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The first step to meeting the Paris Agreement?

- An analysis of Ireland's fossil fuel divestment

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the policy process that resulted in Ireland becoming the first country in the world to divest its public funds from fossil fuels. Against a background of being a climate laggard, the Irish case presents an interesting outcome of introducing a novel measure to address climate change. By drawing on an extended version of the Multiple Streams framework encompassing both the stages of agenda-setting and decision-making the study traces the process to gain insights into the case. The results show that multiple factors contributed to making fossil fuel divestment emerge and become legislation in Ireland. Key to enabling the outcome has been the presence of a policy entrepreneur who helped to couple separate streams together and a policy window in terms of change in the political realm which enabled focus on the issue of fossil fuel divestment. Furthermore, a political entrepreneur was found to advance the issue from within the political system.

Keywords: Fossil fuel divestment, Ireland, Trócaire, MSF, Policy entrepreneur.

Words: 9242

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Abbreviations

Dáil	The lower house of the Irish Parliament
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EU	European Union
FF	Fianna Fáil
FG	Fine Gael
ISIF	Ireland Strategic Investment Fund
MSF	Multiple Streams Framework
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises

1 Introduction

Transnational climate change governance (TCCG) reflects a variety of actors dealing with climate change through different efforts. This form of climate governance has, especially since the Paris Agreement in 2015, become recognized within the multilateral climate change regime. Yet TCCG provides ways to contest the frameworks of the multilateral climate regime by taking climate action through actions often characterized by novel techniques as a response to climate change. One such approach is the fossil fuel divestment movement which works to delegitimize fossil fuel companies by strategically focusing on investor power.¹ The aim of the movement is to get investors to divest their holdings in fossil fuel assets. As a key figure in the movement, Bill McKibben, has argued, fossil fuel reserves must be kept in the ground in order for global warming to not reach catastrophic levels. Thus, the fossil fuel industry is a clear target of the movement, not necessarily in terms of economic damage, but in restricting its social license to operate through reputational damage. Describing the movement in their 2015 article, Julie Ayling and Neil Gunningham write that it is still unclear how divestment could affect state climate policies.² In 2018 Ireland provided clarity by taking a step towards becoming the first country in the world to divest its public funds from fossil fuels. The lower house of the Irish Parliament passed the Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill (the Divestment Bill) which mandates that investments through the national investment fund, Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF), must be divested from fossil fuel companies.³ By the end of 2018, it had been enacted into law by the Irish president and in the beginning of 2019 ISIF had divested from 38 fossil fuel companies.⁴ The Irish case illustrates that the divestment movement has managed to exercise

¹ H. Bulkeley, et al., 'Transnational Governance: Charting New Directions Post-Paris', in A. Jordan et al. (eds.), *Governing Climate Change: Polycentricity in Action?*, Cambridge University Press, 2018, 63-64, 73-74.

² J. Ayling and N. Gunningham, 'Non-state governance and climate policy: the fossil fuel divestment movement', *Climate Policy*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2017, 132-136 (accessed June 4th 2019)

³ D. Carrington, 'Ireland becomes world's first country to divest from fossil fuels', *The Guardian*, 12 July 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/jul/12/ireland-becomes-worlds-first-country-to-divest-from-fossil-fuels>, (accessed June 4th 2019)

⁴ C. Taylor, 'Republic withdraws public money from fossil fuel investments', *The Irish Times*, 4 January 2019, <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/energy-and-resources/republic-withdraws-public-money-from-fossil-fuel-investments-1.3747740>, (accessed June 4th 2019)

influence over state climate policy, but how did fossil fuel divestment catch on and become legislation in a country that has not exactly been a climate champion?

1.1 Problem formulation, aim and research question

The passing of the Divestment Bill in the Irish Parliament contrasts with a picture painted by recent rankings of Ireland as among the worst performers on climate action. In June 2018 a report by Climate Action Network Europe ranked Ireland as the second worst EU member state in fighting climate change referring to their stiff opposition to climate action.⁵ The Climate Change Performance Index also ranked Ireland's performance as very low due to the lack of measures to get on a pathway of below 2°C.⁶ Against this background, it is surprising that Ireland was the first country to adopt fossil fuel divestment as part of their climate policy. The aim with this thesis is to study how this interesting outcome came about. The initial motivation for this study concerned the adoption of the Divestment Bill. However, coming in contact with John W. Kingdon's work has guided attention to the equally important aspect of asking why this became an issue for Ireland in the first place. This enables a view of the outcome as consisting of two aspects, first, the emergence of the issue and secondly, making it legislation. The purpose of this study is therefore to trace the processes that lead the Irish Parliament to engage with the issue of fossil fuel divestment and to subsequently adopt the Divestment Bill. By focusing on these two aspects this study aims to clarify how fossil fuel divestment became part of Irish climate policy.

The following research question is applied to achieve the aim of the study:

“Which factors can explain the Irish Parliament's decision to make fossil fuel divestment part of its climate policy?”

⁵ Climate Action Network Europe, 'Off target: Ranking of EU countries' ambition and progress in fighting climate change', *CAN Europe*, 2018, <http://www.caneurope.org/docman/climate-energy-targets/3357-off-target-ranking-of-eu-countries-ambition-and-progress-in-fighting-climate-change/file>, (accessed June 5th 2019)

⁶ J. Burck et al., 'Results 2019', *Climate Change Performance Index*, 2018, 19, https://germanwatch.org/sites/germanwatch.org/files/CCPI2019_Results.pdf, (accessed June 5th 2019)

1.2 The Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016

In November 2016, independent member of the Irish Parliament, Thomas Pringle introduced the Divestment Bill to the lower house of the Parliament, Dáil. The purpose of the Bill was to amend the National Treasury Management Agency (Amendment) Act 2014 so that the ISIF could be divested of fossil fuel assets. The Bill set a five year timeline to do so, starting from the commencement of the Act, to hasten the decarbonisation needed to align with Ireland's climate change commitments. Specifically, the Bill targets financial flows under the Paris Agreement.⁷ Decarbonisation refers to the removal of reliance on fossil fuels as a way to combat climate change.⁸

1.3 Literature review

In their study of actors' participation in transnational climate governance (TCG), Roger et al. write that the effect transnational activities may have on the development of public policies has received limited attention. While their study is more concerned with how domestic factors affect sub- and non-state actors' participation in TCG, they also consider how TCG and formal policy interact. By analysing articles from other scholars, they find that often TCG initiatives have a complementary role but the increasing TCG connections between countries might well come to affect national policies.⁹ Jessica Green has explored countries' participation in transnational governance through the interaction of public and private authority in the context of carbon markets. Her analysis shows that despite that such interactions do occur, private rules have a limited effect on national policy because they are most often recognized in voluntary programs instead of domestic regulation. NGOs are found to be the most important actors in driving interaction between public and private spheres with countries that recognize private rules found

⁷ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: First Stage, Dáil Deb 30 November 2016; Houses of the Oireachtas, [website], <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/members/member/Thomas-Pringle.D.2011-03-09/> (accessed June 6th 2019)

⁸ S. Bernstein and M. Hoffman, 'Decarbonisation: The politics of Transformation', in *Governing Climate Change: Polycentricity in Action?*, Cambridge University Press, 2018, 248.

⁹ C. Roger, T. Hale, and L. Andonova, 'The Comparative Politics of Transnational Climate Governance', *International Interactions*, vol. 43, no.1, 2017, 12, 17-19.

to have a much larger NGO presence than countries that do not.¹⁰ Erick Lachapelle and Matthew Paterson have studied what drives national climate change policy making. They find variation in the choice of policy instruments across countries and discover that parliamentary systems are more likely to be engaged with climate policies compared to presidential systems. This was especially so in the case of regulations and carbon pricing.¹¹

Focusing on Irish climate policy, Wagner and Ylä-Anttila conducted research regarding the process leading to the Irish climate law, The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015. Using advocacy coalition framework (ACF), they study how advocacy coalitions affected the policy process regarding the climate law.¹² Their findings show that actors who wished for the inclusion of emissions reduction targets and independence of the climate change advisory council formed an advocacy coalition. However, the actors who got their way were the government parties and organisations in agricultural section who did not form any advocacy coalitions. Thus the law lacks emissions reduction targets and the makeup of the advisory council is not wholly independent either, leading the authors to conclude that ACF does not explain this case.¹³

¹⁰ J. F. Green, 'Blurred Lines: Public-Private Interactions in Carbon Regulations', *International Interactions*, vol 43, no.1, 2017, 104-105, 124-125.

¹¹ E. Lachapelle and M. Paterson, 'Drivers of national climate policy', *Climate Policy*, vol. 13, no. 5, 2013, 548, 561, 564.

¹² P. Wagner and T. Ylä-Anttila, 'Who got their way? Advocacy coalitions and the Irish climate change law', *Environmental Politics*, vol. 27, no. 5, 2018, 873, 877.

¹³ *Ibid*, 885-887.

2 Theory

The theoretical framework in this study consists of an extended version of the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF). The MSF has its origins in the work of John W. Kingdon who developed it for the purpose of studying agenda setting in the federal government of the United States. He solely focuses on pre decision processes rather than on decision making.¹⁴ Herweg, Huß and Zohlnhöfer add an additional policy stage to extend the framework to include decision-making.¹⁵ This extended version allows for studying both the emergence of the issue and the decision to adopt the Divestment Bill within the framework. The overview starts with the original MSF and after that covers the extended part of MSF.

2.1 The Multiple Streams Framework

MSF takes as its starting point the *garbage can model of organizational choice* by Michael Cohen, James March and Johan Olsen, in which they try to understand how organizations function by focusing on separate streams. Starting from this rationale, Kingdon then amended the model to study how subjects gain attention in the federal government and identified three processes that affect agenda setting calling these *problems, policy and political streams*. MSF assumes that the streams are mostly independent from each other, however agenda change results from when the streams are brought together.¹⁶ This can happen when a *policy window* opens and when a *policy entrepreneur* manages to couple the streams together. Kingdon describes a decision agenda which includes only subjects that are up for an authoritative decision such as legislative enactment. The likelihood of getting onto the decision agenda is increased if all three

¹⁴ John W. Kingdon. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. 2nd edn. Longman, 2003, 4, 196.

¹⁵ N. Herweg and C. Huß and R. Zohlnhöfer, 'Straightening the three streams: Theorising extensions of the multiple streams framework', *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 54, 2015, 444-446. Available from Wiley Online Library, (accessed June 10th 2019)

¹⁶ Kingdon. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 84-88.

streams are coupled together.¹⁷ The following sections outline the purpose of the framework's elements.

2.1.1 Problem stream

The problem stream consists of problems that come to the attention of governmental officials through such things as indicators, feedback and focusing events. Something is seen as a problem if there is a perceived need for governmental action on it.¹⁸ Indicators such as consumer prices can reveal problems and are used by decision makers to evaluate the size of the problem and changes in it. Changes in an indicator can signal a problem.¹⁹ Focusing events such as a crisis or a powerful symbol can act to reinforce the perception of an existing problem. Feedback about existing programs is yet another way that problems can gain attention. The problems could be indicated by a project not meeting its goals or it becoming too costly.²⁰ Problem recognition is an important factor in affecting agendas. For example, a subject or solution that is linked to an important problem has better chances to get on the agenda. Efforts to influence how a problem is seen are important because they favor certain approaches.²¹ Åsa Knaggård has further developed the problem stream in MSF by introducing the concept of a problem broker. She explains that often the policy entrepreneur is seen as taking on the role of defining problems when coupling it to policy alternatives, leaving the problem stream without much agency. A problem broker frames conditions as public problems with the aim of getting policy makers to do something about it.²² This study attempts to see if a problem broker can be found in the problem stream.

2.1.2 Policy stream

The policy stream is where policy alternatives emerge in policy communities. Policy communities mainly consist of policy experts who advocate policy ideas.²³ Kingdon calls these

¹⁷ Ibid, 20, 202.

¹⁸ Kingdon. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 19, 110.

¹⁹ Ibid, 90-91.

²⁰ Ibid, 98, 100, 102.

²¹ Ibid, 115, 198.

²² Å. Knaggård, 'The Multiple Streams Framework and the problem broker', *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 54, no. 3, 2015, 451-453. Available from Wiley Online Library, (accessed June 28th 2019)

²³ N., Herweg, N., Zahariadis and R., Zohlnhöfer, 'The Multiple Streams Framework: Foundations, Refinements, and Empirical Applications', in C.M. Weible and P.A. Sabatier (eds.), *Theories of the Policy Process*, 4th edn., Boulder, CO, Westview Press, 2018, 22-23.

experts *policy entrepreneurs* who invest their resources hoping to gain something from it. This could be policies in line with their values or expanding their agency.²⁴ These entrepreneurs engage in softening up the policy community and the general public through introduction and education about issues, new ideas and try to get their ideas accepted. The goal of such softening up is to get people to embrace and discuss an idea so that once an opportunity emerges to push it, the way has already been paved. Proposals that meet the criteria for survival have a higher chance of becoming viable alternatives. This criteria includes technical feasibility, value acceptability, public acquiescence and acceptable cost. Technical feasibility refers to that a proposal must be worked out and it can be realistically implemented. Value acceptability entails that a proposal fits with the values of the policy community.²⁵ Public acquiescence means that a proposal must find acceptance with the general public. The last criteria entails that a proposal must be financially acceptable in terms of a tolerable cost.²⁶ Kingdon emphasizes the importance of an available alternative as it markedly increases a subject's chance of entering the decision agenda.²⁷

2.1.3 Political stream

Political events such as a national mood, turnover of key personnel or a new administration affect agendas and make it possible for certain subjects to rise onto the agenda. A national mood entails that many people in a country have a similar outlook on things and it tends to shift from time to time. Kingdon gives the example of deregulation, referring to a general climate which was hostile to government regulation. Sensing the mood, policymakers work to promote subjects which conform to the mood while constraining subjects that would run against the mood.²⁸ Turnover of key personnel refers to changes such as elections, bringing in a new administration or legislature which make certain subjects possible because new people have different priorities. Kingdon also theorized that organized interests might affect agenda, to both promote and block

²⁴ Kingdon. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 122-123.

²⁵ Kingdon. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 128, 131-132.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 138.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 144.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 145-147.

certain subjects. However, if there seems to be a consensus among the organized interests of doing something, then there is incentive to go in that direction.²⁹

2.1.4 Policy window and agenda coupling

A policy window is an opportunity which enables policy advocates to push their proposals. It is a specific point in time that makes coupling of the three streams more likely and the window can open in either the political or the problem stream. The window opens in the political stream if there is a change in the composition of government or people in legislature change bringing in new actors who are receptive to new ideas. It could also be opened by a remarkable change in the national mood. If the window opens in the problem stream it is because an indicator has quickly worsened or because a focusing event has taken place.³⁰ Linking all three streams into one package increases the chance for a decision on the subject. Hence, the window is what enables agenda coupling and agenda coupling is the reason for agenda change.³¹

The policy entrepreneur, an advocate of policy ideas who was introduced in the policy stream, waits for a window to open and once it opens couples the separate streams together. So in addition to pushing their proposal they wait for developments in either the political or problem stream. After they have linked their proposal to either politics or problems they then try to couple all three streams. Kingdon notes that the policy entrepreneur is the key figure because without it coupling may not take place and the window is only open for a short time hence requiring quick action. The success of policy entrepreneurs comes down to qualities such as expertise, political connections and persistence in the sense of investing a lot of time and effort on one's idea.³² Herweg, Huß and Zohlnhöfer introduce the idea of a political entrepreneur, a key policy maker who actively supports the idea. Due to the formal leadership position, a political entrepreneur can work to push the idea from inside the governmental system and try to get it adopted. Thus, the policy entrepreneur works to convince the political entrepreneur of the proposal.³³

²⁹ Ibid, 150, 153-154.

³⁰ Herweg, Zahariadis and Zohlnhöfer, 'The Multiple Streams Framework: Foundations, Refinements, and Empirical Applications', 26.

³¹ Kingdon. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 179, 202.

³² Kingdon. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 170, 180-182.

³³ Herweg, Zahariadis and Zohlnhöfer, 'The Multiple Streams Framework: Foundations, Refinements, and Empirical Applications', 26.

2.2 Decision making in the MSF

Herweg, Huß and Zohlnhöfer extend the framework by considering two coupling processes, one for agenda-setting which has been discussed above, and one for decision making. Similar to the policy window which enables agenda coupling, there must also be a decision window that enables decision coupling. This *decision window* opens when the policy alternative from the policy stream has made it onto the decision agenda. As soon as the policy alternative is on the decision agenda, the actors in the political stream try to add their influence by bargaining the details of it. The important part now becomes to get the majority support needed to pass the policy and like-minded individuals work together to get the policy adopted. However, individuals with an elected leadership position, that is political entrepreneurs, are expected to do the *decision coupling*. The decision coupling can consist of package deals, concessions or manipulation to increase the likelihood of policy adoption. Package deals would entail including other policy proposals while concessions would entail that the original proposal is amended so all parties can agree on it.³⁴ Manipulation could entail that political entrepreneurs stress the importance of the problem from the problem stream. Managing to connect the problem with the reelection of policymakers adds pressure. Successful decision coupling leads to the adoption of a bill.³⁵

³⁴ Herweg and Huß and Zohlnhöfer, 'Straightening the three streams: Theorising extensions of the multiple streams framework', 444-446.

³⁵ Herweg, Zahariadis and Zohlnhöfer, 'The Multiple Streams Framework: Foundations, Refinements, and Empirical Applications', 31-33.

3 Method and material

3.1 A process-tracing case study

This study uses process-tracing to guide the analysis. In general, process-tracing aims to investigate theoretical causal mechanisms that link a cause with an effect through making within-case inferences in a single case study. A causal mechanism can be understood as a system comprised of parts that together produce an effect. One part cannot by itself produce the outcome rather each part is a necessary part of the whole mechanism.³⁶ As the focus of the study is on one case and the aim is to trace the process leading to fossil fuel divestment becoming Irish climate policy, process-tracing method suits the purpose.

Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen distinguish between three kinds of process-tracing. The theory-testing and theory-building variants of process-tracing aim to generalize across cases. The explaining-outcome variant on the other hand has a case-centric ambition as it seeks to explain an interesting outcome by studying if a theory can provide a minimally sufficient explanation. Due to that the focus of the analysis is to explain the outcome in the Irish case, the explaining-outcome design will be used.³⁷

This study employs the deductive path in the explaining-outcome design to test if an existing mechanism can explain the outcome. This can be done by viewing the outcome as a case of some theoretical phenomena and exploring existing theories for potential mechanisms that could provide an explanation. The theory should then be conceptualized as a mechanism.³⁸ Here, the outcome is considered *a case of policy process* and the extended version of MSF, as explained in the theory chapter, is conceptualized to provide both the causes and the mechanisms that could potentially explain the case. Beach argues that many applications of process-tracing black-box the causal process because they do not explicitly theorise the different parts of the

³⁶ Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen. *Process-tracing methods: foundations and guidelines*. The University of Michigan Press, 2013, 4-5, 29-30.

³⁷ Beach and Brun Pedersen, *Process-tracing methods: foundations and guidelines*, 11, 18f.

³⁸ Beach and Brun Pedersen, *Process-tracing methods: foundations and guidelines*, 19, 63.

causal mechanism thus not specifying how and why the mechanism is the link between the cause and the outcome. By making the causal mechanism explicit and explaining how the parts of the mechanism should be observable allows us to understand what it is we are tracing in the empirical analysis.³⁹

This study conceptualizes the theoretical framework into causes and two causal mechanisms, one for agenda change and one for policy change. The first causal mechanism is *agenda coupling* and it consists of the parts of a policy window and a policy entrepreneur who couples the three streams together. The second mechanism is *decision coupling* and it consists of the parts of a decision window and a political entrepreneur who works to bargain the details of the policy so it would get adopted. The causes are defined as *problem, policy and political streams* because they affect both agenda-setting and decision-making.⁴⁰ The first part of the analysis attempts to trace the causes and the causal mechanism of *agenda coupling* to explain agenda change as an outcome. Similarly, the second part attempts to trace the mechanism of *decision coupling* to explain policy change as an outcome.

The aim with this research design is to confirm the sufficiency of an explanation by testing if the causal mechanisms are present in the case and can account for the important aspects of the outcome. This entails developing predictions of each part of the mechanism regarding what we should be able to observe in the empirical case if it is present.⁴¹ In order for the mechanisms to be present, the causes must also be present because the mechanisms cannot exist without them. The theory derived predictions are as following:

Problem stream

The purpose of the Bill to hasten decarbonisation outlines the problematic relationship between fossil fuels and climate change. The expectation for the problem stream is therefore to find worsening indicators, focusing events or feedback on existing projects related to climate change.

³⁹ D. Beach. 'It's all about mechanisms – what process-tracing case studies should be tracing', *New Political Economy*, vol. 21, no. 5, 2016, 466-468.

⁴⁰ Herweg, Huß and Zohlhöfer, 'Straightening the three streams: Theorising extensions of the multiple streams framework', 444.

⁴¹ Beach and Brun Pedersen, *Process-tracing methods: foundations and guidelines*, 91f, 95.

Policy stream

The expectation in the policy stream is to find a policy alternative that functioned as the foundation for the Divestment Bill. This proposal should exhibit the criteria of survival as explained in the theory. We should also be able to observe of some actor who performs the role of policy entrepreneur with evidence of them engaging in the softening up process.

Political stream

In the political stream we should be able to find indications of many Irish people thinking in similar ways about climate change and/or changes such as a new government or legislature.

Policy window

We should be able to find a specific point in time when either a development in the political or problem stream provided an opportunity to focus on the issue of fossil fuel divestment.

Agenda coupling

The expectation is to find an actor who performs the role of the policy entrepreneur and evidence of them coupling the three streams together.

Decision window

The expectation is that there was a policy alternative in the policy stream and it was the one on the Irish Parliament's agenda.

Decision coupling

The expectation is to find an actor who performs the role of a political entrepreneur working to get the Divestment Bill adopted.

The discussion will then evaluate if the extended MSF can sufficiently explain the case. Beach and Brun Pedersen note that sufficiency does not rule out alternative explanations, rather it only proves that mechanism X sufficiently explains the outcome.⁴²

3.2 Clarification of terms and restrictions

The Dáil is the lower house of the Irish Parliament and consists of elected representatives. Members of the Dáil are referred to as Deputies.⁴³ The thesis refers to the Dáil and parliament interchangeably. The discussions in Seanad Éireann, the upper house of the Irish Parliament⁴⁴, are excluded from this thesis because they are not considered to provide any further insights into the case.

3.3 Material

The departure point for collecting material has been the debates held in the Irish Parliament regarding the Divestment Bill. This has resulted in a better understanding about the parties involved in the process and has guided where to look for further material. The empirical materials consist primarily of parliamentary debates in the Dáil and parliament committees. Other primary sources include reports, policy briefs, newspaper articles and news on organizations' website. Secondary sources include articles, books and reports in the context of climate and politics.

⁴² Beach and Brun Pedersen, *Process-tracing methods: foundations and guidelines*, 19, 93.

⁴³ Houses of the Oireachtas, *Dáil Éireann* [website], <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/visit-and-learn/how-parliament-works/dail-eireann/> (accessed August 14th 2019)

⁴⁴ Houses of the Oireachtas, *Seanad Éireann* [website], <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/visit-and-learn/how-parliament-works/seanad-eireann/> (accessed August 14th 2019)

4 Results and Analysis

This part of the paper presents the empirical analysis and aims to find out if the extended MSF can provide a sufficient explanation of the adoption of the Divestment Bill in Ireland. The analysis consists of two parts with the first part focusing on the decision agenda and the second part on the decision-making.

4.1 Mapping how divestment made it onto the decision-agenda

4.1.1 The policy stream

In his introduction of the Divestment Bill, Deputy Thomas Pringle mentions Trócaire for its work on the Bill.⁴⁵ Looking into Trócaire reveals that it is a development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland and works with matters of poverty and climate change. In their paper titled *The Burning Question*, published in April 2016, they outline the challenges Ireland faces in living up to the Paris Agreement goal of keeping global warming well below 2°C due to its lack of climate action. Trócaire connects the Paris Agreement and poverty fueled by climate change to fossil fuels. Fossil fuels are identified as a leading cause of climate change and attention is targeted on to that 80 percent of fossil fuel reserves must stay in the ground to stay within the Paris Agreement temperature goal. Attention is also drawn to finance flows because the Paris Agreement places an obligation to ensure that they align with low greenhouse gas emissions.⁴⁶

The core message of the paper concerns Ireland's relationship with fossil fuels, specifically its investments in them. They explain that the Irish State's investment vehicle, ISIF,

⁴⁵ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: First Stage, Dáil Deb 30 November 2016.

⁴⁶ Trócaire, "The Burning Question: Are we investing in climate injustice or in a fair future for all?", Ireland, April 2016, 7, 11, 13, 15, back cover, [web document], <https://www.trocaire.org/sites/default/files/resources/policy/burning-question-climate-policy-brief.pdf> (accessed June 14th 2019)

is invested in controversial fossil fuel companies which do not aim to keep their fossil fuel reserves in the ground. Recognizing that ISIF is financed by taxpayers and should be furthering public interest, they combine these facts with the Paris Agreement obligation regarding finance flows to make their case for fossil fuel divestment. By presenting the problematic relationship between the obligation of the Government to reduce emissions and at the same time having investments in the fossil fuel industry, the paper calls on the Government to do its part. The foremost recommendation to the Government is to make state investments congruent with international climate obligations by divesting ISIF from fossil fuels as well as adopting a 100 percent renewable energy investment policy and banning any future investments in fossil fuels.⁴⁷ This way they paint an alternative to the current policy.

The Divestment Bill reflects the points made by Trócaire as presented above. For example, Pringle refers to the obligation of financial flows under the Paris Agreement, climate change largely stemming from fossil fuels, and that taxpayers money is currently going to fossil fuel companies through ISIF. Much like Trócaire, he also speaks of the need for Ireland to fulfill its commitment to the Paris Agreement.⁴⁸ Due to these similarities it can be assumed that Trócaire's recommendations laid the foundation for the Divestment Bill and in terms of MSF there would then have been a policy alternative. However, usually alternatives on the decision agenda meet the criteria of survival. In this case the policy alternative met value acceptability in the policy community because Trócaire was not alone in its advocacy of fossil fuel divestment. In a news brief, Trócaire mentions that other civil society groups and Global Legal Action Network, by providing legal help, also worked for the Divestment Bill.⁴⁹ Other examples refer to the coalition Stop Climate Chaos, which is mentioned several times by Deputies for its advocacy campaign on divestment.⁵⁰ Moreover, there seems to have been public acquiescence for the policy alternative as expressed by Pringle: 'I thank [...] in particular, all those members of the public who have campaigned on the issue in recent days and weeks.'⁵¹ Similarly, Finola Finnan

⁴⁷ Trócaire, "The Burning Question: Are we investing in climate injustice or in a fair future for all?", 4, 6, 20-22.

⁴⁸ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: First Stage, Dáil Deb 30 November 2016.

⁴⁹ J. Lamb, 'Ireland leads the way in landmark Divestment Bill', 2018 [website]

<https://www.trocaire.org/news/ireland-leads-way-landmark-divestment-bill> (accessed June 11th 2019)

⁵⁰ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: Report and Final Stages, Dáil Deb 12 July 2018.

⁵¹ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: Second Stage [Private Members], Dáil Deb 19 January 2017.

from Trócaire presenting in front of the relevant Parliament committee said ‘I believe the committee recognises the significant level of public interest in the Bill’.⁵² In terms of acceptable cost of the alternative, the financial case for divestment had been made through a study by Corporate Knights at the request of Trócaire. The study showed that ISIF would have saved 22 million euros in 2015 if it had divested from fossil fuel assets and re-invested them in clean energy. The same study also discusses the impact of energy transitions on investments and outline that trends indicate that fossil fuels no longer have a long-term growth market. On the other hand, clean energy is seen to be growing.⁵³ Having requested this study to be done can be seen as strengthening the recommendation to adopt a 100 percent renewable energy investment policy. Thus, the policy alternative brought forward by Trócaire seems worked out and possible to implement in the sense of technical feasibility.

In conjunction with *The Burning Question* paper, Trócaire also started a campaign in April 2016 which was directed both towards the public and political leaders. The campaign aimed at making fossil fuel divestment a political issue by asking Irish people to engage with policy makers about ending Irish investments in fossil fuels. They called attention to Ireland’s investments in fossil fuels by checking if people were aware that their money was invested in driving climate change.⁵⁴ By publishing their paper with recommendations to the Government regarding Ireland’s relationship with fossil fuels, Trócaire took on the role of a policy entrepreneur and advocated for their preferred policy alternative. The paper provides indications for why they did this, it emphasizes their values of equity when it states that:

The prospect that governments in rich countries such as Ireland, with the greatest responsibility and capacity to act on climate change, may fail to do what is both necessary and possible to avoid further suffering of the poorest people is something Trócaire cannot accept.⁵⁵

⁵² Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach, Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: Discussion 27 Jun 2017.

⁵³ Trócaire, “Ireland Strategic Investment Fund, Fossil Fuels and Climate Change”, August 2016, 2, 5, 7-8, [web document] <https://www.trocaire.org/sites/default/files/resources/policy/isif-fossil-fuels-report.pdf> (accessed June 12th 2019)

⁵⁴ L. Evers, ‘Trócaire calls on Ireland to withdraw public money from the fossil fuel industry’, 2016 [website] <https://www.trocaire.org/news/burning-question> (accessed June 12th 2019)

⁵⁵ Trócaire, “The Burning Question: Are we investing in climate injustice or in a fair future for all?”, 7.

Actions such as working together with other organizations, commissioning research on ISIF and starting a campaign to gather public support for fossil fuel divestment, made the policy alternative meet the criteria of survival. By launching the campaign and directly involving the Irish people in it, Trócaire was both educating and introducing new ideas to the public as well as to the policymakers. These activities illustrate resources such as time, effort and money invested in the process of pushing for this policy alternative and constitute the softening up process that is described as vital preliminary work in the MSF.⁵⁶

4.1.2 The problem stream

The Paris Agreement features heavily in the parliamentary debates and can therefore be assumed to have been an important focusing event on the existing problem of climate change. In discussing the Divestment Bill, the Deputies often refer to the Paris Agreement in the context of Ireland's need to deliver on its commitments and the general importance of realizing the goals in the agreement. These statements are accompanied by a wider consideration of the harms and threats caused by climate change.⁵⁷ The wider discussion on climate change illustrates existing awareness of the problem and in the language of MSF, the Paris Agreement can be seen as a powerful symbol that emphasized an already existing problem. Symbols function as focusing events because of their ability to coherently present a reality that was previously sensed in a more vague manner.⁵⁸ That the Paris Agreement functioned as a symbol for the reality about climate change can be inferred when Deputy Róisín Shortall expresses:

We are now dangerously close to exceeding the 1.5o level, the level climate scientists say will be catastrophic for the global climate. This is an irreversible tipping point acknowledged in the Paris Agreement which was ratified by the Dáil.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Kingdon. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 128.

⁵⁷ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: Second Stage [Private Members], Dáil Deb 19 January 2017.

⁵⁸ Kingdon. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 97-98.

⁵⁹ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: Second Stage [Private Members], Dáil Deb 19 January 2017.

Moreover, climate change had clearly been a serious topic in Ireland for a longer period prior to the Paris Agreement. This is illustrated by the fact that the discussion of a national climate law started around 2007 and efforts to make it happen continued through the years until the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act was enacted in 2015.⁶⁰ Ireland being a party to the Kyoto Protocol, which placed emissions limits on Ireland for the period 2008-2012, is another example of the occupation on climate change prior to the agreement.⁶¹ And yet, the Paris Agreement brought the issue of climate change into focus in quite a major way as it was described as a historic agreement with so many of the world's countries agreeing on climate action.⁶² The momentum it produced on the importance of addressing climate change is reflected in that the Deputies often bring it up when discussing the Divestment Bill.

The Paris Agreement as a focusing event was not alone in surfacing problems as there were also other factors at play. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Ireland wrote in a press release in March 2016 that it was unlikely that Ireland could meet its EU 2020 emission reduction targets for greenhouse gases. While the target is 20 percent below 2005 levels by 2020, the estimate shows that emissions would be reduced by 6-11 percent below 2005 levels.⁶³ This information is then brought up in the parliamentary debate on the Divestment Bill with concern for not meeting these targets and pointing to the relevance of legislation, in this case the Divestment Bill, to underpin obligations.⁶⁴ The information by the EPA can be seen as a form of feedback on Ireland's performance in an ongoing project that had captured the attention of policy makers because it indicated a problem. Another form of feedback is found in the *The Burning Question* paper by Trócaire. The paper is critical of the current national policy on energy because

⁶⁰ Wagner and Ylä-Anttila, 'Who got their way? Advocacy coalitions and the Irish climate change law', 874-876.

⁶¹ Environmental Protection Agency, *The EPA & Climate Change: Responsibilities, challenges and opportunities*, Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland, 2011, 3,7, [web document], <https://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/climatechange/The%20EPA%20and%20Climate%20Change%20-%202011%20Update.pdf> (accessed June 19th 2019)

⁶² F. Harvey, 'Paris climate change agreement: the world's greatest diplomatic success', *The Guardian* [website], 14 December 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/dec/13/paris-climate-deal-cop-diplomacy-developing-united-nations> (accessed June 20th 2019)

⁶³ Environmental Protection Agency, 'Ireland projected to miss its EU greenhouse gas emission reduction targets', [website], 2016, <http://www.epa.ie/newsandevents/news/pressreleases2016/name.59044.en.html> (accessed June 20th 2019)

⁶⁴ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: Second Stage [Private Members], Dáil Deb 19 January 2017.

it does not take into account that 80 percent of fossil fuel reserves must be kept in the ground. Instead continued fossil fuel exploration is part of its strategy. Another point of contention in the paper is the subsidies given to the fossil fuel industry and Trócaire argues that climate change entails that current policies should be reviewed. Both these points are linked to the ability to reach the Paris Agreement goal of keeping global warming below 2°C.⁶⁵ In this way Trócaire brings attention to problems in current policy, much like MSF describes that policy entrepreneurs engage in giving feedback on governmental performance.⁶⁶

News on increasing global warming point to changes in indicators about climate change. The Irish Times reported on their website first in 2014 that World Meteorological Organisation had estimated that 2014 would likely be the hottest year on record. The news article also drew attention to that due to that global sea temperatures had increased, many places in the world experienced floods and droughts.⁶⁷ In 2016 the Irish Times reported on its website that year 2015 broke the record of 2014 for the hottest year.⁶⁸ It is likely that news like this come to the attention of Irish policy makers as they indicate global problems.

The problem stream here consists of the Paris Agreement as a focusing event, feedback by the EPA and Trócaire and changes in global warming as an indicator. If we look to Knaggård's problem broker then the question of who plays this role arises. As mentioned, the Paris Agreement gave coherence to the issue of climate change by outlining the urgency of taking action. This urgency itself stemmed from the findings by the Fifth Assessment Report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which guided the policy formulation ahead of the agreement.⁶⁹ Therefore, IPCC can be seen as a problem broker for the goals in the Paris Agreement. As for Trócaire's focus on fossil fuels, it is possible that they were

⁶⁵ Trócaire, "The Burning Question: Are we investing in climate injustice or in a fair future for all?", 11, 19.

⁶⁶ Kingdon. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 204-205.

⁶⁷ D. Ahlstrom, '2014 likely to go down in history as the hottest year on record', *The Irish Times* [website], December 3 2014,

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/science/2014-likely-to-go-down-in-history-as-the-hottest-year-on-record-1.2024432> (accessed June 26th 2019)

⁶⁸ D. Ahlstrom, '2015 smashes record for hottest year, scientists say', *The Irish Times* [website], January 20 2016, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/science/2015-smashes-record-for-hottest-year-scientists-say-1.2503989> (accessed June 26th 2019)

⁶⁹ UNFCCC, 'Background - Cooperation with the IPCC', *UNFCCC* [website], 2019, <https://unfccc.int/topics/science/workstreams/cooperation-with-the-ipcc/background-cooperation-with-the-ipcc> (accessed June 28th 2019)

influenced by how climate activists defined the problem of climate change at a conference in Ireland in June 2015. Speakers included Mary Robinson and Bill McKibben, both of whom drew attention to the role of fossil fuels in causing climate change. McKibben advocated for divestment as a strategy to go against the fossil fuel industry.⁷⁰ Since the conference was held in June 2015, prior to Trócaire's publication of the *The Burning Question* paper and campaign, it could well be that their understanding of the problem was shaped by these climate activists.

4.1.3 The political stream

The Irish general election of 2016 resulted in a situation where no political party gained majority in the Dáil. The Fine-Gael (FG) party won the most seats, yet was still far from winning a majority. The second most votes went to Fianna Fáil (FF), which declared it would not work together in a coalition with FG but raised the opportunity to help an FG-led minority government by abstention. Such suggestion required that FG would manage to get support from independent members in order to have a majority in the Dáil given the abstention by FF. The independents agreed to support FG which led to the creation of the minority Government.⁷¹ The abstention by FF is realized through a confidence and supply agreement with FG and concerns motions of no confidence in government or ministers and budget votes, however FF is allowed to stay in its opposition capacity in other matters.⁷² This led to what became termed the 'new politics' and refers to the fact that executive no longer controls the Dáil but needs its consent due to not having majority in parliament.⁷³ The new politics seems to have had a profound effect on the issue of fossil fuel divestment as can be inferred from statements made in the debates. Pringle

⁷⁰ Trócaire, 'Major Conference Calls for Immediate Action on Climate Change', June 2015 [website] <https://www.trocaire.org/news/climate-conference-2015> (accessed July 2nd 2019)

⁷¹ P. Leahy, 'The 'new politics' one year on: Different? Yes. Better? No', *The Irish Times*, February 2017, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/the-new-politics-one-year-on-different-yes-better-no-1.2987841> (accessed July 12th 2019)

⁷² Independent.ie Newsdesk, 'Explained: What is the Confidence and Supply deal?', *The Irish Independent*, December 2018, <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/politics/explained-what-is-the-confidence-and-supply-deal-37622081.html> (accessed July 12th)

⁷³ P. Leahy, 'The 'new politics' one year on: Different? Yes. Better? No', 2017.

explicitly states that the minority Government has been a critical factor for the Divestment Bill when he says:

A lot has been said about attacking so-called new politics and the situation that has arisen. However, this Bill would never have passed Second Stage in the previous Dáil because the Government had the numbers to block anything it wanted to.⁷⁴

Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan confirms this notion in the final stage of the legislative process in Dáil when she expresses doubt that the bill would have gone as far with past majority Government.⁷⁵ As Ireland is a parliamentary democracy, the turnover caused by the election had implications not only for the makeup of parliament but also for the formation of government.⁷⁶ Kefford and Weeks suggest that coalitions are not favored in Ireland and forming a minority government with the help of independents becomes a good option.⁷⁷ That is what ended up happening after the election since FF declined a coalition with FG, but the confidence and supply agreement between these two parties did not prevent FF from supporting the Divestment Bill. This was of great importance because the Government opposed the bill and did not want it to proceed. Deputy Eamon Ryan notes that almost everyone else was in favor of the bill except FG Deputies. Given that Government was in the minority due to that FF engaged on this issue, the Government could not block the bill from proceeding.⁷⁸ The election results clearly had an impact on what subjects could emerge on the agenda, the key being that the Government was in a minority.

In addition to the support for fossil fuel divestment in the Dáil, there seems to have been a supportive national mood in Ireland for measures on climate change. The Irish Independent ran a survey on climate change on their website in 2016 for one week in which 3519 people inside Ireland took part in. One of the questions concerned the Government’s role in highlighting and addressing climate change and a majority of the respondents considered that there has been inadequate action from the Government. Analyzing the results from the survey, Paul Melia

⁷⁴ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: Second Stage [Private Members], Dáil Deb 19 January 2017.

⁷⁵ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: Report and Final Stages, Dáil Deb 12 July 2018.

⁷⁶ Wagner and Ylä-Anttila, ‘Who got their way? Advocacy coalitions and the Irish climate change law’, 887.

⁷⁷ G. Kefford and L. Weeks, ‘Minority Party Government and Independent MPs: A Comparative Analysis of Australia and Ireland’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, gsy037, 2018, 5-6.

⁷⁸ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: Second Stage [Private Members], Dáil Deb 19 January 2017.

concludes that clearly Irish people hope for more action from the Government when it comes to tackling climate change.⁷⁹ Since the survey was carried out just prior to the introduction of the bill, it gives an indication of many people thinking in similar ways about climate change. The Eurobarometer survey on climate change carried out in 2015 found a substantial increase in the amount of respondents in Ireland viewing climate change to be one of the most serious problems in the world. When asked about who has responsibility, the most mentioned answer in Ireland was national governments.⁸⁰ Moreover, Pringle refers to public opinion in the form of a petition by Trócaire, where over 10,000 people plead the Government to stop investing in fossil fuels.⁸¹ It is likely that these kinds of results come to the attention of policy makers in Ireland, much like how Kingdon theorizes that they pay attention to the media.⁸² Deputy Clare Daly calls out the Government for not acting according to what the public wants when it decided to vote against the bill. She further commends NGOs, opposition, and members of the public for listening to the general mood in the country by taking this step to address climate change.⁸³ The national mood is also evident when Pringle gives thanks to university students who were active in getting citizens to engage on this issue.⁸⁴ All these instances can be taken to represent a national mood supportive of climate measures. The debates also reveal that organized forces were in alignment on this issue, with 25 organisations coming together and sending the Government a formal submission to act on fossil fuel divestment.⁸⁵

4.1.4 Agenda coupling

⁷⁹ P.Melia, ‘Most people believe climate change is a problem, so why isn't the Government acting?’, *The Irish Independent*, October 2016
<https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/climate-change-and-you/most-people-believe-climate-change-is-a-problem-s-o-why-isnt-the-government-acting-35094495.html> (accessed August 5th 2019)

⁸⁰ European Union, ‘Special Eurobarometer 435 “Climate Change” Report’, *European Union* [web document], 2015, 11, 22, https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/support/docs/report_2015_en.pdf (accessed August 6th 2019)

⁸¹ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: First Stage, Dáil Deb 30 November 2016.

⁸² Kingdon. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 149.

⁸³ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: Second Stage [Private Members], Dáil Deb 19 January 2017.

⁸⁴ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: Report and Final Stages, Dáil Deb 12 July 2018.

⁸⁵ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: First Stage, Dáil Deb 30 November 2016.

A number of things have become clear from the different streams, but it remains here to examine if the causal mechanism of agenda coupling was present to allow fossil fuel divestment to emerge onto the decision agenda. The decision agenda here is defined as the moment when Pringle introduced it on the floor in November 2016 and the issue became subject for legislative decision-making. Looking at the first part of the mechanism, the policy window, it is clear that change in the political stream opened up an opportunity to focus on fossil fuel divestment. The Deputies highlight the sentiment that the bill would not have been engaged on had the Government been able to block it. The election led to a remarkable shift in the power balance of the Dáil and the effects of it in the form of new politics were integral for the issue to emerge. This conclusion is strengthened by that Trócaire in their *The Burning Question* paper, in conjunction with their recommendations, point to the change that the election brought with it for the Dáil. They interpret this change as an opportunity to take drastic action against climate change.⁸⁶ In addition, the political stream found a highly supportive national mood in Ireland for climate action which made a stronger case for fossil fuel divestment. The problem stream indicated that many problems related to climate change were visible in Ireland, pertaining both to global and domestic conditions. These problems were undoubtedly very important and some are actively featured in the debates, such as the Paris Agreement, nonetheless, the language of the Deputies and Trócaire cite the political event of the election as an opening to engage on this question.

The policy stream shows that Trócaire acted as a policy entrepreneur by providing a policy alternative and advocating for it hence softening up the public. The debates further confirm Trócaire's role as the policy entrepreneur when several Deputies mention them as the driver of this issue. The clearest example of this is when Pringle mentions that Trócaire took the initiative by contacting him in 2016 due to their concern over climate change.⁸⁷ This would seem to confirm what Herweg, Huß and Zohlhöfer describe about a policy entrepreneur convincing the political entrepreneur of the idea. As discussed above, Trócaire viewed the election result as an opening and therefore it makes sense that they made the effort to convince Pringle since he

⁸⁶ Trócaire, "The Burning Question: Are we investing in climate injustice or in a fair future for all?", 22.

⁸⁷ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: Report and Final Stages, Dáil Deb 12 July 2018.

was in a formal leadership position to take the issue onto the political realm. Taking on the issue by presenting it to the floor indicates that Pringle acted as a political entrepreneur.

The understanding of the policy window and coupling as parts of a causal mechanism is useful because as Kingdon states the change that opened the window does not automatically create agenda change. Instead, the policy entrepreneur takes advantage of it to push its idea.⁸⁸ Trócaire did precisely that, coupling the political situation in Ireland to the policy alternative they had brought forward. The issue of fossil fuel divestment had also been connected to the problem stream in the *The Burning Question* paper as it outlined how fossil fuels was driving climate change. This context was then coupled to the Paris Agreement and Ireland's climate performance, which were subject to a wider discourse about problems related to climate change in Ireland. In such a way, they connect their solution to a wider array of problems in the context of climate change. Thus the empirical material shows that a policy window, in the form of elections, took place and there was a policy entrepreneur, Trócaire, who coupled the streams together. This was important because the existence of problems related to climate change, the events in the political stream or fossil fuel divestment as a policy alternative might have stayed in their respective streams had the policy window and coupling not occurred. The role of Trócaire in pushing for an alternative which has its origins in transnational climate governance resembles the role played by NGOs in the context of carbon markets as Jessica Green has found.

4.2 From agenda to adoption

The first part of the analysis has examined how fossil fuel divestment became subject for legislative action. However, this does not explain why the Divestment Bill was adopted and therefore this second section tries to trace the causal mechanism of decision coupling to see if it was present to allow policy change to take place. The policy stream found that the bill introduced by Pringle echoed the recommendations and concerns first raised by Trócaire. Thus, it was

⁸⁸ Kingdon. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 168.

Trócaire's policy alternative that was up on the decision agenda as a result of their agenda coupling. This opened a decision window to discuss and influence the policy alternative.

The Divestment Bill was subject to a range of objections in its original form with the Government going as far as asking Pringle to withdraw it. Among their concerns that it would cause a lot of difficulties for ISIF, they point out that the definition of a fossil fuel company is particularly troubling. Fossil fuels were defined as geological deposits and a fossil fuel company as one that wholly or partly explores, refines, extracts, processes or delivers from such geological deposits. This became a point of contestation because such a definition would not allow investment by ISIF in Irish small and medium- sized enterprises, SMEs, that are involved in any of these lines of work. Such concern was also shared by FF.⁸⁹ FF was furthermore concerned over the impact the definition would have on fossil fuel companies that are transitioning into renewable energy, expressing their view that ISIF should be able to support such efforts.⁹⁰ These and other concerns led to that Pringle accepted a range of changes and additions to the original bill. In fact, these changes in the amendment are described as replacing the original text. For example, the text "fossil fuel company" was replaced with "fossil fuel undertaking" with a narrower definition to include exploration, refinement and extraction of fossil fuels. Pringle accepted the removal of encompassing the processing and delivery of fossil fuels in order to not cause adverse effects to SMEs. It also inserted that a fossil fuel undertaking is considered anything that takes in 20 percent or more of its revenue from exploration, refinement and extraction of fossil fuels. The concern over companies that are trying to transition away from fossil fuels is reflected in the changes, now allowing ISIF to invest in them on certain conditions. Furthermore, a threshold of 15 percent exposure to fossil fuels for indirect investments through ISIF was added. Pringle notes that a common exposure is around 6-7 percent for funds and thus he regrets that the threshold is so high, yet he acknowledges that he has received reassurance for 15 percent being a limit instead of a goal.⁹¹ This indicates that while he was not happy with this addition he likely made the concession to allow the legislative process to progress.

⁸⁹ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: Second Stage [Private Members], Dáil Deb 19 January 2017.

⁹⁰ Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach, Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: Discussion 27 Jun 2017.

⁹¹ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: Report and Final Stages, Dáil Deb 12 July 2018.

Pringle presented his own amendment due to the concerns raised. In order to improve the bill to everyone's satisfaction he worked together with the Department of Finance and ISIF. However, the Government was still not satisfied with his amendment and as there was an equal amount of votes in favor and against his amendment it was not accepted. Other Deputies mention that Pringle's amendment was accommodating to the concerns of other parties while still seeking to keep the amendment tighter than the Government's amendment. It was mentioned that both the Government and FF tried to limit the scope of the bill despite the compromises Pringle had already suggested in his own amendment.⁹² These efforts show that Pringle tried to bargain the details to make the bill acceptable to everyone without diluting it too much from the original form. In bargaining the details, he also turned to the problem stream by connecting the problem of Ireland's climate inaction to the lack of political leadership. For example, in referring to Ireland's inability to meet its EU 2020 emissions reduction targets, he points out that his bill presents an opportunity to lead on mitigation efforts. The problems of climate change and Ireland's poor record of climate action is further coupled to public support for fossil fuel divestment when he expresses that it is by virtue of the public's actions that change and political will can emerge.⁹³ In this way he reminds policy makers that fossil fuel divestment addresses issues that were subject to a wider discourse on climate change in Ireland. Moreover, bringing up the aspect of public support for the issue could be seen, as Herweg, Huß and Zohlhöfer argue, a way to signal that the public expects policy makers to react to climate change.⁹⁴ Energy analyst Mr. Kingsmill Bond and Trócaire joined Pringle when the bill was discussed at the Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach. Mr. Kingsmill Bond explains that a peak in fossil fuel demand is not that far away but this is not reflected in financial markets as the fossil fuel sector has formed an understanding that the energy shift is still far away. He presents arguments for the committee why this is not the case. Trócaire argues for climate action by highlighting the devastating impact fossil fuels have on the people they work

⁹² Select Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach Deb, Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016 [Private Members]: Committee Stage 19 April 2018.

⁹³ Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: Second Stage [Private Members], Dáil Deb 19 January 2017.

⁹⁴ Herweg, Huß and Zohlhöfer, 'Straightening the three streams: Theorising extensions of the multiple streams framework', 446.

with due to climate change.⁹⁵ In this way they strengthen Pringle's arguments from the problem stream.

Pringle has played a fundamental role in working to get the Divestment Bill adopted through decision coupling. Decision coupling was successful partly because he managed to present the issue as very important in terms of Ireland's performance on climate action and the expectations of the public. The other part and arguably, the most important part for the success of decision coupling consists of the compromises made. The position taken by FF on SMEs and companies transitioning away from fossil fuels has likely had an important effect what concerns compromises since it was their vote that was critical as the Government was in a minority. Working inside the political system and employing concessions and manipulation in order to ensure that decision coupling succeeded provides evidence for that Pringle was acting in the capacity of a political entrepreneur.

⁹⁵ Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach, Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill 2016: Discussion 27 Jun 2017.

5 Discussion and conclusion

The extended MSF which also considers decision-making has been important for gaining clarity into the processes that led to fossil fuel divestment becoming part of Irish climate policy. In order to understand how this outcome came about, the paper has engaged with the question: “Which factors can explain the Irish Parliament’s decision to make fossil fuel divestment part of its climate policy?” The first part of the analysis found that all of the three streams contained explanatory factors. The policy stream produced a policy alternative in the form of Trócaire’s recommendations, and moreover, Trócaire acted as a policy entrepreneur performing the important task of softening up the public. The problem stream exhibited several concerns in the context of climate change, especially regarding the Paris Agreement and Ireland’s climate action. Feedback from the EPA and Trócaire as well as indicators of global warming were also visible. The political stream revealed that the general election in 2016 resulted in a significant change in power relations in the Dáil which led to the formation of a minority Government. This in turn opened a policy window which enabled the policy alternative to be floated. Trócaire capitalized on this moment by combining developments in the political stream to their proposal. The proposal itself touched on issues such as the Paris Agreement goals and Ireland’s inadequate climate action that were widely seen as problems. The policy window and Trócaire’s coupling of the streams are fundamental in providing clarity into why fossil fuel divestment appeared on the Parliament’s decision agenda because without them the explanatory factors may not have come together. It can thus be concluded that the causal mechanism of agenda coupling was present in the Irish case and led to agenda change.

The second part of the analysis focused on what happened once the issue was on the agenda. The analysis shows that a decision window opened because the policy stream had provided a proposal and it had been elevated up to the decision agenda due to the coupling of the

three streams. Once the proposal was on the agenda, several concerns emerged to influence the Divestment Bill. Thomas Pringle was found to take on the role of a political entrepreneur, most likely because Trócaire had first approached him about the project. He succeeded in decision coupling primarily by making compromises to the original form of the bill but also by emphasizing the problem stream. The debates revealed like-minded people working together to facilitate the adoption of the bill, exemplified by Mr Kingsmill Bond and Trócaire bringing the problem stream to the fore in their presentations. The opening of the decision window and Pringle's efforts show that the causal mechanism of decision coupling was present and resulted in policy change.

The extended MSF is considered to sufficiently explain the outcome because the theory-derived predictions could be confirmed by the empirical record and because it accounts for the important aspects of the outcome. One of such aspects is that Ireland has a reputation of not being enough proactive in regard to climate action. The analysis has revealed the major role played by Trócaire and Pringle, the effect of minority Government on the issue and the importance of bringing forward a policy alternative. All of these things were key in explaining how fossil fuel divestment could emerge in Ireland despite its reputation as a climate laggard.

Kingdon's MSF has guided attention to factors that might otherwise not become apparent. For example, it would not be self-evident to look to any of the streams and the factors within them and therefore his theory has provided much utility in understanding why did the Irish Parliament focus on this issue in the first instance. Furthermore, the extension to the stage of decision-making has guided attention to elements that enable policy change. Applying Knaggård's concept of a problem broker has added value to the analysis as it shows that the problem may not necessarily have been constructed by Trócaire as the policy entrepreneur. Instead their understanding of the problem of climate change could have been shaped by climate activists and the IPCC.

Although the extended MSF is considered to sufficiently explain the Irish case, no claim can be made about it being the best possible explanation. Larger studies could attempt to study this case by applying several theories on the case to see which provides the best explanation.

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