

The spectre of
continued
ambiguity -
tensions within
cannabis policy
change in Ireland.

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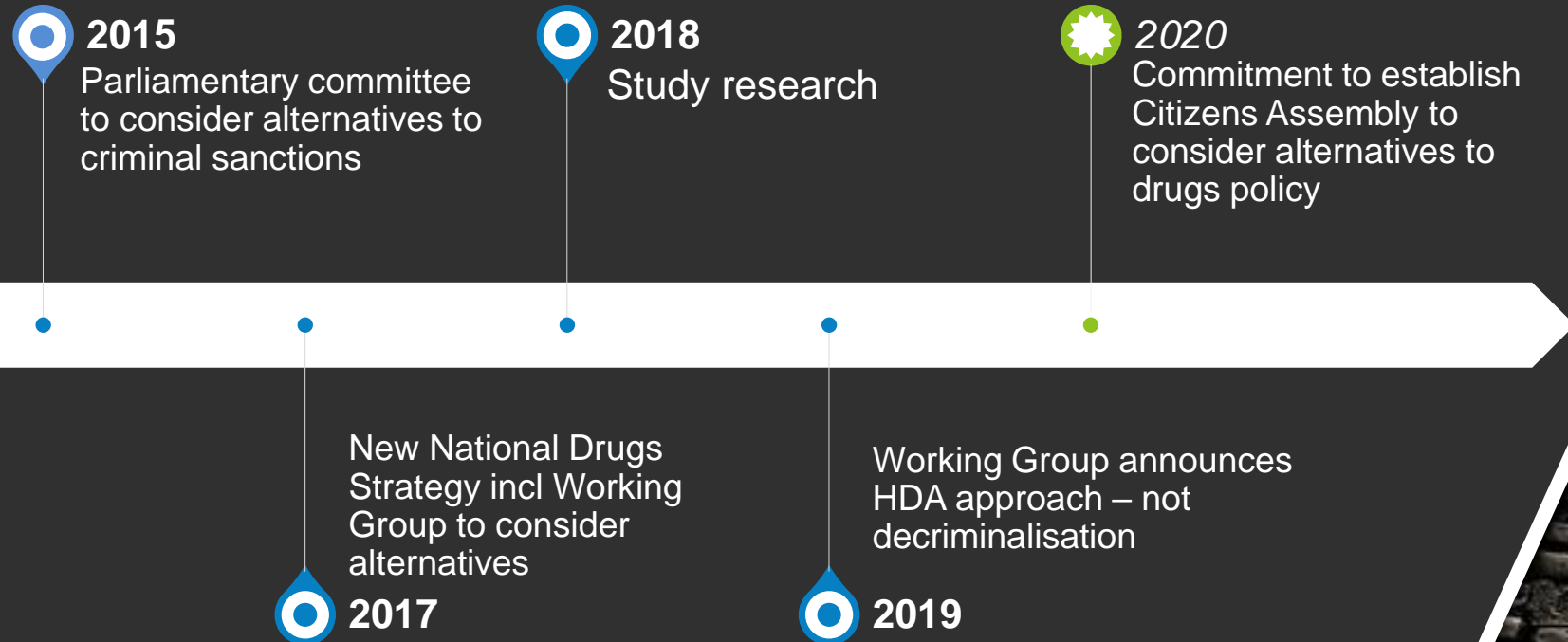
A large, ethereal plume of white smoke or vapor rises from the bottom right, filling the right half of the frame against a black background. The smoke has a wispy, organic texture with various swirls and eddies.

Background and context

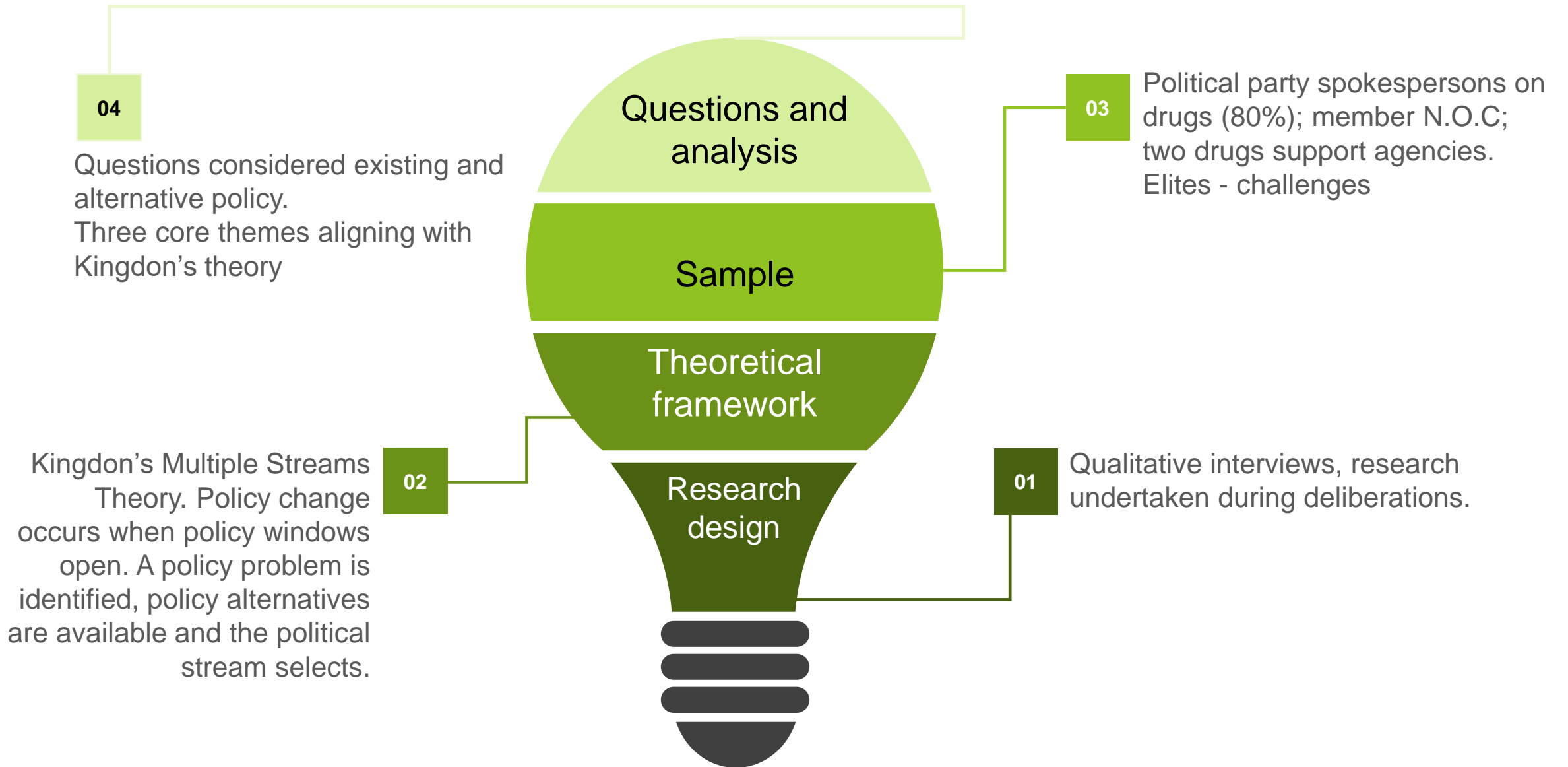
- Cannabis in Ireland
- Drugs policy in Ireland

usage, treatment, potency

incremental, ambiguous, times of crisis,
recent crisis assoc with violence



Methodology



Results

‘..people ask us what are the answers, well we haven’t got any answers within the current frameworkthe major reason we have to change what we are doing is the DRI, the violence.....’ (Participant 4)



The problem stream

Near-perfect symmetry in identification of failings of existing policy

Harms of criminalisation: impact on life-course, employment, travel; class disparities

Crime & violence: Drug Related Intimidation, profit-motive



The policy stream

Decriminalisation: Clear support, based on international evidence, link back to problems.

'That's a model that, you know, takes people out of the criminal justice system, saves people's lives, which is the important thing for me, and it decriminalizes the person.'
(Participant 1).

Legal regulation: Qualified support, no explicit rejection, based on nullification of crime/violence.



The politics stream

Incongruencies: Clear difference between opinions provided and organisational policy position. Political particularly stark.

'Again, the party position is as outlined above (relating to decriminalisation). My own personal position is that I am in favour of legalising cannabis for personal use'.

(Participant 2)

Policy and political blockages: incremental nature of policy development, political/institutional opposition



Discussion



Key issues and questions

Why did these policymakers differ from the Working Group?

Different policymaking group; deemed incompatible with current legislation; aligns with ambiguous, gradual approach.

Could the policy window re-open, leading to further change?

Yes, via Citizens Assembly. Potential for change contingent upon success of HDA.

What of the incongruencies between the personal and organizational positions of policy-makers?

Great unknown. Determined by CA's recommendations, strength of political forces.