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Private spaces, public interest: state regulation of farm households in early twentieth century Ireland

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Abstract: For farm households across Ireland, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were nothing short of a revolutionary period. While the increase in state control and supervision of aspects of Irish life had been expanding throughout the 1800s, it was only in the later part of the century that this attention began to shift from the wider land and landscape to focus on the previously sacred private space of the family home. The Victorian preoccupation with improvement, particularly in relation to standards of hygiene and sanitation, would result in a raft of biopolitical legislation that impacted all families but was felt most strongly by farming households across the country. Public health and sanitation legislation ordered the eviction of animals from inside cottages, the removal of manure heaps from outside doors and introduced regulations for the sale or even provision of dairy produce. This paper will examine these and other changes introduced by the state in the period leading up to the First World War, investigating the role of local government in their implementation and using local authority records to reveal the practical consequences of this incursion of agents of the state onto private property and into private lives.

Keywords: *family farm, public health, biopolitics, Victorian sanitary revolution, agriculture, rural district councils, state, local government*

Introduction

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a transformative period for Irish agricultural families and societies. Major shifts in settlement structures, inheritance patterns and family composition had occurred as a result of the Great Famine, while the land acts from 1870 onwards wrought significant changes in land ownership and landlord-tenant relations. By the onset of the First World War, the bulk of the Irish rural population had been transformed from dependent tenants subject to the rule of local

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landlords to independent and newly enfranchised proprietors. Some had even become able local politicians in their own right. While these alterations are well documented (see Nolan, 2012 for land reform and Crampsie, 2014a and 2014b for local democracy), another vital element in the transformative nature of this period has received surprisingly little academic attention – the expansion of state supervision, regulation and control into the everyday lives and practices of Irish farmers and their families.

The earliest expansionist tendencies of the state in nineteenth century Ireland were embodied in infrastructural development and the extension of institutional landscapes across urban Ireland to the towns and villages on the farthest western periphery (Jones-Hughes, 1981; Whelan, 1983). State incursion into rural Ireland was more subtle, but no less significant. With a focus on civilising ‘unruly’ Irish populations and creating loyal, obedient citizens, the state sponsored national school system brought state institutions to rural, relatively sparsely populated locations for the first time. Beyond the school-going population and their parents, many people’s first interaction with state personnel was either through the employees of the Ordnance Survey, engaged in mapping every aspect of the Irish landscape, or the census collecting officers of the Irish Constabulary. These limited, mostly innocuous contacts with the state’s representatives in the early and mid-nineteenth century gave way by the early twentieth century to state officials’ inspections and regulation of individuals, their homes, animals, business premises and wider properties. This shift, marking the extension of state power from public to private space, was largely facilitated by local government bodies operating on the state’s behalf. Over a relatively short period in the first two decades of the twentieth century, local authorities introduced far-reaching and significant changes in agricultural practices, routines and traditions across rural Ireland.

Through an examination of the extant administrative records of Ireland’s county and rural district councils, the local government bodies with most responsibility for the implementation of this legislation, this paper will examine the impact of state regulation on Irish farm households and activities in the early twentieth century. However, before embarking on this task, it will situate these transformations in the context of the Victorian sanitary revolution and the increasing practice of biopolitics by European states in this period. In so doing, this paper explores both the landscape changes and the geographies of power which emerged as the state evolved into a significant and influential presence in the private lives of local populations.

Farm households in the post-famine period

In many parts of Ireland, the landscape which emerged in the aftermath of the Great Famine was utterly transformed from a few years earlier. Where the 1841 Census recorded that 77% of the Irish housing stock (1,024,575 properties) was comprised of third and fourth class houses, these two classes collectively accounted for just 677,031 homes by 1851 (General Report of the Census of Ireland, 1851: 23). Fourth class houses were most impacted, declining by 72.4% (Smyth, 2012: 190), giving physical expression to the

decimation wrought by the famine on the country's population of landless labourers and small farmers in the intervening decade.

By 1851, a quarter of all farm holdings had been abandoned. In the immediate post-famine decades, landlords continued what the famine had begun, engaging in policies of land consolidation and clearance, which created larger, more viable farm sizes. Holdings larger than thirty acres increased from 7% of all holdings in 1841 to 32.1% by 1911, and holdings of between fifteen and thirty acres increased from 11.5% to 26.3%. Both of these increases were at the expense of smaller holdings (Turner, 2002: 86). In terms of the populations living on these properties, the 1881 Census recorded 382,342 people who self-identified as either farmers or graziers, representing just 7.4% of the Irish population. By 1911, this number had increased very slightly to 383,167 or 8.7%, although in light of the overall population declines then occurring, this figure is significant. Conversely, the number of people living on agricultural holdings declined substantially over the same period. In 1881, there were 3.4 million people living as part of farm households (or 66% of the overall population), but this dropped by almost one million to 2.5 million (or 57% of the overall population) by 1911, reflecting Irish emigration trends and the increasing need for younger siblings to find off-farm employment.

It would be dangerous to generalise about the living conditions of this population cohort, covering as they did everything from landlord families and wealthy graziers to the poorest small farmers still remaining in their fourth class cabins. Yet, despite the continued drop in fourth class housing, it is these latter houses, numbering just 40,665 by 1881 that feature most frequently in landscape depictions and descriptions of the period (General Report of the Census of Ireland, 1881: 163). Commentators who travelled around Ireland frequently bemoaned the dark, overcrowded, poorly ventilated 'wretched huts' where 'the manure heap and green pool are sometimes so near the door that one has difficulty entering' and where 'the inside is often more like a very poor stable than a human habitation' (King, 1882, 20). Nonetheless, these practices had a number of practical and financial benefits for the families within. In spite of the smell and runoff, the manure heaps maintained in close proximity to dwellings acted as a valuable source of fertiliser and an easily accessible sewerage disposal mechanism, while animals sharing the families' living quarters had practical benefits in terms of stock security, additional household warmth and a negation of the need for the construction of separate animal shelters.

Although larger farm households did not generally engage with these specific practices, many still endured a lack of proper sanitary and sewerage disposal facilities. The wide discrepancy between first class and third class farm households, both in terms of the quality of dwelling house and out-building accommodation, manifested itself not just in the type of building materials used, but also in the general comfort, ventilation and living space of the interiors. While the human occupants in the poorest housing suffered most in terms of living standards, their animals were often better treated and cared for than the stock of the larger farmer. Where higher stock numbers and economic efficiency were the driving forces of farm livelihoods, the significance of ensuring the

health and well-being of individual animals was inevitably reduced. Yet, regardless of the scale of these class-based variations, the internal organisation of farmsteads and general environmental improvements remained a matter for private property in the form of either the landowners or the occupiers themselves. This situation persisted until, revolutionary advances in medical knowledge precipitated momentous policy alterations and justified the introduction of the state as a key actor in private space.

Biopolitics and the Victorian sanitary revolution

The raft of legislative initiatives introduced in the aftermath of John Snow's ground-breaking studies on the communication of cholera in 1849, and on the Broad Street cholera epidemic in London in 1854, acted as a key trigger of what is now known as the Victorian sanitary revolution. While interest in the links between unsanitary conditions and disease had been growing, Snow's studies confirmed, for the first time, the role of contaminated water supplies in the spread of infectious diseases, overthrowing the then prevalent theory of disease transmission through miasmas (bad smells or in contemporary phraseology noxious odours) (Snow, 2002). The subsequent revolution in medical knowledge triggered by this discovery, led to the development of a raft of new techniques and technologies designed to prevent the spread of infectious disease and a new focus on the delivery of a proper sanitary infrastructure across the United Kingdom. Ogborn (1993) highlights how growing concerns over the impact and prevalence of both infectious and contagious diseases on the manpower available to the British Army in the aftermath of the Crimean War added impetus to these reforms. Across the United Kingdom, concerns to block disease transmission combined with the interests of social reformers so that the Victorian sanitary revolution acquired a strong moral influence. As the new legislation was enacted and enforced, it became apparent that the state was moving into new fields of regulation – the private spaces of the home and bodily practices.

In this, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland was not unique. As Carroll (2002) illustrates, these developments were mirrored across European states through policies variously termed public health, medical police, state medicine and medical jurisprudence. Common to each was a focus on improving environmental conditions through the removal of nuisances, the introduction of sanitary infrastructure, increasing standards of hygiene and regulation in relation to food production, an increase in health and safety standards in relation to employment and a concerted attempt to reform problematic behaviours at the level of the community and individual. Foucault (2003: 250) notes that these legislative developments marked a shift in governance strategies by European states away from techniques around discipline. While discipline focussed on the individual subject through surveillance and training, generally in the restricted frameworks of institutions, this new technique which Foucault terms biopower or biopolitics was aimed at the level of the population as a whole.

Viewing the population as 'a global mass that is affected by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness and so on' (Foucault, 2003: 242-

243) allowed the state to formulate new techniques of governance based on statistics and patterns of life. Through the development of statistical techniques, the population became a quantifiable object, revealing that populations have their own patterns of disease, scarcity, wealth, and poverty, which must be understood before any new methods can be 'employed as the state both represents and intervenes in the domains it seeks to govern' (Murdoch and Ward, 1997: 308). Thereafter, state intervention focussed on policies which would increase life expectancies and living standards; in Foucault's words, policies to 'make live' (Foucault, 2003: 241). This necessitated legislative innovation at the level of the family and household, directed towards improving living and working conditions, public health issues, and levels of economic growth, through a focus on 'the social, cultural, environmental, economic and geographic conditions' in which people lived (Dean, 2010: 119). Thus, the enlightenment ideal of the home as an isolated and apolitical space (Kaika, 2004: 265), gave way to the view that home space and family life were arenas in clear need of state intervention (Kumar, 1997: 225-226).

In an era where *laissez-faire* ideology was utilised as a technique of liberal governments, this shift to the biopolitical was of necessity carefully balanced so as not to over-govern. Instead, European states sought the development of the self-regulating subject, while simultaneously developing techniques for governing at a distance (Rose and Miller, 1992; Legg, 2005). Thus, the knowledge gathered through statistics was reworked to formulate legislation designed to regulate the 'conduct of conduct' of a state's population without the need for physical force (Burchell, 1996: 19; Legg, 2005). This then is the difference that Foucault outlines between discipline and biopower, although he clarifies that this is not a replacement of one with the other, rather biopolitical techniques dovetail with disciplinary techniques as two forms of modern power (Foucault, 2003: 242). In his subsequent lecture series *Security, Territory and Population* delivered at the Collège de France in 1978, Foucault subsumes both these forms of modern power into a discussion of what he terms governmentality – an approach which combines both the analysis of forms of power as well as the exercise of power (Foucault, 2007). In examining the arts, rationalities and techniques of government that are developed to regulate the 'conduct of conduct' in an era of liberal governmentality, Foucault's new analysis, as Dean (2013: 43) notes, focuses on identity, technique and the government of self and others.

It is in the context of this evolution of liberal governmentality in the United Kingdom that we must interrogate the extension of state power from public to private landscapes. The development of Victorian moral values and the symbiosis between these and the Victorian sanitary revolution can then be read as part of this broader shift to the development of self-regulating subjects. Through various biopolitical legislative techniques and arts of government, the state encouraged citizens to alter personal practices and standards which impacted on personal hygiene, private living conditions and the wider environment. The emergence and development of this moral regulation in Great Britain has been examined in detail by a wide range of geographers since Driver's (1988) paper, while the practical implementation of this regulation has been examined in the context of specific, 'problem' groups. Here, the 2013 special feature on

moral geography in *The Journal of Historical Geography* is particularly useful. Legg and Brown (2013) offer a review of the extant literature, while other papers shed light on the protection of children (Beckingham, 2013) and the management of tuberculosis (Mooney, 2013). These follow on from a similar paper in an earlier issue on 'bad mothers' and infant mortality (Moore, 2013). While all are vital fields of study, what remains largely absent is an understanding of how self-regulation transitions from state theory to an actuality at the level of the ordinary citizen. This is of particular interest in the Irish context where techniques of governmentality in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were charged not simply with improving health and sanitation, but with ensuring their implementation in a country where the very existence of the state apparatus was contested. The remainder of this paper will chart these developments in the context of the ordinary lives and landscapes of Irish farming families.

Introducing regulation to Ireland

Foucault identifies the emergence of biopolitical and governmental techniques at the end of the eighteenth and early in the nineteenth centuries. However, it is the latter part of the nineteenth century before these techniques are applied by the British state in an Irish context. This reflects the colonial status of Ireland in the period before direct rule was implemented from Westminster with the Act of Union in 1801, and the slow transition from colony to imperial core that took place across the nineteenth century. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the British state focussed on knowledge acquisition as it attempted to familiarise itself with the territory that it now directly controlled. Duffy (2012: 372) has noted how this endeavour gave rise to a comprehensive array of maps, valuations, statistical databases, surveys and parliamentary reports. While this material was being collected, collated, analysed and formulated into legislation, the exercise of disciplinary power was already being operationalised through the creation of institutional landscapes as 'the tentacles of the British Empire' stretched deeply 'into the remote corners of the Irish countryside, bearing with them schools, barracks, dispensaries, post offices, and all the other paraphernalia of the incipient welfare state' (Whelan, 1983: 9). It was only with the introduction of the Public Health (Ireland) Acts of 1874 and 1878 that any significant attempt was made to bring a biopolitical rationale to the government of the average Irish citizen and, therefore, farm households.

In the immediate post-famine decades, the role of the state in Irish agricultural practices was mainly confined to ensuring that the annual agricultural census was efficiently conducted and that agricultural properties bore their equitable share of the taxation burden. Nonetheless, the famine had irrevocably altered the hitherto close relationship between the state and Irish landlords. The mismanagement, inefficiency and lack of compassion exhibited by landlords towards their tenants during and immediately after the famine, highlighted the role played by the landed ascendancy in fomenting the perennial civil unrest in Ireland. It became increasingly clear that state intervention would be required to address these agrarian tensions and while this initially focussed

on land purchase and tenancy reforms, it was not a major shift from regulating property relations to intervening in matters pertaining to domestic activity.

Even before the famine, cracks were beginning to emerge between landlords and the state, so that local government reform from the 1830s onwards had witnessed the gradual replacement of the largely autonomous, landlord dominated and infamously corrupt grand juries, with new local authorities subject to central state supervision. The first and most important of these, the boards of guardians, established to administer the poor law through the workhouse network under the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act, 1838, were subject to state regulation and control through a new state supervisory authority, the Poor Law Commission.

While the initial focus of the boards of guardians was on the administration of poor relief, they acquired an increasing range of functions throughout the post-famine period as the state carved out an oversight role on all new legislative initiatives. From 1851, the guardians acquired responsibility for the administration of infirmaries and dispensaries under the Medical Charities (Ireland) Act; the Burial Grounds (Ireland) Act of 1856 gave them powers to open, close and regulate burial grounds; they became the official authority for the registration of births and deaths when this became mandatory in 1863 (Registration of Births and Deaths (Ireland) Act, 1863); they became sewer authorities in 1865 (Sewage Utilization Act, 1865) and were given powers to appoint sanitary committees in 1866 (Sanitary Act, 1866). In light of these increasingly diverse responsibilities, the Poor Law Commission was re-designated the Local Government Board, in 1872. It came as little surprise then that the new functions created by the Public Health (Ireland) Acts of 1874 and 1878 were also commended to the care of the boards of guardians, thereby adding the role of sanitary authority to their remit.

Taken collectively the above legislation ensured that boards of guardians acquired responsibility for the implementation of what can only be described as a suite of biopolitical techniques designed to improve private living conditions and public environmental standards. These included the regular inspections of dwellings, the removal of nuisances (a term covering all insanitary practices in the home and in the wider landscape), the provision of clean water supplies and the creation of proper sewerage networks across their territories. The 1874 and 1878 Acts also clarified and extended existing piecemeal public health legislation relating to the regulation of lodging houses, markets and slaughter houses and the control of infectious diseases which the guardians were expected to administer in rural areas and those urban areas without a designated urban sanitary authority.

As a technique of extending the surveillance network of the state, these should have been unparalleled. The acts legislated for the inspection of private property by an organisation over which the state had direct control. Had the boards of guardians adopted and implemented the full extent of the legislation, the state would have been able to acquire ever-increasing amounts of information at the level of individual subjects, households and communities, which could then have been utilised in the formulation of new legislative techniques. However, they did not. This reinforces Ogborn's (1992)

argument outlining the need for detailed case study based research to highlight the discrepancies which exist between national level legislation and its implementation in different localities. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many boards of guardians were slow to embrace their ever-growing administrative workload. As Crossman (1994: 51) notes, there was a reluctance on the part of many boards to further increase local taxation, while others were simply overburdened and unable to properly administer new measures. The latter resulted in a highly unsatisfactory, piecemeal operation with limited results and public health and sanitation legislation stagnated. It was the turn of the twentieth century, therefore, before the full extent of this attempt at moral regulation reached the level of the individual farmer and farming household with the introduction of the Local Government (Ireland) Act of 1898.

The 1898 Act reformed local government administration, and established a new network of local authorities based on a reworking of the existing county and poor law union areas – democratic, representative county councils and, at a sub-county level, rural and urban district councils. Under the Act, all property occupiers regardless of their gender or property value became liable to pay rates, and all ratepayers were enfranchised and entitled to stand for election. The only exceptions were priests, who were not entitled to stand for election, and women, who were excluded only from holding county council seats until 1911 (for more on the general workings of the 1898 Act see Crampsie, 2014b). Under the new councils, the public health and sanitation functions held by the boards of guardians were divided into curative and preventative functions. The boards of guardians retained control over curative healthcare functions, while the preventative healthcare functions were transferred to the new rural and urban district councils. A small number of other tangential functions relating to public health and, in particular, disease prevention, were deemed to be more suited to a wider scale of administration than the district and were transferred to the county councils.

The reform of local government enshrined in the Local Government (Ireland) Act was in itself a technique of governmentality. Although in practice there was some duplication of both staff and elected representative personnel, the creation of two distinct bodies resulted in the much more efficient administration of legislation as each body focussed specifically on a more manageable set list of tasks. In this way, local government reform paved the way for the implementation of the biopolitical techniques enshrined in earlier legislation. Further, in an era where home rule was the key political cause, the introduction of the first form of fully representative, local democracy through these new councils placed an onus on local representatives to show that the Irish population could indeed be trusted to govern themselves and play their part as imperial citizens. As a local commentator noted: ‘If they made the working of the new Act a failure they could hardly expect further concessions in the time to come; but on the contrary, if they proved themselves wise legislators in local matter[s] they might not only expect, but they could demand still more important measures’ (*The Derry Journal*, 18 January 1899: 3).

Regulating farm households

For Irish farmers and their families, the Local Government (Ireland) Act brought with it both possibilities and revolutionary changes. Many farmers seized the opportunity presented by the democratisation of local authorities and successfully stood for election to rural district councils across Ireland, forming the largest single occupation cohort within these councils. In Donegal, 67% of the first councils' seats were taken by those self-identifying as farmers, while in Meath, a case study of Kells Rural District Council (RDC) identified farmers taking 77% of seats. These farmers represented the broad swathe of farming class profiles, with the exception of farmers occupying fourth class housing who were absent in the above case study. The majority of farmer councillors in Donegal and Kells lived in second class housing (61% in both), while farmers in third class housing represented 22% of all farmer councillors in Donegal and 10% in Kells. Farmers in first class housing made up the remainder. That there were no identified farmer councillors occupying fourth class housing is unsurprising given the small number of extant fourth class houses by 1899 and the fact that many of those were occupied by agricultural labourers rather than farmers (Crampsie, 2008).

Forming such a significant majority on the rural district councils, farmer councillors were well placed to ensure that agricultural needs were addressed and they started as they intended to continue. Where nationalists dominated the councils both national and agricultural interests were clearly elucidated as councils across the country passed resolutions, calling for both home rule and a new land purchase act with more favourable terms, at their first meetings in April 1899 (Crampsie, 2008). With the politicking completed, they then turned their attention to the trickier task of administering public health and sanitation legislation among their electorate.

The first task was the appointment of a sanitary team, which consisted of an executive sanitary officer, usually the clerk of the council; a medical officer of health (MOH) who was a qualified medical professional; and depending on the size of the district, one or more sanitary sub officers (SSO). Each SSO was charged with making a monthly inspection of every dwelling in the district and reporting as to its infrastructural condition, the size and cleanliness of the living accommodation and the cleanliness, number and type of inhabitants. Where an occupier breached the public health acts, the SSO was required to report the issue to the MOH who would inspect the premises, decide on the required remedial steps and report back to the next meetings of the rural district council. The council minutes containing these reports were then forwarded to the Local Government Board for approval. In this way, local authority employees began the process of opening the private spaces of family homes, living spaces and properties across Ireland to the eyes of the state, from early April 1899.

While few of the SSO report books have survived, it is possible to gauge the level of weekly inspections carried out from the summaries included in some rural district council minute books. Ballymoney RDC, for example, regularly recorded between sixty and ninety weekly property inspections (Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), Ballymoney RDC Minutes April 1916, LA/16/2/FA/12). In the poorest parts

of the country, the initial reports from the SSOs and MOHs highlighted all of the most problematic practices long-associated with farm households. In particular, reports focussed on the prevalence of farm animals living in human accommodation and the omnipresent manure heaps adjacent to the farmhouse door or lying against the gable wall. In some districts, it was reported that as many as fifty per cent of the occupants shared their accommodation with animals (Donegal County Archives Service (DCA), Dunfanaghy RDC Minutes 6 October 1900, RDC/3/1/1) and the number and type of animals ranged from a cow or calf to one notable case where an occupier shared his premises with a veritable menagerie of a 'cow, donkey, calf and fowl' (DCA, Glenties RDC Minutes 10 June 1899, RDC/4/1/1).

These practices were swiftly targeted by the district councils' sanitary teams, but not always in the way intended by the legislation. The official policy was to grant offending occupiers a period of time to make the required sanitary amendments to their properties. Occupiers who failed to comply would then be subject to legal action. However, it quickly emerged that some SSOs were simply not reporting offences to the relevant MOH and having nuisances 'removed privately which is more pleasing to the parties concerned' (Meath County Library and Archive (MCA), Trim RDC Minutes 24 March 1900, TR/1/1). In other cases, the councils simply extended the period of compliance from an initial fourteen-day period up to even one hundred days, before finally issuing legal notices. It is these early attempts at circumventing the legislation that further highlights how national level legislation was mediated in local settings. In the early days of the new local authorities, the Local Government Board appeared to simply ignore these legislative anomalies and only began to seriously reprimand district councils after allowing sufficient time for initial establishment difficulties to be overcome.

For farming households, the steps required to abolish these insanitary practices were at best problematic. The loss of a manure heap meant a loss of fertiliser for the subsequent season as few smaller farmers had alternative storage location options. The removal of animals from the dwellings of the poorest farmers brought a double cost – the loss in heat to the family from the additional occupants and the need to build external byres or sheds. Yet, as it became clear that the rural district councils were serious about the implementation of the legislation and taking legal action if required, many households did begin to 'self-regulate' before they were officially reported. Within only a few months of the establishment of the councils, a Glenties RDC SSO reported 'a gradual improvement in the sanitary condition of this vast district as the small occupiers are building "byres" for their cattle apart from their dwellings' (DCA, Glenties RDC Minutes 8 July 1899, RDC/4/1/1). This does, however, bring into question the extent to which the Foucauldian concept of self-regulating citizens can be applied in this context. While the local population appear self-regulating at this juncture, the introduction of the legislation under the public health acts had been entirely ineffective and it was only with the advent of a designated local authority and the threat of legal action that self-regulation was eventually spontaneously evoked.

Although not specific to farm households, the general provisions of the sanitary revolution were also felt by farming families. Sanitary teams targeted both overcrowded, poorly lit, and badly ventilated dwellings and environmental pollution, particularly in relation to the disposal of raw sewerage alongside other nuisance material. At the same time as these previously mundane conditions and practices were increasingly problematised, a veritable underground maze of pipes was introduced, bringing sanitary conveniences to villages and towns across the country. In more sparsely populated rural areas, water pumps were installed at convenient locations and water-closets and privies were introduced to rural dwellings (for more detail see Crampsie, 2014b). Farmers were crucial to this endeavour as inevitably the extension of sanitary infrastructure necessitated the acquisition of land through which pipes, drains and water pumps could be installed. This was slightly more complicated in the case of pumps as access for the public onto otherwise private land was also required. While some negotiations resulted in compulsory purchase orders, many farmers came to private agreements with the councils, with some even providing free access so long as sufficient fencing was provided. For many, this new sanitary infrastructure became the physical embodiment of the extension of state power across rural Ireland. As pipes and drains emerged from the external environment into the private spaces of the home, so too did the state.

For those living in the worst type of dwellings, however, the state's increasing influence could result in people having to leave their homes. Where SSOs reported that the physical condition of a house rendered it a clear health risk, local authorities were empowered to declare that it was 'unfit for habitation' and have the family removed, forcibly if necessary. Houses that could not be brought into repair could be closed indefinitely, although the councils did attempt to expedite these repairs. For example, Edenderry No.3 RDC gave an owner just fourteen days to fix a house, which it was reported '... has fallen in and is in a dangerous state. The roof may fall at any moment' (MCA, Edenderry No.3 RDC Minutes 11 February 1913, E/1/6). In rural areas, for the most part, these properties were occupied by agricultural labourers, cottiers or small farmers, but owned by landlords who now became responsible for their repair.

While this put pressure on property owners and could result in legal action if the owner remained uncooperative, it had more serious implications for the occupants who were made homeless for their own safety. Where neither alternative dwellings nor social housing were available in the area, many of these individuals became reliant on the generosity of their extended family or neighbours. It is reasonable to assume that some must also have sought refuge in the workhouse, but examples are difficult to locate. One possible explanation for this was a tendency for councils to only close entirely irredeemable properties just as a new round of social housing in the form of labourers' cottages was about to become available. To take two indicative examples, in Ardee No.2 RDC, at a special meeting relating to the introduction of a new labourers' cottage scheme, the MOH was asked to review his certificates related to properties then undergoing improvements and amend those that he felt should more properly have been categorised as unfit (MCA, Ardee No.2 RDC Minutes 26 February 1907, AR/1/4). Similarly, in Londonderry No.2

RDC, where complaints of houses being unfit for habitation were relatively rare, on 12 June 1914 the council's solicitor informed a meeting that legal proceedings were being instigated to close a number of problematic cottages. On 11 July 1914, the council resolved to introduce a new labourer's scheme (DCA, Londonderry No.2 RDC Minutes 12 June and 11 July 1914, RDC/10/1/2). While it is impossible to say that this was a deliberate tactic of circumventing existing public health and sanitation legislation, there are enough instances to suggest that this was deliberate rather than coincidental.

The provision of quality social housing was a significant element of the sanitary revolution and while most often associated with targeting slum conditions in urban Great Britain, the most comprehensive early measure was that enacted for slum-like conditions in rural Ireland, targeting agricultural labourers. Between 1883 and 1925, 47,966 cottages were built through the combined efforts of the guardians and the councillors under the Labourers (Ireland) Act, 1883 and subsequent revisions (for more see Aalen, 1986; Fraser, 1996; Crampsie, 2014b). While this engaged the state and local representatives in the practicalities of domestic arrangements, explicitly dictating where people could and could not live, it also had implications for farmers.

Cottages could only be constructed where suitable sites were located, necessitating negotiations between the councillors and local farmers as regards land purchase. If agreement could not be reached, compulsory purchase orders were implemented. Needless to state, this interference in private property was met with significant discontent, culminating at times in official objections lodged at locally held, public inquiries and, in the case of wealthier farmers and landlords, to the Privy Council. The objections raised suggest that this particular piece of legislation may also have increased pre-existing tensions between farmers and the labouring classes. While all occupants in a district had an increased rate burden to pay for the provision of cottages, these farmers bore a double cost through the loss of sometimes important portions of their property. Compounding this was the inevitable consequence that, in certain cases, the local labouring population were provided with housing of a higher standard than that occupied by local small farming families, who were active contributors to this housing provision in the first instance.

However, the most invasive legislation in terms of bringing the state to the scale of the individual and the private space of the home, regardless of living conditions or class, was the legislation in relation to the prevention of infectious disease transmission. The Infectious Disease (Notification) Act, 1889 and the Infectious Disease (Prevention) Act, 1890 were two interlinked pieces of permissive legislation. Influenced by liberal governmentality and encouraging of self-regulation on the part of local representatives, much national legislation in relation to public health and sanitation was initially permissive, giving local authorities a choice of whether to adopt it or not. As with the foregoing legislation, these were initially part of the guardians' remit, but had been transferred to the rural district councils on their establishment. By 1900, sixty of the country's rural district councils had adopted the acts, a figure which had increased to 163 or 75% by 1916 (45th Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1917: 36). The legislation covered a range of infectious diseases such as smallpox, measles, diphtheria, typhoid, typhus fever, scarlatina or scarlet

fever, enteric fever, whooping cough and influenza. Sanitary authorities could amend the list to add other diseases that they felt were important and eventually, most included cerebrospinal meningitis, poliomyelitis and tuberculosis in their lists.

Where a person contracted any of the above diseases, both they and their doctors were compelled to report the illness to the local MOH, triggering the introduction of a range of measures to prevent further transmission and the launch of an investigation into its origins. The patient and their family were the first targets of this legislation. The sanitary team were required to move the patient immediately to the nearest fever hospital for treatment and thereafter ensure that all potentially contaminated clothing and bedding within the property were burnt and the entire dwelling disinfected and limewashed. Where adopted in a district, this legislation moved the state beyond the realm of benign surveillance to that of physical involvement with private property and individuals, albeit in the guise of district council officials. Naturally, the destruction of private property was at best problematic, but the most controversial aspect of this process was the compulsory removal of an individual, who was sometimes gravely ill, from the perceived safety of the home and family to the local fever hospital. While local fever hospitals provided a good standard of contemporary medical care, treatment success was far from guaranteed and families were only too aware that a patient might never return home. In addition, fever hospitals were typically either a part of, or co-sited with, the local workhouse and, as a result, some of the stigma attached to being admitted to the workhouse hung over these admissions.

In the administration of this legislation, we see again the mediation of national legislation by local officials. Not all rural district councils fully implemented the patient removal protocol. Rather than forcibly removing patients from their homes or taking legal action against them, some sanitary officials openly flouted the legislation, reporting that the patient was too ill to be transported or, less credibly, that they were sufficiently isolated in their own homes. In an attempt to distance himself totally from the process, one SSO went so far as to suggest that the council should employ a separate contractor to convey the sick to the hospital (DCA, Dunfanaghy RDC Minutes 23 March 1901, RDC/3/1/2). While the Local Government Board objected to these strategies, they did allow local idiosyncrasies to operate in the early period of the councils, but became increasingly strict over time until the legislation was fully operational.

In attempting to track down the source of a disease outbreak, local food and water supplies were the first and most likely suspects. Contaminated water supplies were regularly blamed for a range of diseases, including fever, typhoid and diphtheria, while insanitary conditions and overcrowding were blamed for typhus. Poor ventilation in houses, schools and public places were thought to aid the spread of influenza, measles, and scarlatina and contaminated dairy produce was held responsible for many enteric fever outbreaks (Mercer, 2014). In reducing the prevalence of infectious disease outbreaks caused by contaminated dairy products, a range of preventative measures directly targeting farming practices and properties were introduced under the Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops Order, 1899. This was initially introduced as permissive legislation, but

it was not until the legislation was made compulsory in 1908 that the councils began to seriously consider its benefits. The legislation gave rural district councils powers to inspect and monitor all dairy supplies. In order to make this possible, all milk sellers *and* suppliers were compelled to register as such with the district council so that the newest members of the councils' sanitary teams – the registrar and inspectors of dairies – could begin monthly checks of their premises.

Following broadly on the checks laid out for dwelling inspections, inspectors examined the animals' physical condition and accommodation as well as the equipment used for milking, storage and product manufacture. Production areas required adequate light, ventilation and a clean water supply and farmers were obliged to repair immediately any defects discovered by the inspectors. If the inspectors' orders were not complied with, legal proceedings were instigated to prevent the farm supplying milk within the district in future. These requirements were understandable in the context of larger farms engaged in commercial milk production. However, many councillors viewed these conditions as more than onerous for small family farms where the only 'supply' was to a number of neighbours or their extended family network. Thus, some councils such as Ardee No.2 and Londonderry No.2 saw the practical benefits and implemented the compulsory order (MCA, Ardee No.2 RDC Minutes 1908, AR/1/4 & AR/1/5; DCA, Londonderry No.2 RDC Minutes 1908, RDC/10/1/1 & RDC/10/1/2), but many others railed against it. Faced with sustained non-compliance from a number of rural district councils, the Local Government Board was forced to take legal action. They successfully took a case against Kilmallock RDC and in the aftermath, other councils, fearing similar legal challenges, began to adopt the Act (DCA, Dunfanaghy RDC Minutes 11 March 1911, RDC/3/19).

Adoption led to various levels of implementation around the country, but over time, inspection and notification practices improved. By 1916, over 1,000 premises were registered in Ballymoney RDC and the two dairies inspectors regularly visited over forty farms per fortnight, issuing orders for laying down concrete floors and drainage channels, introducing ventilation, limewashing walls and, when the weather improved after the winter, for 'spring cleaning' (PRONI, Ballymoney RDC Minutes 1 June 1916 & 6 July 1916, LA/16/2/FA/12). As drivers of sanitary improvement and disease prevention, this legislation was significant. Enteric fever alone declined from 1,170 cases in 1909 to just 643 by 1919 (47th Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1919: 36) and a new landscape of well-constructed, limewashed byres and sheds emerged. However, for some small family farms, the significant financial outlay to bring byres, sheds and equipment in line with the new requirements was too much. As a result, some were simply forced to stop supplying milk and bear the loss of the supplemental income that it had provided. For those who continued, their farmyards, sheds and animals became the subject of state surveillance as the dairies inspectors reported their detailed findings back to the rural district councils on a monthly basis.

The prevention of disease transmission in animals also featured strongly in public health and sanitation legislation, but this was administered at a county council rather than rural district council level through the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act, 1894.

Alongside a range of disease specific orders adopted under the Act, including: the Swine Fever (Ireland) Order, 1901; Glanders or Farcy (Ireland) Order, 1900; Sheep Dipping (Ireland) Order, 1907; and the Tuberculosis (Ireland) Order, 1913, this constituted another layer of legislative practice directed at Irish farms. Key to this legislation were provisions designed to prevent the transmission of infectious diseases, including the compulsory notification of any such disease, transport restrictions, the slaughter of infected animals and improvements in animal welfare and hygiene. Unlike the Dairies Order, these provisions were overseen directly by the Board of Agriculture, adding a different element of state control to local government administration and to the farm, albeit using similar techniques.

While the Dairies Order involved registration of dairy herds and a high frequency of specific inspections, this act applied to all livestock, but inspections were fewer. Paddocks, cattle sheds and pigsties were subject to inspection, and improvement orders were issued if temperatures, ventilation and sanitary conditions raised concerns. The structural improvements, disinfection practices and limewashing, generally ordered, led to significant improvements in animal welfare across all farms. It is clear from the minutes of the Donegal County Council (DCC) Diseases of Animals Committee, however, that animal welfare was a by-product and that the main focus was the targeting of infectious diseases. The minutes detail the minutia of the operation of this legislation, highlighting the scientific nature of the practices introduced, an awareness of the economic burden it placed on farmers, but also its economic necessity at national level (DCA, DCC Diseases of Animals Committee, CC/1/2/4).

This is perhaps most obvious in relation to Tuberculosis and Glanders or Farcy. The latter was a disease mainly impacting horses, which was highly contagious to other horses and to humans. County council veterinary officers were compelled to visit farms to examine suspect animals and where either disease was immediately diagnosed, the slaughter of the animal was ordered. Where the symptoms were inconclusive, lab-based testing was conducted to identify the presence of the disease. If a definitive diagnosis could still not be achieved, the veterinary officer could order the slaughter of the animal as a precautionary measure, followed by a post-mortem to finally determine if the disease was present. Positive results would require tests on other animals on the farm and where contamination was possible, veterinary inspectors would also have to visit neighbouring farms, expanding disease control measures outwards from the core case of infection.

Naturally these requirements were disproportionately felt by smaller farmers without the stock levels or financial means to quickly replace lost animals. Compensation for slaughtered animals was available, partly to prevent any attempted concealment of contagious animals, but this was offered on a sliding scale. Animals found to have been unnecessarily slaughtered were compensated to the full value of the animal, but lower amounts were provided where the disease was positively identified. These decisions were not without controversy with owners claiming that council valuations were too low and some even querying post-mortem results proving the presence of the disease (DCA, DCC Diseases of Animals Committee, CC/1/2/4). Regardless of the outcome of these

negotiations, the very practice of animal inspection, testing and compulsory slaughtering brought the realities of the rapid increase in state regulation into sharp relief, as farmers had to consent to the loss of valuable possessions for the sake of the greater public good.

Conclusion

What had emerged by the outbreak of the First World War was a very different regulatory landscape to that which the rural district councillors and county councillors had inherited in 1899. Although the guardians, had attempted to implement legislative changes for farmers and farm families their engagement in the private space and personal lives of farm households was limited by the administrative framework through which they operated. The Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898, facilitated the changes required and within a remarkably short space of time the state and its officials had become key actors in very personal aspects of everyday life. Through the efforts of the local authorities and their increasing team of employees, state legislation was brought into yards, sheds and homes, dictating how farmers lived, how they looked after their environment, their sanitary practices, the food they produced and consumed, and their treatment of illness. Even the farm animals they owned were subjected to increasing levels of regulation.

Not all local authorities nor communities met these legislative innovations with acceptance; however, the techniques utilised by local authorities to reduce tensions and gradually acquire compliance were ultimately successful. In issuing warnings with extendable time periods and engaging in only lax enforcement at the outset, farming families were given time to adjust to the new legislative landscape and its requirements. The threat of legal action actively encouraged compliance among the remaining defaulters so that only the most serious cases ever reached prosecution, which in itself had the effect of jolting others into action. That the state and the Local Government Board used similar tactics in encouraging local representatives to implement the most controversial aspects of the legislation speaks to their effectiveness.

Yet, this is not to suggest that the agricultural population were passive recipients of various governmental techniques. The fact that these techniques were required in the first place illustrates the resistance to these innovations displayed by local people and local representatives. In doing so, they forced the Local Government Board and the state to face the very practical challenges of the wholesale implementation of national regulations on very different regions and localities. In choosing to permit the differential implementation of certain aspects of the legislation, the state was allowing national policy to be modified to suit local conditions. However, it was clear that this would not apply to everything and certain measures were implemented by all means necessary – compulsory legislation, court prosecutions and significant fines. In engaging with these practices of negotiation, resistance and implementation, local representatives and local populations implicitly recognised the right of the state to govern and by challenging the extent of this right, they themselves were becoming active, politically engaged citizens. However, it also brings into question the extent to which the Irish agricultural population can be

considered self-regulating, given the level of surveillance expended and the constant threat of legal enforcement which existed.

For the state, even the gradual acceptance of its suite of biopolitical techniques was a success. At no point do the local authority records suggest that farmers ever blocked local officials from entering their premises to carry out the required inspections, even if compliance was not immediately forthcoming. At a minimum then, the introduction of these regular inspections added both quantitative and qualitative data to the state's already burgeoning trove of statistics about the lives of Irish farmers and their households. This allowed the state to move from the generalisations of the census returns and valuation reports to the specificities of the most relevant issues in each locality, facilitating the development of further governmental techniques. Thus, in shifting its attention from disciplining deviant individuals to regulating the population as a generalisable whole, the state conversely discovered that these techniques actually allowed it to govern at the level of individual farmers and their farms. Indeed, it is this expansion of the sphere of state interest from disciplinary techniques, given physical expression through the creation of institutional landscapes in the nineteenth century, to the regulation of the population at the micro-scale level of the individual, that truly gives rise to the use of biopolitics as a governmental technique in Ireland in the early twentieth century.

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