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## Homeowners' Lived Experience in Developing and Using Accessory Dwelling Units in Ireland

Geraldine Mary Hurley  
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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Geraldine M. Hurley

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Walden University  
2021

Abstract

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Ireland

by

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MSc, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland 1999

BEng, University College Cork, Ireland, 1997

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration – Local Government Management for Sustainable  
Communities

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## Abstract

Researchers have explored the role of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) as a form of housing since at least the 1970s. Such exploration has taken place across a number of different disciplines, including gerontology, housing affordability, and urban planning. The literature tends to focus on specific policies, however, rather than on the lived experience of the homeowners impacted by those policies. Ireland's national and local governments have yet to acknowledge the potential use of ADUs as a contributing solution to ongoing problems with housing supply, housing affordability, and homelessness, despite a government-declared national housing crisis. Formal research on ADUs in the Irish context is in its infancy. This research explores the lived experience of seven homeowners who have developed and used ADUs in Ireland in order to better understand the positive and negative aspects of that experience. Semistructured interviews were used to collect qualitative data from volunteer research participants. Heidegger's philosophy and the hermeneutic circle were applied, allowing for consideration of the contexts within which the research participants and the researcher made sense of the lived experience to be explored. Emerging themes included (a) pride and satisfaction, (b) need for affordable or elder housing, (c) impact on family relationships, (d) attitudes to and experiences with planning policy, (e) experiences with the construction process, and (f) role as an ADU landlord. The findings of this interpretive, phenomenological study may lead to positive social change by serving as a foundation for further studies and policy development in both the Irish and international contexts.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

The lack of published research on accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in Ireland reveals an opportunity for this form of housing to be considered by policy makers as a solution to the housing crisis developing in Ireland since the early 2000s. ADU researchers and advocates have been proactively examining and promoting the use of ADUs in the United States (U.S.), Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom (U.K.) since the 1970s and 1980s (Antoninetti, 2008; Lazarowich, 1991). However, Irish policy makers and researchers have yet to comprehensively examine this alternative form of housing and the opportunities it presents.

This lack of exploration means that there is little understanding of the potential future role of ADUs in the Irish housing market as a form of elder housing (Antoninetti, 2008; Brinig, 2015; Tinker, 1991; Young & Tinker, 2017), as affordable housing (Liebig et al., 2006; Rosenthal, 2009), or as a way in which to diversify housing stock and optimize the use of existing transport and utility infrastructure (Valance et al., 2005). Questions also arise about gaining an understanding of the lived experience of homeowners who have ADUs on their properties, or on family members' properties, and about the suitability of and compliance with current land use, construction, tenancy, and other policies and regulations.

Throughout this study, international research was examined to acknowledge and build on the decades of work that has been ongoing in a variety of international locations.

Experience in the Irish context was examined, with a view to understanding the impact of existing Irish policies and influences on the experiences of homeowners who have developed and used an ADU. A phenomenological approach has been taken to understand the ways in which homeowners in Ireland have experienced the development, ownership, and use of ADUs in Ireland from the global economic crisis of 2008 up to 2020. Qualitative interviews were used to gather rich data, allowing for the emergence of experiential themes and an understanding of key facilitators and barriers encountered by the research participants.

This study is significant because the findings may help to inform future land use, urban planning, housing, elder care, and tenancy policies and policy changes. This study will also allow those policies to be connected to an understanding of the lived experience of members of the public who are directly impacted by them. Thus, this study contributes to the body of knowledge in Ireland on the use of ADUs as a form of housing, and on lessons for future policy development and implementation in relation to them.

### **Background of the Study**

ADUs are secondary homes or annexes developed/built by individual homeowners, and are located within the boundaries of privately owned residential properties (Antoninetti, 2008; Lazarowich, 1991; Rosenthal, 2009). ADUs present an opportunity for a private-sector (homeowner) contribution towards meeting housing demand and towards increasing housing diversity within existing urban boundaries, taking advantage of existing transport, utility, and societal infrastructure, services, and

amenities. This opportunity is particularly important in markets where overall demand for housing is not being met, or where there is a lack of diversity in housing stock. Both circumstances have contributed to the housing crisis in Ireland in the first and second decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Additionally, ADUs can contribute to affordable rental housing stock while providing a source of income for homeowners as landlords (Brown et al., 2017; Ramsey-Musolf, 2018; Tsenkova & Witwer, 2011). Direct and indirect benefits could also be realized for the homeless, for low-income or younger citizens, for elderly citizens seeking to age-in-place, as well as for homeowners and communities in general (Brown et al., 2017; Lazarowich, 1991; Liebig et al., 2006; Young & Tinker, 2017). The use of ADUs should therefore be of interest to those involved in the development and implementation of policy across the housing, construction, elder care, sustainability, tenancy, urban planning, transport, and infrastructure sectors, and this is reflected in the diverse nature of the available international literature on the topic.

Since local governments and municipalities are often directly responsible for land use and zoning policies, these entities have a fundamental influence on homeowners' ability to legally develop ADUs, whether in urban, suburban, or rural areas. However, even in countries such as the U.S. and Canada, where ADU development has steadily grown since the 1980s, there are still some states and local governments that do not have specific ADU ordinances or regulations (Peterson, 2018). In these cases, even when a municipality does not stick rigidly to "single plot-single home" policies, but has no



relevant provisions for ADUs in their planning laws, residential development is typically guided by traditional Euclidian zoning. This approach has dictated the form and nature of much of suburban, family housing in countries such as the U.K., Ireland, the U.S., Canada, and Australia since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. ADU development is, therefore, not permitted by existing policies, either because this form of housing is not mentioned in those policies or because other policies (such as minimum setbacks, or maximum plot coverage rules, for example) prevent any ADU from conforming with the existing rules. Often the presence of multiple dwellings on a single plot of land, especially in suburban contexts, has not been considered, falls outside the scope of existing regulations, and is therefore not permitted by default.

On the other hand, some local governments in the U.S. explicitly prohibit the construction of secondary units in residential zones. In doing so, these authorities adhere strictly to a key, if somewhat outdated, tenet of Euclidian zoning which designates residential plots of land as being for the construction of dwellings for single-family households only (Gottlieb, 2017; Peterson, 2018). The presence of secondary units does not align with the intended character of traditional residential land use, whether rented to tenants or occupied by members of the extended family of the homeowner. This reluctance to allow housing diversity and multiple dwellings on a single plot may be due to preconceived ideas about rented accommodation and/or tenure mix. Consideration is also given to the impact these changes have on property prices, and to a lack of

willingness by policy makers to risk upsetting homeowners who are opposed to (or perceived to be opposed to) such development in their neighborhoods.

However, support for ADUs is growing in the U.S. in particular. In 2003, Florida became the first state in the USA to pass legislation that proactively encouraged local governments to implement specific ADU permitting ordinances at a city and county level (Gottlieb, 2017). Since that time, many other states have followed, including Colorado, California, and Washington (Brinig & Garnett, 2013; Infranca, 2014; Maaoui 2018). In June of 2019, Oregon, USA, took the historic step of prohibiting single-family zoning (Andrews, 2019) via amendments to state rent control laws. In doing so, state legislators in Oregon are attempting to remove barriers to the provision of more affordable housing in the form of ADUs. By allowing for the construction of duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, attached townhouses, and cottage clusters in what were previously exclusively single-family detached home neighborhoods, policy makers in Oregon are opening opportunities for more housing and denser development in areas already served by various forms of infrastructure, services, and amenities.

Since as far back as the 1970s, pilot projects and research have been carried out in the U.S., Australia, the U.K., and elsewhere on the construction of ADUs in existing communities to help to meet housing demand (Brinig & Garnett, 2013; Chalmers & Hall, 1991; Cubitt, 2008; Hare, 1991; Levering, 2017; Sloan, 2014; Tinker, 1991). Much of this research has been focused on identifying and understanding various barriers to the increased development and use of ADUs by homeowners, despite local government

efforts to encourage and facilitate such development through planning policies and financial and technical supports (Gottlieb, 2017; Levering, 2017; Sloan, 2014).

Much of the relevant published research since the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century across the U.S. in particular, has drawn attention to the failure of well-intentioned policies, seemingly designed to encourage the growth of ADUs as a form of housing (Antoninetti, 2008; Rosenthal, 2009). As evidenced in the literature, these failures are often due to two factors:

1. unintentional, preexisting policy barriers that do not align with new efforts to promote diverse housing stock; and/or
2. a lack of understanding of the real world experiences of homeowners in navigating the relevant policies, and in financing, developing, and using ADUs (Antoninetti, 2008; Rosenthal, 2009).

For example, Brinig and Garnett (2013) noted the impact of hidden regulatory barriers (i.e. parking requirements and minimum plot sizes) at the U.S. local government level in California that effectively prevented the implementation of state-level efforts to promote ADUs as an affordable housing mechanism. The authors concluded that high-level legislation was not sufficient on its own to successfully encourage ADU development at a local level. Also in the U.S., Brown et al. (2017) provided insight into the intricacies of off-street parking requirements for garage apartments in Los Angeles County and the San Francisco Bay Area, and the negative impact of these requirements on homeowners' ability to convert garages into affordable housing units. The unintended

consequences of preexisting, inflexible parking restrictions led Brown et al. (2017) to recommend policy flexibility and reform to avoid stifling the potential supply of ADUs as affordable housing.

Hare (1991) referred to an unnamed 1990 study where it was estimated that, at that time, 60% of municipalities in the U.S. did not allow the development of ADUs. In 2021, that number is much lower, but where ADU regulations do exist, there are several factors that impact the willingness and ability of homeowners to make the decision to invest in an accessory unit for their home. These include restrictions or stipulations within the ADU regulations, the complexity and cost of any permitting processes, the level of market maturity when it comes to understanding and appreciating ADUs as a housing form, and the attendant availability of financing for construction. If these factors are not aligned and suitably balanced, even the most unrestrictive ordinances, codes, and regulations will not succeed in encouraging ADU development by private homeowners. Levering (2017) reported that of 187 U.S. communities in eastern Massachusetts, 107 allowed the development of accessory apartments by homeowners. However, several of these communities reported the issuing of only a single ADU permit every 2 or 3 years, despite concerted efforts to encourage this type of development. Some suggested reasons for this include a lack of information or knowledge on how to plan and develop an ADU (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2008), difficulties in securing financing for the construction of an ADU (Brown & Watkins, 2012), or misunderstandings about the intricacies of local permitting processes (Infranca, 2014).

However, this lack of widespread uptake by private homeowners is not fully understood and is the subject of continued investigation in North America in particular (Maaoui, 2018; Mendez, 2017; Tsenkova & Witwer, 2011). It is clear from the literature that policy efforts to encourage ADU development do not always translate into an increase in ADU supply in the housing market, and an examination of the experiences of those who have completed such processes is therefore warranted in order to understand the disconnect between policy goals and policy implementation.

This restrictive effect of certain policy barriers has garnered much attention in the international literature over several decades, highlighting the need for policy improvements to allow flexibility, compromise, and tailored solutions at local and community levels. Gottlieb (2017) discussed efforts in Florida to develop ADU laws in the context of state-encouraged expansion of ADU permitting. In similar research, Levering (2017) investigated community policies and attitudes towards ADUs in Greater Boston, exploring the perception, use, and permitting of this type of housing. Interviews with planning officials in Boston revealed that rigid legislation negatively impacted homeowners' willingness and ability to develop and benefit from ADUs. Restrictions at the local level hindered state-level efforts to increase ADU construction, again highlighting the need for change and flexibility. Both Gottlieb (2017) and Levering (2017) recommended compromise on matters such as parking requirements and property taxes, as well as revisions to existing restrictive planning and land use laws.

Other researchers have also studied the impact of certain zoning regulations and practices on opportunities for coresidential caregiving in New York State (Antoninetti, 2008; Liebig et al., 2006; Rosenthal, 2009), and the need for the revision and evolution of land use and ADU-related policies in an effort to encourage further development (Antoninetti, 2008; Bervoets & Heynen, 2013; Sloan, 2014). The authors of these studies have independently drawn attention to the tendency for local-level policy barriers to inhibit homeowners' ability and willingness to develop accessory units for the purposes of caring for relatives, earning additional income, or simply expanding their own homes for personal or family use.

Despite the identification of these barriers faced by homeowners, the investigation of the lived experience of homeowners and ADU tenants themselves has gained little academic interest to date. A deeper understanding of homeowners' experiences, and an examination of their feedback with regard to planning, financing, permitting, developing, owning, and using an ADU, could help inform the evolution of policies that may previously have frustrated ADU advocates. In one case, however, Mendez (2017) took the rare approach of examining the nature and quality of interactions between homeowner-landlords and their ADU tenants in Vancouver, Canada, in the context of mixed-tenure communities and homeowners' perceptions of how renters may change their neighborhoods. The study included the experiences of renters and homeowners and Mendez identified factors that contributed to both positive and negative encounters, as well as opportunities to bridge social distance presented by the built environment. The

importance of education on landlord and tenant rights was also noted by Mendez in the context of ADUs.

Although accessory dwellings present an opportunity for a private-sector role in dealing with housing shortages, experiences in different jurisdictions have shown that the creation of suitable high-level policies or ordinances is not enough to encourage ADU development, particularly among homeowners who may be in most need of the additional income an ADU can generate (Levering, 2017; Sloan, 2014). In addition, a deeper understanding of the lived experience of, and especially of the challenges faced by homeowners in developing and using ADUs is needed, in order to better inform future policy changes and implementation.

There has been little, if any, academic research conducted on the existing or potential future use of ADUs as a way to help meet housing demand in Ireland, or as a way to improve the diversity of available housing stock in Ireland. The experiences of homeowners in Ireland who own properties with ADUs, or who own ADUs on family members' properties has also gone unexamined, as is the case in other geographies. In the absence of published research, anecdotal evidence suggests that ADUs are typically used in the Irish context to accommodate aging family members in housing that is suited to their physical health, their level of mobility, or simply their need for a new balance of independence, care, and companionship. In these cases, ADUs are colloquially referred to in Ireland and other countries as "granny flats," with some local governments stipulating that the ADU can only be used by family members, even after the original elderly

occupant is no longer living in it. This approach limits the opportunity to take advantage of the benefits of ADUs across the housing market.

Little is also known about the role of ADUs as rental properties in Ireland or about the experiences of ADU landlords in the broader context of the Irish housing market. Again, an appreciation of the barriers and facilitators faced by these and other private sector stakeholders would allow for the development of policies that are connected to an understanding of the lived experience of those directly impacted by them.

### **Problem Statement**

There is a supply and demand problem in the Irish housing market. Since 2008, the lack of available housing to meet demand in Ireland has worsened to government-declared national crisis levels (Finn, 2018), with the official number of homeless people in emergency accommodation in Ireland reaching a record high of 10,514 in 2019 (Kilraine, 2019), up from 3,258 in 2014 (Focus Ireland, 2018). In October 2020 the figure stood at 8,737 people, with approximately one third of these being children (Focus Ireland, 2020). Despite national government-backed schemes and incentives designed to address this crisis, the government's own targets for the provision of new social and other housing are not being met (Finn, 2019). Private-sector rents in Ireland rose an average of 9.8% nationally in 2018 (Finn, 2019) and 8.3% in quarter 1 of 2019 (Residential Tenancies Board, 2019). Close to 90,000 households eligible for social housing are on a national waiting list for government support (McGee, 2017), and many first-time home buyers struggle to find affordable properties (The Irish Examiner, 2018). By the end of



2021, average house purchase prices across Ireland are expected to have increased by around 12% on the previous year (Pope, 2021). This demonstrates an overall failure in both the public and private sectors to keep up with demand for housing in general, as well as to provide affordable and social housing in particular. This problem has negatively impacted lower income households and young adults. These individuals are forced to seek government support or live with parents or grandparents long-term in an effort to save money for a home deposit or rental property.

A possible cause of this problem is the lack of diversity in Irish housing stock. Research has been conducted in the U.S., Canada, and Australia on measures to encourage homeowners to develop ADUs (also referred to as “granny flats,” “in-law apartments,” or “mortgage-helper units” – see Appendix A for a list of alternative names for ADUs) in existing communities to help to meet housing demand (Cubitt, 2008; Levering, 2017; Sloan, 2014). However, there has been little, if any, research conducted on this potential strategy for meeting housing demand in Ireland. A study which investigates the lived experience of homeowners in Ireland with ADUs on their properties, or on family members’ properties, through a phenomenological, interpretivist research paradigm, could therefore provide an understanding of the facilitators for and barriers against increased development of ADUs in Ireland.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study is to gain an understanding of the lived experience of homeowners who have developed and used an

ADU on their property, or on a family member's property, in the Republic of Ireland, between the global economic crisis of 2008 and the year 2020. Homeowners who have undertaken the process of ADU planning, permitting, financing, and construction were asked to share their positive and negative experiences during semistructured qualitative interviews. Additionally, the homeowners' experiences of using and/or renting their ADUs were also examined. The central phenomenon of interest was the lived experience of private homeowners in the Republic of Ireland with the development and use of ADUs.

Homeowners who either own their ADU outright, or who are paying off a loan on their ADU, were eligible as participants in this study, as long as the homeowner was personally involved in the development and subsequent use/management of an ADU on their property, or on a family member's property, at some point since the global economic crisis of 2008. Only homeowners who live/lived on the properties in question were considered for interview, although they may live or have lived in either the main home or the ADU. Individuals who attempted to develop an ADU but were unsuccessful or did not complete the process for some reason were not eligible for participation in this study. An examination of the experiences of this group may be of interest in the future, since, by definition, the barriers or challenges faced individually by them were significant enough to prevent the development of each planned ADU. No age limit was stipulated for participants in this study, but participants must have been the ones to take the lead in

making the changes to their property or their family member's property in developing an ADU.

To explore participants' experiences, I collected qualitative data relating to the experiences of individuals who have built or converted a space as an ADU on their properties or on their family members' properties and who have also used their ADU either as a rental property or for their own family's use (or a combination of the two uses over time). I took this approach to develop a deeper understanding of the policy, social, financial, personal, and other factors that have shaped those experiences within the Irish context. Since little, if any, research on this topic has been conducted in Ireland to date, I developed a description of the nature of these experiences for research participants specifically in the Irish context. This allowed for the spontaneous emergence of themes in this research setting that may or may not have been identified or studied in other geographies in the past.

In exploring both the positive and negative experiences that homeowners may have had in developing and using ADUs in Ireland, I identified commonalities between participants' experiences, and thereby documented emerging themes specific to the processes of ADU development and use in Ireland. Additionally, unique experiences were also identified and examined. In so doing, and in adding "an interpretive dimension," this research serves as "a basis for practical theory...to inform, support or challenge policy and action" (Lester, 1999, p. 1). Policies in the realms of land use, urban planning, elder housing, elder care, property/personal finance, affordable housing, social

housing, and/or homelessness may benefit from the insights gained as part of this research.

### **Significance**

There is a need for a deeper understanding of the lived experience of the research participants, whose lives and choices are affected by land use planning, housing, and elder care policies. Without this understanding, the creation and evolution of policy cannot be undertaken in an informed manner and policymakers cannot be certain of the real world outcomes or impacts of their efforts. Improved comprehension of the real world implementation of land use, property evaluation, elder housing, tenancy, and real estate financing policies is therefore a key element in policy evolution and improvement over time.

This exploration of homeowners' lived experience in the development and use of ADUs in Ireland has highlighted areas of experience that are directly and indirectly impacted by policies and practices, which themselves may benefit from revision or expansion. This research has provided insights into the barriers and successes faced by the participants by describing the central phenomenon of their experiences using a Heideggerian theoretical framework.

This research, and the descriptions and common experiences that emerge in the Irish context, can be used to identify ways in which existing ADU planning, permitting, funding, building, and/or renting processes may be improved or streamlined. Overall knowledge and understanding of this housing form may be expanded, barriers to ADU

development may be minimized, and facilitators may be enhanced. If local governments and/or the national government of Ireland wish to explore and develop policies to encourage this type of housing, these highlighted areas and insights will offer an initial framework from which to build an action plan. It is also hoped that my research findings will draw attention to the role of ADUs in providing additional, flexible, affordable housing in existing urban and suburban areas, and will foster further dialogue and research into this topic in Ireland.

Furthermore, my research may also be used to highlight ways in which to realize the potential benefits of ADUs, to minimize potential or perceived drawbacks, and to examine the process and experience of private homeowner development of ADUs in further detail. My findings contribute towards the body of knowledge relied upon in the development and/or evolution of planning, permitting, funding, housing, elder care and other policies in Ireland relating specifically to ADUs. This form of housing is currently addressed in Ireland simply from a building code or health and safety perspective, with little consideration of the potential benefits of ADUs as affordable rental properties, flexible housing, sustainable development, transitional housing for the homeless, or elder housing. The lack of research in this area in Ireland suggests that existing land use, planning, parking, and housing policies would benefit from a review, in light of lessons learned elsewhere with respect to ADUs and their contribution to the housing market.

My research, being set in Ireland, can be used to inform the tailoring or revising of current and future land use, zoning, and housing policies in Ireland, in order to allow

any context specific benefits of ADU development to be realized while also minimizing any negative aspects that may apply. In this way, homeowners could in future be encouraged through policy, information, planning and design tools, and perhaps even financing or tax initiatives, to develop their own ADUs as small scale affordable housing for rent, thereby allowing the private sector to contribute to alleviating the Irish housing crisis of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century in an innovative way.

### **Research Questions**

Research Question 1 – What is the homeowners’ lived experience of the development and use of accessory dwelling units in Ireland?

Research Question 2 – What are the perceived factors that positively and negatively influence this experience with respect to the development and use of accessory dwelling units in Ireland?

### **Theoretical Framework**

For this phenomenological study, I have used Heidegger’s philosophy and key principles of lived experience to reveal the “meaning of everyday ordinary human existence” (Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016, p. 1). I have used this approach to examine and better understand the interpretations and meanings research participants attribute to their actions and experiences in the world through their own explanations. The researcher is also understood to exist in the world with the research participants, and therefore also needs to present an examination or illumination of his or her own biases in relation to the phenomenon of interest, and to his or her interpretation of participants’ experiences.

The use of an interpretive, phenomenological, qualitative research design allows for the unveiling of “new kinds of thinking and seeing” (Huttunen & Kakkori, 2020, p. 611) through the lived experience of the research participants. In keeping with Heidegger’s ontology (i.e., reality is subjective) and epistemology (i.e., each person’s reality requires interpretation), an examination of these experiences, and the factors that positively and negatively impact them, contributes to improved understanding of how policy, finance, personal, societal, and other factors influence the lived experience of homeowners who develop and use ADUs in Ireland. This improved understanding reveals facilitators and barriers to ADU development by private homeowners in Ireland and can be applied in the revision of existing policies and/or in the preparation of new ones to encourage expansion of this form of housing, to maximize the potential benefits, and to contribute to addressing the Irish housing crisis.

### **Nature of the Study**

The research took the form of a qualitative, interpretive phenomenological study of the lived experience of homeowners in Ireland who have developed and used an ADU on their properties, or on their family members’ properties, between the global economic crisis of 2008 and the year 2020. I have implemented a phenomenological approach to my research since this lent importance to the “personal perspectives and interpretation” of the participants and their lived experience (Lester, 1999, p. 1), an area that has not been addressed in the literature. This approach also allowed an exploration of experiences related to:

- policies and procedures that govern ADU development;
- financial, social, cultural, or other factors that influence homeowner experiences and decision making; and
- the use of ADUs as dwellings, whether rented to tenants or used by homeowners and their extended families.

A qualitative approach and analysis were consistent with the focus of this dissertation on the lived experience of homeowners in Ireland, and allowed for the emergence and identification of common challenges and experiences, as well as unique ones, in order to inform beneficial policy changes and government initiatives needed to allow the benefits of ADUs to be maximized and the drawbacks to be minimized in future.

All research participants were recruited on a voluntary basis using a recruitment flyer (see Appendix B) in print media, on social media, and via local community notice boards (both physical and virtual). I also planned for the possibility of snowball sampling, and included this recruitment approach in the research design. Ultimately, however, no participants were recruited through snowball sampling. Purposive sampling was conducted of adult homeowners in Ireland with experiences of the development and use of ADUs at any time and for any duration between 2008 and 2020. I provided prospective research participants who responded to the recruitment flyer with a study information sheet (see Appendix C) and arranged a preliminary conversation to confirm that the participant met the criteria and to allow them to ask any questions they had



before deciding to participate or not. Following this conversation, I reviewed the informed consent form with the participant and a date and time for their main interview (approximately 1 hour in duration) was agreed.

Data collection took place via semistructured interviews and memos. Due to the 2020 – 2021 Coronavirus pandemic, in-person interviews were not permitted and were therefore not carried out. Phone and/or voice-over-internet-protocol (VOIP) systems (e.g., Zoom or Skype) were used for all interviews. I informed participants that in-person interviews could only be conducted if public health and Walden guidelines (at the time of the interviews) permitted, and even then, only if the research participant voluntarily chose to be interviewed in person. I communicated to participants, that a suitable, private location, convenient for the participant, would be used if this were the case, such as a private meeting room in a community center, hotel, or church. A total of seven participants were interviewed in order to allow for comparison across participants' experiences while ensuring that the data collected were manageable (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Despite ongoing efforts via multiple avenues to recruit additional participants, additional interviews were not conducted. Interviews were conducted with the goal of achieving data saturation within each participant's narration of their lived experience, i.e., no new themes arising during the interviews and/or repetition of previous narratives and themes. In addition, as interviews and preliminary data analysis progressed, no new experiential themes emerged from the data. Later participants echoed several aspects of the lived experience of earlier participants, despite

differences in ADU form and/or in their reasons for developing an ADU, and data saturation was considered to have been achieved.

A total of seven participants were interviewed overall, allowing for rich textural and structural descriptions of the study phenomenon while ensuring that the volume of collected data remained manageable. Follow-up interviews (approximately 30 minutes in duration) were arranged with individual participants for any data clarification and/or to address any gaps in the data.

The interviews were accompanied by close analysis of the transcribed and recorded data as a whole and in its parts for each interview, as well as for the interviews combined. In accordance with Heidegger's hermeneutic circle, immersion in and analysis of the data at a high-level informed analysis on a more detailed level, and vice-versa, taking into consideration the biases of the researcher and the interpretations of the participants and the researcher. In undertaking data analysis, Heidegger's philosophy and the hermeneutic circle were employed (Giorgi, 2018; Peoples, 2020). The "iterative, inductive process of decontextualization and recontextualization" of data therefore commenced with multiple readings of interview transcripts (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1375). A hermeneutic approach was used for inductive analysis of the data, and to identify emerging experiential themes within and across the data as a result of data familiarization. This analysis, and subsequent reanalysis and reinterpretation provided "structure and [integrate] reflexivity" in the analysis of textual data (Mackieson et al., 2019).

## **Definitions**

### **Accessory Dwelling Unit**

Many different terms are applied to accessory dwelling units, a selection of which are given in Appendix A for reference. An accessory dwelling unit, or an ADU, is a second dwelling on the same plot of land as a main single-family home. The ADU is generally smaller in size and less imposing in character than the main house, has its own separate entrance, and contains living, sleeping, cooking, and sanitary facilities.

### **Affordable Housing**

Affordable housing is housing which is determined by a local or national government to be financially affordable (i.e., not an undue financial burden) for households with a median household income or lower. This means that the cost of housing does not impact a household's ability to meet other basic needs on an ongoing basis. The exact numerical or monetary definition varies from country-to-country, from city-to-city, and may even change from year-to-year. In Ireland, a cost-to-income method is used and affordable housing is defined as housing that costs 35% or less of a household's total income, whether in the form of rent or mortgage payments (Cooperative Housing Ireland, 2020).

### **Development Process**

For the purposes of this research, the development process refers to the activities of planning, designing, permitting, financing, and constructing an ADU, including, where relevant, the conversion of an existing space into an ADU.

**Elderly**

Adults over the age of 65 years are considered “elderly” in Ireland (Central Statistics Office, 2019).

**Emergency Accommodation**

In Ireland, emergency accommodation refers to government-provided temporary housing for those who are homeless and in urgent need of shelter. The beneficiaries of this type of accommodation are often low-income families and/or victims of domestic violence. Housing may take the form of hotel rooms, boarding houses, bed and breakfast, or other temporary accommodation provided while the individual(s) wait for long term social housing (see definition) to become available. These individuals continue to be categorized as “homeless” by the Irish government while living in emergency accommodation.

**Euclidian Zoning**

Also known as single use zoning, Euclidean zoning is a means of controlling land use in developed areas through the regulation of urban planning. Areas are generally identified as exclusively either residential, commercial, or industrial, leading to the creation of zones or zoning districts in towns and cities.

**Gentle Density**

This term is used to describe attached, low-rise housing that is more dense than a detached single-family home, but with a similar scale and architectural character. ADU development is a form of gentle density in residential neighborhoods.

**Granny Flat**

In Ireland, a “granny flat” is a permanent ADU which may or may not be used specifically as accommodation for an elderly parent or relative. In Australia and New Zealand, a “granny flat” is a temporary structure, provided by the local government specifically for the purpose of housing an elderly relative. Policies in Australia dictate that the structure must be removed once it is no longer needed by the elderly relative.

**Infill Development**

This is defined as the development or redevelopment of land in existing built-up areas that takes advantage of existing infrastructure investment and assets while avoiding the expansion of urban growth boundaries.

**Middle Housing/Missing Middle Housing**

Middle housing consists of multi-unit housing types such as single-family homes with ADUs, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, or apartment buildings that are similar in size to a single-family home. This form of housing can be integrated into neighborhoods with primarily single-family homes without changing the character of those neighborhoods.

Middle housing is not as common as higher- or lower-density housing types, and is therefore often referred to as “missing” middle housing.

**Primary Home**

The primary home is the main family residence on a plot of residential land. The primary home is generally larger in size than any ADU on the same plot, and is typically dominant in form and architecture. Where an ADU is integrated into the main structure

on a plot of land, the primary home is the separate space within that structure that is not a part of the ADU.

### **Social Housing**

The Irish government defines social housing as “housing provided by a local authority or a housing association to people who cannot afford housing from their own resources.” (National Economic and Social Development Office, 2014). Social housing may be built and rented (long-term) at affordable rates to tenants, or may be rented by the government from private-sector landlords with rent subsidies applied for qualifying tenants.

### **Assumptions**

I have taken an interpretivist approach to the research in order to “[gain] focused insight into individuals’ lived experiences [and] understand how participants make sense of...the experience in focus” (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 145). From an ontological and epistemological perspective, I believe that there is no single, true reality, and that reality therefore requires interpretation in order to uncover the meaning and essence of experiences. From an axiological point of view, my own role, values, and biases as a researcher have been acknowledged and addressed (see Appendix F for a summary of my preconceptions and biases over time). It follows, then, that a qualitative, phenomenological approach to the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data relating to the lived experience of research participants has allowed the participants’ voices to be heard, and their multiple realities to be presented. Applying a Heideggerian framework

also aligns with my belief that the researcher's own preconceptions and experiences in the world need to be recognized, declared, and examined in any scientific study, particularly as an important factor in the data analysis and interpretation process. This approach ensured that the context within which the analysis of data was carried out (i.e. my own lived experience of being in the world as a researcher and as a human being) was documented and presented in a clear and transparent manner.

One of the key practical assumptions, in the exploration of human experiences in this study, was that suitable homeowners would be willing to take part in the study, hopefully in recognition of the study's significance in exploring their lived experience and in adding their voices to future discussions on ADUs and associated policies. Furthermore, it was assumed that the research participants would be able to understand the questions as they were worded in the interview and that they would have an appreciation for the depth and richness of response being sought.

It was also assumed that the participants, having volunteered to take part in the research, would be open and honest in their responses to interview questions, and would be appropriately articulate. Where participants were asked to recall their past views, feelings, and experiences, this study relied on those recollections being relatively unaffected by the passage of time.

Finally, it was assumed that the participants would have a working understanding of the processes they have lived through, whether of a planning, permitting, financing, construction, or other nature, and that the use of telephone or VOIP interviews would be

suitable for the collection of rich data from all participants, where in-person interviews were not possible for logistical reasons or due to Coronavirus pandemic public health restrictions. Chapter 4 includes a brief discussion of the accuracy of these assumptions, as assessed during and after the data collection and analysis steps.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

This study's participants included an initial group of seven homeowners in Ireland, who had experiences with the development and use of an ADU at some time between the 2008 global economic crisis and 2020. Homelessness and the housing crisis in Ireland have continually worsened during this period of time in particular. It was not a requirement for participation that the homeowners own a property with an ADU at the time of the interviews. However, I did not include homeowners who had experiences with ADUs prior to 2008, but who had not had any experiences with ADUs since 2008, as the planning and other processes related to ADUs may have changed somewhat in the interim, and there was also an increased risk that the passage of more than 12 years may have affected their recollections of the processes involved and of the experiences they lived through.

I focused on the lived experience of the research participants with regard to the planning, permitting, financing, building, and renting or other use of their ADUs, while allowing in the semistructured interviews for participants to relate their experiences in a manner and to an extent that was natural and comfortable for them. In this way, I allowed



for the identification (by participants) of a range of social, financial, personal, policy, and other factors that influenced their efforts, feelings, and actions.

I did not recruit research participants with whom I had a personal or professional relationship, in order to avoid any perceived coercion or influence on the participants, and to avoid any power relationships between the researcher and the participants of a social or professional nature. This minimized the potential for either the participants' behavior or my own behavior as a researcher to be influenced by such relationships. Participants were advised of the purpose and nature of the study (via a Study Information Sheet – see Appendix C), of the measures to be taken to protect their privacy and confidentiality, and of their freedom to leave the study at any time for any reason. Information and contact details were provided to participants who were free to contact Walden University before deciding to take part in the study, or to follow up on some aspect of the study in confidence at any time. Other stakeholders with knowledge of or interest in ADUs in Ireland, such as real estate professionals, mortgage/financing professionals, urban planners or policy makers, were excluded from this study, but have been considered within the discussion of recommendations for future research.

### **Limitations**

The nature of this study allowed for certain insights into homeowners' experiences in relation to ADU development and use, but since the number of interviews was restricted by time and resource considerations, the research participant group could not be assumed as representative of the sample population as a whole. This limitation was

offset, however, by the ability to delve more deeply into the experiences, opinions, and perceptions of the research participants in this type of qualitative, phenomenological study. This in-depth investigation can be used to identify areas for further, perhaps quantitative research.

It is also acknowledged that the findings of this study emerged from a somewhat homogeneous context, due to the fact that all seven of the research participants appeared to share the same nationality and ethnicity (participants were not asked to state their nationality or ethnicity as part of the study). While the approximate age range of each participant was noted, other socioeconomic factors such as income level, mortgage status, marital status, or level of education were neither discussed in detail nor recorded. The results of this study are also not necessarily transferrable to other countries, due to cultural, historical, architectural, and policy differences, although some general insights may be gained. Future research may allow for a larger sample size or an alternative sampling strategy, and may take factors such as income level, location, home value, type of ADU, family size/structure, or homeowner ethnicity into account in some manner to allow for further in-depth quantitative analysis, for example.

There was also the issue of researcher bias to consider, in the design of the interview guides, in the collection of data, and in the analysis and interpretation of this data. The use of a research journal, and post-interview notes, helped me to be aware of my biases and preconceptions at all times, coupled with guidance and feedback from my committee members throughout my research. In keeping with Heidegger's approach to

hermeneutical phenomenology, I documented my preconceptions and thoughts at intervals, and considered them (and the changes in them) in the process of analysis and understanding of the data in its parts and as a whole.

Additionally, there was a risk that some homeowners, who may not have strictly followed permitting or planning procedures for the development of their ADUs, may have been reluctant to participate or may not have been sufficiently forthcoming in relating their experiences. The semistructured interview format, and the confidentiality of participants' data and interviews, allowed for some exploration of these circumstances and experiences with unauthorized ADUs as well as authorized ADUs.

Finally, this research took place against the backdrop of the 2020 and 2021 global Coronavirus pandemic. Various levels of travel restrictions and social distancing had an impact on both the recruitment and data collection processes. Participants were allowed to choose the form of the interviews, taking all public health advice and restrictions into consideration, and adhering to Walden University's guidance and IRB approval conditions at all times.

### **Summary**

In this qualitative, phenomenological study, I employed a Heideggerian philosophy to explore the lived experience of homeowners in Ireland who have developed ADUs on their properties or on their family members' properties. Data was collected using in-depth, semistructured interviews, follow-up interviews, and researcher notes. Using purposive sampling, I initially recruited five research participants for this

study, and interviewed an additional two participants (giving a total of seven participants) in order to achieve data saturation.

The findings of this study shed light on the experiences of homeowners with respect to the development and use of ADUs in the Irish context. This allows for a deeper appreciation of the impact of various social, financing, planning, permitting and other policies and factors on homeowners considering or undertaking ADU development. Informed improvements in such policies could then bring about social change by encouraging private sector development of this type of housing in response to a nationwide Irish housing crisis. Understanding how to encourage and facilitate ADU development by private homeowners is important as there is currently a lack of understanding in the literature as to why certain ADU policy strategies succeed or fail.

The current body of knowledge on the research topic is outlined in Chapter 2 and the way in which this study fills a gap in the literature is clarified. Published research on ADUs was examined from a number of perspectives, since this form of housing has been studied in more than one context (e.g., elder care, flexible housing, affordable housing, and land use policy).

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The Irish housing market has been in crisis for several years (Finn, 2018), with supply not meeting demand and average rental and purchase costs increasing on a monthly basis (Finn, 2019; Residential Tenancies Board, 2019). The role of ADUs in Ireland warrants exploration as a potential contributing solution to this social problem. In particular, an examination of the lived experience of homeowners in Ireland who have developed and used an ADU on their property, or on a family member's property, could contribute to an increased awareness of the benefits of this form of housing, as well as future improvements in relevant land use and other policies.

In reviewing the literature on the topic of ADUs, it was appropriate to consider the different contexts in which ADU development has previously been studied in different countries. Researchers have examined ADU development in different countries in a number of key contexts. Firstly, the role of ADUs in the provision and expansion of ageing-in-place, down-sizing, and at-home care options for the elderly has been explored in the gerontological literature. Additionally, opportunities for increasing the supply of affordable housing and for improved diversity of housing stock have been investigated in urban planning, land use, and housing literature. Finally, ADU development is viewed as a way in which urban sprawl can be avoided and the use of existing land, utilities, and transport infrastructure can be optimized.

Since the 1970s, published research outside of Ireland has delved into these contexts by considering a number of issues, such as the positive and negative impacts of various land use, planning, and parking policies and regulations, the procedural obstacles to accurate valuation of properties with ADUs, and limited access to financing for ADU development. Of interest also, are the roles of local and regional government structures, and the nature of the interactions between them with regard to encouraging ADU development among homeowners. Some scholars have examined specific policies, initiatives, and campaigns implemented in a number of cities in the USA to promote ADU development and to remove administrative and policy barriers. Others have focused on ADUs in the context of the benefits of flexible housing, mixed tenure communities, and mixed generation households for those living in them.

There does not appear to be any academic research on the topic of ADUs in the Irish context, however. In addition, international research also lacks an in-depth consideration of the lived experience of ADU landlords and tenants, focusing instead, albeit briefly, on quantitative measures of levels of satisfaction with ADU living (Glaser et al., 2018; Levering, 2017). Stories of lived experience are occasionally addressed as feature articles in non-academic publications (Emanoil, 1999). An examination of homeowners' lived experience in the development and use of ADUs in the Irish context could therefore provide valuable knowledge for the improvement of existing land use, financing, elder care, housing, and tenancy policies, and also for the crafting of future policies in these areas.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

Support was sought and received on numerous occasions from the Walden Librarian for the School of Public Policy, and although I secured in-person access to library resources at a university in Ireland, the global Coronavirus pandemic prevented the use of this resource (online access was not made available to external researchers). Use was made of numerous databases, including ProQuest Central, SAGE Journals, Political Science Complete, AARP State Data Center, NexisUni, Project MUSE, and Walden’s own Dissertations & Theses database. A range of search terms were used, in a variety of combinations, including several different terms used in the literature to describe accessory dwelling units, such as “ADU”, “accessory dwelling (unit)”, “secondary dwelling”, “granny flat”, “garage apartment”, “garden suite”, and “laneway housing” (see Appendix A for additional terms).

Additionally, the following key intersecting terms and areas were also searched in a variety of combinations with ADU terminology:

- aging-in-place and care for the elderly;
- flexible housing and multi-generational households;
- affordable housing and tenure mix;
- urban planning, planning policy, sustainable development and smart growth; and
- land use, infill development and densification, including “gentle density” and “missing middle” housing.

The literature review encompassed peer-reviewed articles relating to ADUs in these contexts, as well as academic articles addressing particular planning and zoning matters relevant to ADUs, and recently published books on ADU development in the U.S.. Additional perspectives and information were gleaned from a number of older academic and non-academic publications, in line with the surge in interest in ADUs in the U.S., Australia, Canada, and the U.K. in the 1980s and 1990s. Since ADU research in Ireland is in its infancy, early research in other countries was considered of relevance in order to illustrate the history of interest in this topic elsewhere and to provide contrast and comparison with any research published relating to the Irish context. Furthermore, reference was made to a number of Irish government publications on housing and the elderly, as well as recent, non-academic publications such as books, news articles, white papers, and media website articles related to Irish housing and the ongoing social problems of homelessness, housing supply, and housing affordability.

The literature review was informed by the research questions, and, to the extent possible, focused on work that examined the experiences of homeowners and ADU tenants, as well as on research that dealt with factors that have contributed to the success or failure of policy-based efforts to encourage homeowners to finance and build secondary units. The role of ADUs and the variety of policy steps that local governments have taken in order to encourage ADU development were also examined. The majority of the existing (current and historical) literature is set in the U.S. and Canada, where ADU development has been a topic of research and policy interest since at least the 1980s.



However, some older relevant material has also been published in Australia and the U.K., along with a limited amount of research on housing diversity in some European countries. Secondary searches were also conducted, using the material referenced in the peer-reviewed articles and text books.

In order to support the purpose and research questions, to gain an appreciation for the body of work carried out over several decades in different geographies, and to identify potential gaps in the published literature, selected key terms and phrases were used in the literature review. These terms included the following: *accessory dwelling unit* (and multiple alternative terms for ADUs, as shown in Appendix A), *affordable housing*, *Irish housing*, *infill development*, *aging-in-place*, *urban/planning policy*, *land use planning*, *gentle density*, and *missing middle housing*. The search terms were used individually and in combination with each other so as to identify suitable academic material for the research problem and purpose. Further refinement of search terms and combinations of search terms facilitated a focused search on key areas of research for inclusion in the literature review. Secondary- and tertiary-level searches for academic sources were conducted by examining the bibliographies of peer-reviewed articles identified in library and database searches.

### **Theoretical Framework**

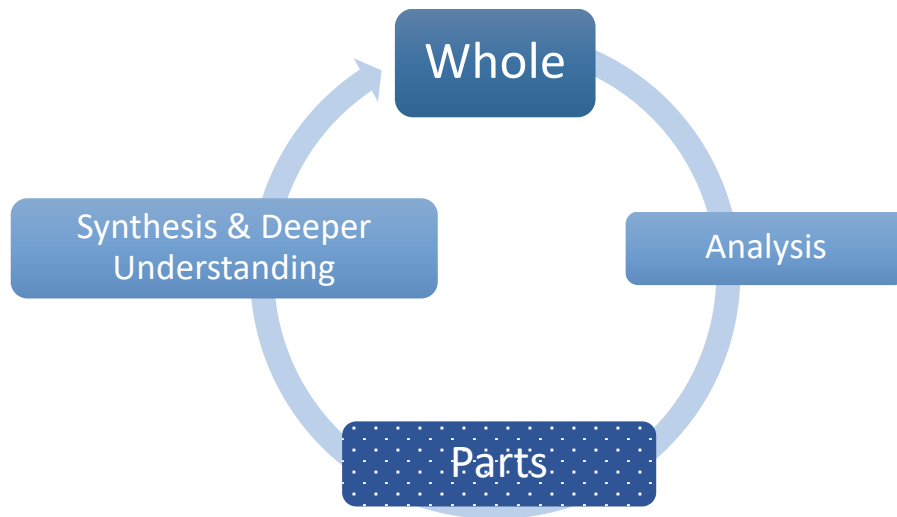
The theoretical framework selected for this research was Heidegger's approach to phenomenology. Ontologically, this philosophy asserts that there is no single reality, since every human interprets their own reality in the context of the world around them

and in the context of their own existence in that world. Heidegger's philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenology also holds that the researcher always shares in the experience of existing in the world, and for that reason cannot truly bracket or separate out his/her assumptions, preunderstandings, or biases. This approach allowed for and required, therefore, an examination of my own assumptions as a researcher, and the inclusion of this examination process in research design, data collection, data analysis, and in the interpretation of the data. This approach was in keeping with my own belief as a researcher in the existence of a multitude of realities and in the need for an awareness of the lenses through which they are viewed by various parties.

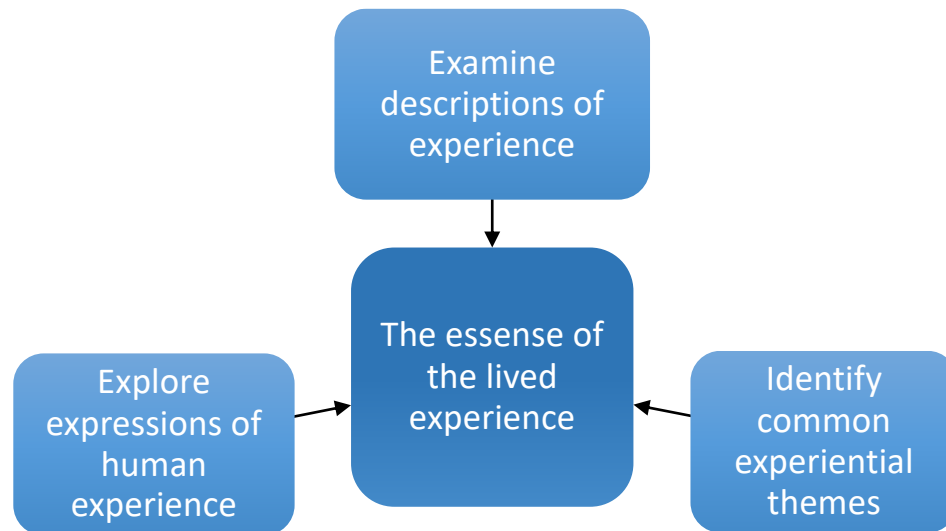
Further, the interpretation of the world is, under this framework, a process of revision and iteration, wherein our understanding of individual parts of an experience impacts our understanding of the whole of the experience, which in turn impacts our (revised) understanding of the whole, and so on. This process is referred to as the Hermeneutic Circle and is illustrated in principle and in practical analysis in Figures 1 and 2, respectively.

**Figure 1**

*Heidegger's Hermeneutic Circle – Principle*



*Note.* Adapted from “A review of Gadamerian and Ricoeurian hermeneutics and its application to interpretive accounting research,” by M. B. Farooq, 2018, *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*, 13, p 261-283 (<https://doi.org/10.1108/QROM-07-2017-1550>).

**Figure 2***Hermeneutics in Data Analysis*

*Note.* Adapted from “A ‘lost life’: Coming to terms with haemodialysis,” by S. Monaro, G. Stewart, and J. Gullick, 2014, *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, 23, p 3262-3273, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.12577>.

**Rationale for Choosing this Framework**

In the context of this research, I used this theoretical framework in conjunction with the findings of the literature review to inform the design of the interview protocol as well as data analysis and interpretation. This approach helped me to gather rich data of particular relevance to the research questions and, importantly, to the role that existing policies, procedures, and societal factors played in the lived experience and decision-making processes of the research participants. This application of Heidegger’s philosophy aligned with my own ontological and epistemological views that there is no

single reality in the world, and that in order to discover the underlying meaning of experiences and events, reality needs to be interpreted while taking into account a researcher's own reality (Horrigan-Kelly, et al., 2016). The application of a double hermeneutic was therefore central to this research, since each participant made meaning of their own experiences, based on the context of their world and their preconceptions, and, as a researcher, my interpretation of participants' accounts also took place in the context of my own world and my own preconceptions or biases.

### **How this Framework Relates to this Study**

The phenomenon of interest for this study was the lived experience of homeowners in the development and use of ADUs. Therefore, it was critical to examine these experiences, and the homeowners' relating of them, through a lens that acknowledged the existence of multiple, subjective realities, based on the real world experiences of participants who have lived the phenomenon in question. Additionally, Heidegger's philosophy recognizes the experiences and biases of the researcher and the need to elaborate on how these may influence the research design, the researcher as instrument, and the analysis of data.

### **Literature Review Focus**

The initial focus in carrying out this literature review was to gain an understanding of the extent of academic research on ADU development in Ireland. An apparent absence of any published academic material on this topic in the Irish context, however, prompted an examination of previous work undertaken in other countries,

where there has been a significant level of both policy and public interest in this form of housing since at least the 1970s (Lazarowich, 1991). Academic research from the U.S., Canada, Australia, and the U.K. provided information and context for other countries with similar land use policies and practices to those in Ireland. A review of available literature on the housing market in Ireland was also carried out, drawing from a recent textbook publication on the history of Irish housing in order to set out the policy landscape applicable in Ireland and to inform the research design and interview guides at a later date.

### **Scope of the Literature Review**

ADUs have been studied in a number of different disciplines. Applying an awareness of this intersectionality, this literature review examined the research on this form of housing from the following perspectives:

- Land use planning efforts to encourage ADU development;
- Affordable housing and diversity of housing stock; and
- Housing for the elderly.

This approach helped to establish the context within which this study of experiences with ADU development in Ireland took place, while also identifying the core themes within the literature and, thus, guiding the research and the researcher alike.

### **Defining Accessory Dwelling Units**

ADUs are known by a multitude of different names around the world. They are sometimes referred to as granny flats, in-law apartments, lane houses, accessory

apartments, and, in Australia, as ‘Fonzy’ apartments (after the television character who lived in a small apartment above a garage), and they fulfil a variety of different purposes for homeowners.

For the purposes of this research, and within the literature, an ADU was defined consistently as a permanent, self-contained residential space with its own exterior access, located on the same plot of land as an associated main dwelling, but smaller than the main dwelling in size (Antoninetti, 2008; Brinig, 2015; Cobb & Dvorak, 2000; Lazarowich, 1991). Formally, both dwellings are considered to be owned by the landowner, who may or may not reside in the main house or in the ADU. ADUs are generally, though not exclusively, built sometime after the construction of the main family home, and by definition, must contain independent living, cooking, sleeping, and sanitation facilities (Antoninetti, 2008; Brinig, 2015; Cobb & Dvorak, 2000; Lazarowich, 1991). It is important to note that this definition excludes so-called “garden rooms” that may provide additional living space or home office space, but that lack one or more of these facilities.

ADUs can take a number of different forms. For example, an ADU may be physically attached to a main dwelling, in the case of a converted basement, attic space, or extension to the main home, but with separate facilities and a separate entrance from the side or rear of the property. Such ADUs may or may not have an internal door allowing access to the main home, should the homeowner so wish. An ADU may be contained within a completely separate structure (e.g., a garage conversion, above-garage

apartment, or a backyard cottage). Whatever form it takes, however, an ADU must comply with local ordinances relating to building codes, safety, utilities, zoning, setbacks, and other urban planning considerations, in the same way that the main dwelling must also comply with these ordinances and considerations.

Additional policies that often apply to ADUs, when used as rented accommodation, include those relating to the content and registration of rental or tenancy agreements, as well as landlord and tenant rights. Parking requirements and restrictions often apply, as do various stipulations relating to the maximum number of bedrooms, the minimum or maximum size of the ADU, and the position and visibility of the ADU entrance and/or access stairs. There are examples in the literature of a wide variety of detailed development restrictions, specific usage rules, and prescriptive design requirements imposed by different jurisdictions in response to public concerns and in order to achieve or align with predetermined local urban planning goals.

### **A Brief History of Accessory Dwelling Units**

For as long as humans have owned and built various forms of shelter, homeowners have modified and added to their homes for a multitude of reasons. In rural contexts, there is historical evidence of farming families in Europe and North America having adapted their housing arrangements through the provision of secondary, stand-alone living quarters for grandparents, in order to maintain close intergenerational links once a son took over the running of the farm from his father (Antoninetti, 2008; Tinker, 1991). In the U.K. in the early 1800s, carriage houses or guest houses, often accessed via



a separate alley, became popular during a housing boom in London and were used to house staff and household workers. This trend crossed the Atlantic and such properties can still be found today in historic parts of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Washington, DC, in the U.S. (Antoninetti, 2008). This demonstrates a long-standing, albeit evolving, demand for flexibility and diversity in housing types within a single neighborhood, and speaks to the ability of private homeowners to take steps to meet that demand at the micro-level.

However, in the U.S. in the late 1800s, various social and economic practices, policies, and circumstances led to the degeneration of existing annex houses and so-called alley-houses, and a general overcrowding of such homes, often with families on low incomes or with marginalized groups. New alley houses were also often built without the necessary permits. These factors combined to fuel concern among policy makers at the time as to the perceived social and financial impacts of these types of houses on surrounding neighborhoods (Antoninetti, 2008). In Europe and North America, the early 1900s saw a transition from ADUs as housing for low-income workers to their use as housing for family members or as rental accommodation and an additional source of income for a household.

### **ADUs and Land Use Policies**

Euclidian zoning, or single-use zoning, is a means of controlling land use in developed areas through the regulation of urban planning. Areas are generally identified as exclusively either residential, commercial, or industrial, leading to the creation of

zones or zoning districts in towns and cities. This means that residential plots for family homes are restricted by planning policies to the construction of one residential building for use by a single family. This approach to town planning is centered on the belief that the best way to organize different land uses is to separate them spatially into different zones or districts. In this way, commercial activities are located separate to family residences, industrial enterprises are often pushed to the outskirts of a town or city, and people must then travel between these districts in order to go to work, shop, and/or run errands, in the course of daily life. Historically, at an international level, land use zoning has been treated as an intensely local issue, with many governments deferring to local municipalities in this regard. Additionally, this approach to land use control does not always adequately address the difference between the definitions of families and of households, ignoring the variety of different bonds and structures that often make up the latter (Silbaugh, 2016).

Although the development of ADUs can offer several benefits to homeowners, communities, and local governments alike, the prevalence of traditional Euclidian zoning laws in urban and suburban areas in much of the developed world means that ADUs are frequently illegal by default in single-family zoned residential areas (Gottlieb, 2017). However, this does not deter some homeowners and unpermitted ADUs are not uncommon (Levering, 2017). For example, research suggests that the true number of ADUs in Portland, Oregon (USA) is two to three times more than official permit records suggest (Levering, 2017). This overall restrictive approach to land use contributes to the

high cost of housing, an absence of housing diversity (in part due to missing middle housing), and the direct and indirect exclusion of particular socioeconomic groups from large residential neighborhoods and communities.

### **A Brief History of Housing in Ireland**

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through to 2021, the Irish housing market has passed through a number of phases, with both the market and the government's housing policies attempting to respond to changing lifestyles, varying household and family composition, evolving transportation trends, and a variety of external economic events. A number of continuous building periods were each brought to an end by outside influences, such as World Wars I and II, the Great Depression, and the Global Economic Crisis of 2007/2008. To add to this, over the course of the past 120 years, Ireland has progressed from British rule, to a Free State (in 1922), to a Republic (in 1948), and most recently to membership of the European Union (since 1973).

In parallel with these political changes, Ireland has evolved from a country that was once predominantly rural in both character and attitude, to one which is dominated by urban and suburban environments, while maintaining an undeniably strong connection to rural backgrounds and lineage. Irish householders have gone from predominantly living in rented accommodation at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to predominantly owning their own homes at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Fahey, 2003). Georgian suburban housing in Ireland (1700 – 1830), took the form of long terraces, centered around a public park or square, and developed in cities like Dublin with occupants relying on walking or

horse riding to get around. Detached suburban Georgian villas, set on their own grounds, relied on horse and carriage transportation, while Victorian housing (1850 – 1910) developed in the era of train and tram transport. Government social housing (1930 – 1990) on the outskirts of larger cities like Dublin and Cork was designed and located to be connected to the urban areas by bus and/or bicycle, and the lifestyle associated with modern suburban private housing (1960s onwards) was and still is centered around Euclidian zoning, single-family residences, reliance on cars for transport, and the need to commute greater distances to work.

Between 1930 and 1990, the government of Ireland undertook the construction of some social housing, but subsequently implemented schemes where social housing tenants could purchase these properties, leaving the national social housing stock severely depleted. Throughout all of this time, and even into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, very little attention was paid to the question of balance in the supply of housing to meet a wide variety of budgets and needs, resulting in a lack of diversity in Irish housing stock at the time of this study.

### **Efforts to Encourage ADU Development**

There is evidence in the literature of efforts made in the U.S. and elsewhere between the 1980s and 2020 by several state and local-level governmental entities and a number of independent organizations to proactively encourage the construction of accessory units by private homeowners (Antoninetti, 2008; Chapman & Howe, 2001; Cobb & Dvorak, 2000; Levering, 2017; Wegmann & Nemirow, 2011). These efforts are

often in response to local-level housing crises, a demand for ageing-in-place options for the elderly, and/or a lack of affordable housing for an influx of younger workers. The goal is to encourage and facilitate a role for private homeowners in meeting housing demand locally, thereby reducing the burden on local government housing programmes while also promoting infill development and gentle density at a micro-level.

### **The Roles of State and Local Governments**

Since state and local governments are frequently directly responsible for devising and implementing land use planning and zoning policies, the ease with which a homeowner can legally develop an ADU is directly impacted by the strategies and priorities set out therein. In the USA, an increasing number of state and local governments have, variously, created bespoke ordinances, published model policies, made template ADU designs freely available, effected changes to permitting processes, created tax incentives, granted permit fee waivers, and carried out initial mapping of neighborhoods to let residents know if their plot meets the planning criteria for permitted ADU development (Levering, 2017; Moffat, 2004; Valance et al., 2005). These efforts are evidence of a widespread policy-level belief in other countries in ADUs as a form of housing with a beneficial role to play in the overall planning and growth of a community. In the context of a 21<sup>st</sup> century national housing crisis in Ireland it is important, therefore, to understand why this form of housing does not appear to be prevalent or popular among homeowners, or actively discussed or encouraged at a policy level.

It is noted in the literature that, internationally, some local governments have been known to explicitly prohibit the construction of secondary units. More indirectly, restrictive requirements relating to parking, utility connections, plot coverage, setbacks, and architectural design have been used to effectively stifle ADU development at the local level, while still notionally complying with state-level ADU ordinances (Antoninetti, 2008; Brinig & Garnett, 2013; Gottlieb, 2017; Levering, 2017; Rosenthal, 2009)). In the U.K., new property tax policies in 2016 treated ADUs as secondary homes, incurring significant taxation, until objections and public outcry caused the details of the policy to be amended (Osborne, 2016). Some examples of other restrictive policies are given in Appendix E.

### **Research Implications**

Much has been written about the wide variety of policy instruments and approaches used by local governments to support homeowner development of ADUs. However, there are still a number of hurdles that need to be overcome by homeowners, and, as a result, ADU development often does not reach the levels anticipated or hoped for by well-intentioned policy makers. Little attention has been paid in the literature to the lived experience of those who have to navigate various policies or combinations of policies in order to build or convert an ADU on their property. An improved understanding of this lived experience, set within the context of the real world and the lives of real homeowners, could inform future strategies and policies aimed at encouraging ADU development and thereby helping to meet housing demand.

## **ADUs and the Elderly**

### **Ageing Populations and Changing Housing Needs**

In 2017, over 13 percent of the world's population was reported to be over the age of 65, with the number of people in this age category expected to double by 2050 (United Nations, 2017). More recently, Gardner and Nasserjah (2019) noted that more than 33% of households in both the U.S. and in Western Europe currently have a member who is 60 years of age or older. In the U.K., there are projected to be almost one and a half million additional homes with an older person of 85 years or more by 2037, an increase of 161% from 2016 figures (Centre for Ageing Better, 2016). In Ireland, demographic changes can be seen in the form of an ageing population, with citizens enjoying longer life expectancy, and the number of people over 65 years of age anticipated to increase at a faster rate than in some of our European neighbors (Housing Agency, 2016; Timonen & McMennamin, 2002). As a result of this, more and more people, in Ireland and further afield, are spending longer periods of time as retirees, and as active and healthy parents of adult children who no longer live in the family home (i.e., as so-called empty nesters). The introduction of divorce in Ireland in 1995 has also led to an increase in single-person households in different age groups (Timonen & McMennamin, 2002), which has contributed to an increased demand for more diversity in housing types and sizes. This trend has previously been recognized in Belgium (Bevoets & Heynan, 2013), where, similar to Ireland, wide-scale suburbanization post-World War II has led to strong preference for (and a resulting pervasiveness of) single-family homes, with growing

concern about the housing market's ability to meet demand for smaller homes. In many cases, where housing options are limited, older adults who wish to down-size may be forced to take the decision to reside with other family members in a single-family home (Somes & Webb, 2015), and to accept the loss of independence and privacy that comes with such a move.

### **Housing and Elder Health and Lifestyles**

There is broad acceptance in the gerontological literature of two key matters, namely the positive links between housing, independence, and health among the elderly (Ahn et al., 2020; McCann et al., 2012; Tinker, 1991; Yang & Fu, 2019), and the significant impact of a growing cohort of elderly citizens on housing, transport, health, and social care needs (Gardner & Nasserjah, 2019; McCann et al., 2012; Tinker, 1997). An important factor in the development of public policies relating to providing for ageing populations and communities, is the long-acknowledged, almost universal desire of elderly people in Ireland, the U.S. and the U.K. to age-in-place and to retain their independence for as long as possible (Cobb & Dvorak; 2000; The National Council for the Aged, 1985; Tinker, 1997). The various needs of the elderly, whether present-day or in the future when mobility or health issues may arise, therefore emerge at a unique intersection of housing, urban planning, healthcare, and social care policies. The level of flexibility required in the housing sector to account for this was not recognized in Ireland, the U.S., or the U.K. during the post-World War II days of suburbanization and single-



family homes. However, it is clear from the literature that several states and cities in the USA have implemented a range of policies to change this.

The absence of discussion on this topic in Ireland needs to be addressed, and it is appropriate to give proper attention to the growing demand for suitable, smaller housing for the elderly, within their existing communities, which can provide both independence and proximity to family or other supports. ADUs are uniquely placed to address this need in a balanced way (Brinig, 2015) and provide an opportunity for valuable and healthy interaction and support between different age groups within a community and/or different generations of one family (O'Dare et al., 2019; Siegel & Rimsky, 2013). By encouraging the construction of ADUs, policy makers can promote ageing-in-place in a practical way and facilitate housing options that allow the elderly to experience the benefits of having caregivers, support, family and/or grandchildren in close proximity while retaining their independence, privacy, and dignity (Cicero, 2012).

The creation of age-friendly environments (encompassing suitable housing, security, amenities, universal design, and accessible transport options) has been included as a strategic objective in the World Health Organization's Global Strategy and Action Plan on Aging and Health (Brookfield et al., 2020). So-called Livable Communities (or Lifetime Communities) have been promoted in the U.S. (Siegel & Rimsky, 2013), and the Irish government has formally recognized the importance of ageing-in-place (Housing Agency, 2016). In the U.K., so-called Extra Care Housing (ECH) and the experiences of older people living in such housing have been examined in the context of integrating

independent living with the provision of care and support to meet changing needs over time (Cameron et al., 2019). Measures to facilitate the development of suitable housing for those who wish to age-in-place would therefore be of benefit and of interest to a variety of groups, and efforts to identify and remove policy and other barriers can contribute to the body of knowledge used to develop and implement successful policy changes.

### **Grandparents and Multi-Generational Households**

There is also evidence in the literature of 21<sup>st</sup> century grandparents taking on increasingly supportive roles in their families, rather than being supported by their adult children (Glaser et al., 2018), while also spending more time with their grandchildren and helping their adult children with childcare more than ever before (Brinig, 2015; Emanoil, 1999; Glaser et al., 2018). With these changes comes an increased need for variety and flexibility in housing options, levels of independence, and models of care provision for the elderly (Brinig, 2015; Liebig et al., 2006), many of whom wish to retain their independence and remain connected to their properties, their communities, and their neighborhoods. There is a growing demand for affordable housing options for the elderly (Brinig, 2015), as well as a need for better understanding of the relationships between the physical and psychological health of older adults and their housing and environments (Yang & Fu, 2019).

### **Empty Nesters and Ageing in Place**

For senior citizens whose adult children have moved out of the family home, or whose mobility and care needs have changed over time, the thought of down-sizing their living arrangements may have a certain appeal. However, attachments to property, neighbors, friends, church, community, and other amenities may preclude relocation as a solution to changing housing requirements, particularly if they are long-term residents in an area. Most older adults would prefer to age in place, rather than move to retirement communities or nursing homes (Brinig, 2015; Cicero, 2012). The prospect of staying in the family home may be challenging, depending on “[their] mental and physical health, the ability to accommodate increasing disability, isolation and consequent loneliness, safety from accident and crime, and matters of finance” (Brinig, 2015, p. 386). A large family home may also involve costly and difficult maintenance, as well as energy and other inefficiencies for a reduced number of occupants.

### **ADUs as Elder Housing**

For those who are ready to downsize, one solution is for the senior citizen(s) to move into an ADU on their own property, while renting the primary home to a tenant or allowing family members to move in to the larger family home. Equally, for those who do not wish to move out of the primary home, renting an ADU to a tenant generates income that may be needed for various costs associated with maintaining the property and/or increasing medical bills, and can present opportunities for formal or informal care arrangements, additional companionship, or help with property maintenance.

This approach to elder housing is not a new one, and government-funded schemes to facilitate the provision of so-called “granny flats” have been in place in Australia and New Zealand since the 1970s. Academic research in Canada on this topic dates back to the early 1980s, and ADUs or elder cottages have been the focus of studies in the USA at different times between the 1980s and 2020, but particularly since the 1990s.

**Benefits.** An ADU can offer the opportunity to live more simply and more cost-effectively, in a smaller, often single-level space, while maintaining all of the existing connections to the neighborhood and to the community. These connections can be vital to the mental and physical health and wellbeing of senior citizens and retirees, especially if there are no family members living nearby (Gardner & Nasserjah, 2019; Glaser et al., 2018). Additionally, the ability to rent out the main family home, while living in an ADU on the same plot (or vice versa) can provide a source of income. Tenants can also sometimes be willing to undertake maintenance and gardening chores, and even run errands for elderly homeowners, in exchange for a more affordable rental payment.

ADUs can provide a range of practical benefits for the elderly, including the ability to downsize from a larger main dwelling without having to move to a new community, and the option to live close to children and grandchildren who may occupy the main dwelling (Brinig, 2015; Liebig et al., 2006). ADUs also present a more affordable housing option “for the elderly or others of modest means” (Brinig, 2015, p. 382) while offering an ideal combination of independent living and nearby companionship and assistance if needed.

Living arrangements that bring grandparents and their children and grandchildren together can also provide a number of social benefits for everyone involved. Adult children and their families benefit from having a grandparent nearby, who may be able to help with childcare and other forms of support (Brinig, 2015; Gardner & Nasserjah, 2019; Liebig et al., 2006). The elderly are able to live independently for as long as possible, while still having access to day-to-day support, company, and even help in an emergency. Brinig (2015) refers to this as a balance between “independence and intimacy” (p. 390) and the combination of privacy and proximity is often highlighted in the literature.

**Limitations of ADUs as Elder Housing.** While the idea of having grandparents on-hand to contribute to family life in a meaningful and enriching way is quite appealing, and has benefits for all involved, these types of arrangements do not always work smoothly. Research has shown that such multi-generational living is frequently based on informal agreements, and on an assumption of ongoing care being provided to the elderly parent. Often, the grandparent in question may have sold their own home and contributed financially to the construction of an ADU or to the purchase of a property with a suitable ADU, albeit in the absence of a contractual agreement or of a share in legal title to the property (Thomas, 2008). Unfortunately, there is ample case law in Australia dealing with such situations, and the property disputes that accompany them. Family members rarely document their duties towards one another in this “family accommodation” or “assets for care” context (Somes & Webb, 2015, p. 25) simply because most cannot

imagine a breakdown in the relationships involved. Accusations of financial elder abuse and undue influence are frequently levelled against family members, and regardless of the legal resolution to the issue, the family relationship may become damaged beyond repair and the elderly parent may find themselves without a home or the necessary capital to procure a new one (Somes & Webb, 2015; Thomas, 2008;). It is important, therefore, to understand the potential challenges that may be faced by families wishing to establish multi-generational households with ADUs, and the legal positions of all involved. Seeking a deeper understanding of the lived experience of those who have encountered these challenges can contribute to this process, and the creation of suitable policies to help avoid or address such situations.

### **Research Implications**

It is clear from the gerontological literature that ADUs offer a number of advantages and benefits as a form of housing for the elderly. However, although the Irish government faces challenges in housing and caring for the elderly, historical practices and a recently published strategy document are centered around either the provision of care within the elderly person's own family home, or the provision of care in a nursing home environment. Consideration does not appear to have been given to allowing or encouraging more flexible, multi-generational housing and care options such as ADUs and so the potential role of ADUs in this arena suffers from a lack of attention, exploration, and awareness in the Irish context.

In addition, much of the international research on ADUs and the elderly has focused on homeowners'/landlords' and occupants' quantified levels of satisfaction with ADU housing, on health outcomes for elderly occupants of ADUs, and on other quantitative factors. The lived experience of elderly homeowners and/or elderly ADU occupants has not been explored in any detail. There is an opportunity, therefore, to illuminate these experiences with ADU housing, with a view to informing future policies and practices in the arenas of elder care and elder housing.

While this study is not designed to understand the experiences of the elderly, specifically, in relation to ADU housing, it is intended to provide an initial examination of existing homeowners' lived experience, regardless of age, with ADUs in Ireland. The findings of this study may then not only raise awareness of this housing form and inform future housing, elder care, urban planning, or other policies, but may also inform future research of a more targeted nature in one or more of these disciplines. Study findings may also serve to encourage the holistic development and expansion of policies in a multi-disciplinary sense (e.g., the intersection of elder healthcare, housing, and urban planning).

### **ADUs as Affordable Housing**

In neighborhoods that are typically made up of single-family homes, secondary units are, by their nature, smaller and less expensive to rent than the main dwellings with which they are associated. Research has also shown that secondary units are also often cheaper to rent than a similarly-sized apartment in the same location (Valance et al., 2005). For this reason, this type of housing unit can play a role in the creation of

affordable housing in a community that is otherwise relatively costly to live in (Brown et al., 2017). This allows more low-income households to live closer to employment centers, government services, and, often, public transportation. The development of ADUs also leads to increased housing diversity, thereby meeting an increasing demand for smaller housing units, in line with changing demographics in many countries.

### **Summary**

This interpretivist phenomenological study used Heidegger's philosophy to gain an understanding of the lived experience of homeowners in Ireland who have developed and used ADUs. The researcher's own biases and preunderstandings were documented as they evolved throughout each stage of the research, and were incorporated into a double hermeneutic analysis of the collected data. Similarly, Heidegger's hermeneutic circle allowed for analysis of the whole and of the parts of the data, and the effect of interpretation of each one on the other as the analysis was carried out.

ADUs are of interest to urban planners, architects, those concerned with elder care and ageing-in-place, and housing professionals in general. As a result, this form of housing has been examined in the literature from a number of different perspectives. This literature review has been designed to provide an insight into the main discussion points surrounding the role of ADUs, as well as key policy issues considered in the literature. A review of the urban planning, housing, and gerontological literature reveals a consensus on the benefits of ADUs as viewed from several different policy domains, namely housing, urban planning, elder housing, and elder care. In some countries, research on



ADUs dates back to the 1970s and 1980s and this has been included in this literature review due to the fact that Ireland appears to be several decades behind other countries with regard to the use of ADUs, research into the topic, and the development of related policies.

An annex can provide a family with rental income, flexible living arrangements, or a way for grandparents to live nearby without sacrificing privacy or independence. ADUs can contribute to efficient and more sustainable use of existing land and infrastructure by increasing neighborhood density while retaining neighborhood character. For empty-nesters or those wishing to age-in-place, an ADU can offer a way to down-size without leaving a beloved neighborhood or selling their home, while also opening up opportunities for rental income from the larger family home on the property. The majority of the published literature relates to North America, however, and no research on ADUs in the Irish context was found during the course of the literature review.

There exists, however, a diversity of approach by local governments in North America in attempting to encourage ADU development. ADU and broader planning policies often include onerous restrictions and stipulations that can adversely impact a homeowner's willingness or ability to invest in a secondary unit on their property. As a result of this, and potentially due to other unknown factors, ADU development can stagnate, despite efforts by policy-makers at different governmental levels.

What is absent from the literature, regardless of geography, is an understanding of the perspectives and lived experience of homeowners, both those who may have contemplated developing an ADU and decided against doing so, and those who have actually developed and used an ADU. An examination of this lived experience in particular could reveal the ways in which social, economic, financial, policy, personal, cultural or other factors combine to enhance or inhibit the realization of ADU benefits in the real world. Similarly, the perspectives and lived experience of ADU tenants (whether related to the ADU owner or not) also warrant further exploration and could serve to inform tenancy or rental policies and guidelines to protect all parties.

This research aims to explore the lived experience of homeowners with ADUs in Ireland, with a view to informing future policy discussions and development and thereby contributing to solving Ireland's housing crisis through mechanisms to allow this form of housing to become more widespread. The role of ADUs in Ireland does not appear to have garnered much academic or public attention, despite a problematic imbalance between housing supply and demand. There exists, therefore, a unique opportunity to learn from both the extensive experiences of other geographies and from the lived experience of homeowners in Ireland under current policy frameworks, in an effort to prompt broader public dialogue and to better inform future Irish policy development in this arena. Chapter 3 outlines the interpretivist phenomenological methodology employed in the exploration of the lived experience of homeowners in Ireland who have developed and used ADUs between 2008 and 2020 and in answering the research questions.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research methodology used in this study. I applied an interpretive phenomenological approach to explore and examine the lived experience of homeowners in Ireland who developed ADUs on their own properties, or on their family members' properties, between the 2008 global economic crisis and the year 2020. The development of an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of those directly impacted by a range of land use, planning, tenancy, financing, and other policies will contribute to a body of knowledge relating to policy implementation and the combined impacts of inter-related policies for citizens in the real world. For example, land use policies and property financing/mortgage policies may benefit from a combined, holistic review in the context of their current impact on homeowners' ability and willingness to develop ADUs. The use of Heidegger's philosophy as a theoretical framework places and interprets lived experience within the context of the world that surrounds an individual. It is hoped that this research may help to place and interpret applicable influencing factors and public policies within the context of the real world's influence on the implementation of those policies and the lived experience of those impacted by them.

Using purposive sampling, I collected qualitative data from seven research participants through semistructured interviews. Audio recordings were made for all but one participant. I personally carried out the transcription (in Microsoft Excel) of data

collected from recorded interviews and prepared detailed notes on a single interview where the participant declined to be recorded. These notes were reviewed and approved by the participant in question. I prepared these notes and entered the data in Microsoft Excel in a way that allowed the text to be filtered and sorted in the same manner as data from the transcribed interviews. I then arranged shorter follow-up interviews with all participants. Again, all but one follow-up interview was recorded and I prepared transcripts and interview notes as before. I managed the data from all interviews through the use of Microsoft Office software, specifically Microsoft Excel, which allowed me to filter and sort the text of the transcripts and of the interview notes (where applicable) in a variety of ways in order to facilitate data analysis and theme identification. I used Express Scribe audio playback software to facilitate the transcription process, having made audio recordings of interviews using a voice recording device. I analyzed all data using the hermeneutic method to “focus on how individuals make meaning of their life experiences” (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 7) and to identify the emerging experiential themes. I undertook a detailed analysis of participants’ rich, descriptive accounts of the research phenomenon (experiences with the development and use of ADUs), applying Heidegger’s hermeneutic circle, while considering the interpretations of both the participants and of the researcher (a double hermeneutic). I conducted this study in accordance with the requirements of both the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR) as applicable to European Union citizens, and in conformance with the guidelines and conditions set out by Walden University’s

Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approach ensured the ethical protection of the research participants and of their welfare, privacy and personal data at all times.

In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, I provide an outline of the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, the approach to dealing with the biases of the researcher, and ethical issues considered. The selected methodology is also explained in detail, including participant selection, choice of instrumentation, recruitment procedures, sources and types of data to be collected, and the approach to data analysis. Finally, this chapter includes discussion of the identified limitations, challenges, or barriers associated with the research, and the overall trustworthiness of the research.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The research questions, the role of the researcher, and the phenomenon of interest are detailed in this section.

#### **Research Questions**

In order to explore the lived experience of homeowners who have developed and used ADUs associated with their properties or with their family members' properties in the selected time period, I have posed the following research questions:

Research Question 1 – What is the homeowners' lived experience of the development and use of accessory dwelling units in Ireland?

Research Question 2 – What are the perceived factors that positively and negatively influence this experience with respect to the development and use of accessory dwelling units in Ireland?

The selection of an interpretive phenomenological design for this study was informed by the research questions (Creswell, 2009) and by the intent to understand human experiences rather than to test a hypothesis (Creswell, 2013). This study was grounded in an interpretivist approach to research and was designed to gain an understanding of how homeowners experience the phenomenon of ADU development and use in the context of the world in which they live and the social, policy, cultural, and other frameworks that exist in that world and specifically in the Irish context.

The research questions were composed in an open manner, without the formulation of a hypothesis (other than to assume that lived experience may be both positive and negative and that a multitude of factors may influence those experiences). Some previously published international research in this area has included an examination of homeowners' levels of satisfaction with their ADUs from a quantitative perspective, but has not explored homeowners lived experience in a qualitative sense. Through the application of this approach, the research participants and their experiences have been studied idiographically, and rich, detailed descriptions of their particular experiences and the meaning assigned to those experiences have been generated (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Despite the longstanding popularity of ADUs in other countries where urban areas are experiencing similar housing shortages and challenges to those in Ireland, ADUs have not been discussed or promoted in a meaningful or prominent way among policy makers in Ireland. Listening to and examining the lived experience of the research participants

has allowed certain experiential themes and common experiences to emerge as a contribution to an understanding of why more homeowners do not develop ADUs in Ireland. This understanding is of interest in Ireland in the context of a widespread need for more housing, including (but not limited to) both social and affordable housing. Furthermore, as evidenced by a review of the literature, the experiences of homeowners themselves have not historically been studied or considered in detail, even in jurisdictions where ADU development is actively encouraged by local policy makers (e.g. Oregon, USA, and California, USA). The findings of this research, and the resulting initial understanding, could help guide further qualitative and quantitative research into this topic in the Irish context. While it is accepted that the use of interpretive phenomenology or the hermeneutic circle as a methodological framework does not aim to generate a theory to apply to an entire population, if combined with future studies, this research may “provide insights into universal patterns or mechanisms” (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 9). The opportunity exists, therefore, to contribute positively to the creation, amendment, and evolution of future land use and other policies in Ireland with a view to encouraging increased government and homeowner interest in ADUs. Such increased interest has the potential to lead to private sector involvement in adding to the supply of housing in Ireland and thereby to addressing an existing social problem through policy review and evolution.

### **Phenomenon of Interest in this Study**

The phenomenon of interest was the development and use of ADUs by private homeowners in Ireland, between the global economic crisis of 2008 and the year 2020. During this period of time, the demand for housing outgrew the supply of housing in urban areas in Ireland and government efforts to address the imbalance had little success. This research was centered on the experiences of homeowners in the Republic of Ireland who have developed an ADU on their properties, or on their family members' properties. More specifically, I examined the factors and influences that homeowners experienced in the processes of developing and using a secondary housing unit in gardens or attached to main dwellings. In the absence of prior qualitative research in Ireland on this topic, research participants were identified from homeowners who had developed ADUs for a variety of reasons (e.g., for personal family use, as housing for an elderly relative, or for rental income generation). Future research on specific motivations may be warranted in order to examine homeowners' experiences within specific sub-groups, perhaps taking a quantitative approach to such investigation.

### **Phenomenological Research Rationale**

An interpretivist phenomenological research design was used to explore the lived experience of the research participants and their individual personal accounts of that experience (Smith, 2007). The use of a phenomenological study allowed for "a better understanding of [a] phenomenon through the experiences of those who have directly experienced the phenomenon" (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018, p. 807). Participants'



experiences in navigating the process of developing an ADU were examined, as well as their experiences in using the dwelling unit. The function of an ADU can, by its flexible nature, vary over time. In many cases, ADUs are used as extra living space for growing families, as housing for elderly parents or extended family, or as a source of rental income. Prospective participants who used their ADUs in these or any other ways were considered for participation in the research study, subject to meeting further eligibility criteria. The experiences of the research participants were then interpreted using a hermeneutic approach in order to identify and understand the underlying meanings. The interpretations of the researcher and of the participants were considered in a double hermeneutic, as discussed later in this chapter.

### **Role of the Researcher**

This section elaborates on my role and responsibilities in relation to the research, and how any challenges or concerns were addressed. My primary role as researcher was as an instrument of data collection through naturalistic observation during semistructured interviews. This approach helped to ensure the collection of authentic data from participants in as relaxed a setting as possible, with open-ended questions being used to reduce the risk of researcher influence on the data and on the experiences communicated by participants.

I have worked as a civil engineer for 24 years and hold both a Bachelor of Engineering degree and a Master of Science degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering. I have undertaken a number of formal courses on research design, and

qualitative research techniques in particular, during my doctoral studies, and have also received training in active listening skills in the past. I have interviewed numerous job applicants and university bursary applicants during my professional career, and have also conducted fact-finding and exploratory interviews with a variety of clients and stakeholders during the course of my private- and public-sector work in the contexts of utility and infrastructure capital investment, and land-use planning and policies. These experiences and skills have been combined, adapted, and applied in conducting this research.

### **Participant Communication**

I made use of a Study Recruitment Flyer (see Appendix B), a Study Information Sheet (see Appendix C), and an Informed Consent Form, all of which were reviewed and accepted by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The Recruitment Flyer was a single-page poster used to appeal for prospective study participants to contact the researcher for more information. The Recruitment Flyer was placed on a limited number of public community notice boards and several virtual community notice boards. It was also sent to local and regional radio stations and newspapers around Ireland in an effort to raise awareness of the existence of the study and to disseminate the researcher's contact information. The Study Information Sheet served as a brief introduction to the study, presented in plain language, for prospective participants responding to the Recruitment Flyer.

Following receipt of enquiries, I communicated (by phone or by video call) with potential research participants in the recruitment stage of this study. I provided additional information to the potential participants to allow them to decide if they wished to take part and how they would prefer the interviews to be conducted, bearing in mind the pandemic public health and Walden University guidelines in place at the time. I explained measures to be taken with respect to the protection of participants' identities and personal data, and I answered questions from prospective participants. I also provided them with contact information for Walden University in order to help them to decide whether or not to take part in the research study. I prepared and provided informed consent forms for participants to sign or accept by email, I arranged initial phone/video/in-person interviews directly with the research participants, and I communicated directly with them for member checking and any follow-up questions they had in relation to the interviews. In-person interviews were not permitted, as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic and Irish government guidelines, and none of the participants expressed an interest in a face-to-face interview. I was, however, prepared to discuss relevant public health advice and explain why I could not meet participants in person. Informed consent was re-established at the beginning of each interview, the background and purpose of the study was again briefly outlined, and verbal permission for audio recording of the interview was sought from each participant. Following the completion of each interview, I advised each participant that, upon the conclusion of my study, I would provide them with a short executive summary of the research findings in electronic

and/or hardcopy format, and offered to discuss those findings with each participant by phone or video call in the future if they wish.

### **Researcher as Instrument**

I acted as an instrument of the research, by conducting semistructured interviews with the research participants and thereby collecting rich qualitative data. In this role, I worked to ensure a focus on data relating to experiences, rather than feelings, opinions, or perspectives, and used follow-up questions during the interviews in order to redirect attention to the collection of data on the participants' lived experience, as necessary. I transcribed all of the interview audio recordings myself, which helped me to immerse myself in the data. I organized, analyzed, and interpreted the data, making use of Microsoft Excel software to do so. Express Scribe audio playback software was also used to facilitate the transcription process. I did not use qualitative data analysis software as I wished to avoid viewing the transcripts purely as data. Instead, I worked to familiarize myself with the transcripts in the contexts of the world in which the participants live, and made a conscious effort not to separate myself from the data (Peoples, 2020). This also involved listening to the audio recordings a number of times.

I prepared individual follow-up interview protocols and questions for each participant and I conducted follow-up interviews to allow for high-level member-checking, to allow the participants an opportunity to clarify anything they had related during the interviews, and to address any gaps in the data. During follow-up interviews, I also asked participants if there were any additional aspects of their experiences they had

remembered since the main interview and wished to share. Following the completion of this study, I emailed each participant an electronic copy of the research findings for personal reference, and again ensured that they were aware of all measures taken to protect their identities and their personal data, including steps for the future storage and protection of data and files. I also offered to discuss the study findings with each participant if they so wished.

### **Ethical Considerations**

An informed consent form was reviewed and accepted (by email) by all participants prior to being interviewed. Informed consent was also re-established verbally prior to starting each interview. The informed consent form included an explanation of steps to ensure participant confidentiality, a description of potential risks, details of how to make further inquiries of the researcher and/or Walden University, and a statement that the participant was free to withdraw from the study at any point with no repercussions to them. There were no direct benefits for participants taking part in this study, and the risks to participants were minimal and were limited to feelings of anxiety at being recorded or interviewed and/or unintentional disclosure of personal information. To address these minimal risks, I took steps to make all participants comfortable prior to each interview, and to reassure them of measures taken to protect the confidentiality of their personal information. All recordings and personal data will be stored securely on a password-protected hard drive for 5 years, in accordance with Walden University requirements, and will thereafter be destroyed. Participants were also reminded that their personal data will

continue to be managed and protected in accordance with the requirements of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Prospective participants for this study were sought from a population of adult (18 years and older) homeowners in Ireland, who met the criteria for selection. The selection criteria did not relate to gender, mobility, ethnicity, religion, language spoken, socioeconomic status, or any other demographic factors. All research participants were treated equally, with respect and fairness, and without judgement. Care and attention was given to ensure that participants were comfortable volunteering to participate in the study. Any identifying information referred to during interviews was redacted from interview transcripts and research participants were informed of this principle at the start of each interview.

I offered a modest "thank you" gift as part of the recruitment process for this study. In doing so, I considered the nature and significance of such an incentive carefully, in order to avoid any undue influence on the prospective participants or on their subsequent responses to interview questions. I offered a small gift voucher (€30 – thirty Euro) for a local supermarket chain upon completion of the main interview as a token of gratitude for research participants' time and efforts in contributing to the research study. However, I also communicated to all prospective and (later) confirmed participants that they were free to opt out of the study at any time and for any reason, and that they were free to decline to answer some or all questions during the interview or at any stage if they so wished. Participants were informed that, were they to opt out of the study during or

after the main interview, they would not forfeit this incentive or suffer any negative consequences whatsoever. All participants completed a main interview and a follow-up interview as part of this study. Finally, I did not recruit any research participants with whom I had an existing personal or professional relationship, in order to avoid the perception of any influence or coercion of the participant with regard to their participation in the study or with regard to the integrity of any data that was collected from them as part of their contribution to the study. This also ensured that there were no power relationships between the participants and the researcher.

In anticipation of the potential use of an external transcription service for part of the collected data, I prepared a confidentiality agreement to be signed by an external transcriptionist in advance of undertaking any work. This was designed to ensure that the participants' privacy and the confidentiality of their data would be protected at all times. Participants were advised of this approach during the recruitment process, however, no external transcription service was used and I prepared all transcripts myself.

### **Reflexivity**

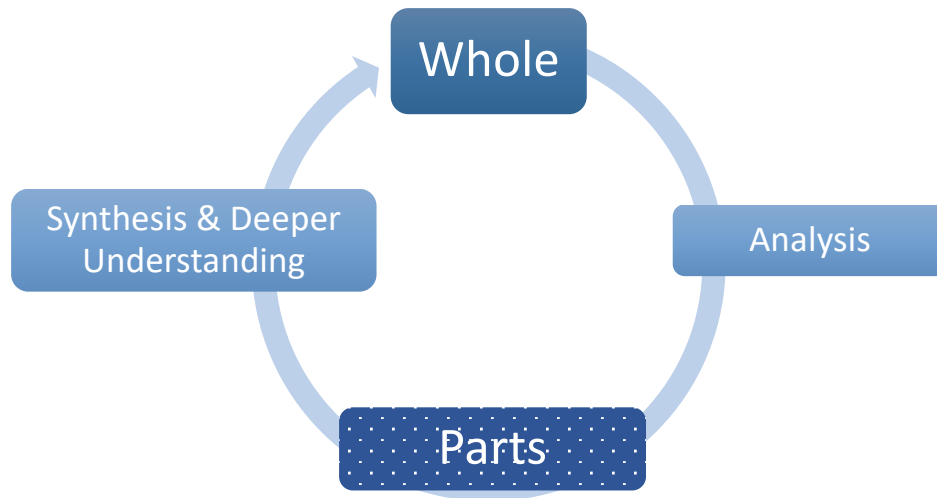
I worked to address reflexivity in the study as an ongoing process in the design of the interview protocol, in communicating with prospective participants, in conducting the interviews, in preparing reflexive notes after each interview, and in the analysis and interpretation of data. I acknowledged, examined, and documented my own biases or preconceptions in relation to the phenomenon and in relation to the experiences of the research participants (see Appendix F), in an effort to address the lens through which I

viewed the collected data. This process was carried out twice during the literature review, prior to the collection of any data, and was repeated at different points during data collection and analysis, taking care to note changes in my biases or preconceptions resulting from the data and my analysis thereof. This helped to ensure a more rigorous approach to the research overall, and to the data collection and analysis in particular. The acknowledgement and examination of researcher biases or preconceptions also formed a key part of the double hermeneutic circle of data analysis and interpretation, since the analysis of the realities of the participants influenced the researcher's own biases, which in turn influenced the interpretation and understanding of the data and of the lived experience described. The concept of the hermeneutic circle is a key part of Heidegger's philosophy and the selected framework for this study, wherein the participants make sense of and interpret their own experiences in the context of the world in which they exist, and the researcher, similarly, interprets the participants' relating of their experiences in the context of the world in which the researcher exists. Similarly, the analysis of individual parts of the data influences the researcher's understanding of the data as a whole, and vice versa (see Figures 3 and 4).

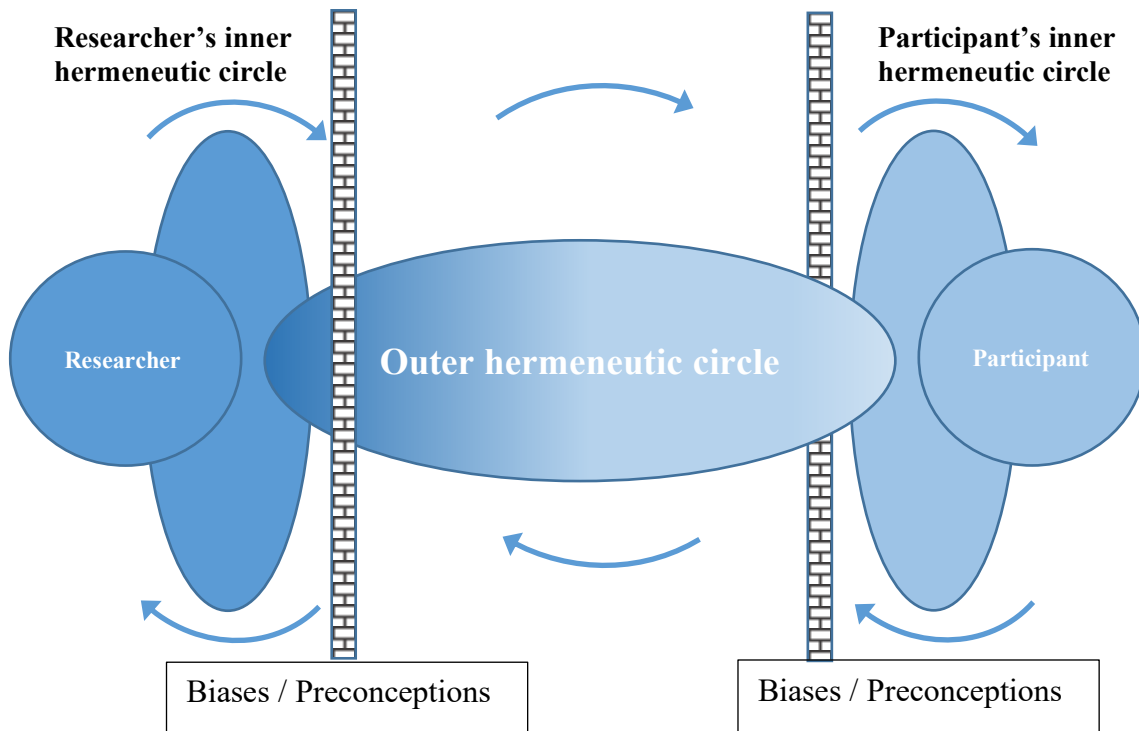


**Figure 3**

*Heidegger's Hermeneutic Circle – Principle*



*Note.* Adapted from “A review of Gadamerian and Ricoeurian hermeneutics and its application to interpretive accounting research,” by M. B. Farooq, 2018, *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*, 13, p 261-283 (<https://doi.org/10.1108/QROM-07-2017-1550>).

**Figure 4***Double Hermeneutic Circle*

*Note.* Adapted from “*The double hermeneutics of life world: A perspective on the social, dialogue, and interpretation,*” by L. Nørreklit, 2006, *Philosophy and Science Studies*, 5.

Copyright 2006 by the Danish Centre for Philosophy and Science Studies, Aalborg University.

## **Methodology**

This section includes details of the sampling and participant selection strategy, instrumentation and data collection, research procedures, and the data analysis plan.

### **Sampling Strategy**

Purposive sampling was used, based on the below criteria for research participants, in order to collect data from a group of adult research participants with lived experience of direct relevance to the research questions:

1. Experience with the development and ownership of an ADU in the Republic of Ireland for any period of time between 2008 and 2020, either on the ADU owner's own residential plot of land or on a residential plot of land owned by a family member;
2. Residence in either the main home or the ADU on that same plot of land for any period of time between 2008 and 2020;
3. Experience with the use of the aforementioned ADU for personal/family use, as a source of rental income, or in some combination of different uses between 2008 and 2020, while residing on the residential plot of land. This may include instances where the homeowner lived, for a period of time, in the completed ADU and the primary home was used by family or was rented to tenants.

Confirmation that prospective participants met these criteria was established through discussion upon initially contacting the researcher and with the use of a short checklist. The timeframe of 2008 to 2020 has been selected for the following reasons:

1. The global economic crisis of 2008 has strongly influenced the context in which homeowners, governments, and developers have built and continue to build residential homes in Ireland in the intervening years;
2. The passage of any more than 10 or 12 years may have a detrimental impact on research participants' abilities to recall events and experiences in sufficient detail for this study, and to provide rich, in-depth accounts of those experiences during qualitative interviews; and
3. The study was neither intended nor designed to examine the lived experience of homeowners in the context of any historical or superseded context or policies.

In the absence of prior qualitative research on this topic in the Irish context, research participants were identified from homeowners who had developed ADUs for a variety of reasons, without limitation (e.g., for personal family use, as housing for an elderly relative, for rental income generation, or for any other reason). In allowing for a range of original motivations for the development of an ADU, this study will provide an initial overview of the themes and concepts arising from the data, and may therefore prompt the identification of future research opportunities, focused perhaps on factors

such as homeowners' motivations, age ranges, socioeconomic factors, and/or neighbourhood types.

It was my intention to firstly interview a minimum of nine homeowners who met the selection criteria and to conduct additional interviews until data saturation was achieved. Ultimately, seven ADU owners were interviewed for this study. A total of six to eight participants is considered an appropriate number for an interpretive phenomenological study as “this sample size gives an opportunity to examine similarities and differences between individuals” and the amount of data to be collected and analyzed remains manageable (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 9). Although the selected research design took a narrative approach to data analysis, the notion of saturation was applied to this research in two ways, to be consistent with the research purpose and the research questions. Firstly, data saturation operates within data collection during the course of an individual interview, wherein the researcher becomes satisfied that a full and in-depth understanding of the research participant's experiences has been achieved, potentially through the repetition of responses to interview questions (Saunders et al., 2018) or through the absence of new stories or reflections. Secondly, data saturation operates during inductive data analysis when the researcher determines that no new experiential themes are emerging across different participants' experiences from new data, meaning that redundancy has been noted in the collection of new data (Saunders et al., 2018). If this second form of data saturation is not achieved following the first set of interviews, data collection would need to continue via interviews with additional suitable participants

until such data saturation has been achieved. Data saturation in conducting this study was determined by the absence of any new experiential themes coming from the data during analysis.

### **Recruitment Strategy**

Potential voluntary research participants were recruited through the combined use of the following avenues: social networks, social media (including accounts associated with some partner organizations), regional and local radio broadcasting, regional and local newspaper advertisements, and a limited number of recruitment posters in local shops and community centers. Potential partner organizations were limited to groups and companies involved in ADU construction and ADU discussion or knowledge-sharing. A total of 50 entities or organizations were asked to share the study recruitment poster on their social media pages, on air, or in their printed news media, with all correspondence from prospective research participants being directed to the researcher. Only 5 organizations agreed to share the study recruitment poster as requested. No other actions or involvement was requested from these prospective partner entities. A limited degree of snowball sampling was also anticipated, in cases where interested participants may have known other homeowners who would be suitable and willing interviewees. However, no participants were ultimately recruited in this particular manner.

I used these recruitment avenues to briefly explain the purpose of my research, the key criteria for volunteer participants in this confidential study, and my contact details for any interested homeowners. Interested parties were asked to speak with the researcher to

complete a short checklist to determine whether or not they met the criteria for participation in the study. I followed up with suitable volunteers to arrange phone/video/in-person interviews, in accordance with public health advice and Walden University stipulations during the Coronavirus pandemic. I did not recruit research participants with whom I had a personal or professional relationship, in order to avoid the risk of perceived coercion of or influence on the participants or influence on their responses to interview questions.

Although it was hoped to initially interview a minimum of nine research participants, a total of seven homeowners were actually recruited. Despite ongoing and repeated additional appeals for participants, using a variety of recruitment avenues, efforts to recruit additional suitable participants over the course of several months were unsuccessful. This may have been due to the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020 and 2021 and a resulting reluctance by homeowners to take on additional commitments. Additionally, there may have been a reluctance among ADU owners with unpermitted developments to take part in any research, although this cannot be confirmed.

### **Instrumentation and Data Collection**

For this study, qualitative data was collected through semistructured interviews, interview and field notes, follow-up interviews, and audio recordings. Interviews were held by telephone, or by video call (the Zoom platform was used exclusively). Although an in-person interview can encourage the development of a rapport between the interviewer and the participant, as well as fostering a natural exchange (Shuy, 2003), in-

person interviews were not possible, due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the public health guidelines in place in Ireland at the time of this study. Participants were informed that an interview could only be held in person if, at the time of the interview, both Irish government public health guidelines and Walden University policies permitted it, and if the participant in question wished to be interviewed in person. In practice, these conditions were not met at any point during the study.

Participants were advised that they may choose the format of the interview, subject to public health advice and Walden policies, and I did not exert any influence on participants to choose a particular format. It is noted that phone interviews lack the incorporation of visual aspects to communication, such as facial expression or body language, and that a video call may allow for the identification of more non-verbal data (Irvine et al., 2012), but the participants were free to choose the format of the interview themselves. Five participants took part in video calls and two preferred to conduct their interviews by phone. In all but one case, audio was recorded with the participant's permission. No video recording was made of any participant at any time. One participant declined to have their interviews audio recorded, and detailed interview notes were prepared for their interviews instead. The participant in question reviewed these notes and confirmed their accuracy and completeness.

A researcher-produced interview protocol (see Appendix D) was used to conduct the interviews. The interview protocol was based on the research questions and the research design, endeavoring to elicit rich descriptions from research participants about



their lived experience and their interpretations thereof. In addition, the findings of the literature review were used to inform the interview protocol and to ensure an in-depth exploration of a number of different aspects of the participants' lived experience (e.g., experiences with the design and construction processes, experiences with planning policies, experiences with funding/financing mechanisms, experiences with tenants, and/or experiences with family living in close proximity). An audio recording of each interview was made, where participants consented to such recording. In one case, detailed notes were made in the absence of the participant's consent to audio recording.

Validity is defined as "the degree to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure" (McKenzie et al., 1999, p. 311). For this study, a semistructured interview was used for the main interviews to "permit the essential spontaneity of phenomenological research" (Giorgi, 1985, in Peoples, 2020, p. 52) and to allow for the emergence of unanticipated data and experiences. Content validity, or the extent to which the measurement covers all aspects of the concept to be measured, was ensured through the use of open-ended questions, the design of the interview protocol being informed by the literature review, and the provision of opportunities for participants to expand on their answers and to add any information they deem relevant towards the end of the interviews and also during the follow-up interviews. Content validity was confirmed through a review of the early interviews to support the appropriateness of the data collection instrument (the semistructured interview) in eliciting rich descriptions of participants' lived experience. Through the use of neutral, open-ended questions, included in the

interview protocol, validity was examined and confirmed through an assessment of the richness of story-telling by the research participants about their experiences in relation to the phenomenon being studied. This allowed the data collection process to capture participants' own interpretation of their experiences in a valid and reliable manner, without influence, and to capture accurately the meanings the participants themselves attributed to those experiences. This was key to addressing the research questions and was directly aligned with the interpretive phenomenological design of the study, and with the planned hermeneutic analysis of the qualitative data. Follow-up questions were used to encourage homeowners to share both positive and negative experiences, to elaborate on particular points as warranted, and to encourage rich, in-depth accounts. I took notes during the interviews as required, in order to record any relevant non-verbal data such as body language or facial expressions (where video calls were used) or hesitancy (where phone interviews were used) and to assist with the use of follow-up questions as the interview progressed. A debriefing was conducted at the end of each interview, allowing the participants to ask questions and outlining any further steps and communication plans. I also prepared post-interview notes as soon as possible after the conclusion of each interview in order to record my own initial impressions and interpretations, for the purposes of reflexivity and later analysis and interpretation of the individual and combined interview data as a whole.

The interview guide was used for practice interviews with friends who volunteered to assist. These practice interviews also provided an opportunity to test audio

recording equipment, but did not form part of the research data. The interview guide was then employed for initial interviews with research participants, and was reviewed for later interviews as initial themes or areas of particular interest became apparent in the early data. Questions were posed in neutral and inclusive language, in order to avoid the communication of the researcher's biases at any point in the interview and to avoid influencing the participants' responses in any way.

After an initial review of each interview audio recording, I prepared a transcript of that interview. This transcript was then reviewed and edited, in order to remove any redundant language (e.g. "um" or "you know"), to ensure the redaction of any identifying personal information, and to allow me to become familiar with the data. Follow-up interviews were arranged with all participants as a way to clarify anything that was unclear in the recording or in the data itself, and to address any apparent gaps or contradictions in the data. Individual interview protocols for follow-up interviews were prepared, based on the recordings and transcripts (or notes) of each participant's main interview. Follow-up interviews were shorter than the main interviews and also provided an opportunity for participants to add to the experiences they had previously related, if something had come to mind in the interim, and to ask any questions of which they may not previously have thought.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Research participants were each assigned a reference number (Participant 1, Participant 2, etc) and all personal or identifying data was stored separately to the

interview recordings, notes, and transcripts. In this way, the privacy of the research participants was and is protected, and the confidentiality of their data is maintained. Interview data was managed through the use of Microsoft Office (Excel) software and basic transcription playback software (Express Scribe) only. The use of qualitative data management software, such as NVivo, was considered, but was ruled out since its use can create a risk of the researcher becoming separate from the data and viewing the transcripts purely as data instead of as a reflection of the lived experience of real human beings (Peoples, 2020). The use of qualitative data management or analysis software can also alter the researcher's experience of being in the world, or Dasein (Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016), and may therefore interfere with the hermeneutic circle and the double hermeneutic at the heart of interpretive phenomenology (Goble et al., 2012). Finally, "...codifications, conceptual abstractions, or empirical generalizations can never adequately produce phenomenological understandings and insights..." (Van Manen, 2014, p. 319) and so the analysis of data as part of this study did not include the use of coding software.

The audio recordings of the initial main interviews were transcribed by the researcher and were listened to and read through a number of times in order to immerse the researcher in the data. Any identifying data was edited out of the transcripts. The first and second readings allowed me to become familiar with the data and the narratives related by each participant. Subsequent third and fourth readings served to reveal different aspects and themes within each narrative and the lived experience of each

participant (Giorgi, 2018). These readings of transcripts from the initial interviews were used to inform the interview protocols for subsequent interviews and to prepare protocols for follow-up interviews. Follow-up interviews were conducted with all participants. This allowed for the clarification of any unclear or incomplete data, and confirmation of interpretation of the audio recording where necessary (Peoples, 2020). These follow-up interviews were shorter than the main interviews and also provided an opportunity for participants to relate any aspect of their experiences that they may not have previously covered, to delve more deeply into certain aspects of their experiences, and to ask further questions if they so wished.

The researcher's own biases and preconceptions were also reflected upon and documented at intervals throughout the literature review and the data collection and analysis processes to allow for an examination of how those biases were influenced by and how they in turn influenced the analysis and interpretation of the data. This process continued until all main and follow-up interviews had been completed and transcribed, and all recordings and transcripts had been listened to and read multiple times.

Preliminary identification of themes within the participants' lived experience took place throughout this process, with a view to preparing rich textural and structural descriptions in an effort to capture the essence of the phenomenon of interest (Van Manen, 2014). I paid particular attention to the identification of outlier themes as well as experiences and themes that may not have arisen previously in the literature. The use of semistructured interviews within this phenomenological research was selected to "permit

the essential spontaneity of phenomenological research” (Giorgi, 1985, in Peoples, 2020, p. 52) and to allow for the emergence of unanticipated data and experiences.

The hermeneutic circle and the double hermeneutic approach were continuously applied throughout, and I also continued the established reflexivity exercise at regular intervals. Through this focused analysis of the data as a whole and in its parts, I endeavored to satisfy myself that data saturation had been achieved, both for individual participants and through a recognition that no new experiential themes or concepts were emerging from the data collected during any subsequent additional interviews. Additional interviews were conducted until such saturation was identified through data analysis.

The transcripts and notes were then analyzed again as a whole. Heidegger’s hermeneutic circle was applied in the examination of the data from each participant both in parts and as a whole, considering the interpretations and meaning-making of both the individual participants and the researcher. Similarly, the hermeneutic circle was applied to the examination of data in parts and as a whole across participants. The data analysis process was interrupted at intervals in order to apply “passive activity” to the process (Van Manen, 2014, pp. 345), thereby encouraging further insights into the data that may otherwise be missed through constant immersion in the data (Peoples, 2020).

Heidegger’s philosophy and ontology was used as the selected theoretical framework for this research. This approach posits that there is no single reality, that all humans interpret their experiences in the context of the world in which they live, and in the context of their own existence in that world, and that these principles apply to

research participants and researchers alike. Throughout the iterative data analysis process I reflected on my own biases and preconceptions, and also used my developing understanding of the various parts of the data to inform my understanding of the overall data. Similarly, I used my understanding of the overall data to reexamine the individual parts of the data, in keeping with Heidegger's hermeneutic circle.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

In taking a qualitative approach to this research, I sought to delve into the lived experience of the research participants, as captured through rich data. In order to succeed, careful and rigorous data collection, analysis, and interpretation was carried out, and detailed textural and structural descriptions were needed. This section addresses ethical procedures, research design, validity and reliability, as well as research alignment.

#### **Credibility (Internal Validity)**

The acknowledgement and incorporation of the researcher's biases and preconceptions throughout the research design and execution plays a central role in efforts to ensure internal validity in interpretive phenomenological research, especially where Heidegger's philosophy is to be used as a theoretical framework and such biases are to be incorporated explicitly into data analysis and interpretation (Cypress, 2017). This element of subjectivity demands that the research be conducted with a high degree of rigor. The application of a qualitative approach to answering the research questions, the selection of Heidegger's philosophy as a theoretical framework, and the use of the

hermeneutic circle in the analysis all speak to the rigor of the qualitative research process in this study, with alignment of philosophy and purpose throughout.

In addition, credibility was established through member-checking during follow-up interviews, whereby I contacted participants by email or phone and shared my understanding of the highlights of the participant's interview. This understanding was shared by phone or by email, according to the participant's preference, so that the participant could confirm whether or not my interpretations were accurate. Participants who had agreed to an audio recording of their interview did not opt to review the transcript thereof, however one participant, who declined to be recorded, subsequently reviewed the detailed notes from the interview and confirmed their accuracy and completeness. The follow-up interviews also allowed for clarification of any aspects or statements from the first interview and from the associated transcript.

Finally, credibility was supported by the establishment of data saturation, both within individual interviews and across interviews and participants. Data saturation during interviews was identified by the repetition of narratives or anecdotes by the participant (Saunders et al., 2018), and by indications from the participant that they were unable to think of any further aspects of or examples from their lived experience in response to interview questions. Data saturation across interviews and across participants was established by the identification of recurring themes and through an absence of new themes emerging from initial data analysis or from follow-up interviews.



**Transferability (External Validity)**

I offered research participants the chance to read through interview transcripts in order to validate the collected data, though none opted to do this. In the case where detailed notes were prepared in the absence of an audio recording, the participant reviewed the notes and confirmed their accuracy and completeness. In all cases, the presence of any contradictory data was given due care and attention, allowing for further exploration of any cases where a participant's experiences or descriptions were vastly different to those of other participants. This created further opportunity for re-analysis and validation of the data, adding to credibility, validity, and trustworthiness overall.

The generation of thick descriptions, both textural and structural, also supports the transferability of the research findings. Although the nature of this phenomenological study was to examine the uniqueness of the phenomenon of interest, any future replication of this study could serve to corroborate or substantiate the study findings. In order to facilitate such potential future corroboration, an "...in-depth understanding of commonalities..." is needed (Carlson, 2010, p. 1104). Thick and rich descriptions of settings, participants, data collection, and analysis procedures, as well as of participants' lived experience, help to "...increase coherence and to evoke...a sense of connection with the participants in the study" (Carlson, 2010, p. 1104) to this end.

**Dependability**

A detailed and comprehensive audit trail of the research steps was kept during this study in order to demonstrate the dependability of the research. The triangulation of data

from different research participants also served to support the dependability of this study and of the research method employed.

### **Confirmability**

In keeping with Heidegger's philosophy, the researcher's biases and preconceptions were documented, analyzed, and discussed at different stages throughout the research. An initial account of researcher biases was prepared during the early stages of the literature review, and was updated and revised prior to the commencement of data collection, and at intervals during data collection (see Appendix F). As part of the application of the hermeneutic circle, and the double hermeneutic approach to analysis, these biases, and their evolution, were considered and incorporated into the analysis process and into the research findings.

### **Alignment**

In order to answer the two research questions of this thesis (Q1 – What is the homeowners' lived experience of the development and use of accessory dwelling units in Ireland? and Q2 – What are the perceived factors that positively and negatively influence this experience with respect to the development and use of accessory dwelling units in Ireland?), homeowners with ADUs on their own residential properties, or on residential properties belonging to family members, were interviewed. The research questions, and the interview protocol, were designed to elicit rich descriptions of experiences in participants' own words, acknowledging Heidegger's philosophy of interpretation in context, and the subjectivity of reality.

Interviews were designed around the collection of data relating to the research questions, allowing for the emergence of experiential themes relating to personal, social, financial, policy, or other factors and experiences, including positive and negative aspects in each case. I examined the research participants' lived experience and assignment of meaning around these themes and undertook data analysis with careful consideration of the participants' interpretation and of my own interpretation of those experiences.

Since my research addressed the question of the lived experience of ADU owners, it was appropriate to collect qualitative data through semistructured interviews. This descriptive and observational approach allowed the participants to relate their experiences and express their views in a suitably non-numerical format. My intention was to use the collected data to identify emerging categories and concepts in order to allow a better understanding of how existing policies, procedures, and practices are actually experienced by those who are required to follow them. This includes land use policies, financial or mortgage industry policies, elder care and elder housing policies, and policies relating to tenancy agreements and rental properties. A qualitative, phenomenological approach also allowed a detailed description of the "core commonalities and structure of the experience" (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1373). It is hoped that this will contribute to a deeper understanding of the overall landscape of ADU development and use in the research setting (Ireland), based on the data collected from the research participants.

### **Ethical Considerations**

In recruiting research participants, I did not select any prospective participants with whom I had a personal or professional relationship. This approach avoided the perception or risk of any undue influence on participants or on their responses to interview questions. The risk of any power relationships between researcher and participant was also therefore minimized. I offered a modest “thank you” gift card (€30 - thirty Euro in value for a local supermarket chain) for participants who took part in interviews and contributed to the study, but in doing so, I considered the nature and significance of such an offer carefully, in order to avoid any undue influence on the prospective participants or on their subsequent responses to interview questions.

All recruitment materials were written, presented, and discussed in neutral, clear, non-academic language, and all prospective participants were made aware that taking part in the study was on a completely voluntary and confidential basis. Participants were also informed that they were free to decide to leave the study at any time, and free to refuse to answer any question or questions, without any consequences.

The study population was not considered a vulnerable population. In all cases, steps were taken to ensure the comfort of participants during the interview process and I was prepared to halt an interview if I perceived the participant to be uncomfortable or distressed for any reason. However, during the initial and follow-up interviews I did not perceive any participant to be uncomfortable or distressed in any way and at no time did any participant ask to stop an interview or express a reluctance to answer my questions.

While participant demographic data was not collected for any quantitative analysis purposes, participants' age, gender, or other details were often discussed by them in the process of sharing their experiences with the researcher. Steps were taken to ensure that the participant could not be identified from the data, including the redaction of some identifying or potentially identifying details from interview transcripts, and any such information that may be shared in the final results of the study was referred to in such a way that participants could not be identified from the data.

As the researcher, I made sure that participants knew they could decide to leave the study at any time and/or decline to answer some or all of my questions. I prepared in advance to handle such a request in a calm and neutral manner, and to either conclude the interview or to make sure that the participant was comfortable to move on to other questions. During the course of my research, it was not necessary to implement these procedures as none of the participants asked to leave the study or declined to answer particular questions. I made sure in advance that participants had the necessary contact details if they wished to communicate with Walden University for any reason. I also advised participants in advance of interviews to have a glass of water, a pen, and some paper nearby during the interview, and anything else that they felt they might need before we began.

All data was labelled with participant codes in place of participant names, to ensure confidentiality (e.g. Participant 1, Participant 2, etc). Only I had, and continue to have, access to the code key, and I removed any identifying information from interview

transcripts. All electronic files will continue to be stored on a password-protected hard drive, to be kept at my home, and only I have the password. All paper files, such as signed consent forms, will continue to be stored in a locked cabinet at my home, and only I will have the key. All data will be destroyed after 5 years, in accordance with Walden University's policies (electronic files will be deleted and hard drives will be reformatted, paper files will be shredded and recycled).

A small "thank-you" gift was offered to participants on completion of the main interview. This took the form of a gift card for a local supermarket chain and was €30 (thirty Euro) in value. This gift was offered in recognition of participants' time and efforts in taking part in the study and was sent to participants by post. Participants addresses were not kept on file once this gift card had been mailed to them. Not all participants availed of this gift, with some insisting that it was not necessary.

### **Amendments to Research Design**

During the early stages of participant recruitment, a number of potential participants explained that they had built an ADU on property that belonged to their family member. This meant that the owner of the main home on the property and the owner of the ADU on the same property were two different individuals. Originally, research participants were to be selected from homeowners who had developed and used an ADU on their own property. As a result of this realization during the recruitment process, I amended and expanded the participant criteria to incorporate these circumstances. I obtained approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board

(IRB approval number 01-13-21-0612122) for this change prior to confirming recruitment of this type of participant in particular.

During the data collection phase of the project, one participant declined to have their interview recorded. In this case, following consultation with my dissertation chairperson, and with the participant's permission, I took detailed notes during and after the interview and used these notes to prepare an account of the interview and of the participant's experiences. The participant agreed to review this account, which I sent to them by email. I received an email confirmation from the participant that the notes were an accurate and complete record of our interview and of their experience as narrated to me during the interview. Subsequently, in conducting a follow-up interview with the same participant, they reiterated that they did not wish to be recorded, but stated that they did not feel the need to review my notes on the shorter follow-up interview, since they trusted that I would prepare an accurate account. The notes prepared for both the main and follow-up interviews with this participant were presented and formatted in the same way as transcriptions of other interviews, allowing the textual data to be managed, reviewed, filtered, and analyzed in a consistent manner.

### **Limitations, Challenges, and/or Barriers**

Some of the challenges faced by this novice researcher included:

- the identification of and reflection on preexisting views or biases in relation to the research topic;

- the recruitment of sufficient research participants to ensure data saturation (Thomson, 2011);
- the collection and analysis of large amounts of data – seven in-depth interviews were undertaken (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Starks & Trinidad, 2007);
- the importance of structural and textural description;
- resisting the temptation to infer that the research findings associated with a selected group of participants apply more broadly than is suggested by the data; and
- the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the ability to conduct face-to-face interviews with participants.

My initial literature review, in addition to refining my identification of the research gap, was also intended to inform my approach to the interviews and to the design of the interview protocol, and to enhance my sensitivity to the data (Allan, 2003). I took care not to formulate any hypotheses based on my reading of the literature, since phenomenological research is not intended to test hypotheses, but also since the majority of the published literature on ADUs does not relate to the Irish context. I also documented my own preconceptions at intervals throughout the study (see Appendix F), in order to acknowledge my own existence in the world and to better fulfil my role in the double hermeneutic data analysis process. During the literature review I focused on familiarizing myself with the types of key experiences, issues, barriers, facilitators, and



other factors that have been studied in the past, as well as the theories and discussions that have emerged. I used this awareness during the development of interview protocols, as well as during the actual interviews and data analysis, while remaining open to the identification of new experiences, factors, and themes.

### **Summary**

This chapter has provided an outline of the research method used to answer the research questions. The procedure, participants, recruitment, data collection, interview questions, and data analysis plan have provided details of how the study was carried out and the criteria for participation in the study. An interpretivist phenomenological qualitative methodology was used to explore the lived experience of homeowners in Ireland who have developed and used an ADU between 2008 and 2020. Issues of trustworthiness have been addressed, and ethical considerations have also been discussed. Chapter 4 documents the results of the data analysis, including the themes that emerged from the data.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of the lived experience of homeowners who have developed and used an ADU on their property or on a family member's property in the Republic of Ireland, between the global economic crisis of 2008 and the year 2020. Homeowners who had undertaken the processes of ADU planning, permitting, financing, and construction were asked to share their positive and negative experiences during semistructured qualitative interviews. Additionally, the homeowners' experiences of using and/or renting their ADUs were examined. The central phenomenon of interest was the experiences of private homeowners in the Republic of Ireland with the development and use of ADUs.

Accordingly, the research questions posed in this study focused on the lived experience of the participants. The main research question was: What is the homeowners' lived experience of the development and use of accessory dwelling units in Ireland? A second research question was posed as follows: What are the perceived factors that positively and negatively influence this experience with respect to the development and use of accessory dwelling units in Ireland? These research questions led to the use of semistructured interviews for data collection, and an interview protocol was developed with a series of open-ended interview questions. These interview questions were directly linked to the research questions and were formulated in a balanced and unbiased manner in order to solicit spontaneous and unrestricted responses from participants. Follow-up

questions were used during the interviews to elicit further detail and rich data as required. I also conducted shorter, individual follow-up interviews with each participant as a member-checking exercise to confirm my understanding of their lived experience, to address any data gaps, to clarify particular points, and to provide an opportunity for participants to add to the experiences previously shared. I used initial data analysis to inform the ongoing development of the main interview protocol, and the preparation of separate semistructured interview protocols for each participant's follow-up interview. Themes linked to the interview and research questions emerged during my analysis of participants' narrative responses about the phenomenon of interest.

All participants confirmed that they undertook the development of an ADU in Ireland on their own property or on the property of a family member at some time between 2008 and 2020. An ADU is a secondary, stand-alone living unit associated with a primary home. It may take various forms, including an annex attached to an existing house, a basement apartment, a garden cottage, or a converted garage. Structurally, ADUs are generally block-built, timber-framed, or manufactured/modular. Published research from the 1980s onwards in the U.S., Canada, and Australia has included examinations of the role of ADUs in affordable housing policies, urban planning regulations, ageing-in-place strategies, elder housing and elder care policies, sustainable land use considerations, and multi-generational living. A variety of facilitators and barriers to ADU development have been studied and discussed in the literature, but little is known about the development of ADUs in the Irish context. This research study was

designed to gain insight into the lived experience of Irish homeowners who have successfully developed ADUs.

In this chapter, I present the setting of the data collection exercise and of the study participants' lived experience. I also provide details of the implementation of the data collection and analysis procedures I described in Chapter 3, discuss the trustworthiness of the research, present the results of the data analysis, and provide a summary of the results.

### **Setting**

Due to the 2020 and 2021 public health restrictions associated with the Coronavirus pandemic, no in-person interviews were held as part of this study. Instead, all interviews were conducted by telephone or online video call, depending on each participant's individual preference. All interviews were conducted one-on-one between the researcher and a single participant, who had previously received the study recruitment flyer and the study information sheet (see Appendices B and C respectively), as well as the informed consent form for this study. Each participant confirmed their consent (by email) to taking part in the study prior to undertaking the main interview. Participants were advised to choose a suitably private location for their interview calls to ensure that they felt safe and secure and to maintain privacy and confidentiality. This also served to help participants in feeling comfortable providing rich and in-depth responses to the interview questions.

The date and time of each interview was determined by the individual participants for their convenience, and to avoid any interference from other commitments they may have had. I had no prior personal or professional relationships with any of the research participants, and there were no conditions which may have been considered to influence the participants' responses, or the interpretation of the data, during the study.

Interviews were conducted with each of seven participants in total, and at the beginning of each interview I asked for permission to make an audio recording. Six of the participants confirmed their consent to being recorded for both the main interview and the follow-up interview. I personally transcribed these interviews for data analysis. One participant declined to be recorded. In this case, I prepared detailed notes from the main interview and, on review, the participant provided written confirmation of their accuracy and completeness. Further detailed notes were also prepared for this participant's much shorter follow-up interview. The participant politely declined the option to review these additional notes, noting that they did not feel it was necessary.

### **Assumptions**

During the interviews, I was able to confirm that all seven participants were willing and eager to relate their stories to me. This confirmation was based on explicit statements of interest and curiosity by participants, tone of voice, body language and facial expressions (where video calls were used), questions about the use of ADUs in other countries, and enthusiastic interest in receiving a copy of an executive summary of the research findings at a later date. While there were no significant issues relating to the

comprehension of questions by the individual participants, I noted during two different interviews that the participants were particularly focused on the minutiae of their own experiences and refrained from reflecting on their experiences in a broader context, despite neutral follow-up questions designed to encourage expansion of the discussion. In both cases, the participants' experiences included some prolonged negative and stressful elements, which may account for their concentrated examination of their own circumstances during our interviews.

### **Demographics**

All seven participants had undertaken the development of an ADU on their own property or on a family member's property at some time since 2008. Although demographic characteristics were not included in the participant selection criteria, Table 1 shows a summary of selected characteristics for the research participants. Out of the seven participants, five were female and two were male. Four had developed an ADU on their own property, two had done so on a family member's property, and one participant had done both in quick succession (i.e. they developed two different types of ADU on two separate properties, the first of which belonged to a family member and the second of which belonged to the participant themselves). Six participants had developed an ADU either to live in themselves or for a family member to live in. Only one participant had built an ADU on their own property specifically to generate rental income. Three participants had developed traditional brick/blockwork ADU structures, two had developed log cabin structures, one had a manufactured (trailer) ADU, and one

participant had developed both a manufactured (trailer) ADU and a brick/blockwork ADU in quick succession (the first on a family member's property, the second on their own property).

**Table 1**

*Participants' Selected Demographic Characteristics*

Participant	Gender	Age	Property type(s)	Reason(s) for ADU(s)
1	Female	60s	Own	For younger family members
2	Female	30s	Own	For elderly parent
3	Female	20s	FM <sup>a</sup>	For self & family
4	Female	30s	Own	For rental income
5	Male	50s	FM <sup>a</sup>	For self & family
6	Female	60s	Own	For self & spouse <sup>b</sup> For elderly parent
7	Male	30s	FM Own	For self & spouse <sup>c</sup> For elderly parent

<sup>a</sup>FM = Family member. <sup>b</sup>Participant 6 spent time living in the ADU and in the main home on the same property at different times. <sup>c</sup>Participant 7 developed two different ADUs on two different properties in quick succession.

Table 2 provides a summary of ADU types, arrangements, settings, and uses. In all cases, participants had developed their ADUs for a specific purpose and, in all but one case, had not yet used the ADU in an alternative manner (for example, the ADU developed as a rental unit had not yet been used in any other way). Only one participant had availed of the flexibility offered by having an ADU on their property by using it for more than one purpose over time. In that case, having developed an ADU on their own property, the participant had lived in both the ADU and the main home at different times in response to varying family circumstances.

**Table 2**

*Participants' Selected Property and ADU Characteristics*

Participant	Property type(s)	ADU type(s)	ADU form	Setting
1	Own	Garden cottage	Log cabin/timber-framed	Rural
2	Own	Annex	Block-built	Suburban
3	FM <sup>a</sup>	Garden cottage	Manufactured	Rural
4	Own	Garden cottage	Block-built	Suburban
5	FM <sup>a</sup>	Garden cottage	Log cabin/timber-framed	Suburban
6	Own	Annex	Block-built	Rural
7	FM <sup>a</sup>	Garden cottage	Manufactured	Rural
	Own	Annex	Block-built	Rural

<sup>a</sup>FM = Family member.



In the following section, I have presented a brief narrative description of each participant's relevant background information and circumstances to provide context for the experiences related during the interviews. Table 3 provides a summary of the themes that emerged from my analysis of the data and a detailed discussion of these themes is provided later in this chapter.

**Table 3**

*Table of Themes*

	Theme	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
1	Pride and satisfaction	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2	Need for affordable or elder housing	X	X	X		X	X	X
3	Impact on family relationships	X	X	X		X	X	X
4	Attitudes to and experiences with planning policy	X		X	X	X		X
5	Experiences with the construction process	X		X	X	X		
6	Role as an ADU landlord				X			

### **Lived Experience with ADUs in the Participant Narratives**

The following brief descriptions are presented for each participant in narrative form as background information relating to each participant's experience with the development and use of an ADU. Participants' words have either been directly quoted or else paraphrased in the preparation of these background narratives, and verification was undertaken during the follow-up interviews that I conducted with all participants.

Participant 1 built a log cabin ADU in the very large garden of their rural home, some distance from the main house. This ADU was intended for use as a family home by the participant's daughter, son-in-law, and grandchildren, and has been used as such since its completion in 2017. Participant 1's family members were in need of affordable housing and had been on a waiting list for government housing support for a number of years. Participant 1 spoke of the desire, echoed by their daughter, to be close to family while maintaining some level of privacy and independence. Prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, Participant 1 would ordinarily spend extended periods of time overseas due to their employment, and they remarked on the peace of mind associated with knowing that someone was at the property during those trips. Participant 1 did not apply for or secure planning permission for the ADU from the local government as they considered the development to be necessary, reasonable and unobtrusive. Participant 1 was formally notified not long after the ADU was completed that a complaint had been lodged with the local government's planning office. Participant 1 suspected that this complaint was lodged by a neighbor, but the complaint process does not allow the complainant's identity to be revealed so this cannot be confirmed. As a result of this, Participant 1 and their family went through a highly stressful and lengthy legal procedure in an effort to secure permission to retain the dwelling after it had been completed and occupied. During our follow-up interview, Participant 1 confirmed that this lengthy and expensive effort had been unsuccessful and that a local government order had been issued in early 2021 for their daughter and her family to disconnect the water supply and vacate the ADU. Several

months later, the local authority notified Participant 1 that they would visit the property on a particular date in October 2021 in order to supervise the removal of the ADU log cabin. Participant 1 continues with their efforts to retain the structure.

Participant 2 developed an ADU attached to their suburban home as a result of their father-in-law's need for a moderate level of care. Participant 2 explained that their spouse's elderly parent had lost most of his vision, retaining a certain level of independence, but that he could no longer live alone. The kitchen and family room in Participant 2's home were also reconfigured and extended as part of the work carried out, although the scale of the changes meant that local laws did not require the issuing of planning permission for these modifications. Participant 2 spoke of a renewed closeness between their spouse and their spouse's father, as a result of their new living arrangement. Some months prior to taking part in this research, however, Participant 2's father-in-law sadly passed away, and Participant 2 expressed gratitude for the quality time that their children were able to spend with their grandfather while he was living in the ADU, even though his absence is now felt more pointedly in the home.

Participant 3 developed a manufactured home ADU (a trailer without wheels) at their grandfather's rural property, separate to the main farmhouse. No planning permission was applied for or obtained for the ADU as Participant 3 did not consider it truly necessary for the development of their unobtrusive ADU on private land in a rural area, despite long-standing land use policies to the contrary. Participant 3 and their spouse had been on the government's waiting list for housing support for a number of

years, living with Participant 3's mother at her home, and had decided to implement their own affordable solution to their housing needs that would provide them with some privacy and independence. During our interviews, Participant 3 spoke of the peace of mind they felt, knowing that they could help to look after their grandfather during the Coronavirus pandemic, and expressed how lucky they felt to have had the opportunity and space to develop their ADU when others in need of affordable housing did not have the same options available to them.

Participant 4 and their spouse built a concrete block ADU in the medium-sized garden of their suburban home. The ADU was built by Participant 4's spouse over the course of several weekends, with help from family and friends. The ADU was developed specifically for the purpose of generating rental income and has been constantly occupied by tenants since its completion in 2015. Planning permission for the ADU was neither applied for nor obtained and Participant 4 admitted that they didn't really think about the need for a permit. Participant 4 discussed the inconvenience and disturbance associated with a drawn-out self-build undertaking, although this was counteracted by cost savings during the construction stage. They also spoke of the positive impact the additional income has had on their family and their life.

Participant 5 built a log cabin ADU in the garden of their mother-in-law's suburban home. In common with some other participants, Participant 5 and their spouse had been on the government's waiting list for housing support for several years, and had decided, out of frustration, to implement their own affordable solution to their housing

needs. Planning permission was obtained for an ADU extension to the existing home, but Participant 5 could not secure financing for construction as they were not the registered owner of the existing property. In desperation, Participant 5 decided to construct a more affordable log cabin home, detached from the main home, with the help of a large personal loan in place of a mortgage. This, however, meant that the terms of the planning permission were not adhered to, and a complaint was made to the local government planning office. Participant 5 seemed certain that the complaint had come from their immediate neighbors. Participant 5 and their family went through a stressful, costly, and extremely lengthy legal process, including a high court appeal, in an effort to overturn an order to vacate and remove the ADU. The order was eventually overturned, with certain conditions relating to the aesthetics of the log cabin being applied, and Participant 5 continues to live in the ADU. Participant 5 outlined the negative impacts on their family that resulted from this experience, and revealed that it led them to engage in charitable work to help the homeless in their area, in an effort to give back and to support others in desperate need of housing.

Participant 6 and their spouse purchased the participant's mother-in-law's property while she was still living in it. Participant 6 then developed an attached annex ADU at the property in order to live close to her and to provide support and care in accordance with her changing needs over time. Subsequently, Participant 6's mother-in-law died, and Participant 6 and their spouse moved into the main home, while their son and daughter-in-law moved into the ADU with their young children. At a later date,

Participant 6 and their spouse swapped with their son and daughter-in-law, and were living in the ADU at the time of their research interview. Participant 6 shared rich, and often funny or poignant descriptions of their experiences with intergenerational living and the joys and challenges associated with their own circumstances over a number of years.

Participant 7 had developed a manufactured (trailer) ADU on their parents' rural property in order to provide housing for them and their spouse during the construction of their own new home on their own adjacent land. In addition, the new home, once completed, also contained an attached ADU, in anticipation of possible future housing and care needs for Participant 7's mother-in-law. No planning permission was sought or obtained for the manufactured ADU and Participant 7 admitted that they didn't really consider it necessary, despite long-standing land use policies to the contrary. The attached ADU on Participant 7's own property was, however, included in the planning permission obtained for the construction of the new home. Participant 7 shared some of the challenges associated with living in close proximity to family members during their time living in the manufactured ADU, as well as their experiences in obtaining planning permission for the new home and in planning and developing their new ADU annex.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

I collected data through semistructured interviews from a total of seven participants. All interviews and follow-up interviews were conducted one-on-one with individual participants via phone or by online video call. In-person interviews were not

permitted under Coronavirus pandemic public health guidelines in effect in Ireland at the time. Initial interviews with participants lasted an average of approximately 50 minutes. Follow-up interviews were conducted several weeks after initial interviews and lasted approximately 15 minutes on average. I used a digital recording device to record the audio from interviews and follow-up interviews with six of the seven participants. One participant declined to be recorded and in this case I prepared detailed notes during and after both the main interview and the follow-up interview. My notes from the main interview were provided to the participant in question with a request for them to review their accuracy and completeness. This participant confirmed that they were satisfied with my written record of our interview. For this participant's follow-up interview, I also prepared detailed notes, though they declined to review these notes, stating that they did not consider it necessary.

Before commencing data analysis, I transcribed each interview verbatim myself. This produced approximately 150 A4 pages of single-spaced transcriptions. After initial analysis, follow-up interviews produced approximately a further 50 A4 pages of single-spaced transcriptions. Extraneous words and phrases such as "um", "you know", and "like" were redacted from the transcripts for clarity. All data was transcribed into Microsoft Excel, using multiple rows according to speaker and as a means to subdivide the data into sentences or points being expressed by the participant. Individual rows of an interview transcription were labelled numerically in chronological order and with a note to identify the speaker for each row. This allowed for filtering out of the interviewer's

rows when needed, for example, and as initial meanings and subsequent codes and themes were identified it also allowed for sorting of the data as a way to examine it in different ways while maintaining access to the chronological record of the dialogue. When filtered in ascending order, these numerical labels, combined with the removal of all other column-based filters, allowed for a return to the original and complete form of the transcript in chronological order at any time during the analysis.

In analyzing recorded data collected from a single interview, I read and reread the transcript of the initial interview several times. I also listened to the audio recording of the interview multiple times. I did this in order to familiarize myself with the data in context as the words and experiences of individual humans, and not just as text. This allowed me to begin the process of interpreting the data. I then conducted a review to identify and note initial ideas, meanings, and themes in a dedicated column in the transcription spreadsheet. Initial meaning units were chosen to reflect some aspect of the participant's experience. I then prepared notes and an interview protocol for the follow-up interview with that participant, focusing on any gaps or inconsistencies in the data, and on any points where clarification was needed.

Once a recorded follow-up interview had been conducted with the participant in question, I transcribed the new data, appending it to the existing transcript and adding numerical and speaker identifiers for new rows in the spreadsheet, as before. I then repeated the process of assigning initial meaning units to the new data, and reviewed the initial meanings previously identified, updating and refining them slightly as needed and



where clarification had been obtained. I then prepared a new column in the spreadsheet wherein I further refined the initial meanings and themes as part of a second review, grouping those that revealed similar meanings or themes. I focused on those that were relevant to the phenomenon of interest, i.e. the lived experience of the participant with the development and use of an ADU. Descriptive phrases were used to record these refined meanings and themes, and I began to note recurring themes as part of this process. A third review was then conducted, in which the names of the emerging themes were refined to make sure that individual data elements had been grouped appropriately and that themes reflected the data accurately. This process included repeated reference to my own preconceptions as a researcher (see Appendix F) and was repeated for data collected from interviews with all participants. Additional iterative reviews were undertaken in the context of all interviews collectively.

The initial reviews of data collected from the first two interviews were used to refine and refocus the interview protocol and interview questions for subsequent interviews, and this process was repeated as more interviews were completed and reviewed. This approach also contributed to the preparation of follow-up interview protocols and questions for all participants as the study progressed.

During the analysis of each interview, I repeatedly returned to my post-interview notes and to the interview recordings in order to recall the interview and the participant's experiences as a whole, rather than as individual data lines or text elements. This allowed me to revisit the analysis of individual data elements while bearing the overall narrative

and experience of the participant in mind. I was also able to revisit and examine my overarching understanding and interpretation of the participant's lived experience with specific meanings and themes in mind as they emerged from the data. As part of this process, I also regularly referred to my notes on my own biases and preconceptions, identifying where and how my interpretation of the data may have been influenced by my own Dasein, or existence in the world (Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016). I then combined meanings and themes across participants where similarities appeared from individual interview analyses and prepared and refined a table to summarize the emerging themes (see Table 3).

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

In this qualitative, interpretive phenomenological research, I worked to establish reliability and validity through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

#### **Credibility (Internal Validity)**

Heidegger's philosophy, when used as a theoretical framework, requires the explicit incorporation of the researcher's biases into data analysis and interpretation (Cypress, 2017). In order to document and assess my own biases and preconceptions, I maintained an intermittent diary of these biases, preconceptions, and associated thoughts. I documented my preconceptions and assumptions during the early stages of conducting the literature review and preparing the research design. I repeated this process at a point in my research where I had written, reviewed, and edited the literature review and had

also set out the methodology to be implemented. Finally, I revisited this process at two different points during the collection of data. In so doing, I endeavored to understand my own biases and how they evolved over time during my research, with a view to acknowledging and incorporating this knowledge and awareness during data analysis and, in particular, during the application of the double hermeneutic circle.

The high degree of rigor in the research process was reflected in the selection of a qualitative approach to answering the research questions of this study, the application of Heidegger's philosophy as a theoretical framework, and the use of the hermeneutic circle in the analysis. Additionally, the consistent alignment of the research purpose, design, and philosophy also speak to the rigor of the study.

In addition, credibility was established through member-checking, in the form of follow-up interviews, wherein I shared and reconfirmed my understanding of the highlights of each participant's interview with the individual participants themselves. I also addressed any clarifications that were required, and provided an opportunity for each participant to correct any misinterpretation, clarify their words, and/or expand on the experiences they had shared. All of the research participants confirmed my summarized understanding of their own lived experience with minimal feedback relating to the relative significance of specific comments or quotes in relation to the main interview.

I established credibility through the preparation and use of interview transcripts, where participants consented to being recorded (audio only). In the case of one participant who did not wish to be recorded, I prepared detailed notes during and after our

main interview, and provided these notes to the participant for review. The participant confirmed in writing that the notes were accurate and complete. For the shorter follow-up interview with the same participant, the participant confirmed my understanding of the key aspects of their lived experience. I again took detailed notes during and after the follow-up interview, although the participant did not wish to avail of the opportunity to review those additional notes.

Finally, credibility was supported by the establishment of data saturation, both within individual interviews and across interviews and participants. Data saturation during interviews was identified by the repetition of narratives or anecdotes by the participant (Saunders et al., 2018), and by indications from the participant that they were unable to think of any further aspects of or examples from their lived experience in response to interview questions. Data saturation across interviews and across participants was established by the identification of recurring themes and through an absence of new themes emerging from initial data analysis or from follow-up interviews.

### **Transferability (External Validity)**

Follow-up interviews were used to confirm the validity of the collected data. The presence of any contradictory data was given due care and attention, allowing for exploration of participants' unique experiences or descriptions. Both of these strategies created further opportunities for re-analysis and validation of the data, adding to credibility, validity, and trustworthiness overall.

The generation of rich descriptions, both textural and structural, supports the transferability of the research findings. Although the nature of this phenomenological study was to examine the uniqueness of the phenomenon of interest, any future replication of this study could serve to corroborate or substantiate the study findings. In order to facilitate such potential future corroboration, an "...in-depth understanding of commonalities..." is needed (Carlson, 2010, p. 1104). Thick and rich descriptions of settings, participants, data collection, and analysis procedures, as well as of participants' lived experience, help to "...increase coherence and to evoke...a sense of connection with the participants in the study" (Carlson, 2010, p. 1104) to this end.

### **Dependability**

A detailed audit trail and comprehensive record of the research, recruitment, data collection, and analysis steps were kept during the study, and are presented in detail in this chapter. This demonstrates the dependability of the research. The triangulation of data from different interviews and different participants also supports the dependability of the research as conducted and of the method selected.

### **Confirmability**

I documented my biases and preconceptions in my research journal at intervals. I reviewed, analyzed, and referred to these notes at different stages throughout the study. I noted my assumptions regarding participants' motivations and experiences, how open they might be during interviews, to what extent they might have knowledge of or opinions on policy matters, and documented how these assumptions changed during the

study. Appendix F provides a summary of the evolution of these preconceptions over time, with examinations being conducted at different stages. In employing the hermeneutic circle, and the double hermeneutic approach to analysis, these biases, and their evolution, was considered and incorporated into the analysis process and into the research findings.

### **Alignment**

In order to answer the two research questions of this thesis (What is the homeowners' lived experience of the development and use of accessory dwelling units in Ireland? and What are the perceived factors that positively and negatively influence this experience with respect to the development and use of accessory dwelling units in Ireland?), the interview protocol was designed to elicit rich descriptions of experiences in participants' own words. Interviews were designed around the collection of data relating to the research questions, allowing for the emergence of experiential themes relating to personal, social, financial, policy, or other factors and experiences, including positive and negative aspects in each case.

Since my study addressed the question of the lived experience of ADU owners, it was appropriate to collect qualitative data through semistructured interviews. This descriptive and observational approach allowed the participants to relate their experiences and express their views in a suitably non-numerical format. A qualitative, phenomenological approach also allowed for a detailed description of the "core commonalities and structure of the experience" (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1373).

## Results

In analyzing the collected data from this phenomenological, qualitative research study, the following six themes emerged in relation to the research questions, which were:

Research Question 1 – What is the homeowners’ lived experience of the development and use of accessory dwelling units in Ireland?

Research Question 2 – What are the perceived factors that positively and negatively influence this experience with respect to the development and use of accessory dwelling units in Ireland?

It should be noted that Participant 5 declined to be recorded during both the initial and follow-up interviews. Detailed notes were taken instead, and approved by the participant. As a result, there are no direct quotes from Participant 5.

**Theme 1 – Pride and Satisfaction.** All of the research participants expressed a sense of pride and satisfaction, not only in the ADU they had developed or built, but in the way in which they had made use of it. For some participants, these feelings were associated with the design and aesthetics of the ADU, as well as a sense of accomplishment in having designed, and/or built it themselves. Participant 1 referred to their log cabin ADU as “...really beautiful, really beautiful inside...it’s a great house” while Participant 4 described their garden cottage ADU as “very nice, it’s done well”, saying they were “very pleased with it”. Participant 7 was especially proud of having modified a garage design during construction in order to incorporate an upstairs studio apartment ADU,

including full provision for the necessary plumbing, cooking, and other facilities. For other participants, their pride and satisfaction revolved around having their own affordable home and their own privacy after a period of living with other family members or living in substandard accommodation for financial reasons. For example, Participant 3 referred to being “very happy” in their “lovely warm” manufactured ADU, having lived for some time with their partner and young child as guests in their mother’s house:

So it’s been really good for us because we feel like we own our own home, even though it’s only a rectangle. Living next to an older person [Participant 3’s grandfather] puts his mind at ease as well, that we’re here to keep an eye on him.

Despite lengthy legal battles and significant stress on the family, Participant 5 was happy to finally have been able to provide a home for their spouse and children, after living in a cold and draughty caravan for several years while awaiting government housing support. Finally, Participant 2 and Participant 6 shared a sense of pride and satisfaction in being able to use their ADU to provide a home and care for an elderly parent while allowing them to maintain a certain level of independence and privacy. They both also expressed a sense of good fortune that they were able to do this for their elderly parent during the 2020 and 2021 Coronavirus pandemic, instead of dealing with the risks associated with nursing home care during this time. Participant 2 noted that their father-in-law “always felt close to us, which was important to him, he didn’t want to be separated”.



It's consoling to me to be able to know that we did what we could for my father-in-law and I would do the same for my own father. He [my father] actually did get a bit sick...and we did joke that we needed to get bunk beds [for the two of them].

(Participant 2)

**Theme 2 – Need for Affordable or Elder Housing.** Most of the research participants undertook the development of an ADU out of necessity, as a result of a need for affordable housing or a need for housing for an elderly parent. Participant 1 built a log cabin on their property for their daughter and her family as they were awaiting receipt of government housing support for some time and wanted to do something proactive to establish a more secure living arrangement for themselves. Participant 1 noted:

My daughter and her husband and one son lived with us for about four years and she became pregnant and she had another baby and around that time they decided that they wanted some privacy.

According to Participant 1:

So there were many reasons for doing that [a log cabin set behind the main home], so that nobody would see it, so that it wouldn't be an eye-sore, a blot on the landscape, and I mean it was all they could afford, they had been saving up really hard and they also got a loan.

Participant 3 also decided to develop an ADU on a family member's property as a result of their frustration at not being able to afford to rent or buy a property, instead having to live with Participant 3's mother prior to developing the ADU. Participant 3

explained:

We were living with my mother up the road and it was only going to be a temporary solution, we needed our own space, but how to even go about renting somewhere? I'm working in the same industry for seven years and I'm still not making enough to pay for the high rent prices in our small town. Thinking about a mortgage makes me sick, to be honest, because it's so much money and you're tied down for so many years. We don't have much money coming in but we're still able to save at the moment. It's enough for us now, but it's not a forever solution to living.

Participant 5 and their family spent a number of years living in a caravan on a family member's property and were awaiting government housing support but eventually Participant 5 decided to take action and find their own solution to their housing needs. Participant 6 developed their first ADU on their parents' property as a solution to the lack of available housing in their area. Later, Participant 6 built their own home nearby, with an ADU annex for future use. According to Participant 6:

So we decided in the end that we needed to live here [with my mother-in-law] in order to kindof maintain her independence but also acknowledge it wasn't really bad health with her, it was more emotional support, and loneliness.

Participant 7's first ADU was developed as a way for them to live affordably while building a main home nearby, and their second ADU was developed in anticipation of a future need for housing and care for an elderly parent-in-law. Participant 2 and

Participant 6 both developed ADUs as a result of an elderly parent's need for some combination of housing, care, and company, and as an alternative to sending the elderly parent to a nursing home, with Participant 2 noting:

It was out of a need to house my father-in-law, who had become ill. We didn't feel he was ill enough to go into a nursing home, because he was still quite independent, but he'd been left virtually blind so he wasn't going to be able to cook for himself. We'd made the decision that when he came out of hospital, the best place for him was with family.

Whether in need of housing for themselves or for an elderly family member, all of the research participants to whom this theme applied expressed frustration at the lack of housing diversity, and the lack of affordable housing (both for rent and for purchase) in the Irish market. Participants 3 and 5 in particular had struggled to afford to rent their own accommodation prior to opting to develop an ADU, and had also not been eligible for mortgages to buy properties as they could not save up sufficient deposit funds to meet the lending criteria. Both Participant 3 and Participant 5 had relied on support from family members, either in the form of shared housing or permission to put their caravan on a family member's property for almost 17 years while awaiting government/social housing. Participant 1's daughter and her spouse were in a similar situation, which led to the development of Participant 1's log cabin ADU. Participants 2 and 6 spoke with some frustration at the lack of options for elder housing, referring to a limited choice in Ireland between nursing home care and in-home care for the elderly. Both participants opted to

create their own solutions to the need for a flexible approach to housing and caring for their elderly parents.

**Theme 3 – Impact on Family Relationships.** Six out of the seven research participants either lived in their ADU on a family member’s property, or had a family member move in to their ADU on the participant’s own property. Two out of these six participants had experience of the former, and two had experience of the latter. The remaining two out of these six participants had experience of both living arrangements. All six of these participants referred to rewarding and even humorous aspects of this family closeness, while some also highlighted challenges and occasional friction between adult family members. These experiences mostly related to intergenerational relationships, but Participant 5 also spoke with some satisfaction of the strengthening of bonds between their children and other children in the extended family. For example, Participant 1 expressed great joy at having their daughter, son-in-law, and young grandchildren living on their property, sharing that “If I ever need them, I literally just go out into the garden and they’re there.” Participant 1 spoke with enthusiasm about they often look after the grandchildren and get to spend lots of quality time with them as they grow up.

Participant 2 spoke at length about the great closeness that developed between the children and their grandfather (Participant 2’s father-in-law), while he lived in their ADU, and explained that, even though the whole family felt his loss more acutely when he passed away in early 2021, they were very glad to have been able to spend time with him and offer him the level of care he needed. Participant 2 even referred to a mending of

the relationship between their father-in-law and their spouse, which they attributed directly to the living arrangements with the ADU:

They [my spouse and their father] wouldn't have had a whole lot in common, so from that point of view...it [living in the ADU] let them mend, it let them get their relationship back on track I suppose.

Participants 3, 5, and 7 felt that they got to know their family members better while living close to them, and Participant 5 in particular spoke about fostering closer relationships between their children and other young family members who often came to visit the property owner (Participant 5's mother-in-law).

Participant 6 shared a number of funny and poignant stories about living in close proximity to their mother-in-law, who it seems was quite a spirited and headstrong woman, although she was in need of a certain minimal amount of care or supervision due to her age and a growing sense of loneliness. Participant 6 and their family purchased the property from their mother-in-law and then developed an ADU annex attached to the main home. Participant 6 then moved into the main home in order to provide care and company, while their mother-in-law moved into the newly-built ADU annex. Participant 6 has two daughters, and expressed that it sometimes felt as though there were three teenage girls in the household, such was the behavior and mischief-making of the participant's mother-in-law (grandmother to the participant's two daughters):

She [my mother-in-law] was great craic [fun]. When my girls were teenagers if they were getting ready to go out they would get ready [in the ADU] with her.

She had to see their style [outfits].

Conflict also arose from time to time, and Participant 6 explained that they and their spouse eventually successfully established certain rules and boundaries in order to minimize or avoid ongoing friction over certain issues (for example, their daughters had to knock on the door of the ADU instead of letting themselves in whenever they felt like it). In the end, however, Participant 6's mother-in-law remained quite set in her views regarding the upkeep of the property, leading to debates over paint colors, gardening duties, planting choices and other such considerations. Participant 6 stated that their mother-in-law often got her way in such matters, partly as a compromise in order to keep the peace.

**Theme 4 – Attitudes to and Experiences with Planning Policy.** Most of the research participants (five out of seven) ignored planning regulations and processes in some way. Four participants did not apply for development permits or planning permission for their ADUs, despite the requirement for local authority permission for any new stand-alone or self-contained residential structure (Participants 1, 3, 4, and 7). One participant (Participant 5) did not adhere to the conditions of the permits and permissions they had obtained to build a blockwork annex on an existing home and instead constructed a separate, detached log cabin. All five of these participants expressed either an unwillingness to pay the various application fees for permits and separate utility

connections and/or claimed a lack of awareness that any permit was needed for an ADU on their own land. Some rationalized their behavior by emphasizing that their need for housing was urgent and reasonable (Participants 1, 3 and 5), and, in four cases, that their ADU would not be an eyesore and would not cause any problems because they lived in a rural area and the ADU would not be visible from the public road.

Of the remaining two participants, one participant did not require planning permission as their ADU was an integral, converted section of their existing home, and one participant followed the complete local government application process for the construction of a new ADU annex, directly attached to the existing home. It should be noted that Participant 7 first developed and lived in an ADU on their parents' property, for which they did not obtain a permit, but later secured planning permission for their garage ADU when building their own new home nearby.

Of those who did not follow the regulations in relation to the construction of an dwelling (the majority of the participants), two participants (Participant 1 and Participant 5) subsequently experienced significant legal problems and stress, while also incurring substantial costs during court cases brought by the local government planning offices in each case. In both cases, complaints regarding the unpermitted development of log cabin ADUs were lodged with the local government offices, possibly by neighbors, resulting in both participants being ordered to vacate the ADUs and dismantle them. Both participants took legal action to appeal these orders. Participant 5 experienced almost a decade of hearings and appeals, eventually securing a conditional permit to continue

living in their ADU. In early 2021, Participant 1 was preparing to appeal the order they received. By mid-2021 they had received an instruction that the local authority would attend the property to witness the removal of the log cabin. In both cases, the participants felt justified in ignoring the rules, explaining their view that housing is a human right and arguing that there was nothing obtrusive about what they had constructed, albeit illegally, with Participant 1 stating “I didn’t think it would be a problem...we live on the side of a mountain, you can’t see the house from across the road.” Participant 1 further noted:

We had to provide evidence that the water treatment system we used was really of high grade...so we made sure we had all that done and the land is registered, it wasn’t like they just built it someplace that they didn’t own.

Both Participant 1 and Participant 5 shared a feeling of not understanding why they shouldn’t be allowed to provide a much-needed home, particularly in the case of Participant 1, who felt it was their right to build on their own (rural) land as long as they did not disturb or impact others, noting:

There was no problem really, until somebody obviously made a complaint to the County Council. And I’m the landowner, so I got the letter. And we tried to engage with the County Council, saying that it was the best possible option for us at the time, I mean we have two acres of land, our garden is a very big garden, but they just said that we’d have to tear it down, basically.

Participant 1 further commented:



So we don't know who complained, but we put in a very good application. It cost a lot of money to do. It was really stressful for my son-in-law mostly, he just fretted all the time over it. So when the letter came saying that they denied retention of the building, I couldn't believe it, because there is a bye-law that you can enjoy your property to the fullest extent, and we appealed, but they rejected the appeal as well.

If you go further up the road, somebody had land there and they got permission to build 12 bungalows! I don't understand it, I really don't understand it. It seems stupid that they would get permission to build 12 houses all in a row in the same size field that we own, where we have two dwellings that are quite small!

Participant 3 had not obtained a permit either, and at the time of being interviewed had not had any legal challenges, but still expressed frustration with the perceived complicated process and excessive costs involved in following the correct procedures. Participant 7 did obtain a permit for the garage ADU they developed as part of their own home, but complained about the seemingly inconsistent and illogical application of planning policies in rural areas, noting that securing their planning permission was not easy. Participant 3 noted:

Definitely cost and time and hassle [put us off applying for a permit]. And the fact that we fit into the surroundings so to speak, and because it's so small, the hassle of having to go do all of that, we just didn't. You'd have to get wells dug, and percolation tests, and we would have to get everything signed off properly, and

the cost would have been probably in the thousands, and we wouldn't have been able to afford that at all.

Participant 7 expressed similar frustration, having followed the planning processes for their second ADU:

It took us a long time to get planning permission because we were refused a few times in the run up to this, in different sites, I had picked different locations on the family farm but got refused a couple of times and that was a pain in the a\*\*. And some of the stuff was kindof ridiculous, percolation issues, fancy septic tanks, and a guy got permission in the field next door for an absolute monstrosity of a house with the exact same type ground and the same type of issues but we just got refused outright.

**Theme 5 – Experiences with the Construction Process.** Four participants spoke in some detail about their experiences during the construction of their ADUs, including both positive and negative aspects of the process. Participant 1 spoke with great warmth of the practical assistance received from neighbors during the erection of their log cabin ADU, saying that it felt like everyone was supporting them to get the work done:

All his [my son-in-law's] brothers and his father and my son, one of my sons, came up and his friends came up, and my partner cleared the site. We got a loan of a digger and it was just, it was actually like one of those things you'd see in a movie with a barn raising.

Participant 3 explained the time and effort that they and their spouse had put in to

preparing their manufactured ADU once it had been installed on a family member's property. Several months were spent carrying out insulation work, plumbing, installing a wood-stove, and decorating the interior. Participant 3 described the experience as hard work but very rewarding, since the ADU was intended for them to live in with their spouse and young child:

We had to cut branches off trees so they could get [the manufactured ADU] down our little narrow lane. It was hard, arduous, and we definitely did it on the cheap compared to going down the route that requires you to have all the certificates signed off...a family friend came and checked over everything, he's a plumber and studied as an electrician for a couple of years.

We had it [the manufactured ADU] here a year before we moved into it, because it needed to be insulated before we moved in. The walls are extremely thin. We spent the first year connecting it all up and insulating the walls and reinforcing it in areas that needed reinforcing.

Participant 4 also spoke of their spouse carrying out the majority of the construction work themselves during evenings and weekends, with help from skilled friends. This process took some time and meant that the disruption from the work was prolonged, but in the end it allowed Participant 4 and their spouse to save money on the cost of the ADU and they were pleased with the final results:

[My spouse] had a friend of his a plumber so he did all the drain work and we got a mini-digger off a friend of his, so he dug it up for us. My husband did the

foundation and actual build. It was slightly chaotic, to be honest, because there was muck everywhere and a lot of comings and goings, so I kindof just had to close the blinds and pretend it wasn't happening, but it was a bit chaotic.

Participant 5 detailed a particularly stressful experience during the construction of their log cabin, explaining that they were not happy with the level of customer service or with the quality of installation delivered by the company from which they purchased the cabin. Participant 5 spoke of a lack of faith in the company, a number of contractual problems, significant delays and a lack of effective communication during the work. Participant 5 also revealed a list of ongoing problems with the property, including poor joints, inadequate insulation, leaks in the roof, settlement, and mold.

**Theme 6 – Role as an ADU Landlord.** Only one participant (Participant 4) had built their ADU with the intention of renting it to tenants to earn additional income. Participant 4 spoke of their efforts to save money by building the ADU themselves, with help from skilled family members and friends at the weekends, although this approach meant that they had to deal with the disruption of construction for a prolonged period of time. Participant 4 also noted that they were charging less than market rate rent for the one-bedroomed garden cottage, and had also discussed with their tenant the potential impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the tenant's ability to pay, reassuring them that they could work to find a solution together if needed. As a landlord, Participant 4 expressed an intention to be reasonable, understanding, and flexible. The establishment and clear communication of certain rules and expectations was also important to Participant 4, in

order to avoid any misunderstandings or tension during the tenancy, especially due to the close proximity of landlord and tenant on the property. Overall, Participant 4 expressed that they were happy with the experience of renting an ADU and would recommend it to others, but that the most important and challenging aspect of being an ADU landlord was finding the right tenant to live in it. Participant 4 emphasized that the additional income made a significant difference to their ability to pay their mortgage and to make improvements to their home, but also to their disposable income and their ability to engage in fun activities with their children and with the whole family.

Finally, Participant 4 spoke of a lack of information or clarity regarding the taxation of ADU rental income, since certain government schemes allow tax deductions for rental income from a room within a house, but do not explain how to deal with income from a detached ADU or garden cottage. Participant 4 was also not fully aware of the applicable land use planning regulations at the time of building the ADU, and had proceeded with the construction without seeking any permits, perceiving the process to be onerous and costly. This became a point of concern for them later on, but the participant was not planning on taking any action to investigate further or seek retrospective permits at the time of this study.

I'm not out to become a millionaire from this, it's an extra bit [of income] for me and it's affordable for someone else. [The ADU income has allowed us] to do other things, like if the kids wanted to go to the cinema, you could just bring them. (Participant 4)

I've been happy enough with the experience, I'd definitely recommend it. I think there does need to be some sort of better legislation around it for both sides, because the other thing that did worry me, if I had someone in there for too long, what sort of rights they have, you'd have that sort of worry if they were there for a few years. (Participant 4).

### **Summary**

In this phenomenological study, I examined the lived experience of homeowners in the development and use of ADUs in Ireland. The findings from interviews with seven research participants reveal six key themes: (a) pride and satisfaction, (b) need for affordable or elder housing, (c) impact on family relationships, (d) attitudes to and experiences with planning policy, (e) experiences with the construction process, and (f) role as an ADU landlord. The following are the findings that emerged as a result of these six key themes.

The findings indicated that the participants developed ADUs for two main reasons, these being where there was a need for affordable housing for themselves or a family member, and where there was a need for some combination of housing and care for an elderly parent. Thus ADUs were developed by necessity, rather than purely by choice. Only one participant developed an ADU with the express intention of renting it to a tenant to generate additional income and thereby make the homeowner's main home more affordable.

Research Question 1 – What is the homeowners’ lived experience of the development and use of accessory dwelling units in Ireland?

Participants’ lived experience of the development of ADUs included both positive and negative aspects, including a recognition of community and family support during construction, challenges associated with disruption, and the stress that comes with dealing with a difficult contractor. All participants expressed a sense of pride in the completion of their ADU homes, even in one case where problems remained with the quality of construction.

Participants’ lived experience of the use of ADUs was overwhelmingly positive, including the strengthening of family relationships, achieving a sense of independence, security, and privacy for themselves or their elderly parent, and earning additional rental income to help pay for their mortgage, home improvements, and family activities. Some negative aspects of the participants’ lived experience of the actual use of their ADUs included dealing with intergenerational family tensions, and a need to address ongoing issues associated with poor construction quality. In one case, the happiness and closeness associated with having an elderly parent living alongside family was partially counteracted by the sense of loss when the elderly parent passed away, but even in this case, the participant proclaimed the experience to have been positive and worthwhile overall for them and for their children in particular.

Research Question 2 – What are the perceived factors that positively and negatively influence this experience with respect to the development and use of accessory dwelling units in Ireland?

On the whole, participants viewed existing land use, planning permission, and landlord-tenant policies as unimportant, not applicable to them, frustrating, costly, inconsistently implemented, inadequate, unclear, or some combination of several of these traits. These findings provide evidence that current policies do not play a direct positive role in encouraging the development of ADUs overall, and may even serve to discourage this type of development by private homeowners. The results also lead to the implication that where a homeowner has already decided to develop an ADU, perceptions of the current policies may actually encourage them to carry out that development without a permit and without adhering to the relevant policies and procedures. Further research (both quantitative and qualitative) focusing on these questions is warranted.

Additional factors influencing participants' lived experience included the urgency of their need for affordable housing or elder housing prior to developing their ADU, the nature of their relationship with their contractor (if applicable), and the nature of their relationships with their neighbors. Where the need for housing was particularly urgent or long-standing, participants viewed their experience of developing and living in an ADU as positive, especially in relation to their previous living arrangements. For one participant, the challenges associated with arguments with their contractor contributed to



a sense of stress during the development and construction process, but the same participant stated that the experience of living in the ADU was a marked improvement on living in a caravan. For two participants, complaints (assumed to be from neighbors) led to extremely lengthy, stressful, costly legal proceedings, which resulted in an order to vacate in one case, and a conditional permit to remain, in the other case, but both participants held positive views of their ADUs, associating their negative experiences with a perceived overly-restrictive and unfair set of land use policies.

In Chapter 5, I have discussed my interpretation of these results, as well as their implications for land use policy, planning policy, elder care policy, and housing policy in general in Ireland. I also addressed the limitations of the study process and provided recommendations for policy changes that may support the Irish government's efforts to meet the urgent demand for more diverse and more affordable housing. Finally, research implications are presented, as well as conclusions.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

As of 2021, Ireland has been dealing with a housing crisis for more than a decade. Despite this situation, ADU development by homeowners in Ireland is neither specifically addressed by current land use policies nor included in discussions relating to policy-based solutions. Additionally, there is an absence of literature on this form of housing in the Irish context, and an absence of qualitative studies relating to the lived experience of ADU owners in the broader geographical context.

This qualitative, interpretive phenomenological study examined the lived experience of homeowners with regard to the development and use of ADUs in Ireland between 2008 and 2020. I implemented a phenomenological approach to my research in order to lend importance to the “personal perspectives and interpretation” of the participants and their lived experience (Lester, 1999, p. 1), an area that has not been addressed in the literature. I used semistructured qualitative interviews to explore this phenomenon of interest, and to gain a deeper understanding of the policy, social, financial, personal, and other factors that have shaped the homeowners’ experiences within the Irish context. Seven participants shared their positive and negative experiences with ADU planning, permitting, financing, construction, and use.

I developed a description of the nature of these experiences for research participants specifically in the Irish context. I identified commonalities between participants’ experiences, and thereby documented emerging themes specific to the

processes of ADU development and use in Ireland. A qualitative approach and analysis were consistent with the focus of this dissertation on the lived experience of homeowners in Ireland and allowed for the identification of common challenges and experiences, as well as unique ones, in order to inform the policy changes and government initiatives needed to allow the benefits of ADUs to be maximized and the drawbacks to be minimized in the Irish context in the future.

All research participants were recruited on a voluntary basis and were adult homeowners with experiences of the development and use of ADUs on their own property or on a family member's property in Ireland at any time and for any duration between 2008 and 2020. I confirmed that prospective participants met the selection criteria and consented to participation in the research before conducting interviews. Data collection took place via semistructured interviews and research journaling. Due to the 2020 and 2021 Coronavirus pandemic, in-person interviews were not permitted and were therefore not carried out. Phone and/or voice-over-internet-protocol (VOIP) systems (e.g., Zoom or Skype) were used for all interviews. A total of seven participants were interviewed, in order to allow for comparison across participants' experiences, while ensuring that the data collected were manageable (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Follow-up interviews (approximately 30 minutes in duration) were arranged with individual participants for any data clarification and/or to address any gaps in the data.

The interviews were accompanied by close analysis of the transcribed and recorded data as a whole and in its parts for each interview, as well as for the interviews combined together. In accordance with Heidegger's hermeneutic circle, immersion in and analysis of the data at a high level informed analysis on a more detailed level, and vice-versa, taking into consideration the biases of the researcher and the interpretations of the participants and the researcher.

The research questions posed in this study were as follows:

Research Question 1 – What is the homeowners' lived experience of the development and use of accessory dwelling units in Ireland?

Research Question 2 – What are the perceived factors that positively and negatively influence this experience with respect to the development and use of accessory dwelling units in Ireland?

My analysis of the interview data collected from seven research participants revealed six key themes in response to these research questions: (a) pride and satisfaction, (b) need for affordable or elder housing, (c) impact on family relationships, (d) attitudes to and experiences with planning policy, (e) experiences with the construction process, and (f) role as an ADU landlord. Only one participant had experience of being an ADU landlord. Each of the remaining six themes were common across at least four participants.

## **Interpretation of the Findings**

The following is a discussion of the seven key themes that emerged from the data, with reference to the findings of the literature review and in relation to the research questions.

### **Theme 1 – Pride and Satisfaction**

The question of satisfaction with ADUs is only briefly addressed in the literature, mostly in the context of quantitative studies of elderly occupants' levels of satisfaction with ADU living, or landlords' levels of satisfaction with ADU tenant relationships (Glaser et al., 2018; Levering, 2017). In this study, the theme of pride and satisfaction in having developed and ADU and put it to its intended use emerged during interviews with all seven of the research participants. While this topic does not appear in the existing literature, it is nonetheless an important aspect of participants' lived experience, and an unexpected, spontaneously-shared theme that may warrant further research in future.

For some participants, this feeling came primarily from finally being able to afford a home of their own and from being able to improve their quality of living for themselves and their spouses and children. A sense of achievement at having completed the construction accompanied this feeling, whether the ADU was in the form of a log cabin, manufactured home, or brick and mortar structure. One participant in particular reflected on a strong sense of achievement for them and their spouse at having actually designed, built, and furnished their ADU themselves, with help from neighbors and friends. For participants who built ADUs on a family member's land and not on land that

they owned themselves, this aspect of property ownership did not appear to diminish their pride or satisfaction in any way. Equally, this theme emerged regardless of whether participants had had predominantly positive or negative experiences with the construction stage of ADU development.

For others, in addition to a sense of pride and accomplishment associated with the physical ADU, there was an added aspect of satisfaction and, in some cases, joy, at being able to provide safe and independent living accommodation for an elderly parent. This finding aligns with Cicero's (2012) and Lazarowich's (1991) focus on the role of ADUs as a practical tool for ageing-in-place, allowing the elderly to retain independence, privacy, and dignity, while still having caregivers or family members in close proximity. These benefits have also been explored in research by Brinig (2015) and Liebig et al. (2006), who emphasized the ways in which ADU living provides affordable housing for the elderly while preserving neighborhood or family connections and maintaining independence and privacy for the elderly occupant.

In analyzing the collected data, I also identified experiences with multi-generational living arrangements, which led to closer family relationships, the creation of fond memories, and, in at least one case, several humorous anecdotes relating to the good-natured antics of the elderly family member. This finding supports the previous findings of O'Dare et al. (2019), and of Siegel and Rinsky (2013), who determined that ADUs can provide an opportunity for healthy and valuable interaction and support between different generations of a family. In Ireland, strategies for elder care and elder

housing focus almost exclusively on nursing home care or in-home part-time care (Housing Agency, 2016), a situation referred to with some frustration by two of the research participants. The role of ADUs in this area therefore warrants further study in Ireland as part of policy development for the recognition of alternative approaches to elder care and elder housing. Suitable consideration of the need for legal protection of elderly ADU occupants should be included in this future research, since intergenerational living is frequently based on informal agreements and this can lead to significant problems if familial relationships break down (Somes & Webb, 2015; Thomas, 2008).

### **Theme 2 – Need for Affordable or Elder Housing**

The role of ADUs as affordable housing has been explored in the literature previously (Liebig et al., 2006; Rosenthal, 2009; Valance et al., 2005), although almost exclusively in the context of homeowners developing ADUs as rental properties available to tenants. The contribution of ADUs to affordable housing stock, while also providing a source of income for homeowners as landlords (and thereby also making their primary homes more affordable) has been examined in the U.S. in particular (Brown et al., 2017; Ramsey-Musolf, 2018; Tsenkova & Witwer, 2011). However, in my research, five out of seven participants developed an ADU as a solution to a (sometimes urgent) need for affordable or elder housing, either for themselves or for a family member, with no prospect of rental income for the landowner. One participant explained that their ADU had originally been developed in order to allow their mother-in-law to age-in-place while the participant and their family occupied the primary home.

Four participants who were themselves in need of affordable housing and who were, in some cases, on lengthy government housing assistance waiting lists (social housing waiting lists) sought their own solutions to their housing needs by developing ADUs of varying types on a family member's property. This was an unexpected ADU development practice that emerged as part of this study, that has not previously been examined in the literature, and required an IRB-approved change to the participant selection criteria in order to include this type of ADU homeowner. This finding, and the practice of Irish residents devising their own somewhat innovative solutions to housing needs, reinforces the need for the Irish government to broaden its approach to policy-based strategies to tackle the ongoing housing crisis in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Focus Ireland, 2018; Kilraine, 2019). Current government-backed solutions in Ireland focus almost exclusively on the construction of new homes to meet housing demand, an approach that is somewhat narrow in focus and, to date, inadequate in scale and scope.

Three participants (including one of the four mentioned above, who had developed two ADUs in quick succession on different properties) had developed ADUs specifically to provide a combination of housing and care for elderly relatives. Brinig (2015) and Cicero (2012) explored the role and benefits of ADUs as elder housing and as a way to facilitate flexible elder care while maintaining as much of the elder person's privacy, independence, and quality of life as possible. In contrast, Irish government strategies for elder care and elder housing do not incorporate any discussion of the potential role of ADUs, which are markedly absent from policy planning documents



(Housing Agency, 2016). It is therefore clear from this study that ADUs have a valuable role to play in the provision of elder housing and elder care, as an alternative to nursing home or in-home care, and that Irish residents are implementing this approach to caring for ageing family members, regardless of the Irish government's failure to examine this strategy.

### **Theme 3 – Impact on Family Relationships**

In conjunction with Theme 1 and Theme 2, most of the participants in this study remarked on the predominantly positive impacts of their ADUs on existing family relationships. Participants' lived experience included closer parent to adult child relationships, including a significantly repaired relationship between a father and son in one case. Grandparent-grandchild relationships were also reported to have been strengthened and deepened by experiences with multi-generational ADU living. This finding is in keeping with previous studies that explored the increasingly supportive roles taken on by grandparents in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and revealed important benefits associated with multi-generational households and closer inter-generational relationships (Brinig, 2015; Glaser et al., 2018). Where friction or negative experiences arose, participants reported a need and a tendency to work together to develop solutions and implement compromises, rather than allow the problems to impact their day-to-day lives while living in close proximity with one another.

As mentioned in relation to Theme 1, it is important to recognize that not all instances of friction or conflict can be satisfactorily resolved, and familial relationships

do sometimes break down irretrievably. For this reason, *Somes and Webb (2015)* and *Thomas (2008)* recommended that suitable written agreements and legal protections be put in place to protect elderly ADU occupants, particularly where an elderly parent may have contributed significantly to the cost of an ADU without any equity in the property overall. Future research and policy development in Ireland should therefore incorporate these recommendations in an effort to formalize multi-generational living arrangements and protect the interests of all concerned.

#### **Theme 4 – Attitudes to and Experiences with Planning Policy**

*Levering (2017)* examined policies and attitudes to ADUs in Greater Boston. In so doing, she highlighted that quantitative research into this topic is often hindered by the fact that “many cities have a substantial number of homes with ADUs that are not properly permitted” (p. 9) and that are therefore not documented. *Levering* noted that this is most often due to a combination of limited financing, urgent need for housing, and a lack of awareness of the permitting process. In this research study, five out of seven participants did not obtain the necessary permits for their ADUs (four participants obtained no permit at all and one ignored the conditions of a permit to extend the primary home and proceeded to build a separate log cabin ADU instead). In each case, participants rationalized their decision to build without local government approval by explaining that their need for housing was urgent, that they didn’t want to pay the extra costs associated with the complicated permit and utilities application processes, and (in four of the five cases) by rationalizing that their ADU wouldn’t be visible or intrusive

since they lived in a rural area. Antoninetti (2008) also explored the policy barriers that prevented homeowners from developing ADUs, or discouraged homeowners from following the correct permitting process, leading to the development of unpermitted ADUs.

The findings of this research suggest that homeowners in Ireland wish to avoid the perceived complex and costly process associated with obtaining an ADU permit, and that homeowners in rural areas consider that they have a ‘right to build’, perhaps to a greater extent than those in other areas with higher housing densities. Unfortunately, this approach means that ADUs in this category also bypass the required building regulations and fire and safety inspections normally applicable to residential construction, creating a potential for unsafe living conditions for ADU occupants. It is therefore important to review current planning and permitting processes in Ireland in order to avoid this potential and to encourage safe and legal ADU construction.

### **Theme 5 – Experiences with the Construction Process**

Research participants shared a number of both positive and negative experiences relating to the construction stage of their ADU development. In some cases, participants reported a positive experience related to the level of support and help they received from neighbors and friends, including the carrying out of skilled work. One participant shared a mild level of frustration at the disruption and mess endured during the construction stage, but said that this was balanced out by the help received from others when building the ADU themselves and by the reduced cost of undertaking a self-build project. One

participant spoke at length about significant challenges during the construction of their log cabin ADU, specifically relating to the reliability of the company contracted to undertake the work, their deviation from specified payment terms, their lack of transparency regarding deliveries and scheduling, and, ultimately, with regard to the substandard quality of the finished product.

While the existing literature does not devote much attention to this aspect of ADU development, these negative experiences in particular suggest a need for comprehensive policies relating to accreditation and registration of ADU contractors. This is particularly relevant for log cabin suppliers and builders, but also demonstrates a need for improved knowledge among homeowners regarding contractual arrangements, quality control, the management of construction projects on their properties, and their rights as customers in the event of problems arising with the finished product over time (for example settlement of a structure, mold issues, or leaks). There is therefore an opportunity for improved building regulations and policies to improve customer awareness and to protect customers' rights in this area.

### **Theme 6 – Role as an ADU Landlord**

While much of the literature on ADUs outside of Ireland relates to their role as rental accommodation (Brown et al., 2017; Brown & Watkins, 2012; Infranca, 2014; Maaoui, 2018; Mendez, 2017), there is an absence of research or even policy discussion on this topic in Ireland. It is of note that only one of the seven research participants had built their ADU with the intention of using it to earn rental income from a tenant. In fact,

no other participants had rented their ADUs (or their primary home) to tenants at any time prior to this study, notwithstanding their various original motives for developing an ADU. My own preconceptions regarding homeowner motivations in the Irish context evolved as the research progressed, and having originally anticipated that most ADUs would be intended for elderly parents or as rental properties, only one of the cases studied related to a rental property.

Although Participant 4's situation was therefore a discrepant case in the context of this research, this does not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that the use of ADU's as rental properties is uncommon in Ireland. Further research is needed to address the question of whether ADUs are primarily viewed in the Irish context as a solution to housing needs for family members (young and old) rather than as an opportunity to generate additional income. Additional, quantitative and qualitative research would help to answer this question and to reveal the factors that influence this perspective, and homeowner's use of ADUs, in the Irish context. Findings could then be used to inform appropriate policy development in the search for solutions to the Irish housing crisis.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The generalizability of this study was limited by the small number of participants. The research group cannot be considered as representative of all homeowners in Ireland who have developed and used ADUs, and further research is required in the Irish context in particular in order to explore the emerging themes in more detail. It is also hoped that this research will contribute to more proactive policy discussions regarding the potential

role of ADUs in the Irish housing market. In addition, the ability to delve more deeply into the participants' experiences in this qualitative, phenomenological study has allowed for the identification of areas for further research, both of a qualitative and quantitative nature.

As noted in Chapter 1, all seven of the research participants in this study shared the same nationality and ethnicity. While the approximate age range of each participant was noted during the data collection stage, other socioeconomic factors such as income level, mortgage status, marital status, number of dependents, or level of education were not recorded. This limits the ability to apply the findings of this study to the broader, presumably more economically, culturally, socially, and ethnically diverse population of all homeowners in Ireland with experience of ADU development and use. Equally, the findings of this study may not be transferrable to other countries, although some general insights may be gained and used to guide future research in a variety of settings.

It is worth noting that this study, by its design, excludes those homeowners in Ireland who may have wished to, or may even have attempted to develop an ADU on their property, or on a family member's property, but failed to do so due to financial, land use policy, or other reasons. An examination of the factors that prevented those homeowners from carrying out their plans for an ADU could reveal areas of land use or lending policies that directly or indirectly prevent the growth of this form of housing at a time when housing solutions are badly needed in Ireland.

### **Recommendations**

It is clear from almost four decades of research and policy experience in English-speaking countries outside of Ireland that the ADU has a valuable role to play in meeting housing demand in general, and in providing affordable housing and elder housing in particular. Equally, it is also clear that there is a lack of knowledge, research, policy, and discussion in Ireland around this form of housing and, as a result, that the benefits of ADU housing have not been realized in this context. Furthermore, the fact that the majority of research participants in this study undertook ADU development out of necessity, rather than by choice, suggests that there is scope for raising public awareness about the advantages and the flexibility of this type of housing in Ireland. Finally, the tendency for participants to develop ADUs without the necessary permits from local governments suggests that existing permitting processes would benefit from review and streamlining, in order to encourage more homeowners to adhere to the relevant regulations and guidelines, particularly with regard to safety and quality of construction.

Further research and policy development is therefore recommended in Ireland in the areas of (a) homeowner knowledge and awareness of the development and financing of ADU housing; (b) knowledge of tenancy laws and rental income taxation rules; (c) strategies to encourage homeowners to build more (permitted) ADUs where space allows; (d) attitudes towards and conformance with planning policies and procedures; (e) the inclusion of ADU living as a third strand to the Irish government's approach to elder care, and (f) the opportunities for environmental benefits and sustainable community

development presented by ADU housing. An exploration of the barriers that may have prevented homeowners from successfully developing an ADU of their own is also warranted, since this would serve to identify specific policy- or procedure-based obstacles that may be easily amended. There may also be value in exploring the views and experiences of other stakeholders with knowledge of or interest in ADUs in Ireland, such as real estate professionals, mortgage/financing professionals, urban planners and policy makers, who were excluded from this study. Finally, a closer examination of the lived experience of ADU owners in other countries would benefit policy makers in general, since this area of research would provide real world feedback as a way to continue to improve relevant planning, elder care, financing, permitting, and tenancy-related policies and procedures.

### **Implications**

With respect to public policy and administration, this research shows that there is much work to be done in Ireland to ensure clarity and consistency in existing land use and permitting rules, and in their enforcement or implementation. Participants demonstrated a tendency to avoid or ignore applicable policies, either due to perceived costs or perceived unfairness, and this indicates a need for policy makers to both review existing policies and to improve public awareness of these policies and the reasoning and logic behind them. Furthermore, explicit policies relating to ADU tenant and ADU landlord rights and responsibilities, as well as tax implications for ADU landlords, are needed, since existing general rules are not perceived to properly or comprehensively



address this form of rental housing. In dealing with strategies for elder care and elder housing, and the combination thereof in the pursuit of improved welfare and quality of life for the elderly, policy makers would benefit from a closer examination and consideration of the flexibility offered by ADU housing. Policy measures to encourage this form of elder housing are currently non-existent in Ireland, and this study demonstrates that this is a missed opportunity that could offer advantages for many families, if they can be educated and supported in their efforts to embrace this approach to caring for elderly family members.

An increase in the level of ADU development in Ireland would bring about positive social change for individuals, families, communities, and for society as a whole through the realization of a range of benefits documented in the international literature and in this study. ADUs as elder housing allow for a flexible level of elder care, balanced with independence and family support, and where an ADU is part of a multi-generational housing arrangement, research has shown that inter-generational family relationships often benefit as well. Communities and society as a whole can also benefit from the role that ADUs can play in meeting housing demand, and affordable housing demand in particular, while maintaining the form of a neighborhood with ‘gentle density’. More sustainable development can be achieved, urban sprawl can be reduced, and environmental benefits can be realized through the efficient use of existing land, roads, public utilities, and other services and amenities. Homeowners can generate additional

income from ‘mortgage helper’ ADUs, and local governments can gain access to additional housing stock to meet demand and help address homelessness.

### **Conclusion**

It is clear that there is ample scope for the detailed exploration of the role that ADU development could play in addressing the Irish housing crisis. Government bodies at both the local and national levels have a unique opportunity to learn from and build on nearly four decades of ADU research, experience, and policy lessons in other countries and to develop context-appropriate policies and initiatives suitable for the Irish culture and housing market. There is also an important opportunity, at the start of this process in Ireland, to further explore the lived experience of existing ADU owners and to incorporate their real world experiences with land use, financing, permitting, and other policies into future policies and strategies to encourage ADU development and to minimize policy barriers to such development.

I very much hope that this form of housing receives the attention and encouragement it needs in Ireland to fully realize the benefits that have been documented in the literature in other countries, and to play a part in solving the Irish housing crisis. Benefits such as increased housing supply without additional urban sprawl, improved diversity in housing stock, provision of more affordable rental housing in existing neighborhoods, and flexibility for elder care and elder housing are important contributions to positive social change that have been identified in the literature on ADUs and are much needed in Ireland. Further research is required, of both a qualitative and

quantitative nature, in order to ensure that this is carried out effectively and innovatively, while learning from past research and from homeowners who have been impacted by the existing underdeveloped policies.

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## Appendix A: Alternative Names for ADUs

1. Accessory apartment
2. Accessory cottage
3. Accessory suite
4. Accessory unit
5. Ancillary dwelling unit
6. Annex
7. Backyard cottage
8. Basement apartment
9. Basement unit
10. Finished Room Over Garage (FROG) apartment
11. “Fonzi” apartment
12. Garage apartment
13. Garden cottage
14. Granny cottage
15. Granny flat
16. Granny unit
17. Guest cottage
18. Guesthouse
19. In-law apartment
20. Infill housing



21. Laneway cottage
22. Mortgage-helper apartment
23. Mother-in-law apartment
24. Secondary apartment
25. Secondary suite
26. Secondary unit

## Appendix B: Study Recruitment Flyer

**WALDEN UNIVERSITY**  
*A higher degree. A higher purpose.*

## Volunteers Needed for Research Study on Granny Flats in Ireland

could help local planning authorities and others to better understand your experiences.

This research is part of the doctoral study for Geraldine Hurley, a PhD student at Walden University.

<p><b>Volunteers must meet these requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18 years old or older</li> <li>• Built or converted a granny flat on your own property or on a family member's property in Ireland since 2008</li> <li>• Used the granny flat for yourself or for family or for tenants or for any other purpose</li> <li>• Lived in the main house OR the granny flat yourself</li> </ul>	<p><b>About the study:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A confidential 1 hour phone interview (video option available)</li> <li>• A follow-up phone conversation/interview for any questions/clarifications (video option available) (approximately 30 minutes)</li> <li>• Audio/sound recording of interviews</li> <li>• No video recording involved</li> <li>• A "thank you" gift card in recognition of your time and efforts</li> </ul>
<p><b>FOR MORE INFORMATION</b></p> <p>Please contact Geraldine Hurley at +XXX-XX-XXXXXXX, or email XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX@XXXXXX.XXX</p>	

## Appendix C: Study Information Sheet

### **Backyard Living in Ireland: An Exploration of Homeowners' Lived Experience in Developing and Using Accessory Dwelling Units**

You are invited to participate in a doctoral research study. Before you decide whether to take part or not, it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what it means for you to take part. Please read the following information carefully and ask me any questions if something is unclear or if you would like more information about any part of it.

#### **Introduction and What the Study is About**

My name is Geraldine Hurley and I am doing this study as part of my PhD degree at Walden University in the United States. I am from Ireland and live here and am very interested in how granny flats are encouraged in some countries as a way to help meet housing needs. The overall aim of the study is to speak with homeowners in Ireland who have developed/built/converted a granny flat at their own property or at a family member's property and to get an understanding of what it was like to plan everything, carry out the work, and then use the granny flat in whatever way best suited them. I hope that this will help land use and other policies to be developed in a way that helps homeowners who wish to build granny flats in the future.

#### **What is Involved in Taking Part?**

If you meet the criteria for taking part, and decide to go ahead with involvement in the study, I will ask you to read and sign a consent form that explains a bit more about

your rights, including your privacy, the confidentiality of your information, and your right to change your mind about participating at any time.

You will be asked to take part in a 1-hour (approximately) interview either by phone or by video call and I will ask you questions about how you decided to develop and use a granny flat at your property or at your family member's property and about how you would describe different parts of the experience. If face-to-face interviews are allowed by Walden University and the Health Service Authority (HSE) in Ireland allows for home visits at the time of the interview, you may choose to be interviewed in person, while following all coronavirus-related guidance and regulations. This decision will be up to you and your preferences will be respected at all times. In-person interviews will be held in a suitable, private location, such as a meeting room in a local church, hotel, or community center. We may discuss both positive and negative experiences relating to, but not limited to, construction work, planning permission, financing, and having someone living in the granny flat on your property or on your family member's property. With your permission, I will make an audio recording of our interview and take notes. No video recording will be done.

Later, after I have reviewed the recording and my notes, I will arrange to speak to you again by phone or by video call in a follow-up interview to confirm that I have understood everything correctly, to fill in any gaps, and to answer any questions you may have. This should take no more than 20 minutes and an audio recording of this follow-up interview will also be made.

**Why Have you Been Invited to Take Part?**

You have been invited to take part because you are a homeowner who has owned a home in Ireland and you have developed and used a granny flat on your property or on your family member's property at some point between 2008 and 2020.

**Do you Have to Take Part?**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may decide to decline this invitation to take part. You may also stop your involvement in the study at any time in the future and for any reason without any consequences to you. Similarly, you may refuse to answer a particular question or questions if you wish. You do not need to provide any explanation if you decide to do this.

**Do I Have to be Interviewed in Person?**

No. You will be asked to choose between a phone interview and an online video call interview (Zoom, Skype, or similar). Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, current Walden University research guidelines do not allow for in-person interviews. **If** these guidelines change before the time of the interview, **and if** the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance in Ireland allows household visits, then an in-person interview may be possible **if this is something that you would prefer**, but only under these conditions and only while following strict public health precautions. A suitable, private location, such as a meeting room in a local hotel, church, or community centre, will be agreed for any in-person interviews.

**What are the Possible Risks and Benefits of Taking Part?**

There are no direct benefits to you by taking part in this study. I am conducting this research because I hope that a better understanding of what it is really like for a homeowner to build and use a granny flat in Ireland will help local authorities and policy makers to develop better regulations and processes to take advantage of this type of housing to meet housing demand. I also hope that this research will generate ideas for more research on this subject in Ireland in the future.

There are no serious risks to you by taking part in this study. There is a small risk that you may feel nervous or uncomfortable being interviewed and recorded. I will do my best to make each interview as relaxed and informal as possible, to allow you to share your experiences with me as openly as you wish to. In order to protect your privacy and confidentiality, your name will not be used in this study. I will assign a code number to each of the interview recordings and I will be the only one who knows the names of the participants. Your information and interview recordings and transcripts will be kept by me on a password-protected hard drive for 5 years, in accordance with Walden University's requirements, after which they will be destroyed. Your rights under the European Union's General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) will also be protected and respected at all times.

**Will Taking Part be Confidential? How Will my Information be Stored?**

Yes, participation is completely confidential. Your name and personal information will not appear anywhere in the study report. I will use code numbers to label

the interview recordings and to refer to each participant in my notes and in my dissertation. Only I will know which participant corresponds to each code number. All identifying information will be edited out of the interview transcripts.

Additionally, all of the information collected for this study, including scanned copies of consent forms and audio recordings of interviews, will be stored on a password-protected hard drive at my home, and only I will have the password. Hard copies of signed forms will be kept in a locked cabinet at my home, to which only I will have a key. Walden University requires the study information to be stored securely for 5 years. After that time, all electronic files will be deleted and the hard drive will be either reformatted/wiped. All hard copy files will be shredded and the paper recycled.

A researcher is only allowed to break this confidentiality in very exceptional and rare circumstances, for example where a researcher suspects that someone is in danger or that a very serious crime has been committed.

### **What Will Happen to the Results of the Study?**

The final research dissertation will be submitted to Walden University Submitted to fulfill the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy and Administration (Local Government Management). The research findings may also be presented at conferences, used in the preparation of papers or articles for publication, and may be used for teaching purposes in the future. Participant confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

**Who Should I Contact for Further Information?**

For further information or questions, or to address any concerns you may have at any time before, during, or after the research, please contact one of the following:

**Researcher:**

(for detailed queries about the research)

Geraldine Hurley

Based in Ireland

T: +XXX-XX-XXXXXXX

E: xxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxx.xxx

**Walden University Supervisor:**

(for high-level queries about the research)

Dr E. L.

Based in the United States

xxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxx.xxx

**Walden University Ethics Review Board:**

(for any ethical concerns or queries)

XXX@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx



## Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Item		Question	Comments/Notes	Other
1	a	How did you come to have an accessory dwelling unit or “granny flat” on your property/on your family member’s property?		
	b	How would you describe the “granny flat”?		
	c	What do you currently use it for?		
	d	What have you used it for in the past?		
2	A	Could you tell me a bit about your experiences of planning the ADU and getting planning permission for it?		
	b	What about the building process itself, how did you go about that and what was that like for you?		
	c	Did you look for financing to pay for the project? How was that experience for you?		
3	a	How has having this living space on your property/on your family member’s property impacted you and/or your family?		
	b	What was it like when you used it:		

Item	Question	Comments/Notes	Other
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For your own family?; or</li> <li>- For your family member?; or</li> <li>- As a rental unit?</li> </ul>		
4	a Could you tell me about a particular aspect of the development process that stands out as being memorable or interesting for you?		
	b What about after it was finished, once you started to use it. Was there anything memorable, interesting, or surprising that you noticed?		
5	a Is there a specific positive experience you can tell me about?		
	b Is there a specific negative experience you can tell me about?		
6	a Would you choose to develop an ADU again on another property? Why?/Why not?		
	b Would you choose to rent out this ADU/an ADU again in the future? Why?/Why not?		
	c What would you say to someone thinking about developing an ADU on their		

Item	Question	Comments/Notes	Other
	own property/on a family member's property?		
d	If you could change something about the processes and experiences you went through, what would you change?		
e	What would you say to local government representatives looking to update the relevant policies for ADU development and use/rental?		
7	a Is there anything else about your experiences that you would like to tell me about or share?		
	b Do you have any questions for me before we finish?		

## Appendix E: Common Stipulations for ADU Development

The following examples highlight the ways in which local policies can influence homeowners' decisions and experiences when it comes to investing in a secondary unit. Research in the U.S., Canada, and Europe has shown that there are a number of key restrictions in the vast majority of ADU ordinances that impact the level of development of ADUs by private homeowners (Antoninetti, 2008; Bervoets & Heynen, 2013; Brinig & Garnett, 2013; Rosenthal, 2009). These barriers often take the form of:

**Owner-Occupancy and Tenancy Requirements.** Owner-occupancy requirements stipulate that the homeowner must live in either the primary residence or in the secondary unit, and cannot rent out both units at the same time. If the owner decides to move, or needs to relocate for work, the rules often require that the property *must* therefore be sold. One notable exception to this exists in Lexington, Massachusetts, US, where allowance is made for “temporary absences” on the part of the owner (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2008). This requirement is often based on a belief that the presence of the owner will ensure proper maintenance of the property and minimize the potential for antisocial behavior by the tenant, since the homeowner has a vested interest in the community and its character. A 2013 survey of ADU ordinances in the Pacific Northwest of the U.S. revealed that 65% of the forty-six towns considered required owner-occupancy as a condition of ADU permitting (Peterson, 2018).

Some jurisdictions take occupancy requirements a step further, mandating that the tenants of the second unit must be members of the homeowner's extended family, or, in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, members of the homeowner's *immediate* family (Peterson, 2018). In Andover, Massachusetts, USA, the rules explicitly state that an ADU is for use only by relatives of the homeowner who are in need of care, supervision, or assistance, and that the eligibility of such relatives for tenancy in the ADU be reviewed at least every 5 years (Peterson, 2018). The requirement for owner-occupancy is sometimes adopted by a jurisdiction simply because it forms a part of the ordinances of neighbouring jurisdictions, and it is also seen as a way to appease those who fear instability in their residential communities.

**Off-Street and Minimum Parking Requirements.** A certain number of side-by-side parking spaces may be required for the primary home and the ADU. In-line parking (where one vehicle may block in another vehicle) is often not permitted in order to meet the parking space requirements. This stipulation prevents the development of ADUs in some cases, due to a physical lack of available space for parking (Brown et al., 2017).

**Minimum Setbacks.** In some cases, no structure may be built within a certain distance of the property boundary, regardless of the position or location of the structure on the plot of land. Again, this requirement can discourage the development of an ADU due to restrictions on available space for construction.

**ADU Minimum and Maximum Size Limits.** Local regulations, aimed at preserving the character of a neighborhood, may place general restrictions on ADU size, regardless of plot size or available space.

**Minimum Plot Sizes.** In some cases, the owners of plots below a certain predetermined size are not allowed to build any form of ADU, regardless of the specifics of the situation.

**Structural Forms.** A local government may ban the development of ADUs above garages, or may restrict development to basement ADUs only.

**Separate Utility Connection Requirements.** Where separate, metered water, power, wastewater, gas and other utility connections may be required under local ordinances for any ADU, homeowners may find this prohibitively expensive and become discouraged from pursuing ADU development.

**Development Fees.** This where a permit application process may involve the payment of significant fees, without any guarantee of approval. Again, this is a financial disincentive for homeowners thinking about entering the ADU market.

Of these, the first two are the most common, and also have the capability to almost completely suppress permitted ADU development in and of themselves, and can even serve to encourage informal or illegal ADU development (Antoninetti, 2008; Peterson, 2018; Rosenthal, 2009). It is clear from the literature that, even where ADU development is actively encouraged and facilitated, there is often a complex set of locally-imposed restrictions and stipulations to which a homeowner must conform.

Without working to fully understand the effect these policy barriers and hurdles have on the experiences of ADU owners, policy cannot evolve effectively in a manner that brings the intended policy goals and the reality of policy implementation closer together. While Ireland has yet to embrace the development of ADUs as a housing form, there exists an opportunity to learn from other countries and to examine homeowner experiences as a key part of the policy development process, right from the beginning.

## Appendix F: Summary of Researcher's Preconceptions and Biases

**Table 4***Summary of Researcher's (my) Preconceptions and Biases Over Time*

Topic (Irish Context)	Research Stage			
	Early stages of literature review and research design	Later stages of literature review and research design	Early stages of data collection and analysis	Later stages of data collection and analysis
Who builds ADUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homeowners choose to develop ADUs on their own property mainly as "granny flats" for elderly parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homeowners choose to develop ADUs on their own property for a variety of reasons, including the provision of elder housing and the generation of rental income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals also develop ADUs on properties belonging to older family members</li> <li>Reasons for ADU development can include a somewhat desperate need for affordable housing for younger family members, including an inability to save a down payment or secure a mortgage to buy a house</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homeowners choose to develop ADUs on their own property, or to allow a family member to develop an ADU on their property</li> <li>ADUs are developed as elder housing, as affordable housing, as temporary housing, and as rental housing</li> </ul>
What local governments should do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage more ADUs</li> <li>Think more broadly about diverse housing options as part of a solution to Ireland's housing crisis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carefully consider how and when to allow more ADUs and what conditions/restrictions would be appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consult with and learn from homeowners who have experience with ADUs</li> <li>Increase knowledge and awareness of ADUs as a housing form</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage/conduct research and dialogue on the topic</li> <li>Increase public awareness of ADUs as a housing form</li> <li>Examine existing policies and minimize barriers to ADU development</li> </ul>



Topic  (Irish Context)	Research Stage			
	Early stages of literature review and research design	Later stages of literature review and research design	Early stages of data collection and analysis	Later stages of data collection and analysis
Flexibility of ADUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homeowners are aware of the flexibility afforded by ADUs as a housing form</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homeowners are aware of the flexibility afforded by ADUs as a housing form</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homeowners and ADU owners often focus only on their own reasons for developing an ADU</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homeowners and ADU owners often focus only on their own reasons for developing an ADU but, when prompted, can appreciate the potential for other uses</li> </ul>
Existing Planning and Land Use Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is not easy to secure planning permission for an ADU</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is not easy to secure planning permission for an ADU</li> <li>This deters people from building ADUs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is not easy to secure planning permission for an ADU</li> <li>This deters people from applying for planning permission but does not deter them from developing an unpermitted ADU</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is not easy to secure planning permission for an ADU</li> <li>There may exist an attitude of disregard for planning laws where a homeowner personally considers an ADU to be unobtrusive</li> </ul>
Homeowners Experience with ADUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative experiences with ADU development and use are minimal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homeowners may face challenges related to financing, build quality, permitting, tenant relationships, intergenerational relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homeowners often face challenges with financing, disruption during construction, build quality, permitting, legal challenges, neighbors, lack of storage space, having boundaries in intergenerational relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homeowners often face challenges during ADU development and use, but these are weighed against the advantages in individual circumstances and most homeowners would recommend ADU development to others and/or would choose to develop an ADU on another property in the future</li> </ul>

## Appendix G: Author Permission for Use of Adapted Figures

**Figures 1 and 3:**

**From:** M. Farooq <xxxxxxxxxxxx@xxx.xx.xx >

**Sent:** Sunday, October 17, 2021 9:47 PM

**To:** Geraldine Hurley <xxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx >

**Subject:** Re: Request for permission to use modified/simplified graphic from your 2018 paper.

Dear Geraldine

Sure, no problem! Also, you may find the following references useful too 😊:

[Farooq, M.B.](#) and [de Villiers, C.](#) (2017), "Telephonic qualitative research interviews: when to consider them and how to do them", *Meditari Accountancy Research*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 291-316. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MEDAR-10-2016-0083>

[de Villiers, C.](#), [Farooq, M.B.](#) and [Molinari, M.](#) (2021), "Qualitative research interviews using online video technology – challenges and opportunities", *Meditari Accountancy Research*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MEDAR-03-2021-1252>

All the best with your research!

Kind regards,

Bilal

**Muhammad Bilal Farooq**

PhD, CA, CPA

Acting Deputy Head of Department of Accounting and Senior Lecturer of Accounting

Auckland University of Technology

Associate Editor: *Meditari Accountancy Research*

**From:** Geraldine Hurley <xxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxx.xxx>  
**Sent:** Monday, 18 October 2021 3:21 AM  
**To:** M. Farooq <xxxxxxxxxxxx@xxx.xx.xx >  
**Subject:** Request for permission to use modified/simplified graphic from your 2018 paper.

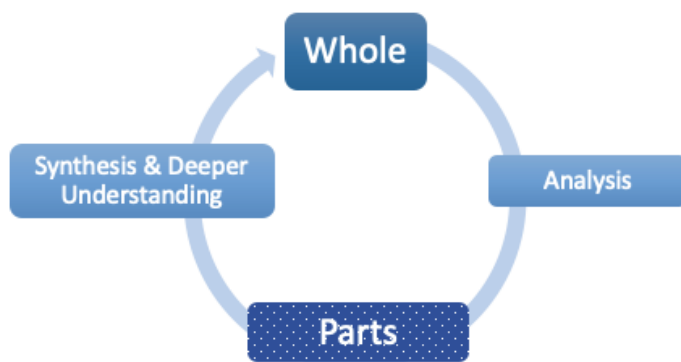
Dear Dr. Farooq,

I am writing to you to ask your permission to use a simplified adaptation of diagrams from your 2018 paper: A review of Gadamerian and Ricoeurian hermeneutics and its application to interpretive accounting research.

I am finalizing my Ph.D thesis on the lived experience of homeowners with secondary units (phenomenological Heideggerian study) and plan to include the following graphic, with a note/citation that it has been adapted from your paper, and with a reference included also:

**Figure 3 /**

*Heidegger's Hermeneutic Circle – Principle*



*Note.* Adapted from Farooq (2018).

Kind regards, and many thanks for the benefit I have already received in reading your paper,

Geraldine Hurley  
 Cork, Ireland

Ph.D Candidate at Walden University (Public Policy and Administration)