:11:09)

Moreover, the public opinion was already on the side of the OAPs. The family members and organisations working with the OAPs have applauded the decision and announced their attendance. And many citizens in their private capacity supported the logistics of the protests with their own resources. When it became apparent that so many OAPs from all over the country intend to attend and they might have problems getting to the bus and train stations. Several taxi driver unions from around the country offered the OAPs going to the protests free taxi from their homes to bus and train stations, and from Dublin stations to the venue of the protest in and back. The representatives of the taxi companies argued that the initiative for this move came from the members of their union whose parents are affected by the measure (Liveline 2008f). Local business owners, also invoking the relationship ties, promised to sponsor buses for the OAP local groups that found it logistically difficult to arrive in Dublin on time (ibid). And, the owners of nearby cafés offered free tea, coffee and sandwiched for the OAPs on the day (Liveline 2008g).

5.5.2. Confronting the politicians

As the government TDs returned to their local constituencies from the Dáil for the weekend, the dissatisfied OAPs and their families delivered on their promises to confront the TDs directly, intensifying the pressure on TDs further. Joe Behan, a Fianna Fáil TD who resigned from the party in protest of the measure, described the
controversy biggest issue of his 32 years long political career regarding the numbers of people involved and the level of the concern and anger it induced among the population.

I’ve been involved in local politics and national politics for 32 years now, and it was the biggest issue I ever dealt with as a public representative...

In 32 years?

...in terms of the volume of people who were affected by the decision, the volume of people that were very unhappy with the decision, the numbers of people who contacted me after I resigned to express thanks and support. It was way ahead of every other issue I have ever dealt with.

Do you think that other TDs would be in the same position?

I’d imagine, I’d be very surprised if they weren’t in that position, yeah.

(Joe Behan, FF TD at the time)

The OAPs have picketed local constituency offices, and a Campaign for Real Public Service march was staged in Cork on Saturday 18th to express the dissatisfaction over cuts in health with the estimated number of attendees between 2000 and 4000 (Liveline 2008f). A smaller group of pensioner protested outside of Willie O’Dea’s (FF minister) office in Limerick, threatening never to vote for Fianna Fáil again (RTÉ Six One News 2008b). But, the most intensive pressure on individual TDs came from consistent confrontations with the individual OAPs and their relatives rather than from local protests.

And to take that [medical card] away from people at the age of 70, or 80, or 90, as the case might be, and was, it upset a lot of them, and it also upset their families. So I was getting calls and emails, not alone from the people over 70, but their sons and their daughters, their grandchildren, their family members generally. So I knew it would be a big issue. (Joe Behan FF TD at the time)

The mention of 90-year-olds in distress, having something taken away, is what Weber (1995) would term affective action. It is an action that has a deep emotional response. Again, the use of emotional triggers points toward 4D power.

The government decision to target the over-70s medical cards, due to its enormous perceived existential impact on the OAPs which transgressed the boundaries between
the public and private, effectively placed the government TDs into the position of sharp antagonism against the OAPs in particular and the wider public as a corollary. This, in turn, provoked a response in kind and transformed the everyday spaces, like a street or a shopping centre, which hitherto provided the politicians with 4D ontological security, into a political battlefield. Suddenly, the politicians’ private everyday lives became a target for a political struggle on a personal level where they had to face the very constituents affected by what they perceived as unpalatable measure at best (a liquidatory one at worst). The OAPs continuously de-structured their claim to authority and reminded them that they are about to support a decision that runs against the claims upon which they have been elected, while at the same time realising that they will be asking those very people for support in the upcoming elections. In some cases, the public pressure on the backbench TDs was almost unbearable, Eamon Timmins gave an example of unnamed backbench TD who described the weekend between the budget hearing and the protests as the worst in his political career.

Certainly, I was talking to a backbencher, FF backbencher and he said to me, he was telling me, [possible identifying details] and he said to me afterwards. It was the worst weekend, the weekend between the budget and the protests. He said he couldn’t leave his constituency. (inaudible-1-32.55) went down to the local shopping centre, he was bombarded, he said, there was nowhere he could go. People were after him wherever he went, you know. And it is very very .. I suppose it’s a sign of a healthy democracy …. I agree, politicians make a mess of it. And if they get scared afterwards, yeah and they are accessible and they can be told and .. “ I know where you live” (Both burst out laughing). You know, they do literally know where you live, and this politician said to me he said they came to his home, he said he tried to take a break and went out to the shopping centre, and they were after him in the shopping centre, he said people coming at him left right and centre. he said he was the worst weekend of his of his political career. (Eamon Timmins AAI)

Moreover, this campaign of local pressure was not externally organised, but driven by the OAPs themselves. This distinguished it from other, premeditated, public pressure campaigns which made it very effective in making an impact on the politicians. In terms of the discourse of populism, this was as close as you are ever going to get the ‘Voice of the People’. Plausibly to speak for, or to represent the ‘People’ is a highly effective 3D strategy of the political campaign.
Chapter 5: Uproar and Mobilisation

The lack of coordination made the 3D ‘Voice of the People’ message convincing. As with all populist strategies, it plays on the emotional action. Note the phrase ‘the protests came from the heart’ in the quotation below.

Yes. And it wasn’t...sometimes when there’s a campaign going on, there’s a certain amount of coordination. Like, if there’s an issue arises, let’s say with something that’s coming up in the Dáil, and you have people have a particular interest in it, there can be a coordinated campaign to email your local TD - you know, it’s organised. This was a spontaneous reaction by the people of Ireland, to a basically blatantly unfair and unjust decision. So it wasn’t organised by anybody.

That’s the very interesting part of it. Very, very interesting.

It was spontaneous. It came from the heart. My decision came from the heart. I think the protests came from the heart, and I believe that’s why it was so profound and so influential in the life of this country. (Joe Behan FF TD at the time)

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But I think when its coming from their own constituents its very very powerful. I think politicians can see an orchestrated campaign if the calls come with the same texts, they say the same thing, they speak the same language. Suddenly when they see Mrs. Murphy and Mr. Murphy and people they know from their community coming at them, you know. It’s different it’s a different quality. (Eamon Timmins AAI)

A similar sentiment was expressed by the Ciaran Cuffe, from the Green party in the interview for the RTÉ after the government rolled back on the morning of the first protest.

This was not choreographed, it was unprompted, it was from the heart, it was people who lost sleep at night, it was people who are worried about their parents with dementia, people who are worried about all kinds of long-term illness. These are genuine, these are really from the heart. They’re angry, they feel vulnerable, and I hope that the announcement this morning will go some way towards meeting their concerns(Ciaran Cuffe in RTÉ PRIME TIME 2008c runtime 00:11:22)

Such strong public response triggered the experience of cognitive dissonance between the loyalty to the people they claimed to represent and the loyalty to the party they were members of, and speculatively, their self-interest. Which, in turn, instigated the sense of ontological insecurity which combined with a real threat of the loss of
electoral support. Joe Behan, the only Fianna Fáil politician who resigned on the matter of principle in the wake of the decision, described the experience as:

And I know one of the things I suppose that would’ve maybe annoyed my colleagues in Fianna Fáil was that when I resigned it put a lot of pressure on them, because people were saying to them "Well what are you going to do about it?" So they may not have been pleased, but I suppose they were getting the same kind of pressure as I was, but they obviously felt they could work within the system, and that’s a valid point to make. Some people said “Look, you’re never going to change it from outside. Stay inside and try and change it from the inside.” But there came a point for me when I had to say “Well what do I stand for? What are my beliefs? What are my values?” And as I said to you, the value I put on older people’s contribution to this country is enormous, and I couldn’t abandon that value.

I believe myself that, as I say, at certain times in your life you’re asked to make a stand for what you believe in, and I don’t want to ever look at myself in the mirror and say I let people down because I didn’t have the guts to make a stand. (Joe Behan, FF TD at the time)

Participants agree that the immediacy, extent and severity of the OAPs response are indicative of the genuine and spontaneous nature of the people’s concern and anger which pushed them to the point that they had to do something about it. Again, signalling a deep structural conflict that ran across all dimensions of the OAPs habitus, in which the emotions of anxiety, anger and ontological insecurity, overwhelmed the internalised constraints and drove them into such transgressive political action. At the same time, leaving the capacity to overcome internalised constraints aside for a moment, this form of political litigation would not be possible without the possibility to gain access to the politicians on a local level. This possibility was facilitated by the specifics of the structural configuration of the Irish electoral system, PR-STV\(^\text{10}\), which is focused on the individual politicians, rather than political parties and premised upon the very close connection between the politicians and their electorate. Even to the point that the politicians know members of their electorate by name and demand that if the politicians want to be elected, their presence in the community is felt or at least

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\(^{10}\)Proportional representation by the means of single transferable vote, the Irish electoral system is an interesting exemplar of an electoral system based on personality politics. Unfortunately, due to the constraints of word-count, we do not have time to examine it as the discussion would be lengthy. Thus, its discussion in the text is rather superficial, but outlines the main aspect of the system relevant for our investigation which is the close interconnectedness between the electorate and their representatives. The interested reader can turn to Sinnott’s (2010 pp 111–133) or Gallagher’s (2005, pp. 511–534) discussion which provides a very useful overview of the system, its development, advantages and disadvantages.
noticed, they must remain accessible to the electorate and tend to local issues (Gallagher 2005, Sinnott 2010). And it was these features (or structural configuration of the system), immediately available to the OAPs on the level of discursive awareness of the possibilities afforded by the structural configuration of the system (2D) which the OAPs utilized as a resource which enabled, gave power-to, the OAPs to exercise power over the politicians locally (1D). Comparing the Irish case, as well as advocacy in general, to its immediate neighbour – United Kingdom Eamon Timmins argued:

"Because from these guys’ [the politicians] point of view, they realise that this is about local politics. All politics is local."

"Especially here in this country .. yes .. It’s very rare that you know your local TD by name."

We even find this as we go to Britain, and say Age UK and they would say to us “ there is no way you could get to a minister or prime minister. There is a ring of steel around them, and there is the whole civil service. And I remember when a colleague in Britain said. Could you meet the Taoiseach? We could, if we really wanted to meet him. If it was that desperate, we’d go for a football match in Castlebar on a Sunday afternoon, and we find him somewhere (both laugh). He’s not, he’s not hard to find. He asked, “will he not have security around him?” I said “ no, he won’t have security around him”.. (inaudible 21:08). So, we are, we actually take for granted how accessible our politicians are. And, you know, to be fair to them they don’t try and hide, they do make themselves accessible, you know. Um.. so yeah, we are lucky in that sense. (Eamon Timmins AAI)

5.6. Government Rollback

It would be a mistake to think that the government officials were not aware of the potentially disruptive nature of the measure at the time it was announced. Joe Behan argues that he was aware of the problematic nature of the measure as soon as it was announced. The coalition TDs were aware that taking already existing benefit is going to cost them political favour with their constituents. The concerns of the backbench TD were underscored in the television from the first day of the controversy. On the day of the budget, the RTÉ political correspondent speculated that the measure is in effect taking the benefit away from the middle classes which is bound to cause dissent from the better off OAPs and their families (D. Davin-Power in RTÉ Six One News 2008c). And later, in live reportage from the Dáil, stated the TDs are bracing themselves for ‘tough encounters on their doorstep’ as they return to their
constituency offices and they will have a difficult time convincing the electorate of the merit of the measure (D. Davin-Power RTÉ 9 O’Clock News 2008a runtime 00:28:12). Following a day of what media called unprecedented pressure on the government (Collins 2008a, O’REGAN and Kelleher 2008), several backbench TDs began to voice their concerns openly in response to public outcry. At first, the TDs were highlighting the problematic nature of the way the issue was presented without any explanation of details, which caused unnecessary anxiety among the OAPs and calling for the specifics of the measure to be clarified. The measure was discussed at a parliamentary party meeting on Thursday 16th where more than 30 TDs and senators were reported to criticise the ‘damaging information vacuum’ even for TDs (Collins and McGee 2008). And to demand the increase of the thresholds of eligibility for the medical cards (MCGEE 2008)

My reaction was obvious. Most of my colleagues were very, very concerned about it, and very annoyed about it and upset about it. And what upset them more was that we couldn’t even get very much clarification on how exactly this measure was going to be implemented, because what the government said was that the automatic right to a medical card for people over 70 was going to be taken away, but they were going to introduce means test. So there was no clarity about how this means test was going to be operated. So people couldn’t even find out, well maybe they might still hold onto their medical card depending on their income, because the income levels were very fluid the first day or two after the announcement was made, and we had a number of meetings of the parliamentary party, which is the TDs and senators and the ministers, and it was very unclear how the income guidelines were going to be actually implemented. (Joe Behan FF TD at the time)

The government officials listened and attempted to contain the dissent by increasing the thresholds shortly after the meeting but failed to calm the TDs who continued to be bombarded by the distressed OAPs, Opposition and activist groups. The TDs dissent has become much more calescent with the passing time, and by Friday 17th, the media were presenting backbench dissent as ‘Mutiny’ (Molony and Kerr 2008) or ‘outright rebellion’ (Downey 2008). The ranks of the unhappy FF backbenchers have increased and by then included around a dozen TDs who were openly criticising the decision and calling for its reversal (Smyth 2008b). The gravity of Friday’s situation deepened with the Joe Behan’s resignation from Fianna Fáil in opposition against

31 Tom Kitt, Mattie McGrath, Jim McDaid, Noel O’Flynn, Ned O’Keefe, Johnny Brady (Hand 2008);
government decision to revoke the principle of universality. The combined effects have put the government in a difficult political situation as the government majority was sustained by a few votes. By the evening the RTÉ news were heralding 'full-blown crisis' for the government (RTÉ 9 O’Clock News 2008b). The crisis continued over the weekend; Senior Citizens Parliament has announced public protest on the following Wednesday (RTÉ 9 O’Clock News 2008c), independent TDs Finnan McGrath withdrew his support and two other Independents, Jackie Healy-Rae and Michael Lowry, threatened to do the same (Hand 2008, Sheahan et al. 2008). And Joe Behan’s example was followed by the mayor of Middleton Billy Buckley who also left the party on the matter of principle (Kelleher and Kerr 2008). The threat of loss of support of so many TDs has put the coalition in a difficult political situation as the government majority consisted of 12 votes and the coalition was ruling with the support of three independents.

The Taoiseach recognised the gravity of the situation, decided to postpone an important business trip to China and attempted to quell the public, and TDs’, sentiments by announcing that the measure will not go ahead in its current form. Indicating a further review of the means test thresholds, and outlining the intention to renegotiate the over 70s medical card with Irish Medical Organization, who have been receiving significantly larger payments for treatment of the patients with over 70s medical card as one possible avenue of action (McGee et al. 2008). However, the official position on the abolishment of the automatic entitlement did not change, which drawn further dissent from the public, and therefore TDs, and the unrest continued until the Government’s rollback. The final change in the income levels came on the morning of the protests on Tuesday 21st Oct with a very significant change in means-test threshold. The income limits for the full medical cards were announced at €700 for singles and €1400 for couples, with the difference that this time it was gross income that was being counted and the OAPs were allowed to exempt the savings up to 36000 for singles and 72000. Moreover, the means-test was set to apply to new entrants to the scheme, and the current holders will not have to re-apply. The new threshold had changed the estimates dramatically, and it was now being claimed that of the approximately 140,000 currently non-means-tested OAPs, about 20,000 of the wealthiest will lose the benefit when their cards expire at the end of the year. Given that vast majority, but the wealthiest of OAPs were going to retain their medical cards,
the government had also discarded the intention to introduce the GP visit only card and the cash payment of 400EUR given that everyone over-70 will qualify at least for the GP visit card (Donnellan 2008c). This final change has effectively quelled the concerns of the backbench TDs and brought the two remaining independents, Michael Lowry and Jackie Healy-Rae, to resume the support for the government in upcoming opposition motion to reverse the government decision claiming that they were satisfied with the new means-tests threshold (Brennan et al. 2008). However, was not sufficient to appease the OAPs, backed by public sentiment, who maintained their demand to reinstate the principle of universality in its original form, and went ahead with the protests that, although considered a spectacular success by many, nonetheless failed to protect the status of the over-70s medical card as a right which brings us to the final chapter.
6. Won the Battle, but lost the war – ambivalent legacy of the silver revolution.

The OAPs’ week-long vocal campaign of de-structuration of the legitimacy of the government move, backed by public support, achieved a significant revision of the means-test thresholds to the point that the numbers of the affected OAPs who were going to lose the medical card fell to a fraction of the original intention of the government, from approximately 120,000 to 15,000. Thus, bringing the proportion of current over-70s who will retain their full medical card to 95% which effectively constituted its reversal in practice. Despite this extensive reversal, the government officials’ position on the principle of universality did not waver, and they insisted on its abolishment. This refusal to listen to the OAPs further sustained the OAPs’ campaign of resistance through the protests which focused on demanding the complete reversal of the measure. While Brian Cowen, Mary Harney and John Gormley were presenting the final set of thresholds, the OAPs were gathering for the meeting organised by Age Action Ireland. This event, together with the public protest organised by Irish Senior Citizens’ Parliament the following day, took the nation by surprise and made the full extent of the OAPs concern and anger apparent in a spectacular manner.

This chapter begins with the exposition of the extraordinary nature of the OAPs’ protests concentrating on three aspects identified as central by the participants: the large numbers, OAPs’ anger, and atmosphere of common purpose, which enabled the OAPs to restore their sense of ontological security related to their standing in society because their self-perception as citizens-with-right-to-healthcare-premised-upon-their-contributions-to-society became publicly confirm-structured nationwide. The discussion then turns to investigate the wider effects of the OAPs’ week-long campaign of resistance. Here, it will be argued that the capacity to organise the largest political mobilisation in decades on short notice, engage wide-spread public support and force the government into such significant retreat on the means-test threshold led to the public construction of OAPs as a political force. This construction enhanced their reputation for political power and propelled the politicians to treat the OAPs
issues and benefits with utmost sensitivity. Thus, protecting the core universal benefits valued by OAPs in subsequent austerity budget cuts.

At the same time, the OAPs have lost their principal objective, the universality of the medical card. And with it the conflict over the bias of structural configuration of the medical card system, which has made its provision a matter of government discretion rather than inalienable right premised upon social contract and opened the door to further tampering with the means test levels. Thus, making them subject to the further arbitrary exercise of power over their capacity to act. The OAPs have continued to be hit in subsequent budgets through indirect measures despite their newly established reputation as a powerful political group. Moreover, occasional concessions to the OAPs from the politicians aside, the events failed to secure the commitments of the successive governments to take the population ageing seriously on board in the matters of policy.

### 6.1. Protest events as exercise and demonstration of OAPs’ power

While the events in question were organised independently of one another by Age Action Ireland and Senior Citizens Parliament respectively, and there was little co-ordination between them. The participants from the OAP NGO sector have argued that the two events nonetheless worked together in a complementary manner and ultimately increased the impact of the whole enterprise.

You said, you have contacted them about an event together and they said, they said that no, we’ll do our own...

I think they [Older and Bolder Alliance] already had something in train as well. So I mean, their members are quite strong, and they dictate what they do. They have, we have worked with them on some joined campaigns, we worked on joint campaign in the last general election. But they tend to be [pause] and I …[pause]… (inaudible-1-38:16) …[pause]… if they got their own thing up and running – go do it. You know, I think in some ways the two complimented each other quite nicely. I think if we’d have

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52 The OAP NGO participants accounts suggest that there was a tension or rivalry between the OAP NGO organizations, similar observations were made by Carney (2010) and Acheson (2010). However, this aspect was not followed up as the information gathered during interviews was not sufficient to engage in analysis.
one slightly bigger one it would not have had the same effect. I think the
two days in the trough was very effective. (Eamon Timmins AAI)

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[PAR] But the march was very important, one of the things we wanted
to do was to try and get all the ageing organisations together, we didn’t
want just to be an Age Action event but one of the other, the organisation
that organised the march as it were in front of the Dáil was very keen to
do their own thing, so that was a pity in one sense, except there were two
different kind of events on the same topic and that helped, you know one
supported the other, and we were quite happy with that. But in a sense
that was an accident. (Robin Webster AAI)

Moreover, while these organisations constitute discrete bodies, they have similar aims,
and the OAPs involved in those organisations are often members of more than one.
Therefore, the following discussion will treat the two events similarly - as a prolonged
campaign, rather than as two isolated events. There are several aspects of both protests
that the participant highlighted as extraordinary and contributing to the effectiveness
of the protests. Most of these elements are related to the unexpected and
unprecedented nature of the events for all sides involved: unprecedented numbers,
OAPs anger and behaviour towards the politicians, and the atmosphere of common
purpose.

6.1.1. Numbers

The first thing that stood out as exceptional was the numbers of the OAPs that have
attended both events. The Age Action initially booked the largest room in O’Callaghan
Alexander hotel which was supposed to hold 300 people, but the interest in the event
became so high that it soon became apparent that the venue will not suffice. The
organisers secured the St. Andrew’s church as an alternative venue through the
personal connection of one of the Age Action Ireland representatives who sang in the
church choir by Saturday. The estimated attendance on the day was very high, between
1600 and 1800 people, which encouraged and delighted the OAPs. Such large
attendance was also a pleasant surprise and success for the Age Action Ireland staff,
given that the total membership base was between 2000 and 3000 people at the time.
By comparison, the Annual General Meeting [AGM] of the organisation reaches an
attendance of 200 people.
So we had to tell people “apologies, we can’t stay here, we have too many people, we have to move you”, people were delighted. They were delighted (Participant becomes excited and smiles). It was kind of a sign of success … there is too many of us, we have to change venue (participant continues on smiling - both laugh for a while). So, there was this fantastic picture … of people heading down with their walking sticks and their frames down that little alleyway besides the hotel into the back door. The church, it was about, someone said to me that the church holds about 1800, it was certainly 1600 hundred there, it was a massive sight to see this church full of people. (Eamon Timmins AAI)

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This was the church meeting, so you had no expectations at all?

No. And we didn’t ask people, we just said, ‘Come if you want to’ and they didn’t but they were so angry and they were so, yes angry about it and wanted to do something and make a protest that they turned up in huge numbers.

Just to compare, how many people would you usually have on your AGMs for example?

AGM would be, we would have quite a big AGM, it would be up to 200 people. (Robin Webster AAI)

The OAPs numbers in the meeting in St. Andrew’s church foreshadowed the large attendance on the Senior Citizens’ Parliament protests which took place outside of the Dáil following day just before the government vote on the opposition’s motion to reverse the decision. This event was attended by 15,000 OAPs and their supporters and ranks among the largest public demonstrations that Ireland has seen in decades. Moreover, it was the first demonstration of the OAPs in the history of the country. The OAPs have travelled to the protests from all parts of the country as reflected in the banners expressing affiliations to local organisations and demonstrating the nationwide resentment of the measure. They travelled in such numbers that the Iarnrod Eireann (Irish Rail) had to fortify six national train routes to and from Dublin to weekend capacities to accommodate the numbers of protesters (Bartley 2008). Such high attendance also came as a surprise for the OAPs themselves. Moreover, a pleasant surprise at that. The OAP participants described at the numbers of protesters as exceptional with strong connotations of pride and astonishment which are very difficult to convey because they were conveyed extra-linguistically through
participants’ tone of voice and body language which are very difficult to capture in transcription.

*I mean it was quite extraordinary when we met in Dublin on that day. We came down by train, the train was packed full of old people. And the trains from all over the country were packed, busses from all over the country packed. Then suddenly when we arrived at the station. See hordes of people and before we got to the Dáil, it was absolutely packed. It was extraordinary* (Participant 1 - OAP Protester)

This mobilisation was, to a large extent, facilitated by the OAPs access to another universal age-related benefit – free travel which enables persons over 66 years old to avail of public bus and train services free of charge. According to the participants, the free travel constitutes an important resource in the hands of the OAPs given the relatively high costs of public transport and their limited income. It provides the OAPs with means of connecting with family and friends, as well as access to shops and facilities. More importantly, from our perspective, the free travel was crucial in allowing the people from all over the country to attend the protests.

*Yes, because the free travel was the access that we had of getting to Dublin. Because if you think of the cost of travel … cost of travel is terrible* (Participant 1 - OAP Protester)

Carney, using Campbell’s (2003) research on the relationship between the universal age-based policy and political mobilisation, argues that universal benefits for the aged are involved in a reciprocal relationship with their capacity and likelihood for political mobilisation. Suggesting that different policy set-ups will affect ‘not only services for older people, and levels of welfare and independence amongst older cohorts, but also the likelihood that older people will mobilise collectively when those benefits are threatened’ (Carney 2010, p. 233). Translating this into the language of (re)structuration theory of power, the universal, or indeed any, benefits represent structured resources (2D) which confer the capacity for action, or power-to, upon a large number of OAPs. Which, in turn enables them to use those resources to mobilise in their defence if the need arises.

The fact that the Irish age-based policy has historically moved away from the universal benefit provision (ibid) makes this synergistic effect between the universal benefits even more tangible in our case. The medical card and free travel are among very few universal benefits available to Irish OAPs and, in the context of the protests, the free
travel constituted one of the few resources enabling the exercise of power-to at the OAPs disposal. Moreover, it was used to its full potential, not just as a means of transportation, but also to motivate the OAPs’ attendance. From the time the OAP NGOs announced public events, those attempting to incite OAPs into attendance at protests have repeatedly pointed out that the OAPs have access to free travel which will enable them to travel to Dublin on the day.

And it’s interesting, one of the things that the members said, ‘We’ve all got free travel we can travel to the meeting’.

So this came from the members, actually?

Yes. The members said that. ‘Look we can all come to this because we’ve got free travel’. The second thing is that I suppose and people then because of the free travel, they were easy to come, and we organised it thinking that would be 200 people. (Robin Webster AAI).

* 

Now, all those of us who are affected by this, we all have free travel. And let’s all be in in Dublin when we hear the details of the meeting. There is no excuse for those of us, 90 percent of us are retired fully. Get into the tram, get into the bus, arrive in Dublin and show the government that we are not going to be kicked around (Liveline 2008c runtime: 00:11:09)

Even with a free travel pass, for some of the pensioners, travelling to the protests was no easy thing given their advanced age, health and mobility difficulties as well as the fact that they had, in some cases, more than three-hour journeys ahead and had to leave their destinations very early in the morning to arrive at the protests on time. And, the fact that they have done so in such large numbers shows the strength of their determination to defend the universality of the over-70s. Even at the costs of possible discomfort or injury.

we are up from three o’clock this morning, my colleague and I from Waterford. And I am 71, and I got a stroke and (very emotionally) that medical card means more to me. (clip stops) (RTÉ Six One News 2008d runtime: 00:01:58)

* 

Oh yes, I am going in, even if I have to crawl in. I have a stick, I had a serious illness … I am hoping to get a lift from my daughter who doesn’t really approve because I’m on a stick. But I mean … (being asked why
her daughter does not approve) … (dismissively) because she is afraid someone will knock me over. And I have my placard as well, which will say ‘Mary Harney – Minister for Ill health, Brian Lenihan – Minister for Misery’ I think it’s dreadful, mugging the elderly. (Liveline 2008f runtime: 00:21:56)

The OAPs willingness to engage in such altruistic sacrifice and compromise their wellbeing testified to the importance of the medical card for the OAPs and perceived gravity of the insult inflicted upon them by the government officials’ perceived attack on their rights. This is symptomatic of deeper levels of conflict rooted in the incompatibility between the attempt to revoke the universal nature of the benefit, and its justification regarding the economic factors by the government officials, and the OAPs understanding of the benefit as right traced in previous chapters. This conflict assumed a very concrete form in the protests.

6.1.2. Anger

Once in the protests, the anger and anxiety echoing through the airwaves for the previous seven days assumed a concrete form of large numbers of outraged seniors who expressed their dissatisfaction in no uncertain terms. Even as the OAPs were gathering for the events, their mood could be inferred from the banners and placards which condensed their grievances into cutting punchlines expressing strong resentment of the government move. These placards expressed the OAPs dependence on the medical cards (AGE 85 NEED HELP TO STAY ALIVE I NEED MY MEDICAL CARD PLEASE, A BUDGET TO DIE FOR); framed the government move as an attempt to attack on the elderly (JUST SHOOT US IT WOULD BE QUICKER, MARY WHAT’S NEXT, EUTHANASIA?); assigned the blame for the medical card fiasco to the leading representatives of Fianna Fáil, Brian Cowen, Brian Lenihan and Mary Harney (HATCHET HANNEY AND PATRIOT LENIHAN OUT - HARD HEARTED HANNEY - SHAME ON YOU BRIAN FOR EVEN TRYING); contested the government’s discourse of necessity by pointing out the connection between banking crisis, politicians and austerity measures (HANDS OFF THE MEDICAL CARD FOR THE OVER-70s STOP THE BLEEDING OF THE NEEDY FOR THE POCKETS OF THE GREEDY – ROB THE PENSIONERS TO BAIL OUT THE BANKERS SHAME, SHAME, SHAME); And, highlighted the fact that it was the OAPs who voted for Fianna Fáil, and it will be the OAPs who will put them out of power in the next elections (NO MEANS TEST VOTERS WILL NOT FORGET –
HARNEY, YOU ARE FIRED — FIANNA FÁIL YOU DISCRIMINATE, WE ELIMINATE) These placards set the tone for the protests to follow.

The Age Action meeting was initially conceived as an advocacy exercise to facilitate the dialogue between OAPs and the government representatives, allowing them to educate the politicians about the importance of the medical card and the widespread impact of the measure. ‘For politicians to hear from older people, in their own words, why this card is so important to them’ (E. Timmins in Liveline 2008f runtime: 01:05:50). Age Action invited some government representatives, and the format of the meeting was that the OAPs would present their concerns to the politicians who will get time to respond at the end. The meeting started with OAPs making speeches that were arguing for the importance of the medical card, highlighting the OAPs contributions over their lifetime condemning the government move. However, and this is where the problems began, the government officials were not there to listen. They arrived only towards the end when their speaking slot was coming up completely defying the purpose of the exercise and further aggravating the OAPs mood.

When the government representatives tried to talk, the OAPs booed and heckled so loud that the politicians’ voices became drowned out and they could not talk. John Moloney, standing up to the crowd, argued that he was invited to talk, but if the people wish for him to leave the stage, he will do so (RTÉ PRIME TIME 2008c) before being physically confronted by two ladies who took away his microphone in what became referred to later as an ‘attack’ on the minister.

And, people were absolutely furious, the whole purpose of the exercise was to educate, inform or address the politicians. And yet, some of them decided not to arrive until the end when their speaking slot was coming up. So, they would talk at the people (Eamon Timmins AAI)

So, our members were very very angry and when he stood up … they started to boo and shout [starts to smile, then both laugh]. Robin’s recollection is [inaudible] very interesting, there is … one lady said, “give me that!” and she tried to grab the microphone from the politician, and Robin had to kind of [mimicking polite physical struggle, both laugh] as politely as possible, without throwing her to the ground, and push her back and say “get back please, you have had your time please, be respectful now” and so she, he was booed down, he couldn’t talk. (Eamon Timmins AAI)
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And, like how was the atmosphere on the ground, on the day, in the Church?

Very fiery. The minister, I think you heard, you know the minister came to talk and two women attacked him, and I couldn’t protect him.

When you say attacked?

And literally he, well no they were grabbing the mike and so on, which didn’t help in one sense you see because a lot of people didn’t like you know kind of physical violence and John Moloney the minister, one of the nice guys to be honest. (Robin Webster AAI)

While she was spared the physical confrontation, John Moloney’s colleague Fiona O’Malley did not fare any better. She stood up and managed to push out few sentences stressing the importance of her message before the angry OAPs shouted her down (RTÉ PRIME TIME 2008c). Similar scenario repeated, on a much larger scale, the following day on the protests outside of the Dáil, where the OAPs booed and shouted down the Fianna Fáil Junior Minister of state for Services for Older People Maire Hoctor and Green Party TD Ciaran Cuffe despite the Senior Citizens’ Parliament representative’s plea to let her speak. The OAPs chanted slogans like ‘Fianna Fáil Out’, ‘Lies’ to drown out politicians’ voices (Anderson 2008b). The national television even showed footage of a group of pensioners singing a song about voting the party out of power in the next elections.

Damn them all, Fianna Fáil; The long an’ the short an’ the tall;  
Damn the two brains an’ Mary Harney;  
They Gave us the card; then they took it away.  
Damn them all, Fianna Fáil; The long an’ the short an’ the tall;  
You won’t get our votes; when it comes to a poll;  
Then it’s goodbye Fianna Fáil”  
(RTÉ PRIME TIME 2008c runtime: 00:01:35)

The manner in which the OAPs expressed their anger was not received well by the government officials. The National television footage of both events shows all four government representatives, who appeared as speakers in the protests (John Moloney, Fiona O’Malley, Maire Hoctor and Ciaran Cuffe), visibly distressed when confronted with the OAPs anger as they attempted to speak. Later on, speaking about the attack on national television. John Moloney claimed that he understands that the OAPs are
angry and might feel let down by his party given the fact that Fianna Fáil was associated with respect for the OAPs ‘...clearly, for a party that for years has been associated with the care for the elderly, that quite obviously the women felt that we have let her down’, but still argued that if the government officials were given a chance to communicate the decision on the event, the OAPs might not have been so upset (RTÉ PRIME TIME 2008c runtime: 00:10:04). Other government representatives also expressed regret at the way the government-sent officials have been treated. Pat Carey, the Fianna Fáil chief whip, invoked the democratic principles when he argued that the OAPs should have listened to the politicians. ‘When members or representatives go to attend those particular meetings, the courtesy should be accorded to them that they at least be heard … I think it’s better in a democracy to hear different points of view’ (Healy 2008b). Geraldine Feeney, a Fianna Fáil TD, called the OAPs protesters in the Church rude, bad mannered and argued further that if similar performance came from a younger group ‘the whole country would be up in arms if that amount of people were allowed into a Catholic Church to behave in such manner’ (Walsh 2008). Some members of the public expressed similar sentiments through the media. Those voices predominantly criticised the behaviour of the OAPs in the Church and argued it is setting a bad example (The Irish Times 2008, p. 17). Some of the public anger was even aimed at the parish priest that allowed the OAPs into the church (Healy 2008b, Liveline 2008d) The participants from all camps and without exception have interpreted the government officials’ reaction to the campaign of resistance and protests as one of shock and fear.

... what I said the government on the day were frightened. Frightened of the turnout of it, of the people, of their determination and their, their anger. The anger with the capital, with the capital A. (Participant 2)

Not in the sense of being physically in danger (although it came to that in the case of John Moloney’s ‘attack’), but in the sense of political survival which has been put on notice by OAPs' threats to vote the Fianna Fáil out of government. Combined with the element of shock caused by the behaviour of the OAPs in the protests, which de-structured entirely the status of politicians as public representatives whose authority entitles them to be listened to. It is worth reiterating that democratic interactions entail routine reproduction of power structures that are, by and large, unconnected
with coercion, the legitimacy of which is, following Weber, a power structure monopolised by the state and used in the last instance.

Consequently, the threat of violence is not part of the everyday interaction between either the citizens or the citizens and the state. However, in this case, the recourse to aggression by the OAPs is symptomatic of de-structuration of the rules of the routine democratic interactions in response to the rejection of the authority of the government elites as legitimate representatives of the state. Again, pointing to the deeper conflict over the structures (or 2D conflict) whereby the routine everyday rules of non-coercive interaction facilitated by the democratic system became suspended as the OAPs’ emotions of (4D) ontological insecurity, primary anger at politicians, overrode the ontological security they derived from confirm-structuration of everyday rules of interaction. This de-structuration instigated the feelings of ontological insecurity among politicians on top of presenting an existential threat in the form of loss of power in the following elections.

In the aftermath, both, Age Action Ireland and Senior Citizens Parliament expressed regret that the politicians were not allowed to speak but defended the OAPs and argued that the anger was proportionate to the levels of distress induced by the government decision.

*And suddenly, lot of politicians told us how rude we were and how bad it was and how bad it was for us. Without realizing.. you could understand the context. You know the context in which people were very very hurt, feel they are misunderstood, trying to speak to their politicians. Who then, for whatever reason don’t turn up to listen to them, turn up to respond to them. And.. it’s very hard to see how that wasn’t turn out badly for the government on the day. You know, when you do that. If they had actually turned up early and sat there, I wonder would there have been different .. I don’t know people were very very angry.. people were very very angry. (Eamon Timmins AAI)*

*And older people, by their nature, are not people who want to protest, in my opinion. I think it was extraordinary that so many of them travelled to Dublin from all over the country. They had to get up very early, they had to travel in buses, cars, whatever, trains, etc. And they wouldn’t naturally be going out with placards. They wouldn’t naturally be shouting at politicians to stop speaking. It just showed to me the depth of anger and upset they felt. (Joe Behan FF TD at the time)*
A sentiment which was reiterated again and again in the accounts of the OAP protesters interviewed for the project as well as across all data collected. The OAP participants were well aware of the fact that their behaviour was at odds with what is expected of the older people within the parameters of the Irish social system but argued that their behaviour was justified relative to the seriousness of the government officials’ infraction of their rights. Their behaviour was at odds with their 4D subject formation. It is worthy of note also that when politicians reprimand the OAPS as rude, they are effectively attempted to use appeals to that aspect of habitus as a resource against them. Again, the following quotation entails such an appeal to the social ontology of politeness attributed to the elderly.

and they were shocked that old people should behave in such a way. They kept on saying “we are shocked that old people should boo politicians, have they no respect for government! “. I mean it really look as if .. we had no respect for the government. (excited) How could we respect a government that takes away something that you have? And that’s very important that we had it and they suddenly wanted to take it away from us. You can’t do that!. You know it’s like somebody walking down the road and a mugger comes along and tries to take somebody’s handbag from them.

You can’t, You are right..

..you know, you are going to fight back. And that’s what happened.
(Participant 1 – OAP protester)

* 

Well I’m not a great protester, now I walked in all of those protests and I talked, but I hate giving out.

So, this was just too much?

Yes, (Participant 3 – OAP protester)

Moreover, given the deeply ingrained understanding of the over-70s medical card as right in the OAPs’ habitus and their self-conceptualisation as citizens-with-rights-premised-upon-their-contributions, the OAP protesters have framed their conduct as a democratic exercise which was aimed exclusively towards the politicians they perceived to be acting against their interests. So while they agree their interventions
could be regarded as infelicitous in terms of 4D social ontology of OAPs, they were characterised as felicitous relative to the democratic process.

*And as well the fact is that they, the government wake up. It’s all good .. you know. It helps democracy. So you must say is that the mobilization actually helped democracy and proved that actually democracy works. And I think that is one of the most important lessons of that mobilisation. Democracy works when the people suddenly decide that the government is not acting in just way. So you are making the government accountable. And that’s what that mobilisation did.*  (Participant 1)

* (in response to participant’s mention of democracy) Do you think it was a democratic thing, this protest?  

[PAR] Oh it was. Number one, we are entitled to do it. And number two they achieved a lot by it. They achieved, first of all the government rolled back (smiles) and to well, what it is today that when hit 70 you do your means-test, prior to that, as I said you automatically qualified. Well they were justifying it, you see there is nothing wrong with protest as long as it is within the law and everything like that, you see. That was another thing, they didn’t break down (inaudible-51:57) or anything like that. The only thing, they were vocal. But apart from that, we are all right (laughs heartily).  (Participant 2)

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You know, a mass movement of people who have been upset by something, it’s good for democracy. And they didn’t break up any (inaudible 19.53 – one word), they didn’t burn any cars, they didn’t .. they booed, they shouted down a junior minister, well. (Eamon Timmins AAI)

The last quotation is interesting in distinguishing between de-structuration that may be verbally aggressive, and overt acts of violence, such as burning cars. It is clear that the speakers are a little uncomfortable with their social protest, and so compares it to violent revolution, to make their intervention less radically de-structuring. *Not only are we Democrats, but we are not that confrontational really,* is what he appears to suggest.
6.1.3. The atmosphere of common purpose / resonance / re-claiming the sense of ontological security

Even though the protesters displayed the anger towards the government officials sharply, the atmosphere amongst the OAPs themselves was positive. What stood out for all participants attending the protests, without exception and across all data collected, was strong feelings of common purpose and togetherness. The protest rally brought together an unprecedented number of OAPs who, although of different walks of life, social, educational and economic backgrounds, in short, different individual habitus (plural), have been socialised into the same traditional system of meaning and values. The emphasis on intergenerational solidarity and respect towards the elders premised upon social contract was one of the aspects of this system that became embodied on the deeper levels of the OAP’s habitus (plural), (4D) as well as practical consciousness (3D) which made the world intelligible and predictable. But, became dislocated in response to government move on the over-70s medical card. Thus, disrupting the individual OAPs’ sense of ontological security attached to their authority as citizens-with-rights-to-healthcare-premised-upon-fulfilment-of-their-obligations-to-the-state. Although the OAPs have come to interpret, the government officials attempt as an unjust and illegitimate attack on their rights.

While the OAPs were aware of the nationwide public support for their cause as the public condemnations of the measure from the fellow OAPs, their relatives, professional organisations working with the OAPs, opposition and even several coalition TDs frequently featured in the media throughout the previous week. Meaning that their cause was confirm-structured by those around them, which enabled them to moderate the feelings of ontological insecurity induced by the government move. At the same time, those bearings were, up to that point, transmitted and received between the individual OAPs more or less in isolation from one another through media or confined to their social networks, their friends and families. Compared to re-assurance from the friends and family during everyday lives, seeing so many people driven by the same purpose constituted much stronger experience described by the participants as a strong sense of common purpose and feelings of belonging and togetherness among the protesters that permeated the atmosphere.

Here I will make an exception to the advice of the IPA’s manual to handling larger samples, which recommends one or two illustrative quotes rather than a repetitive list.
of quotes saying the same thing (Smith et al. 2009, pp. 112-116), and include multiple quotes to capture this experience.

And, as I’ve said several times now that was a huge boost to morale, huge you know so you can imagine somebody living alone and coming to that and you know the atmosphere was fantastic I mean one of the biggest churches in Dublin and it was full, crammed. (Robin Webster AAI)

* 

They really felt that no one will get together on the common theme. That people would just be thinking about themselves. And for the first time, old people were not just thinking about themselves, they were thinking about the whole collective.. of all of us. (Participant 1- OAP protester)

* 

What was the atmosphere on the street when you were ..

It was .. (speaking nostalgically and with enthusiasm) oh it was good, it was friendly .. and .. it was .. I met a lot of people I knew who said ’isn’t this great!’ and .. people were .. in a mixture of surprised, admiring, pleased, ... ”good on you”.. and ”it’s about time”, glad to see it .. and .. good to see older people showing younger people (smiling). (Participant 4 – OAP policy expert)

* 

So, how was the protest like what was the atmosphere like on the protest?

Oh, it was great.

You liked it, yes?

You felt you were doing something and you were part of a movement that was going to change how government would act.

It was lovely feeling of solidarity. (Participant 3 OAP protester)

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**Resistance and mobilisation of power: The case of Irish senior citizens**

So you have been to both [events] .. yes .. so how was the atmosphere on the ground.

They were both amazing, an amazing partly for ppl, um.. that sense of comradery.. we are all out together, look at us, we have closed this street look how far back … as far as I can see there were people… or in this church, we have had to change the venue because it is not big enough and this church filling up with older people. A tremendous sense of people being together shoulder to shoulder behind a common issue. It was a most, most remarkable day (Eamon Timmins AAI)

Gathered together, the OAPs gave a concrete and public expression to their interpretive horizon and created a temporary space of meaning ordered according to the normative system of values, ingrained in their habitus, which emphasized the value and status authority of the OAPS embodied in the symbolic meaning of the medical card as right and hypostasized this meaning beyond the possibility of contestation. Once inside, the OAPs did not have to defend or justify their claim to the medical card because it was reified as right backed up by social contract. The feelings of togetherness, solidarity and belonging described by the participants indicative of the strong commensurability, between the Individual OAPs on the level of their deep practical consciousness (3D) as well as disciplinary dispositions (4D) which sustained this space. This feeling was not a case of simple restoration of the sense of everyday ontological security that enables agents to lead ontological anxiety-free lives. But, the opposite of the experience of profound ontological insecurity, a kind of an emotional explosion of ontological security, which I will call, following Rosa(2014, 2016), Resonance. This concept constitutes the final theoretical addition to the explanatory framework developed here. 33

Rosa describes the concept of resonance as a mode of relating, an experience of being in touch with something other. This mode is counterpoised to the experience of alienation and described in terms of encountering a phenomenon, (a person, book, theory, idea, music etc.), that immediately ‘clicks’ or resonates with the person who is experiencing it on a deeply ontological level that goes beyond the capacities of

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33I have become aware of the strong correspondence between Hartmut Rosa’s concept of resonance and the (re)structuration theory very late in the project, this is mainly due to the fact that the theoretical elaboration of the subject is still available only in German language, which makes it in my case, inaccessible for proper theoretical interrogation. Therefore, the theorisation is for now very tentative, as the main literature on the subject has not been translated into English at the time and the discussion is based on several public lectures on the subject rather than on detailed understanding. And therefore, it will be treated as a metaphor to be translated into the language of (re)structuration theory.
language or discursive consciousness. It is characterized by positive affection, emotion, sense of self efficacy derived from the immediate pre-discursive fusion of the event and individual understanding of it, a degree of discursive elusiveness that requires time to process this bodily experience in order for individual to make sense of it discursively (a kind of positively charged dislocation), and therefore has transformative potential. (Rosa 2017 runtime: 1:20:12-1:26:17)

Extracting this, rather superficial characterisation, as a metaphor, into our theoretical model of 4D/(re)structuration (as opposed to theoretically integrating two approaches in terms of its onto-epistemological assumptions). The concept of resonance corresponds to the agents’ experience of amplified ontological security in response to the encounter of the external phenomenon that resonates with the aspects of embodied on deeper pre-conscious levels of practical consciousness (3D) and ontological dispositions (4D) in agents habitus. This is very much in line with the definition of the concept in physics as:

The state of a system in which an abnormally large vibration is produced in response to an external stimulus, occurring when the frequency of the stimulus is the same, or nearly the same, as the natural vibration frequency of the system’ (www.dictionary.com 2018).

Whereby the agents experience external phenomenon as strongly commensurable and felicitous relative to the embodied (as opposed to discursive) aspects of their habitus and experience amplified ontological security in response. We can now imagine this range of experience as a continuum with the ontological insecurity in its ideal-type form (and all the negative consequences) on one end and absolute resonance (and ontological security) on the other, with most experiential instances falling somewhere in between. If we wanted, we could set the point for the everyday ontological security arbitrarily in the middle and begin to characterise the individual instances relatively to distance from this equilibrium and bring it together with our classification of possible forms of interaction. Like this:
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Table 7: modalities of interaction fused with the continuum of resonance, adapted from Haugard (1997 pp. 144-145)

The above diagram shows the common-sensical theoretical relationship between the possible modalities of social interaction and their correspondence regarding its effects on the ontological security/insecurity and can be further extended to cover the possible outcomes regarding confirm or de-structuration. We have seen that the institution of the over-70s medical card and its presentation in the language of rights constituted a situation nearing pure consensus and was thus resonant with the OAPs habitus, thus inducing ontological security and confirm-structuration. The decision to abolish the principle of universality, by contrast, nears the situation of dissonance relative to the OAP habitus, dislocation and deep ontological conflict which was not quelled even by the significant reversal of the means-test thresholds. The experience of the protests then constituted a veritable feast of extreme intersubjective resonance on the deeper level of the OAPs’ habitus (3D and 4D) that was strong enough to ‘transform’ the OAPs’ self-perception, to enable them to restore their sense of ontological security even though the universal aspect of the principle was lost in the aftermath. This experience was further amplified by the extent of the public support, which confirm-structured the OAP’s understanding and has placed the OAPs into the position of legitimate representatives of the interests of wider society, rather than sectional strife of a social cohort, against the political elites who betrayed the authority.
invested in them. At the same time, legitimating the defence of the medical card (1D) by any means they deemed necessary and discursively perceived as feasible within the structural possibilities of the system (2D) which included harsh de-structuration of the status of the government ministers described above that momentarily instigated the sense of ontological insecurity in politicians. An outcome that participants perceive as a definitive sign of the power of the OAPs as a group. A power which was always within their reach, but they did not realise they had.

The grey-headed people, government didn’t think they could … they could gather such … power, for want of a better word. Or to stage such a a show of strength.

Absolutely, because when you read the statements from ministers from the time. The government officials were …

Oh they were, they were, they were (smiling) … it took them, obviously, they were surprised. But certainly, it frightened them that they had to roll back, right. It must have Oh it must have, I’d say. Any of them in the government at the time would certainly remember it anyway. (Participant 2 - OAP protester)

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So it gave power to people who had never had it before or never realised they had the power I suppose, and therefore there was a misunderstanding in two senses that the government, the politicians, the political ranks completely underestimated the importance of the issue to older people and older people didn’t understand the power they had and so exercising that was enormously important. (Robin Webster AAI)

This experience, in turn, had a lasting positive effect on the OAPs as a group regarding their energy. The experience of what they perceived as the success of their political mobilisation was a catalyst that re-invigorated the energy of OAPs. Participants described the old age as a time of decline in the frequency of social relationships which makes the individual pensioners more likely to experience social isolation, which has been repeatedly correlated with deteriorating health (Luanaigh and Lawlor 2008, Cornwell and Waite 2009, Courtin and Knapp 2017). The participation in protests, and seeing themselves succeed, provided the OAPs with a sense of purpose and belonging to a community which further motivated them to engage with their social lives.
But the other thing is, you see, is that the mobilization galvanized old people’s energy. And that is very important to put in your research.

Absolutely.

Because if people, if old people begin to mobilize … and begin to feel that they belong to the society, they live longer and they are healthier. So mobilization protest is one of the best tonics that can be given to old people to live. And I think that’s a very important power

It is very important ?.

Because otherwise what you do is that you are at home, lying in bed all day and you don’t have any motivation about why you want to live. (participant’s phone rings and I turn off the recorder).

And we can start again

I think that’s very important is the mobilization and the collective energy of old people.

So you would actually see more of this energy around recently?

Absolutely, but that’s what your research could say.. but how much did they saved, from the energy of these old people. (Participant 1- OAP protester)

The above highlights two significant theoretical aspects of the concept of resonance, in both its original (to the extent I was able to gather) formulation and my theoretical incorporation of the concept into (re)structuration language. First is the transformatory nature of the experience which is very much akin, in terms of the process, to that of dislocation in response to ontological insecurity. But, in the opposite direction regarding the affective charge of the experience for the individual. While the latter involves an encounter with an outside phenomenon that is so incommensurable with the deeper levels of habitus that they experience significant ontological insecurity as their taken for granted knowledge fails to interpret it and they are forced reflect on it discursively and so open the space for possible transformation. The resonance, by contrast, involves an experience of extreme commensurability between the external phenomenon and pre-discursive aspects (3D and 4D) of agents’ habitus, accompanied by strong ontological security (or even ontological certainty at the moment of the encounter). This experience, in turn, opens the possibility for transformation through the attempts to reconcile the experience with one’ taken-for-
Chapter 6: Won the battle, but lost the war – ambivalent legacy of the Silver Revolution

granted knowledge and dispositions, which, also, involves a degree of dislocation. Again, this is not an all or nothing binary situation, but a matter of degrees and continua that can range from minor disruptions of the ordinary flow with relatively little consequences to the stability of the agents’ habitual understanding to some with the potential to overthrow the agents’ habitus completely.

The second theoretical aspect closely related to the above is a sense of self-efficacy that appears to accompany the experience of resonance. Following the (re)structuration theory, the assertion makes perfect sense given that the individual is encountering a novel phenomenon that resonates with their habitus and is thus able to engage with it successfully (what success means is a function of the phenomenon being encountered) without prior discursive instruction or familiarity leaving the agents with enhanced sense of self-efficacy.

As mentioned in the introduction, increased sense of self-efficacy among the OAPs in the wake of the protests was observed (even if in passing) by Fox and Quinn (2012). My research can only corroborate their observation and (slightly) extend the discussion with the help of the account of the participants from the OAP NGO sector who described the effect of this process on the OAP activists.

* I think it would have been, it would have created some element of awareness that by speaking up you can make a difference. It gave a boost to our members who are involved in advocacy, because advocacy can be quite, it’s like a marathon. There is very few wins, and its constant sloughing without any result, and, or even any recognition that you’re making difference or changing an opinion. So, I think it was important to have a big win, although as I said it’s a qualified win. (Eamon Timmins AAI)

* It’s had longer-term influences in terms of moral certainly and therefore speaking up and challenging ministers and local TDs is not something that it’s strange to members now and they would, the Glór groups now would regularly meet local TDs and be expected and local TDs of course I mean if a group of older people said ‘I want to meet you’ the last thing you say is ‘No’. (Robin Webster AAI)

On top of enabling the OAPs to restore the sense of ontological security participants agree that the experience has provided a much-needed boost for the morale of the
OAPs involved in activism. The participants from this sector argued that the advocacy in the OAP sector is a long-term process that involves for which they seldom receive recognition. This point was already raised in Fox and Quinn’s (2012) investigation of the OAPs activism who show that the OAP activism can, and is, often met with disinterest. Even scorned by the broader public even though it requires a significant personal sacrifice of the OAP activists at the costs of time and resources that could be spent with friends and family. Moreover, significant victories or success regarding tangible results are even harder to come by in this line of work. And, this is why the participants involved in OAP activism argue that the protests represent an important milestone for OAP advocacy that provided the OAPs with further encouragement to engage the politicians directly and increased the likelihood of political action.

6.2. Won the battle but lost the war - ambivalent legacy of Silver Revolution

6.2.1. Won the battle…

The above is closely related to Carney’s (2010) observation which used the work of Binstock (2005), Campbel (2003) and Duncan (2008), which identified the confluence between the reputation for political action of the whole group, advocacy on its behalf, and political action of the lobby groups as sufficient causes with the potential to sensitize the elected politicians to the older people issues in the United States, to argue that the protests of the Irish OAPs have enhanced their capacity for exercise of political power in this manner. And, shifted the perception of the OAPs in the eyes of the government and wider public from passive to vigilant. Resulting in the much more careful approach of subsequent governments towards the OAP’s issues. This claim can be further developed in the context of my analysis.

In addition to forcing the government officials into a significant retreat on the means-test threshold, and thus safeguarding the access to the medical card for many who would otherwise lose it before the protests described in chapter 5. The episodic, or momentary, exercise of power over the government-sent politicians brave enough to face the angered OAPs described above. The reputation for political agency, one aspect of power-to, of the OAPs as a political group, and of OAP NGOs has increased in the wake of the protests. This outcome comes across clearly from the accounts of the participants from the ranks of the OAPs as well as OAP NGO representatives. The
OAPs themselves understood the fact that they were able to mobilise as a success and spoke about ‘sending a message’ or ‘waking up’ the government. Meant in the sense of forcing the government officials to recognise the value and potential power of the OAPs as a group which, in their eyes, translated into a conviction that the government has to, from then on, take the OAPs as a group into account. Thus, asserting the importance and value of OAPs for society.

*So it was quite extraordinary and I think that the government learned a lesson. But they rolled back later.* (Participant 1)

*‘Yes, we had to force them to recognise that we were an entity in the country, we had to teach them by walking in the street.* (Participant 3)

*But … what I said the government on the day were frightened. Frightened of the turnout of it, of the people, of their determination and their, their anger.* The anger with the capital, with the capital A.

*So, it was quite strong?*

*Oh it was, it sent a great message to government. The grey vote are a strong group, they’re the group to be reckoned with.* (Participant 2- OAP protester)

The Media re-iterated the OAPs narrative and welcomed and celebrated the protests. By the evening of the first event the National Television headlines heralded ‘Awakening of the sleeping giant’ and described the Age Action meeting as the *‘morning when the elderly showed their teeth and the sacrificial lamb at their anger filled rally was to be junior minister John Moloney’* (RTÉ PRIME TIME 2008c runtime: 00:01:04). While the emphasis was on the severity of the OAPs response, the media sentiment was, bar several exceptions who were in the stark minority, on the side of the OAPs. The commentators highlighted the OAPs’ contributions to the state and argued, in line with the OAPs, that the anger was proportionate to the distress caused by government decision. And commended the OAPs determination in travelling to the protests from all over the country despite advanced age, long journeys and, in some cases, health problems. Here, my analysis is closely aligned with that of Fealy et al who described the shift in the media narrative from from portrayal of the OAPs as *‘frail, infirm and vulnerable’* and *‘victims’* of the government towards a discursive articulation of the OAPs as *‘Radicalized citizens on march’* which deployed romantic and military metaphors of power to describe the event as a significant success.
for the OAP. However, while very favourable to the OAPs cause, this discourse implicitly characterised the protest rally as an anomaly given their frailty and vulnerability and celebrated it as a mythical achievement which is well beyond the capabilities of this cohort (FEALY et al. 2012, pp. 92–94). Thus, perpetuating the ageist discourse of dependency and vulnerability of the OAPs.

At the same time, the media have played an essential role in the public perpetuation of the issue from the moment it has become clear that the measure has induced such wide-spread anxiety among the OAPs and sustained the public focus on the controversy for the duration of the affair. In addition to reporting on the OAPs levels of anxiety and anger at the government decision, the coverage of the event, particularly in the RTÉ TV news was focused on the high levels of internal dissent among the party backbenchers who were going to have to face their constituents over the weekend before protests. The reporters argued that the government has managed to mobilise one of the most significant consistently voting segments in society against itself and emphasised the imminent political threat to the Fianna Fáil. Not just because the OAPs and their families threatened to withdraw their support, but also because the issue has thrown the stability of the government into question which made it vulnerable (Downey 2008).

The notorisation of the issue continued after the protests which were celebrated as a triumph of people power (Collins 2008b, Devlin 2008). Or a victory for democracy that described OAPs romantically as ‘Silver Revolutionaries’ (Anderson 2008a, 2008b), ‘Grey Panthers’ (Ingle 2008), ‘Unlikely militants’ or ‘noble group of warriors’ (Anderson 2008a) who have challenged the state’s injustice and ‘taught younger generations a thing or two about protesting and standing up for their rights. Framing the event as the emergence of a new political force in Ireland.

In showing backbone on the medical card issue, our elders have given other groups in society a valuable lesson on how to fight for their rights (Devlin 2008)

Older people came out in their droves to show "silver solidarity", wielding "grey power" like a sword. But whatever you choose to call it, the outrage unleashed by the nation's older people has emerged as a significant political weapon that any savvy public representative can ill-afford to ignore. (Ingle 2008)

Participants from the OAPs NGO sector, along with Joe Behan, agree that the most obvious outcome of this is the way in which the government coalition of the Fianna
Fáil and Greens approached the OAPs policy in subsequent austerity budgets. Here, despite implementing severe cuts across all areas of public spending, the universal benefits considered of importance on the level of discursive consciousness (and thus potentially mobilising issues) by the OAPs’, state pension and free travel among them, remained protected from further cutbacks (Acheson 2010; Carney 2010). Very probably out of the fear of the electoral backlash promised by the OAPs if the measure was not reversed fully. Subsequently, the government officials approached every policy change affecting the OAPs with caution.

But it’s also significant that during the recession the government never touched the old age pension, afterwards, since then...in other words, they were very, very careful never to do anything more to older people to upset them. Now I’d like to think that’s because they believed in the principle of having respect for older people. It may also mean that they were afraid of the consequences at elections.

And as I say, it has affected every government since, in how they approach the question of older people, that whole movement of protest at that time has had a huge effect since. So it has been very successful in my view.

the government and the politicians became more aware of the older people, which is even more important from the point of view of decisions.

(Joe Behan FF TD at the time)

* 

Subsequently, government .. I suppose that one thing about that protests is that subsequently the government moved more carefully in relation to older people. So it’s not that older people sort of earned enormous benefits subsequently, they didn’t. But there was a great deal of caution and care when benefits were being tampered with after that protests (Participant 4 OAP policy expert)

And thus, the OAPs, through a definitive performance of their capacity to mobilise politically and utilise the structures of Irish society to realise their collective power-to in a manner that resonated with aspects of wider public’s habitus (plural) earned the recognition as a political group capable of exercising power strategically.

6.2.2. ...Lost the war

The capacity to force the government into ostensible concession towards the OAPs in the form of a significant rollback preserved the benefit for more than 100,000 OAPs.
This was a significant success given the fact that the original means-test thresholds were going to affect more than 120,000 out of the population of 139,035 (roughly one third of the total population\textsuperscript{14} of the OAPs with the medical card) to automatic over-70s medical card who were in imminent danger of losing the full benefit and this figure fell to 15,000 seven days later. And so, protected the benefits for many who would have lost it otherwise. However, his victory came at a price regarding structural bias and equality of the OAPs. As Robin Webster put it:

*So, but we lost the war. That’s really very important.*

*So, when you say, ‘Lost’ you mean the universal principle has been lost?*

Yes. (Robin Webster AAI)

*But it was significant that they didn’t reverse it the ppl said “ah yeah, we won”, we didn’t, we didn’t.*

*They just scaled back … yes … they scaled back a lot but still.*

*And if you tell about this… because the people see it as a victory and victory is important when you’re doing advocacy. You need a victory every now and again to keep ppl going. But, it’s better to remind ppl we didn’t get back the automatic, universal entitlement didn’t come back* (Eamon Timmins AAI)

Contrary to the romantic narrative of the event as an unequivocal victory for the OAPs. Participants from the OAP NGO sector highlighted the fact that OAPs have lost the automatic access to the medical card as a significant drawback of the enterprise. The loss of the principle of universality and automatic access for all over-70s meant that the OAPs, and anyone turning 70 subsequently, again became subject to the means test levels, which in turn became open to further manipulation at the discretion of the government.

*I remember we were interviewed at the time. And they were saying “look isn’t it great that they have giving you back the 36000” and I said “No, the entitlement is gone, the entitlement is gone”. There is the income level*

\textsuperscript{14} The total population of the over-70s with both means-tested and automatic medical cards was at the time (353,432), the proportion of automatic medical card holders was roughly over one third (139, 035) compared to the means-tested holders (214, 397) (Sullivan 2008 p.4)
now [raises hand to chest level], it was there last week [lowers the hand belly level], we brought it up to here [raises hand to the chest level again], next week it could be here [lowers it a bit]. It’s gone, the entitlement is gone and now it’s just a matter of who gets to keep what’s left”. (Eamon Timmins AAII)

* 

But the thing is, of course, once the principle of universality was lost, then bit by bit, over time and particularly during the austerity period, I can’t remember all the details. But, I mean that they .. they .. the bar, the standard for access to medical card was reduced. So it became much less easy and etcetera. And the I do know that there were people who suffered, and there are always people who suffer on the margins of those changes. And it created lots of anxiety when medical cards were being checked and people didn’t (inaudible 00:33:16) what was being checked. (Participant 4 OAP policy expert)

This is precisely what happened, not under the incumbent government of Fianna Fáil/Greens which remained in power until the election in 2011, but under the subsequent government composed of the parties in the opposition at the time of the protests. But before we turn to this last aspect, let’s stay for a moment with the aforementioned ‘earthquake election’ (Gallagher and Marsh 2011), which marked the end of 15 years of the rule of Fianna Fáil in Irish government following an unprecedented drop in the electoral support from 41.6% in 2007 to 17.4% in 2011 (Donnelly 2018). With a drop of 24% in support among the population older than 65 years as measured against the exit polls in 2007 (Gallagher and Marsh 2011, p. 183). While it would be tempting to argue that the protests have been the cause of such a landslide drop, this result is difficult to disentangle from the wider socio-economic context. The protests occurred at the beginning of one of the costliest economic crises in the world in the wake of an unprecedented state bailout of banks (Laeven and Valencia 2013) which has had profound impact across all areas of state expenditure and taxation to the detriment of the equality and social protection (Allen 2012b, Dukelow and Considine 2014). For which the voters could firmly assign blame to the Fianna Fáil (Marsh and Mikhaylov 2012). It is thus difficult to disentangle the effect of the over-70s medical card crisis from the general disdain this period provoked against Fianna Fáil. At the same time, two participants have argued that the fact that the government officials began the difficult economic period with such a measure began the party’s descent in popularity.
Um.. I think there was a long-term effect, in that the Fianna Fáil lost power afterwards. That probably was a residual effect of people remembering. And lot of those people would be loyal Fianna Fáil supporters. And then, our.. certainly among our members were people who vote for all parties. You know, some of the smaller parties, you’d be surprised. Older people have.. there is an idea that older people vote either for Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael and that’s it. These are a.. these are a huge. huge priority. But certainly, even those, certainly there would have been a lot of animosity towards FF. It did, it certainly contributed to them losing power afterwards. (Eamon Timmins AAI)

* 

So it was such a slap in the face for older people to see that changing. And my own belief is that that was the beginning of the drop in the support for Fianna Fáil. Fianna Fáil had support levels up to nearly 40% at one stage. Their support went down as low as I think 16%.

The same year?

Not the same year, no. It was a consequence of a number of years, including the bail-out. But I think the beginning of the drop in Fianna Fáil support was the damage that was done to older people by that decision. That’s when the trouble started for Fianna Fáil. (Joe Behan FF TD at the time)

Moving on, before this short detour, I have argued that the re-introduction of the means-test opened the possibility for further tampering with its levels at the discretion of the government. Thus, while many individual OAPs gained episodic power-to access the health service through the resource of over-70s medical card, the OAPs as a group have ‘lost the war’ over the structural configuration (2D) of the system of distribution of this resource and became, once again, subject to politicians’ power to set the parameters of the system. While this power was not arbitrary, it very well may have been from the perspective of the OAPs since it was guided by a neoliberal logic of international finance which was, to a large extent, incompatible with the OAPs traditional habitus. And which, as Meade (2015) reminds us, is increasingly subjugating the Irish policy-making process to the point that the politicians behave as if the social policy is an ‘afterthought to economic and electoral considerations’ (ibid p.175).

Even though the coalition responsible for the crisis did not exercise this capacity and stayed away from the issue of the medical card means-test for the rest of the term, possibly due to the threats of the OAPs to vote the coalition out of the government.
After the 2011 election, the new coalition of Fine Gael and Labour (the most vocal opponents of the introduction of means-test and defenders of the over-70s medical card, and even proponents of universal health care for all at one stage during the Silver revolution) have, with the same recourse to justification in terms of economic considerations, further retrenched the over-70s medical card means-test threshold from €700 to €500 for single person in 2013 where it remains to this date (HSE - Health Service Executive 2016). Resulting in the further loss of 35,000 medical cards, more than twice as many as in 2008. Moreover, according to participants from the OAP NGO sector, more OAPs continue to lose the benefit every year due to the inflation.

*And what they’ve done since is essentially they capped it and they haven’t changed the limits. SO every year they are taking people out, the inflation is taking them out.* (Eamon Timmins, AAI)

### 6.2.3. Walking around the beast

While the OAPs’ enhanced reputation for power did result in the protection of the state benefits that were considered of critical importance on the level of discursive consciousness by the OAPs, free travel and state pension, who as a recently mobilised social group became discursively sensitized to the potential threat of the austerity budget, by incumbent as well as subsequent governments. At the same time, this reputation for political power constituted a deterrent against the most obvious and blatant cuts by the subsequent governments, rather than a basis for further capacity for intentional exercise of power, by the OAPs as a group, over the government policy strategically. According to OAP NGO participants’, this is evident from the fact that despite several years of effort of the OAP NGOs, the subsequent governments have yet to take the population ageing seriously on the level of the policy.

*I think there was a slightly greater awareness or cautiousness among politicians towards older people’s issues. It hasn’t, what there hasn’t been is a buy-in in an awareness and a need to start planning for an ageing population. They still see it as older people’s issues rather than your issue or my issue. Because the issues are going to be about time we hit our sixties or seventies. It’s not, to some degree its not about this generation, its for the next generation, future generations. And there hasn’t been that buy-in, we have a national policy for ageing strategy which got published in 2013 and we are finding it very, finding it very hard to get it*
implemented, or even making progress to start to get it implemented. So, when people say "oh it was a .. a turning point an awakening, it changed .. politicians finally took older voters seriously. I think politicians became more cautious of older voters. Haven't really taken it .. if they were to take it seriously, we would have progress in positive ageing strategy. It wouldn’t have taken us seven years to get it published, two governments, three ministers for older people. The whole Older and Bolder effort as well ... yes .. five years it took them.. yes. So, it’s hard to show the evidence that they are taking older people more seriously. (Eamon Timmins AAI).

*  

But I’d say at the end of the day these people are still… disenfranchised for the most part. They’re still, despite voting more often than anybody else, they’re certainly, and the evidence will back up that they are not visible in policy matters. That they’re not included when it comes to the formation of programmes for government, that they are just not seen … we saw it in a cabinet reshuffle halfway through the lifetime of the last government where the minister for older people title was just removed. She was no longer a minister for older people, the title was gone in the cabinet reshuffle. I mean ... worst case scenario is that was a deliberate attack on older people. The more realistic thing is that they probably just forgot, because that’s how much they care about older people. And when I say they I mean government and I don’t differentiate between either of the two traditional parties of power in Ireland, because neither of them had been particularly spectacular. (Peter Kavanagh ARI)

Moreover, the participants from the OAP NGO sector argue that while the protests subsequently protected state pension and free travel, the OAPs continued to be hit through indirect cuts, taxes and levies which further constrain the limited income of the OAPs. As in the case of the medical card means test, the situation had, according to the participants from the OAP sector, worsened for the OAPs with the newly elect coalition in 2011 that, although protecting the benefits dear (and discursively clear) to the OAPs, nonetheless continue to retrench the provision of services and put the OAPs under economic stress. At the same time, still attempting to perpetuate the idea that the government is protecting and serving the OAPs.

if you take the fee for prescription going up that’s one thing. But, actually to have their income cut through things like the telephone allowance being taken and the bereavement grant being taken, the fuel allowance being cut. So even if you just take the cash payments that they used to get, they were down by 13 euros per week up until the last budget. But then, on top of that, you have to look at the .. the fee for prescription has gone up. It was 50 cent when it started, now it’s what .. 5 times that, it’s gone up by a factor of five, 500 percent... its crazy when you’re on a very
limited income. Even though its capped to 25 euros per month, we do have anecdotal evidence of older people picking and choosing which medication they are going to take, because they can’t afford to get all the prescriptions. And then… that’s another big hit, and then on top of that property tax and on top of that water charges, and then on top of that an increased cost of living. Because while incomes have remained relatively static, the cost of living outside of … property has gone up. (Peter Kavanagh, ARI)

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And certainly government officials we have spoken to have said “look it was a choice of cutting that or cutting a fuel allowance or cutting the pension. And we protected the pension”. Yeah, then you increased all sorts of other hidden taxes and charges, so you did … you know. You can say “we didn’t cut the pension” and its true you didn’t. but, people are worse off still (Eamon Timmins AAI)

The above suggests that the Silver Revolution has taught the politicians more than the lesson intended by the OAPs. Despite gaining political visibility and assuming the position of a group with significant potential for political power. The subsequent governments have learned that the threat of such massive political mobilisation of OAPs can be reduced via targeting smaller cuts to already existing services, retrenchment of multiple services considered of importance only by a section of the OAP population. And even making changes with profound impact to the benefits considered of utmost importance by the OAPs in a way that is very difficult to translate into a clear, potentially mobilising, issue 35. In other words, what has changed was the tactics of the subsequent governments in approaching the retrenchment of the OAPs benefits and supports in a way that poses as little political threat as possible regarding the OAPs mobilisation in response.

So…i am not sure about its lasting legacy though. I mean I think it was a turning point but whether … maybe governments will be less stupid and more careful? Yes, they might be a bit more careful. Bit more weary .. I think it’s more weary than respectful (both laugh).. and there is a difference. It’s more of a kind of walking around the beast, rather than loving the beast, you know (smiles). [Eamon Timmins AAI]

35 A good example of this can be found in the changes to the Irish pension system contributions via raising the retirement age, increasing individual responsibility for pension provisions and tightening the criteria for state pensions, which have had a disproportionately more profound impact on the state pension provision for women (Duvvury et al. 2018).
The successful mobilisation of the protests did establish the OAPs reputation for political power which has made the politicians’ more ‘weary of the beast’ thus forcing them to consider the impact of future policies against the potential backlash of the OAPs. Thus, as Carney (2010) argued the OAPs abandoned the position of deserving, but essentially burdensome, passive and politically powerless population group to be administered, governend and talked at. And instead assumed the role of vigilant potentially-non-confirm-structuring-beholder whose political agency must be considered by the politicians. However, this shift also means that in doing so they have assumed the role of a political adversary to be dealt with according to the rules of the field of Irish politics.
Conclusion

Introduction

Silver revolution, Revenge of the Grey Panthers, Awakening of the Sleeping Giant, these are but a few of the terms imposed upon the Irish Old Age Pensioners’ (OAPs) mass political mobilization against the government attempt to abolish the universal access to medical card for the seniors over 70 years of age in October 2008 in which the OAPs achieved significant, although not complete, reversal of government policy. This was a significant moment for the political activism by and on behalf of the elderly, given the fact that, up to that point, the OAPs political participation was, by and large, confined to the ballot box, and Elderly political lobby was fragmented, largely inefficient and powerless in terms of impact on policy-making process despite long-term involvement in public-private partnership bodies designed to advise on policy. Yet, in the space of a week, they managed to mobilise the largest political campaign of resistance the country had seen in almost three decades (Acheson 2010). Despite the loss of the principle of universality, the OAPs have interpreted the event as a victory for the collective (Fox and Quinn 2012). A perception which was reinforced by portrayal of the event in the media which, although with ageist undertones, framed it in terms of mythical narrative in which the frail and vulnerable seniors, victims of the unjust government policy rose up in defence of their rights, mobilized as unified political group and forced the government into retreat. (Fealy et al. 2012). This, in turn, enhanced their reputation for power which might have been enough to shift the perception of the OAPs in the eyes of the government officials from politically quiescent to vigilant and active, advancing their capacity to influence the policy in the future (Carney 2010). This turned out to be the case in the two subsequent Budgets in which other OAPs’ benefits remained untouched despite severe austerity measures across the board (Acheson 2010).

While literature characterised the event as an exercise of power or a moment of empowerment, the focus of the respective analyses oriented them towards theorising their effects. Leaving the phenomenon of power in the context of the case wanting for explicit theorisation, which, to be fair to the authors, has not been their intention and has been acknowledged in their work. Two notable steps in this direction can be found in the work of Acheson (2010) who, although rather briefly and very implicitly,
examined the event in terms capacity of the OAPs Advocacy NGOs to respond to a discursive opportunity. Which opened up with the upsurge of the OAPs anxiety about the government measure, mobilize the energy of the elderly and direct it towards the government officials through active construction of meaning and shaping of the public narrative. And Meade’s (Meade 2014, 2015) analysis of the event in terms of Foucauldian concept of ‘counter conduct’, a mutually constitutive interaction between subject positions of the OAPs and the government officials tied in the interplay between constraining and productive aspects of the power/knowledge dyad which sets out the boundaries of the possible. This analysis argued that even though the OAPs resistance managed to preserve the medical card for many who would have lost it, the overall balance and relationships of power in Irish politics did not change, and afterwards ‘ministers still behaved as if social policy is an after-thought to economic and electoral consideration’ (Meade 2015, p.174). Moreover, the OAPs, by articulating their argument with the appeal to their own vulnerability, reproduced their status as a dependable group.

Driven by a strong interest in the theoretical sociology of power, this thesis sought to build on and contribute to this growing body of knowledge by explicit investigation of the phenomena of power in the context of this case. Now, it is time to round up the suspects, gather the evidence, and make a compelling final statement.

This concluding chapter proceeds in five sections. First, I will restate the central research problem and explain how I answered each research question as clearly and succinctly as I can. This will be followed by a discussion of what I understand to be the theoretical and empirical contributions of this project to the sociology of Ireland as well as literature of power in social sciences more generally. After that, in line with the projects’ emphasis of reflexivity, I will move on to discuss the main limitations of the study and explain some aspects of what I have, in hindsight, come to see as problematic. And finally (finally!), I will move to the discussion of the possible directions and challenges for future research which have surfaced in the context of the study and present my own future research agenda.
Aim and research questions

I began the introduction with the exposition of the empirical case, an overview of the literature and the argument that although the empowering nature of the event has been established in existing research, there is an eminent need for the explicit investigation of power in its context and have set out the central research problem as follows:

To examine how and why do disempowered social groups exercise collective social and political power in the process of resistance against existing power structures in the context of the case of the over-70s medical card protests.

Even at a first glance, this is a compound as well as complex problem, and it was therefore divided into two main research themes, subdivided into further, more specific research questions that guided the project from its inception. First one was theoretical:

1) How can we study the relationships of social and political power?
   a. How can we approach the study of social and political power on the level of the theory?
   b. How do we access the phenomena of social and political power empirically?

And second, empirical which set out to investigate the three aspects of social action, or what has been called here practice, highlighted by Weber (meaning, process and effects) through the lens of Haugaard’s model:

2) How did the relationships of power operate in the concrete context of OAPs mobilization and resistance against the government decision to abolish the universal aspect of the over-70s medical card?
   f. Why did the OAPs mobilize in response to this specific measure? (meaning)
   g. How did the OAPs exercise power in the face of existing power structures (process)
   h. What were the effects of OAPs campaign of resistance (effects)
Part I

How can we approach the study of social and political power on the level of the theory?

This question was answered in the first part of the thesis (chapters 1, 2 and 3). As I have outlined in the introduction any attempt to examine power rests upon its definition, which, in turn, enables the researcher to devise the methodological route by which it can be accessed empirically. Defining power is no easy task because it is a concept that has acquired a plethora of meanings in colloquial as well as analytical use in the context of social sciences. And therefore, requires extensive theoretical discussion.

Having a felicitous excuse to do so\(^\text{36}\) I have argued that conceptualisation of power is best approached from the perspective of Four-dimensional model of power developed by Mark Haugaard. Of course, I am aware that there is more than one way to skin a cat, so to speak, especially in the field of theoretical sociology of power which is riddled with different conceptual expressions of power, often in disagreement or contradiction with one another. And would like to emphasise again that the choice of the framework was mine. At the same time, it was not arbitrary. The framework was chosen because of its capacity to integrate elements of a number of disparate theoretical positions into an analytically useful whole through their re-inscription in the language of (re)structuration theory which constitutes the ontological and epistemological foundations of Haugaard’s thought discussed in chapters 1 and 2.

Following Haugaard’s reading of Giddens, I have conceptualised social and political power as the relational capacity to achieve outcomes, to bring about consequences in the social, as opposed to the natural world through intersubjective action or practice. Or to put it another way, a capacity to achieve the desired outcomes through and in the context of the agency of others.

This capacity is premised upon shared system of meanings, acquired in the process of socialization and embodied on the level of agents’ habitus consisting of discursive and practical consciousness and unconscious dispositions towards modes of being-in-the-

\(^{36}\) As I have stated several times (this is the last one I promise) the theoretical interest in sociology and theories of power is the raison d'être of this project that has guided it from its inception and sustained my energy throughout.
world, that render the world meaningful and predictable, which enables the agents to maintain their sense of ontological security, a kind of un or pre-conscious trust in the symbolic coherence of the world and their own capacity to function in it competently. Agents learn to trust in their social world by learning its rules and observing patterns of social interactions that bring about desired consequences. This trust contributes to the maintenance of their sense of ontological security and reinforces agents’ tendency to reproduce the structures in similar contexts across time-space routinely.

Structures exist as one form of knowledge of agents’ social world, knowledge of rules of social interaction that constrain agents into particular modes of interaction and thus make the interactions similar across time-space. Agents routinely, and often subconsciously, use this knowledge in their day-to-day lives to achieve their intended goals by conforming to the structural blueprint of interaction in order to achieve predictable (same across time-space) outcomes. At the same time unintentionally drawing on and reproducing the structural aspects of the interaction across time-space. It is the enabling aspect of structures that make them central to the power as the capacity to achieve outcomes. When the structures are utilised in this way, they constitute resources that agents can draw upon, in turn reproducing their meaning in the continual process of structuration. Resources ‘make possible the intentional content of action, with the unintentional effect of being reconstituted as resources’ (Giddens, 1981 p. 52). And the existence of structures as resources becomes central to the generation of power, which is realised through their mobilisation.

Haugaard’s reconstructive critique of Giddens’ model claims that while the theory explains societal reproduction on the level of the individual, it leaves the intersubjective and relational dimension of human existence undertheorized. In short, Giddens does not pay sufficient attention to the importance of structuring others. Thus, creating problems when it is put to task of explaining stability or (and) change in social systems as well as confusing the understanding of social power. This is because it tends to appear too voluntaristic in relation to systemic change and, at the same time, biased towards systemic stability. Haugaard seeks to overcome this deficit by focusing the attention on the intersubjective and systemic aspects of the theory and on the existence of structuring others in the social systems. He introduces the conceptual vocabulary of confirm-structuration and de-structuration to discern between the
successful and unsuccessful reproduction of structures and allow for a more complex understanding of how individual practices can either promote or hinder the change in social structures.

The ontological and epistemological assumptions, developed in Haugaard’s early work, constitute the conceptual foundation that functions in a manner akin to a universal synthetic language that enables him to re-inscribe elements of often disparate and often conflicting theoretical frameworks into a coherent model of power in an ontologically and epistemologically consistent manner. Haugaard’s four-dimensional model was developed on the foot of the influential three-dimensional power debate embodied in the works of Robert Dahl, Bachrach and Baratz, and Stephen Lukes, with the Digeser’s extension which integrated Foucauldian account of subjectification as its fourth dimension. And the integration of this work with the insights of other influential theorists of power like Arendt, Barnes, Bourdieu, Elias, Giddens, Amy Allen. While using the work of these authors as a departure point, the 4D model is quite different from what the authors might have imagined and sees the power as operating on four distinct levels: practice, structure, knowledge and ontological dispositions.

Even though theorised in separation for the purpose of theory building, the distinction between individual levels is strictly analytical, and all four dimensions are present in every instance of the exercise of social power. This position sees the social agency (1D) as always nested within the structural conditions of possibility perceived by the agents (2D) which is determined by their tacit understanding of the world on the level of practical consciousness (3D), acquired during their process of subjectification which translates into agents’ ontological dispositions (4D). This simultaneous operation is exemplified in Haugaard’s discussion of habitus. Understood as both epistemological and ontological embodiment of social system acquired in the process of socialization, habitus enables agents to make sense of their world and constitutes the nexus from which they generate their practices (Haugaard 2008b, p. 191).

**How do we access the phenomena of social and political power empirically?**

With the theoretical framework set up, it was time to turn to the issues of research design and methodology, which presented a significant challenge, given the lack of methodological pointers on how to do research in the context of the theory of four-
Conclusion

dimensional model. Long story short, I have, in chapter 3, argued that ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the theory of (re)structuration, and the 4D model of power build upon this theory, are highly commensurable with the methodology of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA was suitable due to its focus on understanding and interpretation of specific experience from the perspective of the participants, which is well in line with the Weber-inspired focus of 4D model on social action or practice as meaningful within agents’ interpretative horizon sustained by their habitus.

At the same time, keeping in mind the IPA’s psychological origins and focus, I argued that in order to furnish a sociological analysis, its idiographic focus on individuals’ understanding of experience, gathered exclusively from the participants accounts, needs to be widened and pay equal attention to the historical and socio-cultural aspects of the phenomena under study. And thus, requires more diverse sources of data. After this method-theoretical excursus, I went on to describe the research design itself.

IPA studies are, almost by their definition, an exploratory, descriptive, and problem-oriented endeavour that is, as its title suggests, best approached by the interpretative research design. This thesis is no exception, and I have designed the study adherence to the criteria of reflexivity, thick description and triangulation rather than post-positivistic benchmarks of validity, generalizability or falsifiability. As such, its purpose is to generate an in-depth description and interpretation of the empirical case in terms of the conceptual framework rather than testing pre-defined and conceptually sharpened hypotheses with statistical significance.

The remainder of Chapter 3 described the various sources and methods of data collection used to access the empirical case and furnish the thick description which consisted of 9 participant interviews, newspaper articles from two mainstream broadsheet Irish newspapers, National television and radio archive recordings, government documents, OAP NGOs websites and academic literature on the subject. And, provided a step-by-step outline of the analytic process, while tracking my own deviations from the IPA methodology.
Part II

Why did the OAPs mobilise in response to this specific measure?

Bringing the conceptual framework to bear upon the empirical analysis, I began the investigation of the Silver revolution with a phenomenological interpretation of OAPs’ understanding of and relationship to the medical card and their experience of anxiety in response to sudden and unannounced decision to withdraw the automatic access to medical cards for the over-70s. The inductive analysis of the participant’s accounts brought to the fore two distinct, yet related, aspects of medical card central to the importance of the benefit for the OAPs.

First, and the most obvious was the existential value or utility of the medical card as an inherently empowering resource. Given the increased morbidity of various illness in the old age, the benefit represented an important source of security for the OAPs because it enabled them to access medical services for free, or at minimal cost, and so maintain their health (central to their capacity for agency or power-to) regardless of their access to economic resources, And to which they became habitually accustomed over time to the point that they took it for granted.

Second, the over-70s medical card has, since it was introduced in 2001, come to be understood by OAPs as right on the level of their tacit, practical consciousness knowledge, thus making it a 3D phenomenon. This understanding was not an accident or an arbitrary construction invented by the OAPs. But a result of the strategic politicization of the over-70s medical card in advance of the 2002 elections by the Fianna Fáil politicians who, although preserving its policy status as extended social support premised upon the capacity of the country to remain competitive, nonetheless presented it as a reward, a symbolic token of recognition for the OAPs’ lifetimes of contributions to the Irish society (Burke 2009, Meade 2015).

Even if deployed for strategic purpose only, the government officials’ discursive articulation of the over-70s medical card in the language of social contract and mutual reciprocity between the state and the OAPs and its discursive equation with other universal benefits, like free travel and state pension, has conferred a new meaning structure upon the institution of the medical card in the eyes of the OAPs. Effectively transforming it from social support premised upon the vulnerability of the recipient,
and discretion of the government, into a right, premised upon the OAPs contributions to the state.

This novel structuration of meaning was strongly commensurable with the OAPs’ habitus (discursive and practical consciousness and disciplinary disposition), which embodied a much more traditional system of meanings and values characteristic of a pre-Celtic-Tiger era that emphasised the intergenerational solidarity. This equivalence became confirm-structured by the OAPs, gradually shading into the implicit, taken-for-granted practical consciousness knowledge. At the same time, this resonance between the reality of the medical card as a symbolic token of recognition and their normative system of values embodied on the level of their disciplinary dispositions, practical and discursive consciousness knowledge (in short habitus) provided them with a source of ontological security in relation to their understanding of the world.

Insofar as the success story of the Celtic Tiger continued, this differential, and as we saw incompatible, understanding of the medical card - as a right, and therefore beyond contestation by the OAPs. And, as social support, and therefore legitimately amenable at the discretion of the government officials - remained latent and sustained a positive-sum relationship of power that conferred enhanced capacity to act for both sides. And had it continued, this contradistinction in understanding would possibly have not surfaced from the practical consciousness of either side as its praxiological effects were identical, and neither side had any reason to question the status of the benefit discursively. However, the economic realities of the global economic meltdown of 2008 have changed that and revealed the incompatibility between these differential understandings of the medical card. It was an external event that revealed epistemic incommensurability. What appeared as a simple 1D conflict over resources triggered a conflict over structures that brought to the fore 3D epistemic conflict.

When the government officials, facing the imminent financial crisis, dropped the m-bomb (m for means-test) on already existing recipients of the over-70s medical card. Without warning and with no clear guidelines of implementation. All of a sudden, large number of OAPs were forced to discursively consider the possibility of losing this valuable benefit even if they were not in any imminent danger of losing it. This did not just disrupt the OAPs’ habitual reliance on the medical card for access to services on the level of practical consciousness. But went deeper and negated the symbolic status of the over-70s medical card as right, which epitomized their own self-
understanding as valuable citizens whose contributions deserve recognition. This, in turn, disrupted their sense of ontological security sustained by their taken-for-granted understanding of the world on the level of practical consciousness.

Garfinkel’s (1984) breaching experiments show that even minor breaches of social conventions can instigate ontological insecurity and provoke adverse reactions from others. And, from the perspective of OAPs, this was not a minor breach but a serious infraction of the social contract which disregarded lifetimes of their contributions to the state and was going to have catastrophic existential consequences. A situation worsened by the fact that such infraction came from the very same party that initiated the extension of the benefit and enjoyed the electoral support from the OAPs in return, thus adding a bitter taste of betrayal to symbolic degradation of their status in the Irish society. This dual disruption has led them to interpret the government move as an illegitimate attack on their rights to which they had no other option but to respond.

**How did the OAPs mobilise and exercise power in the face of existing power structures?**

While chapter 4 was focused inward, on the phenomenological interpretation of the OAPs experience as embedded within an intersubjective system of meaning specific to this age group. Chapter 5 examined the outward, the various practices by which the OAPs mobilised and resisted the government move.

The OAPs campaign of resistance began almost immediately with large-scale nationwide and increasingly calescent outbursts of individual expressions of anxiety and resentment of the government move, articulating both, the OAPs anxiety over losing the access to health and their anger at the symbolic insult inflicted on their status as valuable members of society by the government officials’ attempt to take away what they perceived as their right to healthcare.

Beginning with the former, these accounts articulated the existential importance of the medical card which stemmed from the complete reliance on the benefit for access to healthcare in the wake of its extension to cover all the over-70s. Drawn a sharp distinction between the existential utility of the medical card and the two other proposed benefits (GP visit card and Support payment of €400). And argued that
anything less than full medical card would have severe consequences on their capacity (power) to maintain their health because it will re-introduce the question of money into the equation of health and make healthcare available on the basis of OAPs access to economic resources rather than need. Moreover, will force them to make a trade-off between accessing healthcare and using their economic resources elsewhere. Again, having their dispositional capacity for action (power-to) curtailed.

These idiographic expressions of economic insecurity were interpreted as a practice of de-structuration of the government officials’ attempts to make the measure more palatable to the public which rested upon dissimulating claims that the measure was going to affect only wealthy pensioners who can well afford to pay for their medical care. As well as the attempts to discursively equate the medical cards with the other two benefits and so make the numbers of the OAPs affected by the measure more less contentious.

At the same time, the OAPs articulations of their own vulnerability and utter dependence on the medical card enabled them to utilize their status, described by Carney (2010) as ‘dependants’ a needy vulnerable and helpless social group that is perceived as deserving of public investment, and transform it, in the context of the event into a power resource.

In parallel to the above, the OAPs also articulated their anger at the symbolic insult of the measure. And, justifying their claims with the appeal to the government officials’ own language used to seek the electoral favour of the OAPs seven years earlier, took the government officials to the task for breaking the contract of their own making. Thus, constructing it as an illegitimate attempt to bind the OAPs, and the whole country, into a new set of obligations instead of delivering on its promise. And moreover, framing the government officials as corrupted authority figures who have betrayed the authority invested in them to run the country in the interest of the people. Which led the OAPs to publicly denounce their electoral support for Fianna Fáil.

And they were not alone. The OAP’s plight was deemed felicitous relative to the understanding of intergenerational solidarity embedded in the interpretive horizon(s) and sustained by habitus (plural) of the wider Irish public. Their relatives, NGOs and the opposition politicians all supported and confirm-structured the OAPs’ articulation of medical card as right.
Once the OAPs discursively articulated the reversal of the principle of universality as an illegitimate exercise of power by the officials whose authority to do so has been compromised, and this articulation became confirm-structured by others. Individual expressions of anxiety and anger gave way to collective resistance and the OAPs began to incite others to remedy this injustice through mobilisation of the resources afforded to them by the democratic nature of the Irish political system in the attempt to have the measure reversed.

This mobilisation included widespread calls from the OAPs for a public demonstration that would allow them to show the extent of their disapproval, which, once answered by Age Action Ireland and Irish Senior Citizens’ Parliament, met with large-scale public confirm-structuration from OAPs, their relatives, other OAP NGOs, opposition and the media. Indicating the nationwide refusal to confirm-structure the government officials’ alterations of the structural configuration of the system to their disadvantage as legitimate. And incitements to utilize the personal nature of Irish politics and confront the government TDs directly in their constituency offices. Practice that, once deployed, has put the backbench TDs under considerable pressure because it demonstrated, first-hand, the extent of the anxiety and resentment of the measure coupled with the withdrawal of legitimacy among their constituents upon whom they depended for re-election. Inducing in, turn, ontological insecurity related to their own standing in their community being tainted by the decision they had no part in (it came from the cabinet ministers). And led to an outright ‘mutiny’ whereby several Fianna Fáil backbenchers, along with three Independents on whose support government coalition depended, openly challenged the ministers and demanded the review or reversals of the measure before they support it by their vote.

Facing the increasingly calescent response, not just from the OAPs, but also from their relatives, wider public, media and opposition. As well as fighting the internal mutiny, the government ministers attempted to quell the situation and restore their authority as legitimate representatives of the people by announcing changes to the means-test levels so significant that they effectively reversed the effect of the measure in practice.

However, they did not concede the OAPs’ core (and singular) demand and insisted on its abolitionment as a universal benefit. While this move was enough to quell majority of the mutineer TDs, thus enabling the government to implement the policy. This refusal to listen and recognize the status of over-70s medical card as right premised
upon the value of OAPs contributions did not appease the OAPs and provoked the largest protests the country has hitherto seen in almost three decades in which the anger, anxiety, determination and threats seeping through the airwaves for the previous week materialized into a large number of angry OAPs whose behaviour represented the final and unequivocal statement of refusal to confirm structure the government measure. And withdrawal of their support for the legitimacy of the Fianna Fáil government that led to the construction of the event as the awakening of the grey vote in Ireland. However, despite the large numbers of protesters and the extent of the public outrage, the government coalition defeated the opposition’s move to have the measure reversed and implemented its intention to abolish the principle of universality of the over-70s medical card. Which brings me to the discussion of the ambivalent legacy of this unexpected and extraordinary week in Irish politics

**What were the effects of OAPs campaign of resistance?**

Turning on to the final aspect of our investigation of social action, its effects, the OAPs resistance can be classified along several lines. Phenomenologically speaking, public and media confirm-structuration of the OAPs self-perception as valuable citizens-with-rights-to-healthcare-premised-upon-lifetime-of-contributions, and the government officials as corrupted elites, from the inception of the controversy, validated the OAPs’ interpretive horizon ingrained in their habitus which, in turn, moderated their feelings of ontological insecurity and aided their mobilisation.

The protest events in which the OAPs, however temporarily, reversed the social order and were able to return the gift of ontological insecurity to those deemed responsible through denial of their authority to speak as elected representatives in the same way, they felt, the government has denied theirs, constituted at once an exercise of power and experience of resonance for the OAPs. Which, in conjunction with the fact that they were able to force the government into retreat and the positive construction of the event in the eyes of the wider public as a felicitous, democratic and justified response that was proportional to the severity of the measure, enabled the OAPs to restore their sense of ontological security. Even though it was the withdrawal of a right that triggered their epistemic conflict with the government, and the government in a sense won out on that principle, as the universality of the over-70s medical card was not restored.
This, in turn, provided much-needed (after a long period of inefficiency) boost for the morale of the activists involved because it demonstrated that OAPs activism could make a difference and influence the policymakers if the numbers are strong enough, and thus re-invigorated their energy and willingness to employ their newly discovered power resources further. And, increased the interest of the wider public in political activism.

Sociologically speaking, despite ultimately losing the principle of universality to which we will return below, the OAPs’ unexpected and unprecedented resistance was nonetheless able to constrain the government into a significant revision of the parameters of new structural configuration and significantly soften its impact. Thus, preserving the benefit for large number of individual OAPs who would have lost it according to the initial means-test guidelines proposed by the government, bringing the number of OAPs who were going to lose the card from 120,000 to 15,000, a change that effectively reversed the cost-saving effect of the policy in practice. And it was this capacity to compel the government to such significant concession that contributed to the public construction of the event as a victory and the moment of the awakening of the OAPs political power.

The capacity to organise such massive public demonstrations on such a short notice represented a significant success for the OAP NGOs involved in the advocacy and political representation of the OAPs which fortified their status as legitimate political representatives of the OAPs in further dealings with the public and the government. Because of public support, there was also a sense that they did not simply represent a specific interest group, but it had that status function of the will of the people, which even included many of the backbench government TDs. In that sense, this was a rare populist moment of power-with solidarity whereby the OAPs truly came to represent the will of ‘The People’ in the sense of representing the interest of every ageing person.

The show of determination in attendance and threats to vote the FF out of the government, along with the increased awareness of the political mobilization and vigilance of the OAPs as a politically active segment of society has, as Carney argued, contributed to the enhancement of the OAPs reputation for political power, which in turn influenced the further approach of the politicians towards this group and protected the OAPs most obvious benefits in the subsequent austerity budgets. Thus,
the OAPs assumed the role of a potentially-non-confirm-structuring-beholder whose political power must be considered in advance and entered the political arena as agents rather than as a passive group to be governed.

However, this success came at the cost. Structurally, the most obvious outcome of the over-70s medical card controversy was the abolishment of the principle of universality of the benefit on the level of the policy. The government officials were thus able to prevail over the OAPs with regard to the conflict over the structures of the system that conferred the dispositional power-to capacity to maintain their health. Speaking in terms of the OAPs as ideal-type group interpelated by the identity constructed in the course of the protests, this outcome represents a considerable setback. Compared to the universal nature of the medical card which granted the access to health to all OAPs, thus making them equal. In bringing back the means-test, the government officials successfully introduced bias working to the OAPs disadvantage into the system, and thus curtailed the capacity of some of its members to maintain their health. And, at the same time provided the successive government with a legislative mechanism to alter the means-test thresholds at the discretion of the ruling elites (which happened in 2013, when around 35000 cards have been lost as a result of a further reduction in means-test threshold from €700 to €500).

It would appear that the government has learned more than the lesson intended by the OAPs. In particular, that targeting singular and clearly understandable issues (from the perspective of OAPs) with the potential to mobilise a large number of people does not pay off. This is because the singular issue has greater potential for mobilisation of collective power and solidarity than a myriad of diffused cuts. And even though the OAPs’ universal and highly visible benefits have not been touched and even saw minor increases, the successive budgets saw a number of incremental cuts in the value of the benefits as well as abolishment of several minor supplementary schemes, increases in charges for some services and introduction of several ‘stealth taxes’ through which the OAPs continued to be hit economically by the subsequent governments.

Moreover, the data collected here suggest that although the OAPs became a politically mobilised and active group, there is still little evidence of the effectiveness of their power beyond the protection of the obvious and potentially mobilising issues established during the protests. While the government officials continue to make concessions to the OAPs as a group, these concessions are by and large symbolic and
indicative of the piecemeal fragmented approach to OAPs policy guided by narrow rational instrumental and positivist neoliberal preoccupation with costs that fosters structural dependency described by Carney and Meade. Rather than signalling a genuine ‘buy-in’ a commitment of the government to the development of integrated ageing policy, which constituted a focal point of the OAPs activism since the protests and could indicate that the subsequent government are taking the power of the OAPs seriously.

**Contributions**

Despite its limitations (and looking back, there are numerous) I see the thesis contributing to the field of power theory and contemporary power analysis that seeks to balance the understanding of power as zero-sum domination on one hand and power as empowerment and capacity to act on the other. Within the power literature, there is a tendency to, following Weber, conceptualise power as domination, where the powerful having access to vast amount of resources can prevail over the powerless with fewer resources. At the same time, the power debates are also replete with the conceptualisations of power as power-to a capacity to act, to achieve outcomes and to inflict change upon the world which leans into the idea of empowerment rooted in the intuition that the powerless, if they get together, can prevail over the more powerful. While these perspectives have been integrated on the level of the theory, for example in Allen’s distinction between power-over, power-to and power-with applied to a feminist purpose, Clegg’s frameworks of power or Haugaard’s four-dimensional model, the empirical studies examining these aspects simultaneously are rather scant. And, the empirical opportunities to examine instances whereby a disempowered group was able to prevail over the more powerful even more so.

The OAP’s protests represent a specific instance whereby a group of people who prima-facie appear disempowered and does not have access to a lot of structured resources, as demonstrated by their lack of hitherto political mobilisation or effectivity of their representatives. And yet, were able to mobilise and prevail over an apparently more powerful group of political elites to a significant extent in a very short time frame. This counterfactual offers us an insight into the capacity of the powerless to collectively alter the economy of power-structures in the system and exercise power-
to as against the group with much greater access to power resources. And, given the relatively short time-frame, to track the emergence of a resistance movement, its progress and its effects. Thus, providing an empirical flesh to substantiate a theoretical analysis of resistance that moves away from considering either the domination or empowerment aspects of the situation in isolation. And towards an analysis that interrogates the event in terms of the continuous interplay between enablement and constraint facilitated by the (re)structuration theory and four-dimensional model of power.

Using this theoretical approach, I was able to show that the reason why the resistance took place was that the government decided to target the over-70s medical card and the official justification of the measure was in direct violation of all aspects of the OAPs’ habitus, which in turn generated conflict across all four dimensions of power at once. First of all, it was an issue of principle that spans the first as well as second dimension of power because the issue of contention was not just about the conflict over goals within a particular structural configuration on the level of practice (1D), but deeper conflict over the structural configuration of the system itself (2D). Moreover, the decision to target the medical card, violated the OAPs practical consciousness (3D) self-understanding as citizens-with-right-to-healthcare-premised-upon-their-contributions.

Compared to the straightforward conflict over goals within structure, which is often the case of democratic conflicts, whereby those with access to a greater number of commonly structured resources prevail over others, the conflict tends to be confined to the level of goals in the context of interaction while the status and legitimacy of the structures-as-resources, sustained by the agents’ habitus, involved in the conflict remains intact as the agents are still able to drive the sense of ontological security from the configuration of the system. In this case, however, it did spill across all four dimensions, and this absolute epistemic incommensurability resulted in dislocation across the OAPs habitus which in turn, had a 4D ontological knock-on anxiety-inducing effect that dislocated the OAPs taken-for-granted practical consciousness knowledge and triggered mobilisation.

In a way, it is a fascinating case which shows, and this comes to the core of the thesis, that successful mobilisation of collective power against an adversary with access to the disproportionate amount of power-resources involves the conflict across all
dimensions of individuals’ habitus (plural) related to the trigger-issue. But it is not enough, and the issue of contention and the plight of the resisting party must be understood and confirm-structured by a critical mass of individuals in the system if its intended effect is to take place. And even then, the unintended consequences are difficult to foresee.

During the journey, I was also able to make several theoretical incisions to Haugaard’s theoretical framework, which can be considered, if not original than at least as contributions. First of those is the re-activation of the ontological and epistemological foundations of the theory of (re)structuration which serves as an underlying language through which Haugaard reinscribes the insights from the work of others a coherent interrelated whole, lends it its theoretical depth and makes the conceptual clockwork of 4D model of power tick. And, despite the fact that it is implied in most recent writings in a manner akin to the operation of practical consciousness, it has not, as of yet, been explicitly theorized alongside the four-dimensional model.

Moreover, the above enabled me to articulate an agent-centred reading of the 4D model of power. As I have argued in chapter 2, insofar as the theory centres on agents as reproducers of the social system in the course of exercising social power over one another, all four dimensions operate on the level of the individual and the theory thus needs a four-dimensional account of the self. To be sure, it is not the case that the theoretical resources for such endeavour are lacking - Haugaard offers numerous indicia enable us to (at least partially) sketch out the contours of such account through the explicit re-reading alongside the (re)structuration model of the self as operating on the levels of agents’ practices (1D) embedded in the structural conditions of possibility perceived by agents on the level of discursive consciousness (2D) determined by their tacit, taken-for-granted practical consciousness knowledge (3D) acquired in the process of their socialization which translate into agents’ ontological dispositions (4D). This shift in emphasis is subtle but useful as it brings the theory closer to agents. At the same time, this endeavour enabled me to integrate two novel

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37 I am aware that Haugaard is currently working on a book devoted to the extensive theorization of the 4-D model of power alongside its foundations. But until that happens, my attempt to use early Haugaard’s work to interpret the 4-D model constitutes, except for reading his complete life-work, the most comprehensive one-stop-shop theoretical statement of 4-D model of power.
conceptual tools, dislocation and resonance, into the framework which (hopefully) enhanced its explanatory capacity.

Another contribution dwells in mapping out at least one possible methodological route to empirical investigation of power relationships for those interested in using Haugaard’s recent model. And perhaps, made it easier to find others. Despite its theoretical depth, Haugaard’s work lacks the methodological pointers on ‘how to’ do the empirical research. And this dearth is furthered by the relative lack of empirical studies using his new framework. Beginning from the scratch, the excavation of the onto-epistemological foundations of (re)structuration theory enabled me to demonstrate the commensurability of the model with a range of approaches to empirical investigation grouped under the umbrella of interpretive paradigm in general and to design the research methodology with reference to the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in particular and thus overcome the distance between the empirical and the theoretical while doing justice to both. Moreover, as far as I am aware, my project represents one of the few and recent attempts to bring the IPA’s methodology from the field of psychology to sociology and I have outlined one of the ways how its, strictly psychological, focus on individual experience can be shifted towards the intersubjective aspects of experience and furnish sociological interpretation through incorporation of wider array of data sources at later stages of the analysis. In doing so, I have hopefully facilitated further use of this approach in sociology, even if just by committing mistakes that others can avoid.

In addition to the (modest and highly field-specific) theoretical contributions the thesis also offers some, small-scale and in themselves incomplete, advances towards a more complete understanding of the OAPs protests against the abolishment of the universal access to the over-70s medical card in the context of Irish Sociology. First of those contributions dwells in the expansion of repository of empirical data that illuminate our understanding of the Silver Revolution that brings together phenomenological investigation of the experience of the event through interviews with participants from the main groups involved, OAPs, OAP NGOs representatives and politicians (although this broad scope of participant selection also represents a methodological drawback which will be clarified in the limitation section), with the analysis of the newspapers, TV and Radio archive material. And second can be located in its explicit focus on the phenomenon of social and political power in the context of the case.
Although the concepts of power family (power, power structures, empowerment and resistance) have been deployed casually in the investigations of the case, they have been largely left undertheorized and taken for granted by the authors. Similarly, the process by which it was exercised was, except for Meade’s work, bracketed from the analyses. To be absolutely clear, this is not an attempt to run down others’ work through setting up a straw-man argument about the inadequacy of their analysis because it leaves out power which was not their intention in the first place, but positioning myself as following the path set out in their work which explicitly highlighted the investigation of social power in the context of the case as necessary in order to arrive at more complete, although still far from definitive, understanding of the case.

Limitations

First, and rather obvious, limitation of this thesis is the absence of discussion of gender differences which is, for me, striking given that women make a significant portion of the OAP population in Ireland\(^{38}\). Initially, I intended to devote a chapter or an extended section to the discussion of gender differences in the context of the protests, but participants’ accounts, as well as other data collected, emphasized the age-related aspect of their identity of OAPs-as-citizens-with-rights-premised-upon-their-contribution which was perceived to be under attack so heavily, that I had to reconsider.

While the thesis remains silent on the issue of gender differences, the project is not unrepresentative of women, two out of three OAP protesters I interviewed were women and it is predominantly their voices being heard throughout the interview excerpts. Similarly, women made up approximately half\(^{39}\) of the callers into the radio show analysed in the context of the study and appeared regularly in the media. After listening back over those interviews and call recordings with the issue of gender differences in mind, I was able to detect certain differences in the way that male and female OAPs expressed their emotions about the measure and argued for its reinstatement. However, this observation is rather intuitive at this stage as the

\(^{38}\) According to the Irish Central Statistics Office Census, 2006 (closest to the protests) the population of the aged over 65 was composed of 260,831 female and 207,095 male

\(^{39}\) For those positivistically inclined; Female callers (both the OAPs and on behalf of OAPs) n=47 and Male callers (both by the OAPs and on behalf of OAPs) n=38
limitations of time and space necessitated the prioritisation of further analysis of themes of proximal relevance to the research problem at hand, which, in this case, meant leaving the issue of gender aside. Obviously, the way to remedy this deficit in the context of the work done here would be to conduct an in-depth IPA analysis focused on the issue of gender in the protests from the perspective of OAP protesters with at least three female and three male participants (between six and eight in-depth interviews appear to be optimal amount according to IPA authors) that would allow for deeper idiographic comparisons.

Methodologically, there is a number of drawbacks most of which can be traced to my, somewhat unfaithful, implementation of the IPA’s methodological marching order in the context of the study.

First of those is related to diffused scope in the selection of participants. While the IPA’s advocates the use of ‘homogenous’ sample of participants who share the experience of the phenomenon under study. My own sample, driven by the broad exploratory nature of the project, consisted of participants representing several social groups involved in the conflict (OAPs, OAP NGO Representatives, Backbench TDs and a Cabinet Minister at the time who wished to remain anonymous and unquoted) and each of those generated a fascinating idiographic account which, given the limitations of space and focus of the thesis, got diminished or eschewed in favour of wider sociological interpretation and construction of ideal types. While this served the purpose of the thesis well, a more complete investigation of the case could also benefit from in-depth IPA examinations of the event limited exclusively to the perspectives of the respective groups and with a larger sample for each group. However, given the time-consuming nature of IPA analysis, sample size already nearing the upper recommended limit, and a large number of other data, such an endeavour could not have been accomplished here.

Second is related to the process of analysis of the data other than participant interviews where I have applied the inductive process of IPA to generate themes as best as I could, given the qualitative difference between various sources of data. While I have found the process useful (and very much akin to Thematic analysis). I am also aware that it was rather superficial and there are better methods out there that deal specifically with the analysis of individual types of material in much more depth, Fealy’s et al. (2012) application of Critical Discourse Analysis to newspaper articles is a case in example.
In particular, I wish I knew more about the analysis of TV Journalism in terms of its ‘communicative frames’ and ‘communicative architecture’ (Cottle and Rai 2006) before I completed the archival research, I suspect it would have strengthened the thesis’s claim to triangulation. As would, no doubt, the integration of other various, highly specialized, methodological approaches, most of which I have probably not even heard about yet. And I think it’s an excellent idea. But, such an undertaking would be beyond the capabilities of a single researcher in the context of a four-year PhD.

Moving on to the epistemic limitations. The thesis aspired to become one of the first empirical studies that used Haugaard’s theoretical framework in its entirety and devoted a significant space (and effort) to its exposition in order to make it applicable in the context of the case. But, this conceptual choice came with a trade-off resulting in the necessity (again dictated by the limitations of space) to forego the discussion of other contemporary theoretical perspectives in the field of power literature, which is most notable by the absence of a standalone state-of-the-art discussion of the theoretical field (which would, given its extent, led to a thesis twice as big in terms of word-count) in favour of a detailed genealogy of Haugaard’s framework, in the hope that I would be able to demonstrate my own knowledge of the field throughout.

Second, and from my standpoint more serious, the epistemic trade-off was the conscious choice to steer away from the social movements scholarship which has traditionally been concerned with political mobilization and social change. Both fields, power and social movements, are deeply intertwined and concerned with similar phenomena, and both can be (I presume fruitfully) applied to the case at hand. However, they are also similarly extensive, and I had to make a choice early in the project and commit my (limited) time to become well versed in one field. As in the case of triangulation across different sources of data, the thesis’ findings would be strengthened by the joint theoretical interrogation from the standpoint of one or more of the many streams of social movements literature alongside Haugaardian analysis, but such engagement would have strong potential to result in superficial treatment of both theoretical approaches in the time available. That being said, the theoretical imbrication between Haugaard’s model of power and its expression in social

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60 Although I would like to claim for this thesis to be the first empirical Haugaardian power analysis, I cannot as the term has been already used by Harris (2012) in the investigation of the gender-age relations of power among the Acholi in northern Uganda.
movements literature appears as an interesting avenue for future inquiry that I intend to pursue further.

Bracketing this epistemic Batrachomyomachia, the theoretical framework developed here could be animated better. I have attempted to present the different aspects of the theory and the relationships between them, and to draw them out in the context of the empirical case, as clearly as I could. But, even though I have revised these substantially (and repeatedly) over the course of the project, as always, there are better ways to say things, and better ways to structure the analysis.

And finally, as was argued in chapter 3, the findings of this thesis are not generalisable. This is a function of the (intentional) interpretative - descriptive, multi-dimensional theory-laden and explorative nature of the study, which had profound implications for the kind of conclusions that were offered here, and I do not claim that it can ‘prove’ anything about either the case or the universal validity of the theoretical framework. Such statements would be foolhardy even if the project followed rigorous post-positivistic research design with carefully validated measurement tools (however they might have looked like for the research problem at hand), adequate samples and perfect implementation fidelity. Which it did not. All it can offer is just another interpretation developed from a particular theoretical standpoint by a particular researcher over a specific time-frame. Although I think that the project has, to an extent, achieved its aims in a manner that satisfied the criteria of interpretative sociology as outlined throughout, its felicity ultimately rests with the potentially-non-confirm-structuring reader.

Future Research

Where to next? While I have, to some extent, accomplished the objectives set out in the introduction. The broad exploratory research design and the inductive process of empirical analysis have exposed more questions than would be possible to address in a single PhD. I have briefly mentioned that our understanding would be advanced significantly with an in-depth IPA (or indeed any phenomenologically oriented approach) of the event focused exclusively on the individual parties in the conflict. Here, I would especially be interested the interrogation of the events from the perspective of the cabinet ministers at the time, which is one area where I had only
scratched the surface. Individuals’ idiographic accounts also raised several issues that I only had time to touch upon only briefly because they were of marginal relevance to my project (relationships between the individual OAP NGOs within the sector, the loss of meaning and authority related to transition to retirement or gender differences to mention just a few) each of those would deserve an in-depth examination in their own right.

As for my own future work, I intend to use the data, experience and knowledge accumulated over the course of this PhD as a gateway into a range of projects. Some of this is already underway, and I have begun to formulate several chapters for submission as articles in academic journals. But the fun does not stop there, and I intend to develop this research into a wider research agenda connected to my old theoretical interest in the sociology of power and newly found empirical interest in the sociology of Ireland.

Beginning with the empirical sociology of Ireland. I want to develop this project into a comparative study that will examine the OAPs resistance alongside the nation-wide resistance to the introduction of the water charges in 2014 which involved almost 100 local protests nationwide, large mobilization of approximately 130,000 people in Dublin. And a prolonged campaign of nationwide boycott of the government attempts to compel the population to register and pay for water that involved open defiance of government coercion in the form of threat of fines. This event is ripe for comparison because it is similar to the OAP’s protests in that it began bottom-up in response to the government attempt to target a singular, universally available benefit considered of utmost importance by those affected (which was every household in Ireland). But, unlike the protests examined here, the water charge protests have been successful in the achievement of a complete reversal of the government policy and even saw the government return the already collected payments.

Moving on to a more theoretical terrain, I see my future work as nested comfortably within the (re)structuration theory. Word of caution, nested comfortably does not mean resting in content but having enough theoretical knowledge of it to ‘mess with it’ to develop it further, to attempt to test its limits, to push it in directions Haugaard might not have. In short, to paraphrase Foucault’s approach to Nietzsche’s work⁴¹ to

⁴¹ And, at the same time, a number of paraphrases of this intention by others, including Haugaard (Haugaard 2012a)
use it, to deform it, to make it groan and protest’ because that is the only valid tribute (Foucault 1980b, pp. 53–54). Although I have, over last four years, pondered several possible paths for this oeuvre, I will limit the discussion to two directions which stem from this research because I have already begun the journey and can see their contours in the distance.

First is related to methodology. I have mentioned that Haugaard’s work, while theoretically sophisticated lacks the methodological ‘how-to’ pointers of the empirical research and this thesis represents an attempt to if not remedy then at least Band-Aid this lack. For the future, my intention is to explore the possibilities for the development of a set of methodological tools that can be used with this theoretical framework in an ontologically and epistemologically consistent manner. Maybe even integrate basic post-positivistic measures like scales and questionnaires through a mixed method research design.

And second is related to the (re)structuration theory’s concept of self, again moving on from what has already been said, I have argued that insofar as the 4D theory of power centres around agents as reproducers of social structures, It needs an account of the self that can accommodate all four dimensions, and tried to facilitate this by joint reading of the Giddens’ model of the self and Habitus. In addition to the explicitly cognitive and reflexive operations of discursive and practical consciousness, the habitus also has also another, less clear and tangible, element of the self that is beyond the epistemic reach of the individual - the unconscious - referring to those motivational aspects of existence that are: ‘…either wholly repressed from consciousness or appear only in distorted form’ (Giddens 1984, 5).

I proposed to posit the fourth dimension of power as operating on those aspects of the habitus which are, following Giddens, influencing agency in a way that either bypasses the agent’s epistemic horizon (both practical and discursive consciousness) completely or becomes registered by them only in a very distorted manner. To avoid misunderstanding, I am not advocating accepting Giddens’s model of the unconscious tout court, but simply using this operational definition as a departing point for further possible theoretical inquiry into the extra-epistemic factors implicated in power relations. Certainly, revisiting the psychoanalytic sources of Giddens’ model...
tracing their recent development appears as a viable option. The understanding of the human mind has progressed significantly in recent decades. And with it, the understanding of the unconscious. Another possible avenue of inquiry can be found in the sociology of emotions\textsuperscript{43} which seems to be gaining theoretical momentum. And, perhaps, even the human capacity to directly influence the genetic make-up of the individual\textsuperscript{44}, an inevitable outcome of what Foucault calls the epistemic discovery of man, can be described as an instance of power operating on the level of the ontological. However, each of those avenues requires an extended discussion which must take place elsewhere.

\textsuperscript{43} Useful overviews of the relationship between power and emotions in sociology can be found in (Heaney and Flam 2016) or in the recent special issue of Journal of Political power which documents its recent advances (c.f. Baaz et al. 2017)

\textsuperscript{44} C.f. Coors’s work that constitutes one of the steps in this direction (Coors 2003)
APPENDIX A – participant information sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Title of Research Study

Resistance and mobilization of collective political power: the case of Irish Senior Citizens

Principal Researcher

Martin Javornicky, PhD Candidate, School of Political Science and Sociology, National University of Ireland, Galway

Objective of the study:

This study is going to look at the political protests of the Irish Senior citizens against the Irish government’s budget cuts to the universal medical healthcare provision for the aged in 2008.

Invitation

You are invited to take part in this research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. This Participant Information Sheet will tell you about the purpose, potential risks and benefits of this research study. If you agree to take part, you will be asked to sign a Consent Form. If there is anything that you are not clear about, we will be happy to explain it to you. Please take as much time as you need to read it. You should only agree to participate in this research study when you feel that you understand what is being asked of you, and you have had enough time to think about your decision.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

Purpose of the Study

This study is looking at the protests against government cuts to universal medical health care for the Irish elderly, organized by the senior citizens’ organizations in 2008. In particular, it is going to look at political power of the elderly and social conditions that brought the protests about. You have been selected because you were personally involved in the protests. Taking part in this study will involve an interview that will examine the protests from your perspective and your views of the events will help us to better understand the nature of Senior citizens’ political action.

Taking Part

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part
you will be asked to sign a consent form and given this information sheet to keep. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect your rights in any way.

Participation in this study will involve a recorded interview that will last between 1 (one) and 2 (two) hours, with the option to take a break, or several breaks, at any time. You can also choose to make several, shorter, interviews if it suits you better. During the interviews, you will be asked questions about your past political participation, participation in the protests and your personal views about the protests. Your account will help us to better understand the nature of the political action of the Irish Senior citizens as well as clarify the social context of the protest. Your interview will be analysed and the results of the research will be made available through publication in 2018.

Participation in this study involves no foreseeable health risks. However, you might find the recollection of your memories upsetting. We are prepared to stop the interview at any point if this happens to you. While a considerable effort was taken to design the study safely, some particular issues could be overlooked by the investigator. If you have any concerns that are not addressed in this information sheet, please feel free to contact the researcher (contact details below).

Confidentiality
The information collected in this research study will be stored in a way that protects your identity. Any information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will not be shared with anyone else in a way that could potentially reveal your identity. Unless you want us to. Before the interview, you will be given an option to choose a nickname. The recordings and their transcriptions will be stored in a locked cabinet under this nickname only, and the list linking the nickname to your real identity will be stored apart. The only person having access to these data will be with the principal researcher (Martin Javornicky) and his supervisor (Prof. Mark Haugaard). We will store the original recordings securely for 5 years, after which they will be destroyed. Results from the study will be reported in a way that will not disclose any information that could identify you, unless you would like to be recognized. In the unlikely situation that your information would need to be disclosed to a third party, a written consent will be sought from you beforehand.

Even if you agree to participate, you are free to change your mind and withdraw from the study without providing a reason at any moment. If you have any more questions or concerns about any of the aspects of this study, either before or after taking part please contact the researcher (Martin Javornicky; tel: 0857720437; email: m.javornicky2@nuigalway.ie). Or alternately, if you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent and in confidence, you may contact 'the Chairperson of the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice President for Research, NUI Galway, eithne.oconnell@nuigalway.ie.

Thank You again, Your participation will be greatly valued.

Martin Javornicky.
APPENDIX B – Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project: Resistance and Mobilization of Collective Political Power: The case of Irish Senior Citizens

Principal Researcher: Martin Javornicky, PhD Candidate, School of Political Science and Sociology, National University of Ireland, Galway.

Participant Identifier:

Please tick the box

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated 10/06/2016 for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I am satisfied that I understand the information provided and have had enough time to consider the information.

3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.

4. I freely and voluntarily agree to take part in the above study.

5. I have received a copy of this consent form and information sheet dated 10/06/2016

Participant

__________________________

Date

__________________________

Signature

__________________________

Researcher

__________________________

Date

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Signature
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