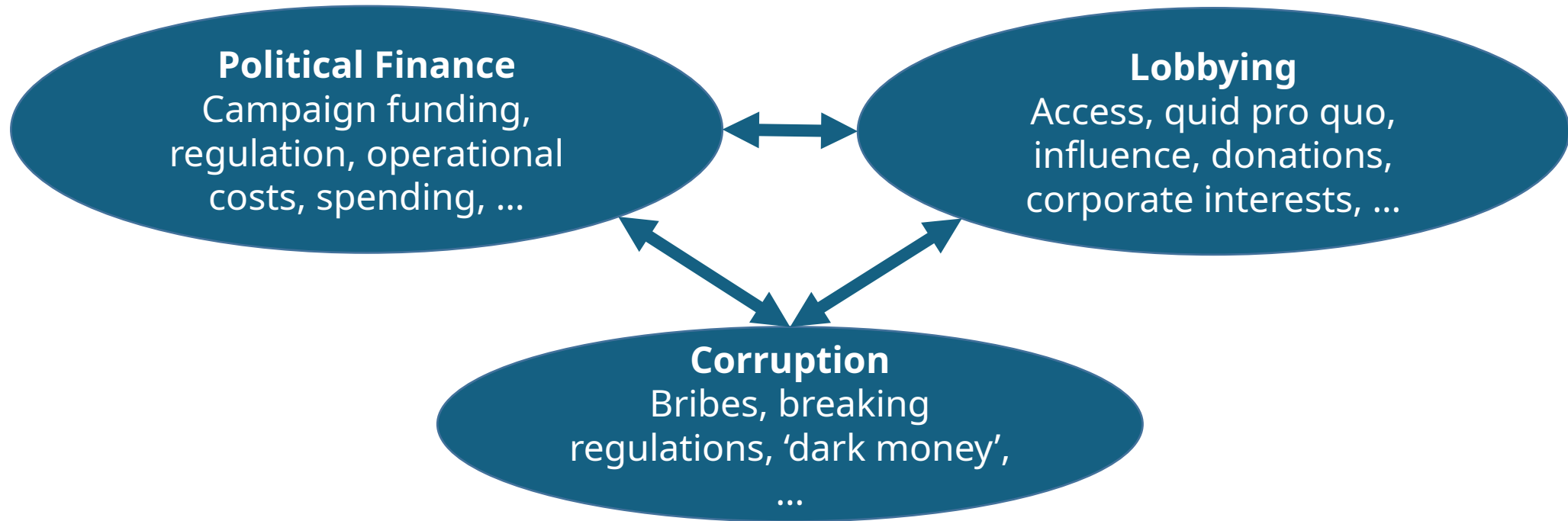


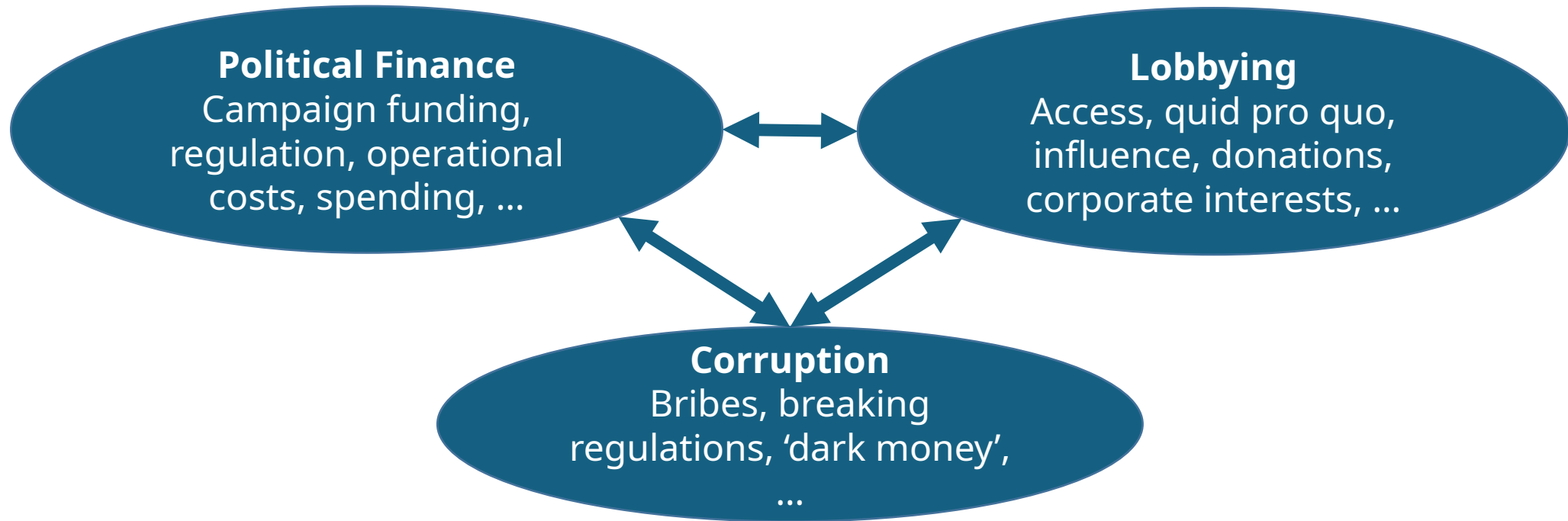
Housekeeping

- Preparation 1 due October 6th at 7am -> Loop
- Groups for seminar sessions posted on Loop (Course Information)
- Presentation:
 - 3 questions sent via email by October 20 for approval
 - Reminder: related to course, but otherwise free to be creative
 - Presentation in week of November 26th (5-10 min, 5 min of questions)

Looking back...



... & looking forward



Case Studies

Ireland, **Competitive Authoritarian Regimes**,
US

POL1050: Money, Power & Democracy

Class 7 – Ireland Case Study: Corruption & Reform – 29/9/2025

Schedule

This week: Money, Power and Democracy in Ireland

- Today: *Ireland's History of Political Corruption & Reform*
 - Era of 'laissez-faire' political finance
 - Pressures leading to scandals in the 90s
 - Reform
- Wednesday: *MPD in Contemporary Ireland*
 - How are political finance and lobbying regulated?
 - Paths to power:
 - Campaign spending?
 - Influence/Access?



Ireland

Freedom at a Glance

Global Freedom

97 / 100

FREE

Share



Ireland is a stable democracy in which political rights and civil liberties are respected and defended. There is some limited societal discrimination, especially against the traditionally nomadic Irish Travellers. Corruption scandals have plagued the police force, and domestic violence remains a problem.

CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX

Scoring 180 countries around the world, the Corruption Perceptions Index is the leading global indicator of public sector corruption.

Ireland has a score of 77 this year, with a change of 0 since last year, meaning it ranks 10 out of 180 countries.

Find out about key corruption issues in Ireland in [CPI 2024 for Western Europe & EU: Leaders' hollow efforts cause worsening corruption levels](#)

[Learn more about the CPI](#)

IRELAND

Score

77/100

Rank

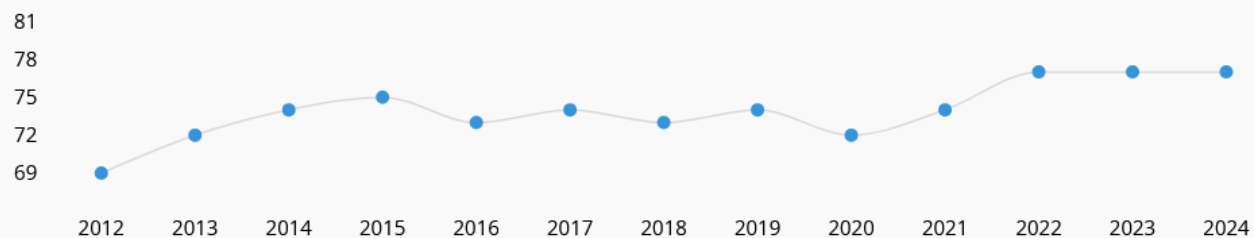
10/180

Score change

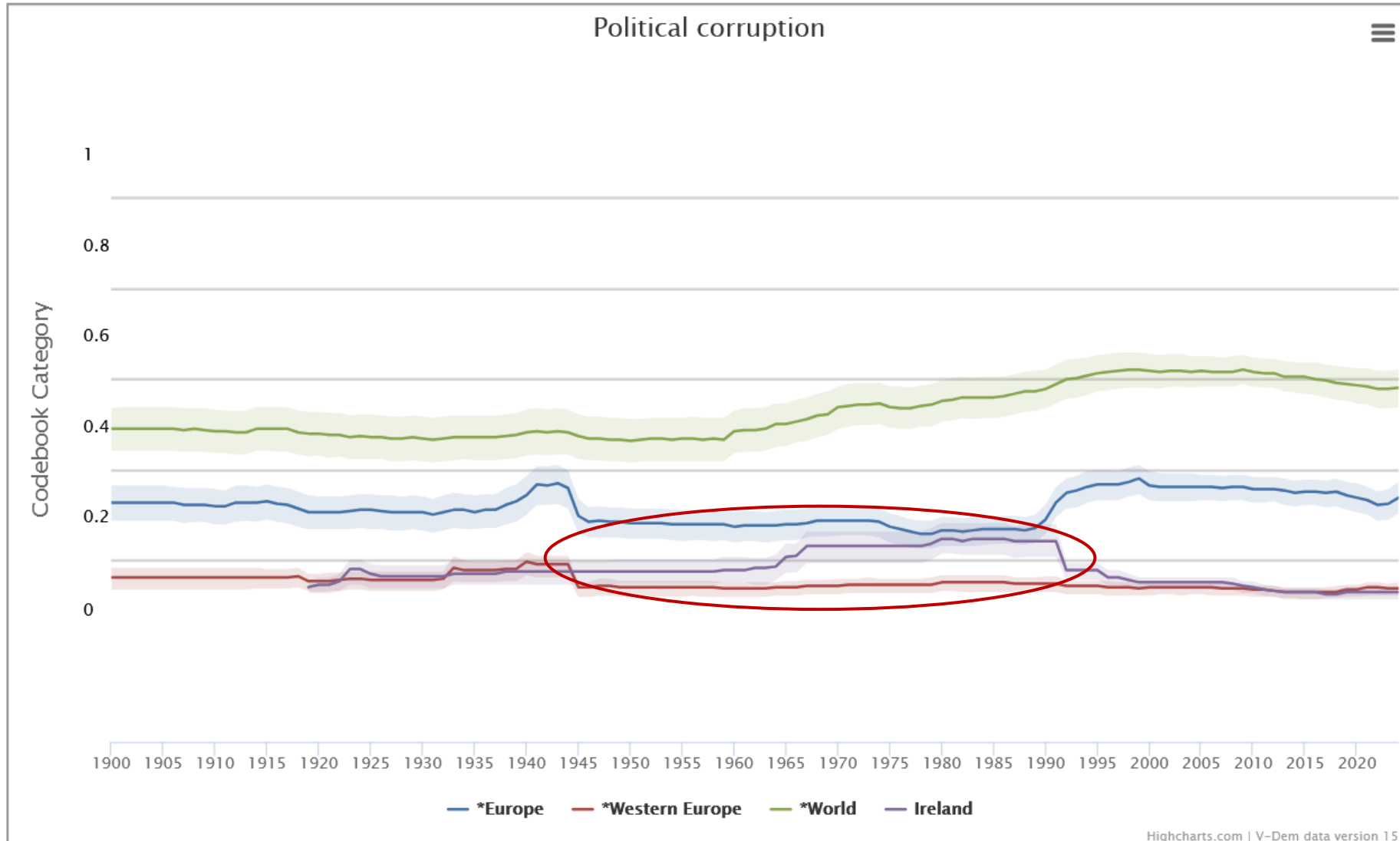


0 Since 2023

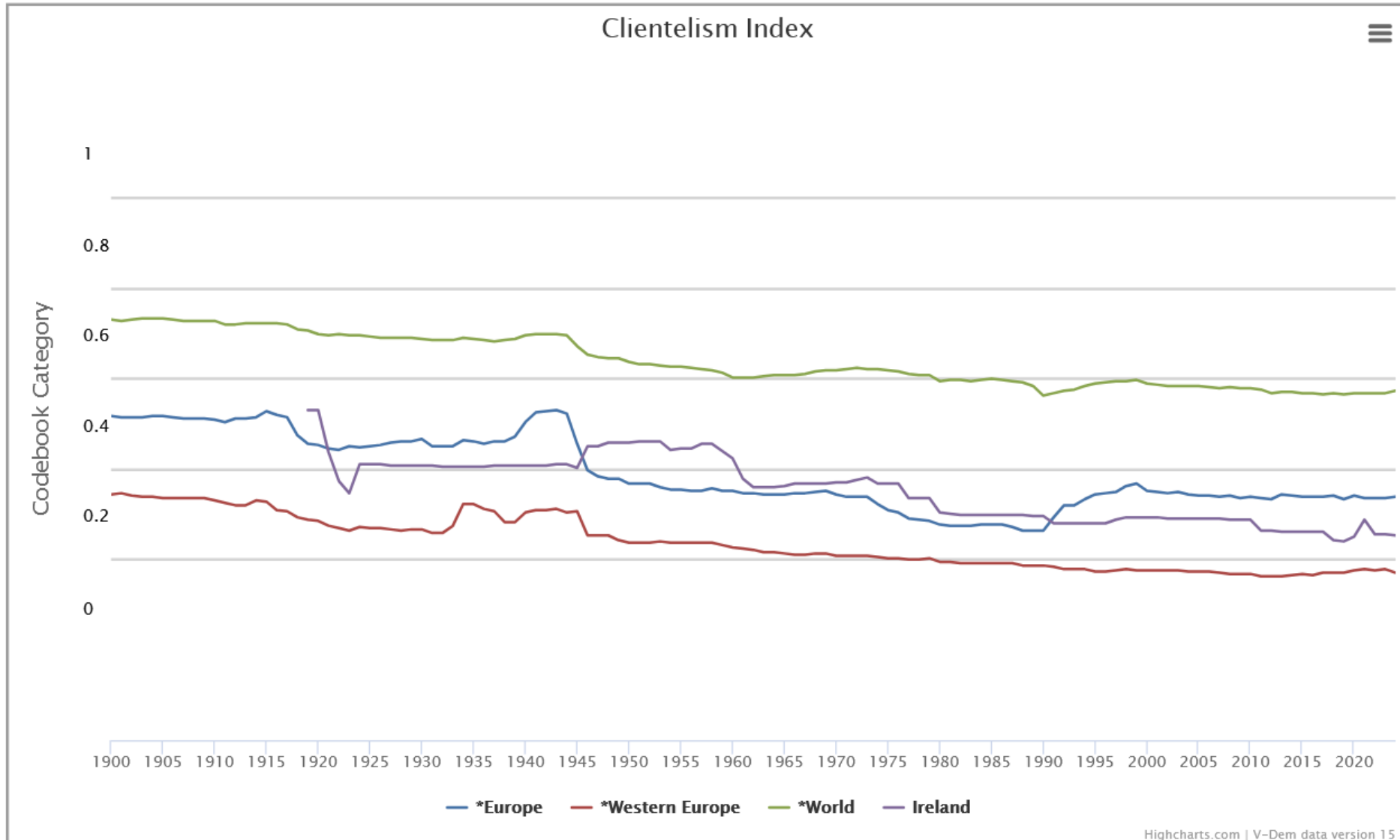
Score changes 2012 - 2024



V-Dem Political Corruption Index



V-Dem Clientelism Index



Political Finance Regime in Comparative Perspective

Source	Classification scheme	Irish classification
Horncastle (2022)	Extent of regulation	Partially regulated
Wiltse et al. (2019)	Transparency and income intervention	Market-based
Bonotti and Nwokora (2023)	Source of funding	Private funding (708)
Paulissen & Horncastle (2024)	Extent of referendum legislation	Below-Average

Ireland

- Stable democracy
- Generally low to medium levels of corruption & clientelism
- (but higher than average Western European countries)
- Political finance regime:
 - Comparatively not very stringent
 - Market-based
 - Dependent on private funding (but: parallel universe!)

So how did we get here?

1800 Act of Union

- Elimination of Irish Parliament
- Ireland governed by Westminster
- British bribing of MPs -> 30.000 GBP (over 3 Million today)



Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act 1883

- Criminalised bribery
- Constituency-level limits on spending
- Form of disclosure
- Later transferred to Free Irish state using Prevention of Electoral Abuses Act 1923
 - Requirements for candidates to declare election expenses
 - Free postage for one item per elector per candidate (indirect public funding)

THE
CORRUPT AND ILLEGAL PRACTICES
PREVENTION ACTS, 1883 AND 1895.

[46 & 47 VICT. c. 51, AND 58 & 59 VICT. c. 40.]

*WITH NOTES OF JUDICIAL DECISIONS, AND WITH SHORT
INTRODUCTORY CHAPTERS ON ELECTION PETITIONS
UNDER THESE ACTS, ELECTION CONTESTS UNDER
THESE ACTS, THE GENERAL POLICY AND
EFFECT OF THESE ACTS AND THE
PARLIAMENTARY COMMON
LAW OF AGENCY.*

BY
ERNEST ARTHUR JELF, M.A.,
OF NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD,
BARRISTER-AT-LAW OF THE HONOURABLE SOCIETY OF THE INNER TEMPLE;

The Free Irish State (1920s): Probity & Meritocracy

- Inspired by British reforms and age of patronage
- A new sense of probity in use of state funds
 - Refund of meals for ministers, deputies and officials during 1922 hostilities
 - Primacy of civil service regarding public funds

Ernest Blythe (March

I am directed by the Minister of Finance to refer to the circumstances during the months of June and July 1922 when owing to dangerous conditions in the city it was necessary for Ministers, Deputies, Officials and other persons occupied on duties at Government Buildings, to remain there for some days, having their meals supplied from a neighbouring restaurant (Messrs. Mills on Merrion Row). The cost of these meals was met out of Public Funds, and the C+AG on examining the accounts thereof, has questioned the propriety of such a charge. The

Minister agrees that the expenditure is not such as should be met from Public Funds and has directed that steps be taken for the recovery thereof from the persons concerned. The cost of meals supplied to you in the above mentioned period is found to be £4 9s 6d, and in

the circumstances I am to ask that you will be so good as to forward a cheque for this amount drawn in favour of the Secretary, Ministry of Finance. Mise le meas, JJ McElligott Ministry of Finance.²¹

The Free Irish State (1920s): Probity & Meritocracy

- Inspired by British reforms and age of patronage
- A new sense of probity in use of public funds
- Meritocracy in civil service and local government
 - Local Government Act (1925)
 - Local Appointments Commission (1926)
 - ...

Sweeping reforms

- Due to sense of state
- To prevent abuse of authority
- With new respect for rule of law



Design for the Great Seal of the Irish Free State,
created by Archibald McGoogan in 1923.
UCD Archives.

A Ticking Timebomb (1930s – 1980s)

- **Weak regulation + lack of accountability**

- Plenty of corruption scandals without consequence...

- Wicklow Gold Inquiry (1935)

- The Tribunal Trilogy (1940s)

- High Court Bribery Case (1968)

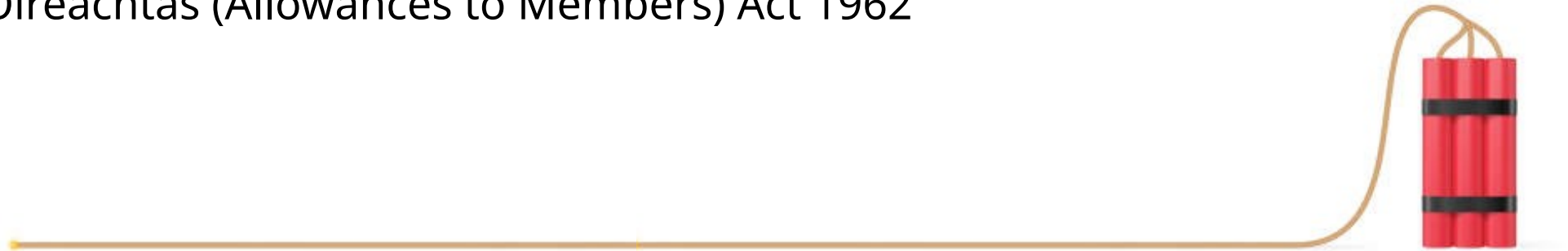
- Tully Tribunal (1975)

1963 Planning Act

- ... but little legislation

- Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices Act 1938

- Oireachtas (Allowances to Members) Act 1962

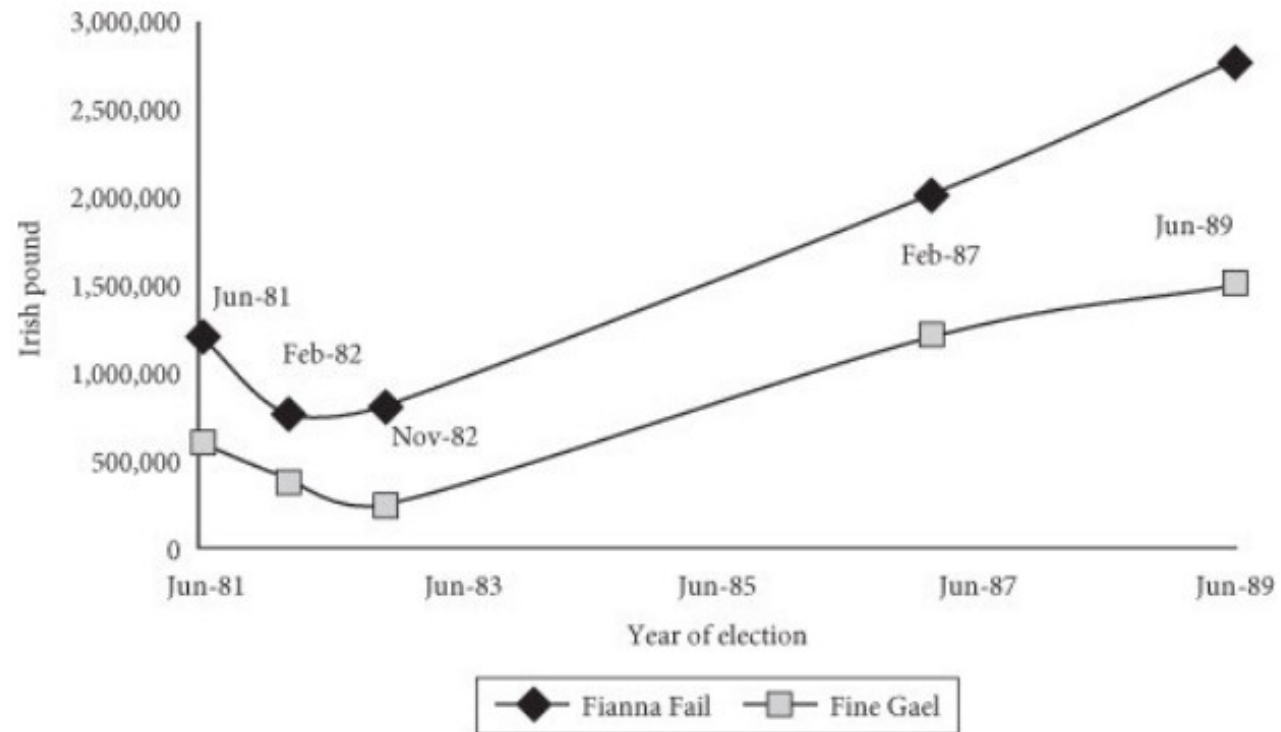


A Ticking Timebomb (1930s – 1980s)

- Weak regulation + lack of accountability
- **Financial pressures on political actors**
 - Increased political competition & professionalisation (60s)
 - Presidentialisation & personalisation of politics (80s)
 - No state funding



Byrne (2012)



Note: Figures for the Labour party and other parties were sporadic.

7.1 Estimated campaign spend by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, 1981–89

A Ticking Timebomb (1930s – 1980s)

- Weak regulation + lack of accountability
- Financial pressures on political actors
- **Economic transformation in late 80s**
 - Privatisation
 - Deregulation
 - Rent-seeking behavior



A Ticking Timebomb (1930s – 1980s)

- Weak regulation + lack of accountability
- Financial pressures on political actors
- Economic transformation in late 80s
- **Housing demand**
 - Cheaper to create building land through planning decisions than through the market
 - Created opportunity structures and potential for clientelism



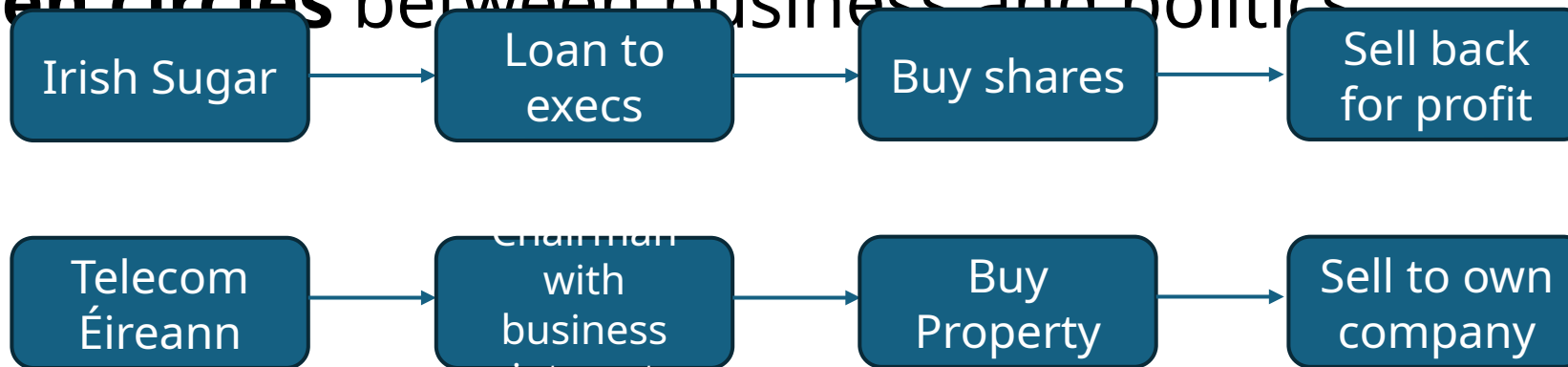
A Ticking Timebomb (1930s – 1980s)

- Weak regulation + lack of accountability
- Financial pressures on political actors
- Economic transformation in late 80s
- Housing demand
- **Late 1991...**



Golden Circles: Irish Sugar (Greencore) & Telecom Éireann (1991)

- Broke within a week of each other
- First major corporate governance scandals in privatization era
- State company executives used positions and public money to enrich themselves
- **Golden circles** between business and politics



Private Funding Corruption: The Age of Tribunals (1991-2012)

Tribunals of Inquiry:

- Set up by Oireachtas
- Investigate matters of public importance
- Can hold public/private hearings
- Report with potential recommendations
- ROI?

Table 6.2 A balance sheet: estimated cost of tribunals and direct yields to exchequer because of tribunals (€ million)

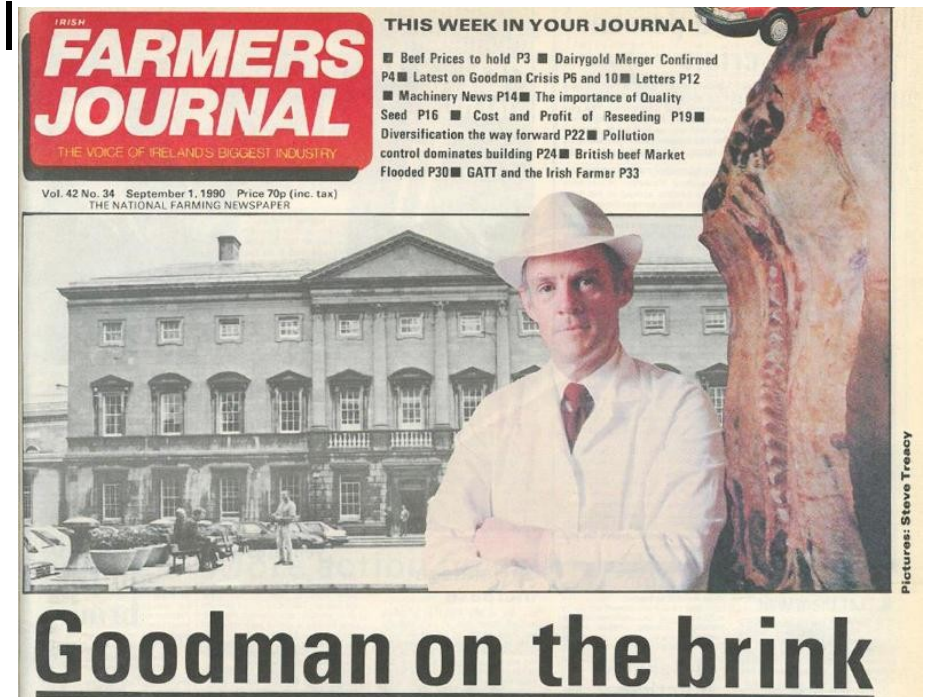
Investigation / initiative	Estimated cost (including third party costs)	Yield (tax, interest and penalties)
McCracken Tribunal 1997–97	6.5	–
Ansbacher 2002–10 (arising from McCracken)	–	107.3
Moriarty Tribunal 1997–2011	200	8.44
Flood / Mahon Tribunal 1997–	300	32.6
DIRT / bogus non-resident accounts 1998–2010 (arising from Moriarty)	–	872.4
Total	506.5	1,020.74

Source: Author's analyses from C. Keena, 'Pressure grows as €200m tribunal faces more scrutiny', *Irish Times* (27 May 2010); C. Keena, 'Mahon Tribunal ends 11 years of hearings', *Irish Times* (30 October 2008); July 2010 data from correspondence with Revenue Commissioners including spreadsheet entitled: 'Yield from various Revenue Special Investigations / Initiatives at 31.3.2010'.

Private Funding corruption: The Age of Tribunals (1991-2012)

- **The Beef Tribunal (91-94):**

- Fianna Fail Minister (Albert Reynolds) gave special dispensations to beef business Goodman International
- Final verdict was not guilty, but found patterns of large campaign contributions by company to Fianna Fail



Private Funding corruption: The Age of Tribunals (1991-2012)

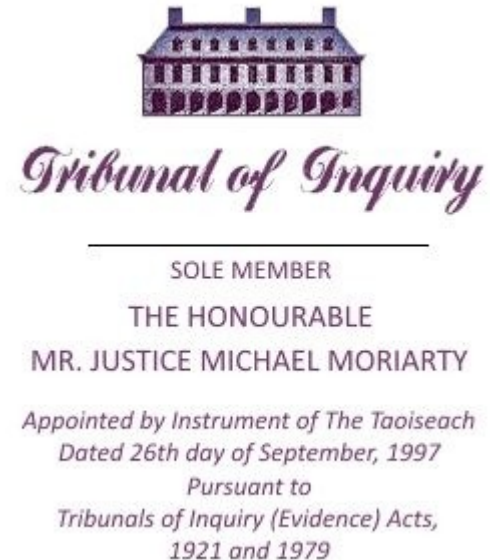
- The Beef Tribunal (91-94):
- **The McCracken Tribunal (97)**
 - Close relationship between FG minister Lowry and Ben Dunne (Dunnes)
 - Tax evasion for donors to FF Taoiseach Haughey



REPORT
of the
TRIBUNAL OF INQUIRY
(DUNNES PAYMENTS)

Private Funding corruption: The Age of Tribunals (1991-2012)

- The Beef Tribunal (91-94)
- The McCracken Tribunal (97)
- **The Moriarty Tribunal (97-2011)**
 - Expands on McCracken Tribunal
 - 2006 report focused on Haughey (FF):
 - tax evasion, political favoritism, conflicts of interest
 - “when in power the money tended to flow in, and when he was out of power the money tended to dry up”
 - 2011 report on Lowry (FG)
 - Donations by Dunne and Denis O’Brien in return for certain political decisions (mobile phone operators license)



Private Funding corruption: The Age of Tribunals (1991-2012)

- The Beef Tribunal (91-94)
- The McCracken Tribunal (97)
- The Moriarty Tribunal (97-2011)
- **The Flood / Mahon tribunal (97 – 2012)**
 - Planning permissions & land rezoning in Dublin County
 - Widespread corruption in public life
 - Bertie Ahern
 - Pádraig Flynn

Pádraig Flynn's Self-Destruction



How an Interview Ruined a Career and Changed Irish History

2M views • 5 years ago



Imparter

On January 15th 1999, former EU commissioner Pádraig Flynn gave a terrible interview on the Irish TV program, The Late Late ...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0wAbQUMfWs>

8:00