

MAPPING OBSERVATIONS ON HOUSING IN DUBLIN

The Dublin Housing Observatory – a new research unit based in Dublin City Council and overseen by an independent advisory board – continues to strive to provide evidence to inform housing policy, leading to better practice.

In just one year the Dublin Housing Observatory (DHO) has launched a Mapping Viewer in collaboration with AIRO and OSi, which contains a wealth of housing related data, some of which was not previously available to the public, such as the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) data.

It has also commissioned and published an independently-authored report on the city's Rapid Build Programme and the lived experience of residents' in Dublin's Rapid Built Housing.

Meanwhile, the results of the DHO's study on vacant housing, presented at the International Conference of Irish Geographers 2018, were used to inform a report for DCC's strategic policy Committee on Housing.

It has also developed a research project that will allow DHO to examine the impact of short-term letting on Dublin's housing market using reliable data.

The work of other Dublin City Council departments has been supported by DHO in, for example, reviewing the DCC Housing Strategy; policy and best practice guidance in urban renewal and regeneration; research support for area management in Dublin's north east inner city and development of an overall housing data management system.

The DHO has also organised several housing policy related events attended by national and international researchers, academics, practitioners and elected officials.

MAPPING VIEWER

Launched in July 2018, the Mapping Viewer contains information on Dublin's rental and sales market, vacant housing, planning and zoning data, local services, and demographic information from the Central Statistics Office.

Speaking at its launch Dr Dáithí Downey noted: "The data and analysis offered by the Dublin Housing Observatory is going to play a key role in the future development of Dublin City Council's housing policy. We have never had access to this level of information before, and it will be a game-changer as we seek to tackle the challenges of providing sustainable, affordable housing in a changing city."

Using the viewer, DHO was able to submit specific area profiles that informed decision making, guided policy, and answered crucial questions about housing and rental costs for those living in an area. For example, it revealed a high dependence on the private rental market near the St Michael's Estate area of Inchicore.

This evidence offered support to the council's case for a cost



Pictured (l-r): Eoghan McCarthy (AIRO), Dr Dáithí Downey (DHO), Prof Ken Gibb (CaCHE), and Colin Bray (OSi).

rental model of housing provision in the area. This is a system where rents are tied to the current and capital costs of housing. Tenants living in cost-rental projects tend to see lower rents than those living in the private rented sector. Such a system, therefore, would have a significant impact on Dublin's housing crisis.

RAPID BUILD HOUSING

The Observatory also collaborated with Prof Katherine Brickell, Dr Mel Nowicki, and Dr Ella Harris from the Royal Holloway University of London. The researchers explored the lived

The DHO mission statement – "To support Dublin City Council's provision of high quality affordable homes and sustainable communities and help drive strategy and policy design for Dublin's Housing development supply and use."

DUBLIN HOUSING OBSERVATORY



Pictured at the seminar titled 'Financing Affordable Housing to 2040 and Beyond' were (l-r): Javier Burón Cuadrado, City of Barcelona; Dáithí Downey (DHO); Dr Rory O'Donnell (NESC); Sorcha Edwards, Secretary General, Housing Europe and; Susanne Bauer, City of Vienna and Chair of EUROCITIES Housing Working Group; Back Row (l-r) James Clarke, Head of Housing Strategy, Greater London Authority and; Herbert Bartik, Senior Expert Urban Innovation, Vienna.

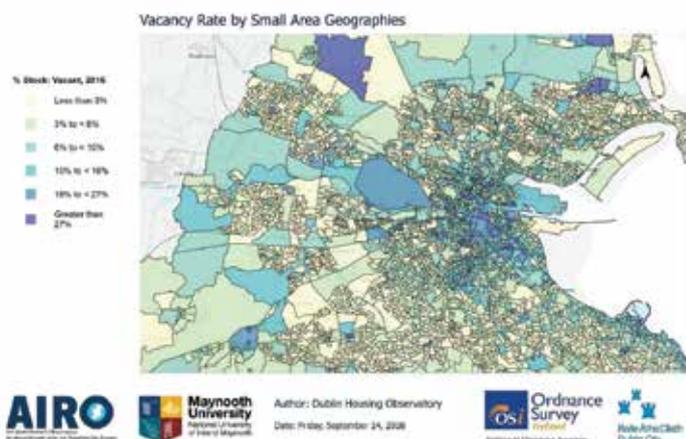
experience of those exiting homelessness into Rapid Build housing in a report titled 'Home at Last'.

This report described the Rapid Build programme as an "unequivocal and fundamental solution to Dublin's housing crisis for many homeless families", but more importantly, the programme had a lasting positive impact on families coming from precarious positions in the private rented sector.

While researchers found that tenants responded very positively to their rapid built homes, they also found that tenants had anxiety about the longevity of their tenancy and the home itself, despite receiving reassurance from the local authority. Crucial in maintaining the longevity of the Rapid Build programme, these findings will inform future decision making.

HOUSING VACANCY

The DHO investigated the issue of housing vacancy for two



(Source: DHO Mapping Viewer in collaboration with AIRO and OSi, shows the CSO vacancy rate by small area).

reasons; firstly, because Minister Eoghan Murphy instructed local authorities to draw up Vacant Home Action Plans to identify "ambitious but realistic" targets for returning vacant homes to use as a means of increasing housing supply.

Secondly, DCC schemes which attempted to identify and return vacant homes to use (Repair and Lease, Buy and Renew), had produced very little return. A street survey was conducted in November 2017, in four Dublin City Electoral Divisions in order to identify potentially vacant housing.

The results showed an extremely low level of housing that was both vacant and available for re-use in Dublin. A deeper examination of the Census data on housing vacancy was recommended as this may provide more nuanced learning about vacancy both nationally and in Dublin.

The findings were presented by the DHO team at the Conference of Irish Geographers and by Dr Dáithí Downey at the Housing (SPC). The conclusions helped to understand the low yield generated by government schemes like the 'Repair and Lease' and the 'Buy and Renew', which have struggled since their inception.

FINANCING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In June 2018, in collaboration with international researchers and in partnership with the EUROCITIES Housing Working Group, the DHO hosted a two-day seminar series titled 'Financing Affordable Housing to 2040 and Beyond'.

Each seminar provided researchers, practitioners and policy makers with a platform to discuss methods of facilitating affordable rent and affordable owner-occupation of housing in their respective cities.

Presenters included speakers from Vienna, Barcelona, Brussels, Scotland and London, as well as researchers from Ireland's National Economic and Social Council (NESC), UCD, Irish AHBs, The Housing Agency and Dublin City Council's Department of Housing and Community Services.

HOUSING STRATEGY REVIEW

Currently, the DHO is engaged in supporting a review of Dublin City's Housing Strategy. A recent workshop, organised to explore the effectiveness and continued relevance of the objectives stated in the strategy was attended by DCC senior management, elected councillors and housing agency research staff.

Findings from the workshop will assist in progressing efforts to provide 'affordable housing' solutions including the promotion of the cost-rental model of housing provision. Despite its youth, the Dublin Housing Observatory has left several important marks on the housing policy landscape. It aims to keep the discussion going and continue to contribute to Dublin's housing debate.

REFERENCE:

'Based in Maynooth University, the All Ireland Research Observatory (AIRO) maintains and manages the Mapping Viewer, which is incorporated into the Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi) 'GeoHive' platform. The Mapping Viewer can be accessed online at <https://airomaps.geohive.ie/dho/>