



Editorial

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EDITORIAL

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This volume of Translocations seeks to address once again the intricacies of migration. This time, however, many of the articles speak specifically to those issues that tend to be de-emphasised in political and media debates about integration, namely the context, location and fluidity of boundaries. In various ways these notions contest essentialist thinking about Irish identity implicit within integration policy goals. Through their exploration the articles herein highlight the often overlooked inconsistencies inherent in the notion of ‘integration’ itself as traditionally understood.

This issue’s lead article is written by Floya Anthias who presents the notion of ‘translocational positionality’ as a way of addressing new identity considerations which diaspora, hybridity and cosmopolitanism have brought to the fore. Anthias uses the concept of ‘intersectionality’ here in order to consider how presumed ‘group’ identities and understandings of belonging - those, for instance, of ethnicity, gender, and class – can be understood to intersect in and thereby be the *result* of social locational processes, as opposed to being given in advance and then coming to rest in specific spaces. This ‘intersectionality framework’ challenges the idea that concepts of ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘European’ and ‘Non-European’, ‘Irish’ and ‘Non-Irish’ can be mapped neatly onto categories of race, class, ethnicity and gender by forcing us to consider how the latter are constantly being reformulated within and across a multitude of social settings. Anthias’ work in this area is at the forefront of current theorising about identity and belonging and arguably challenges even the most critical of readers to reconsider what they think they already ‘know’ about identity.

The idea of being able to ‘map’ different communities in and around a country is one which, in the personal experience of the authors of the second piece in this issue, has proven to be very popular in Ireland recent years. In *Mapping Migrants in Ireland: The Limits of Cartography* Mary Gilmartin and Gerald Mills attempt however to consider whether there are limits to the tools which are increasingly being used to plot migration in this way. By drawing our attention to the processes of selection and generalisation necessary for any depiction of ‘reality’, they stress the role which cartography plays in *creating*, as well as representing, patterns of migration. Their discussion speaks to the necessity of maintaining a critical perspective, especially in

relation to enterprises that purport to merely ‘understand’ the movement of different communities around the world.

The most obvious example of twenty-first century essentialism in Ireland is the Manichean distinction often made between ‘nationals’ and ‘non-nationals’. Such reductionism is easy to criticise but difficult to supplant in a context where it makes empirically validated distinctions between citizens and non-citizens of the Republic of Ireland. The rules of citizenship aside, the national/non-national dualism serves as shorthand for a history of Irish essentialisms within Irish identity politics. Integration approaches predicated on the presumption that there is therefore a single homogenous host community are unhelpful. Hence the need to move beyond integration, beyond the notion that somehow immigrants must become ‘Irish’ in the sense that Irish identity has been previously formulated. As the third piece in this issue, Caitríona Ní Laoire’s analysis of Irish return migrants (as both homecomers and newcomers) challenges the perception that the ‘Irish’ society into which migrants might integrate is a homogenous one. Similar to the Floya Anthias piece, Ní Laoire highlights here how notions of ‘identity’ and ‘belonging’, as opposed to being located in any one fixed place, can be conceptualised as moving *between* spaces, many of which can be referred to as ‘home’. In redefining location in this way an alternative understanding of the idea of ‘space’ is presented. This is the idea that the space which communities occupy need not necessarily be something that is definable in terms of distinct and clear boundaries. As Ní Laoire herself concludes, “[t]his is not a simple narrative of either ‘coming back home’ or ‘moving to a new place.’ It is a complex and in-between narrative which moves between both but also sits in the undefined space between the two”. (p.13)

Three other peer-review contributions to this issue explore the complexities of migration in applied settings. Emphasising discontinuity and contradiction as opposed to synergy and coherence, each piece contributes, in its own way, to further undermining the supposed ‘logic’ of migration policy as currently practiced in Ireland.

The first is a piece by Sinead Meade and Michael O’Connell which examines cognitive representations of immigrants and minorities amongst Irish adolescents. Meade and O’Connell argue here that traditional methods of ‘measuring’ attitudes (in particular the Likert Scale) ignore (as they are unable to account for) the often complex and conflicting attitudes of individuals in relation to the same issue. Their piece works to undermine the idea that people are necessarily *either* ‘racist’ or ‘non-racist’ by emphasising the often ignored issue of the ever changing and more often than not contradictory *contexts* or “representational fields” in which individual’s articulate their attitudes (for example between wanting to be ‘wised up’ about immigrants yet not prejudicial towards minorities).

Maeve Foreman uses the lens of HIV Aids care and lack thereof, to explore the underlying tension between the adequate consideration for the health care requirements of refugees and the Reception and Integration Agency’s (RIA) need to disperse people far and wide around the country into direct provision accommodation. This piece sits easily within an ever growing critique of the Irish Government’s continued insistence that the direct provision system constitutes a humane, fair and effective means of meeting the basic needs of asylum seekers in Ireland.

The final peer-reviewed article in this volume is by Abel Ugba wherein he considers how Paul Gilroy's analysis of diaspora constitutes an alternative way according to him of articulating identity that does not essentialise 'blood and soil'. On the basis of Gilroy's claim Ugba asks whether anything can be learned from the recent advent to Ireland of African Pentacostalist groups and the manner in which these have provided a basis for identification other than that of race, nationality and immigrant status. Similar to the aim of Anthias and Ni Laoire, Ugba can be seen here as proposing a way of thinking about identity that avoids the kinds of essentialism that might see integration amounting to little more than assimilationism in practice. His essay is a fruitful exploration of the possibilities as well as the new challenges which such an alternative approach throws up.

Contributions from civil society and analysis of recent academic as well as media publications on the topic of migration sees the platform and book review sections of this issue examine underlying contradictions within the 'integration' paradigm.

The three pieces in the platform section emphasise collectively the role of bottom-up contestations (in all their complexity) in response to recent homogenous institutions and institutionalised culture. The first of these is by Katrina Goldstone of Create who explores how the exoticisation of one particular view of Jewishness now lodged in the Irish psyche has resulted in suppressing other idea(l)s of Jewishness. Jean Pierre Eyanga Ekumeloko of Integrating Ireland writes the second piece wherein he looks at what can be learned from innovative examples of coalition building on the more unusual basis of diversity as opposed to that always of commonalities. The final piece by Mayte C. Martín, an independent consultant on diversity considers the situation of the Roma population across Europe, as well as briefly in Ireland, in light of the recent EU Roma Summit. She concludes that despite calls for a 'joint effort' between supra national and national bodies, the current situation of poverty and social exclusion which most Roma in Europe find themselves indicates that neither the Commission nor individual member states are assuming enough responsibility for improving the situation of Roma communities across Europe.

The review section of this issue confirms the extent to which the certainties of the integration paradigm have *already* begun to shift; not only within academia, but, also, and according to Gavan Titley not a moment too soon, within media circles. Gavan Titley's review of *Meet the Immigrants*, a six-part co-produced BBC/Open University observational documentary sets the backdrop for subsequent review pieces which consider how notions such as the politics of identity, diaspora and racism continue to slowly undermine the conservative idea(l) of the white monocultural society which is beset by the arrival of strangers and the dreaded M word (multiculturalism) which then proceeds to supposedly threaten the core of its very existence.

The Irish Government's assertion earlier this year to the effect that 'Identity politics will only harm not help' (Conor Lenihan, Metro Eireann, 28 Feb – 5 March 2008) stands in stark contrast to the first book to be reviewed in this issue. In his most recent publication Bhikhu Parekh calls for a new politics of identity in light of the increasing prevalence of globalisation, a call which Philip Watt describes as a truly democratic endeavour. Yet when compared with the Minister for Integration's conviction that "a major re-think of the Irish identity would probably unsettle rather than consolidate"

(ibid) we are left feeling somewhat deflated. The true importance of maintaining bodies such as the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) and National Action Plan Against Racism (NPAR) in order to provide a much needed challenge to the often sedimented politics of current government policies in the area of migration, arguably becomes clearer in light of such disjunctures between academia and political expediency.

Recent publications by Jana Evans Braziel, *Diaspora: an Introduction* and Arun Kundnani, *The End of Tolerance: racism in 21st century Britain* provide discussion for the subsequent two reviews, both of which attest to the fact that ‘diaspora’ and ‘racism’, although highly contentious concepts at times, both continue to resonate in the contemporary world because they constantly force us to reevaluate what we mean by ‘multiculturalism’, ‘interculturalism’ and ‘integration’. The concluding review essay of this issue of *Translocations* finally sums up many of issues which have been discussed in this volume. It does so by offering forth the phrase “politics of scale” and exploring the idea therein of the challenge which globalisation as a new framework for conceptualising migration provides to the now increasingly defunct nationalist paradigm. Munck puts it thus: “[m]igration – from this globalisation as revolution perspective – becomes a symbol of the fluidity, impermanence and complexity in an era of time-space compression. Emphasis is today less on individual strategies or structural political economies but rather, in the complex turbulence of migration - flows, diasporas and hybridity - with chaos theory emerging as a potential explanatory paradigm” (p.7).

Dublin, December 2008
The Editors