Getting integration right? Media transnationalism and *domopolitics* in Ireland

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Abstract

This article examines the transnational media environments and experiences of Nigerian and Chinese nationals living in Ireland. It theorizes empirical research in the context of the mode of integration governance developed in the Republic of Ireland during a period of significant in-migration. Building on a theory of domopolitics, it suggests that Ireland's short-lived integration regime deployed culture and interculturalism as resources for the self-governing integration of all foreign nationals, while developing a system of civic stratification designed to limit claims to citizenship and social and economic rights. It examines the concomitant development of public service media policies in this context. Drawing on recent discussions of contrapuntal media readings, the article argues that transnational media experience refracts the lived tensions inherent in the disjuncture between the possibilities of cultural participation and the constraints of socio-political containment.

Keywords: Integration; Ireland; transnationalism; domopolitics; multiculturalism; Nigeria; China.

Introduction

This article examines the transnational media practices of Nigerian and Chinese discussants during a period characterized by an Irish governmental focus on integration, a focus replicated and adapted in the 'intercultural policies' adopted by the public service broadcaster, RTÉ. As non-EU citizens with residence permitted through a variety of channels – work permits, student visas, refugee status or with 'leave to remain' – they have been the imagined subjects of a politics that

proposes integration as a primarily cultural 'two-way process' of undifferentiated majority/ minority relations, while living within a system of civic stratification based on a tiered legitimacy of labour utility and perceived impacts on social cohesion (Fanning 2009). The disconnect between culturalized narratives of integration, and re-stricted access to permanent status and economic and social rights, is primarily explored through the experiences of female discussants, who may be 'triply disadvantaged' in Ireland through gender inequality, racial discrimination and the precariousness of migrants in the labour market (Pillinger 2007).

As Eleonore Kofman summarizes, in western Europe '...immigration policies are directed towards selecting those who will be most advantageous to the economy, will fit into a pre-existing national culture, and not disrupt a supposed social and community cohesion' (2005, p. 463). The practices of the state in Ireland are congruent with this, while being mediated through 'soft' discourses of interculturalism and integration, as opposed to the variegated 'neo-assimilationist' agendas more commonly found in neighbouring countries (ibid. Fekete 2009). Media research provides an interesting space for examining the relationship between the structuration and culturalization of legitimate migrant presence. Given, as Roger Silver-stone argues, that the primary cultural role of media work is 'boundary work', '...the endless, endless, endless, playing with difference and sameness' (2007, p. 19), public service media in Europe have been charged with and have adopted ambivalent roles in relation to the contemporary governance prerogative of integration. Media work is not only institutional, it is also the work of situated sense-making. For migrants, this involves working with the multiplicities of media in contexts of constraint, imbalances of power, and where boundaries are made and re-made in relation to their identities and presence. Silverstone posits a theory of such media work as the *contrapuntal*; empirically, as situated in a diverse yet transnationally convergent 'single media environment', but also experientially – as the inescap-ability of the presence of others, of a dialectic between presence and absence, of situatedness and dispersion (2007, pp. 84–7). Following a discussion of institutional integration discourse in the Republic of Ireland in relation to 'domopolitics' (Walters 2004), the article presents a thematic analysis of empirical research conducted as part of a 2007–9 research project examining migration, and media policy and practices. The analysis examines how mediated resources are incorporated into the constraints, situated affectivities and future orientations of young Chinese women working in Dublin, and Nigerian women and men of varying statuses reflecting, through media practices, on their future in a 'home' unsettled by racialization. Contrapuntal media practices integrate Irish and transnational media, providing resources for

reflecting on and re-shaping relations of 'here' and 'there'. Yet discussants also reflected, through mediated resources, on the disjuncture between the constraints of status, and their experiences and modalities of integration. These practices elaborate the resistant social fact, as articulated by Ghassan Hage, that 'cultural integration' happens: often regardless of particular state policies, and in ways that exceed, evade, and undermine the majoritarian projections of those modes of governance (2000, pp. 238–40).

Situating the politics of integration in Ireland

Integration as 'domopolitics'

Integration regimes in western Europe display an apparent contradiction between the expansion of stratifying systems of entry, status and residence, and the extensive formal and symbolic demands for loyalty and elective homogeneity made on migrants with these variegated legal statuses. The 'neo-assimilationist agendas' that now seek to protect social cohesion through demands for cultural affirmation were generated by the complex of migratory pressures experienced in western Europe in the post-Cold War period (Kofman 2005). These agendas, as Kofman argues, are integral to 'managed migration regimes' and processes of civic stratification: differentiated access to civil, economic and social rights, as well as potential citizenship, is organized according to the gradiated utility of migrant labour and concomitant modes of entry, employment and residence. In regulating the productive contribution of migrant labour and the manifold risks associated with migrants as 'social enemies' (Tsoukala 2005), integration governance produces differentiated modes of legal subjectification detached from processes of citizenship, while delineating acceptable ranges of possible conduct based on a projection of the idealized national citizen (McGhee 2008; Fekete 2009).

As Bryan Fanning details – in reflecting on the 2004 Citizenship Referendum that removed the birthright of citizenship from children of 'non-nationals' – the state in Ireland has developed a broadly similar structure. The incorporation of citizenship as a 'mechanism of civic stratification' is part of a structure of '...gradations of rights between citizens and non-citizens, immigrant "guest" workers, "illegal" workers, refugees and asylum-seekers...in which groups of people are differentiated by the legitimate claims they can make on the state' (Fanning 2009, p. 111). Prior to 2002, integration governance was restricted to those granted refugee status and labour migration was regarded as temporary (Boucher 2008, p. 22). In advance of the 2004 accession of new EU member states, Irish policy shifted to develop a system of stratification based on satisfying low-skilled

labour needs from mobile EU labour, and a 'managed system' involving Green Cards and enhanced residence pathways for skilled non-EU labour (ibid). The economic recession since 2008 has provided significant evidence of the structured inequality and exploitation facilitated by the employer-held work permit system. The state response has been to ignore and enhance these restrictions, based, as a 2010 Migrant Rights Centre report contended,

> ...on a misunderstanding of migrant workers and their families as temporary residents whose position is entirely dependent on economic circumstances. Migrant workers and their families are thus actively encouraged to leave Ireland, or not to come here in the first place' (Crowley 2010, p. 5).

However, the gaps between 'nationals' and 'non-nationals' can be understood less as 'misunderstandings' than as systemic priorities, and integral to the project of integration governance in '...systems that couple security and migration with visions of integration' (Maguire and Murphy 2009, p. 3). Integration governance in Ireland may be interpreted as an iteration of what William Walters terms 'domopolitics' – a themed, securitized politics of home. In a configuration particularly suited to theorizing the 'neoliberalisation of Irish society' (Kirby, Ging and Cronin 2009, p. 205), Walters argues that the image of a coherent national economic system '...linked in turn to a social order...in an international order populated by discrete, bounded socio-economic systems engaged in mutual relations of trade' (2004, p. 244) has been largely replaced by configurations of the neoliberal state located in a space of flows, where the 'business' of governance involves tapping into and directing productive mobile goods. In this porous order, 'insecure societies' are held to be vulnerable to mobile 'bads', including such human mobilities as 'unskilled' workers and the delegitimized mobility of asylum-seeking.

Domopolitic cannot seek to arrest mobility, it looks to manage and discipline its costs and risks. It regulates suitable entry. Guests must learn the house rules – a common metaphor in integration debates – and submit to cultural governance. Home must be protected because its '...contents (our property) are valuable and envied by others' (2004, p. 241), implying guest self-sufficiency. Guests should not steal; the threat of the 'immigrant' is a threat to the residual welfare state, and domopolitics transfers (social) security to the policing of resource threats in a field of internal and transnational security, juxtaposing '...the "warm words" of community, trust and citizenship with the danger words of a chaotic outside – illegals, traffickers, terrorists' (Connolly 1995, p. 142). In Ireland as elsewhere, 'integration' is detached from a process of access to national citizenship through

naturalization, and has become a border practice, beyond and inside the territorial border (Guild, Groenendijk and Carrera 2009, p. 15–17).

In a study of the 'feminisation of migration' to Ireland, Jane Pillinger (2007) illustrates how this mode of domopolitical governance specifically impacts on migrant women. While describing a diversity of experiences – and a recurrent reflection among her respondents that migration had increased some forms of autonomy and impacted on prevailing, dominant gender relations – Pillinger's research shows the divergence between the integration strategies and experiences of many migrant women and the legal-structural barriers they face. Difficulties in accessing social and economic rights to information, health services, childcare and maternity benefits are structured by limited access to secure status, independent status (for the spouses of employment permit-holders), rights to family reunification, and the disruption of mobile networks of care and support through visa regimes (Pillinger 2007, pp. 35–50). The domopolitical emphasis on policing the threat of the immigrant is further secured through a gendered rendition of civic stratification.

Culture, governance and the integration narrative

Western European integration politics is mediated through idioms conveying threatened and desired states of integration: laïcité in France, 'community cohesion' in the UK, 'standards and values' in the Netherlands, 'Leitkultur' in Germany (Fekete 2009, pp. 62–3). These resurgent imaginaries cannot be understood without reference to the contemporary license provided by the rejection of a 'failed experiment' in multiculturalism. Regardless of the conceptual elasticity and contextual variations barely contained by the idea (Fleras 2009), multiculturalism has been inflated beyond the scope of empirical rebuttal, and provides a reductive, mobilizing metaphor for the manifold threats of difference to social cohesion and national unity (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2009; Lentin and Titley 2011).

Demands for conformity to national ideals are less pronounced in Ireland, where the mediation of a 'progressive multicultural image' is crucial to the globalized, foreign direct investment-dependent economy (Kirby et al. 2002, p. 197). Instead, integration governance was themed as 'a chance to get it right', a temporal emphasis that envisioned engaging with the problematic of migration just as other European countries transcended 'multiculturalism'. Influenced by the non-binding common principles at EU level (2004) the 2008 policy statement of the Office of a Minister of State for Integration (OMI) narrates 'experience in other countries' as shifting from 'relatively laissez-faire…to compulsory engagement'. This suggests that '…from Ireland's point of view, we may be able to position ourselves on a more

advanced cycle rather than go through earlier cycles' (OMI 2008, pp. 35–6).

For all this modular precision, research consistently critiqued the lack of coherence in '…a collection of policy statements and piece-meal, reactive policy responses to immediate, experiential policy problems' (Boucher 2008, p. 6). Following the abolition and 'down-scaling' of agencies deemed central to integration[1] in an emergency budget in 2008, it becomes possible to theorize this piece-meal development as an aspect of what Christian Salmon terms 'narrative as instrument of control' (2010, pp. 6–10). Ireland's post-multicultural certainties were entirely discursive. 'Multiculturalism', for instance, was merely re-branded as 'interculturalism', a shift that extends a multiculturalist ontology of 'already there' cultures. This elided experiences of racism, while limiting more materialist forms of anti-racist politics (Lentin and McVeigh 2006).

Ireland exemplifies how, under domopolitics, the assertion of '…home as our place, where we belong, naturally, and where others, by definition, do not' (Walters 2004, p. 241) does not always depend on overt appeals to national homogeneity. Instead, culturalization delimits the political field while promoting culture as a managerial 'resource' (Yúdice 2003). For all the anxieties concerning futures of multiculturalist dis-cohesion, integration was not meaningfully re-garded as a question for social policy, as domopolitics works to manage cultural and economic threats in the absence of the social. Immigration policy acts as an integration filter selecting those deemed capable of economic self-sufficiency (Boucher 2008) and integration discourse attempts to cultivate '…self-sufficient and autonomous immigrants, who must work on themselves in order to be independent, and committed to contributing to the Irish economy and society, in order that they may be integrated' (Gray 2006, p. 130).

The boundary work of media institutions

If integration provides a cultural control narrative, it also provides a legitimation narrative for national broadcasters de-centred by digita-lization, media transnationalization, and audience fragmentation (Larsen 2010). In Roger Silverstone's theorization of **media work as boundary work**, modern agencies such as public service broadcasters were historically involved in the work of '…boundary and community construction at national…levels' (2007, p. 19). In the era of networked mediascapes, where the integrative role of national broad-casting is disturbed, boundary work becomes more difficult but also more pressing, arguably defining the media's role as a site for the '…endless playing with difference and sameness' (ibid).Boundary work among western European public service broadcasters is shaped, but

not determined by, the politics of integration (Leurdijk 2006; Horsti 2009). Ben O'Loughlin (2006) has demonstrated how BBC policy shifted from an essentialist vision of multiculturalism to a 'concept of cultural diversity' influenced by community cohesion agendas, and the knowledge economy goal of increasing individual social capital (2006, p. 15). O'Loughlin's British coordinates map broadly onto the frameworks developed within Radio Telifís Éireann (RTÉ). The broadcaster's policy framework was also inflected with a desire to 'get it right' beyond multiculturalism, as evidenced by the careful, multi-stage development of a 'diversity and interculturalism' policy between 2005 and 2009 (Titley, Kerr and King O'Riain 2010, p. 113–138). Interculturalism was adopted as a dimension of the institutions' corporate review, and spliced to the established remit in the Public Service Charter to enhance 'the democratic, social and cultural values of Irish society' and to reflect the 'regional, cultural and political diversity of Ireland and its peoples' (2004, p. 4). Thus in its 2007 Corporate Responsibility Report it adopted the role of an intercultural mediator, with '…a decisive and responsible role in determining attitudes and levels of understanding between communities and cultures (2007, p. 52). While space prevents a fuller examination, a similar narrative trajectory to that of national governance can be discerned, if for different reasons. From a position that similarly imagines 'migrants' as '…always already excluded and in need of integration' (Gray 2006, p. 121), the policy proposes a role in educating majority and minority audiences in an appropriate valuing of other cultures, and thus providing resources for understanding and tolerance. However, the commitment to integration through diversity is a mediated commitment, operating at the level of representation, and with stated goals concerning diversified staff profiles scaled back over time (RTÉ 2007, p. 53). The interculturalism of better understanding and more tolerance as the keys to 'integration' are inflected with the domopolitical logic that locates 'acceptable' societal outcomes at the level of individual actualization, at the expense of critical spaces for articulating systemic problems and racialized experiences.

Transnational 'media worlds': cultural governance and contrapuntal negotiations

The contrapuntal dynamics of transnational media engagement open up other kinds of critical spaces. The following discussion draws from twelve focus groups and concentrates on a discussion of the reflections of young Chinese women, and a diverse range of Nigerian female, and some male, participants. The comparative relation between nationally-based groups, as well as single and mixed gender groups, requires contextual explanation. The research worked with nationally-based

groups to facilitate snowball sampling and linguistic access. The aim was not to attempt to produce 'national profiles' or generalizable results, but instead to conduct thematic analysis based on their shared, politicized identity as non-EU nationals, and differentiated by the varying statuses – and accompanying constraints – available to them. As King O'Riain has argued, public discourse in Ireland has tended to position Chinese workers as 'model minorities', a form of benevolent essentialism that produces an '…image of a quiet, polite, hard-working, but exploitable population…and pits them against other migrants in Ireland' (2011). In contrast, the prevalent association of Nigerians with asylum seeking, and the particular iterations of anti-asylum seeker discourse in Ireland, work to produce Nigerians as a problematic population subject to periodic expressions of popular racism (Lentin and McVeigh 2006).

The focus group discussions were conducted respectively in Mandarin and English, and worked from open discussions of participants' media habits and what the researchers termed, perhaps fancifully, their 'media worlds'. This term is less grand ontological claim than methodological priority: rather than set a range of structuring topics, our aim was to facilitate discussants in outlining the contours of their own transnational media experiences, and to discuss the interplay of national, local, 'community' and transnational/diasporic engagements proceeding from this more emic set of concerns. The snowball sampling employed accounts for the fact that several of the Chinese focus groups were female only, whereas the Nigerian groups were consistently more gender-balanced. As a result, the following discussion proceeds through a thematic comparison shaped by this investigation of integration dynamics, and while the focus is on the experience of migrant women under domopolitical arrangements, the Nigerian-focused discussion does not artificially exclude perspectives offered by male participants that have a dialogic relevance.

The country is small, there is no news

From a small, diverse population of long-term Chinese residents, the population has increased rapidly over the past fifteen years, facilitated by changes in Chinese state emigration law, the labour market in Ireland, and the attraction of English language immersion (Yun Wang 2007). The majority of recent arrivals are young people on student visas – which allow for part-time work – and are overwhelmingly concentrated in the Dublin area. The research participants correspond broadly to this profile. Predominantly from Shenyang, Shanghai and Beijing, they ranged in age from twenty-three to forty-six, were mainly single, but some were married with partners here and at home. Some participants had been here less than a year and some as much as seven

years, and had migrated to study English and work, with a view to expanding their experience, earning to support family in China, and/or to invest in an enterprise. Most were working as healthcare assistants, cleaners, waiting staff, language teachers, nurses, and many were studying as students in training institutions. Six focus groups were conducted with 5–8 participants. Four of these involved all-female participation, and are the subject of this analysis.

In a study of 'young diasporic Chinese' in Iowa, Yu Shi emphasizes 'their complex cultural condition of living on "borderlands" and ... their ongoing process of identity negotiation' (2005, p. 60). In a difference that is as positional as it is biographical, Dublin does not constitute a borderland marked by tensions between competing futures. Instead, it is a migratory site affectively bounded by the certainties of return, even if in practice such plans may be flexible (Yun Wang and King O'Riain 2006). As Lu recalled, 'When I just came I knew little about Ireland ... there was a nickname for Ireland, which was "the second re-employment base for the people from North-East China"'. Consequently, much discussion of engagement with Irish-based media is recounted as part of a process of ongoing orientation: language acquisition, and surveillance of political-economic threats to their status are recurring topics: 'I don't really (follow) unless (Irish news) is related to immigration, visas, education policies.' Similarly, general media use, and specific engagement with Irish media, is shaped by the rhythms and exigencies of lives lived working in the flexibilized service and care industries. In the working spaces of shops, cafés and public buildings, national radio and Irish and UK television channels – particularly Sky News – are ubiquitous environmental presences. Several focus group discussions refer to the desire to watch 'anything' on television after work, preferably involving shared viewing as a scarce communal pleasure, with Chinese and non-Chinese housemates. As Xue elaborates:

> I watch TV with my friends together because the TV is placed in the sitting room. We agree on a channel first. It feels good when we sit and watch TV together. We laugh together if something is laughable. We can share something.

Similar exigencies structure transnational media engagement. The 'Chinese transnational mediasphere' is extensive, but must be understood in terms of localized conditions and inflections (Wanning 2005). Living in rented accommodation restricts satellite use, thus discussants had irregular access to transnational television, other than streaming online. Chinese 'community media' – including newspapers such as The Shining Emerald – were of interest if available in a café, like other 'free sheets', but not as objects of affective or cultural attachment.

Media produced by and for the Chinese in Ireland were mainly evaluated in terms of detached utility, and given that it was held that the information they contain is available faster online, they simply did not feature as significant points of reference: 'They don't have much information from back home. Ireland Chinese news hardly has any'.

If media use was frequently defined by pragmatic constraints, media engagement was shaped by priorities derived from the wider, gendered experience of work and opportunity-based migration. According to Kim (2010), the transnational mobility of young Chinese women has been shaped by exclusion, where despite increased female access to tertiary education in China, '…gendered socio-economic and cultural conditions persist and continue to structure labour market outcomes and lifestyles' (2010, p. 28). Yet, transnational mobility enables a 'different life trajectory' and mediated resources allow for the construction of transnational subjectivities through '…an extension of social imagery from which women can reconstruct their conceptions of self in relation to the lived realities of global Others' (2010, p. 39). For many discussants it is not society in Ireland or self in society in Ireland that stands as the contrapuntal other for re-imagining the self. Instead it is a site from where their relations to China are re-assessed. To this end, the contrapuntal involves navigating a projected future of self-insertion in the labour market and society: of, as Xia noted, 'not being backward when I go back to China'.

Keeping up with the news about China involves relational inter-pretation across a variety of national and transnational channels, and keeping up has a dual sense – of staying informed in the present, and staying engaged for the future. 'The country is small, there is no news' – for Xia the disparity in societal scale maps onto thresholds of what constitutes news, and Ireland simply does not pass a threshold of significance adequate to the role of contrapuntal 'global Other'. For many participants, beyond the strategic surveillance of Irish broadcast news, their discussions focus on how Irish and British channels represent China's role on the world stage. While this focus is prevalent, it is not monological. Evaluations of coverage of Chinese issues may involve long-distance nationalism, as Lie puts it, 'It's funny for such a small country to criticize other countries'. However, it is also a resource for reflecting on official Chinese narratives:

> I began to know China when I came abroad. When I was in China, I didn't know anything. I lived in a specific cycle (of society). I thought that…there was only prosperity. Everything was good on the surface. When I came out, I realized that China had a lot of negative aspects which I hadn't known.

Given this attention to the demands of future re-integration, official narratives of migrant governance simply do not feature, and when they do, as Xue reflects, it is linked to indicators derived from their own prerogatives of mobility and achievement:

> More and more Chinese people have come here. They have integrated into Irish society. Irish people have known Chinese culture, food and New Year. Besides, Chinese people used to do low-paid jobs. The jobs have changed somehow. Some people work at bank now. The change has influenced on Irish multiculturalism.

Throughout, the constraints of work/study and status, questions of cultural scale, and a dominant sense of an experience bounded in time if not duration produce ideas of 'integration' adequate to these conditions. Yet reflections on media use and everyday life also nuance the pronounced insistence on the mobile self. Mei's experience of internal mobility is unusual among the discussants, and suggests how media use may be central to place-making over time:

> My husband and I used to live in a village (in Ireland). There was a website of that village. I don't browse it now. My husband browses it often. He is concerned about if there is any change of that village. He is concerned about it and wants to keep informed about it. We were there for two years after all. He is concerned about it very much. I learn (about that village) from him. He browses (the website) first and tells me the change of that village.

This accumulation of local attachment is erased in the domopolitical imagination, which in fixating on the national home allows no space for the kind of situated, affective belonging attested to in this reflection.

Today they want us to stay and tomorrow they are sending us away

According to the Census, 16,300 Nigerians were living in Ireland in 2006, though that is widely regarded to be a conservative figure. A relative increase of eighty-two per cent since the 2002 figure of 8,969, Nigeria has been the destination from whence most applications from asylum have been received by the Irish state year-on-year since 2001. Education, work and family networks are other significant migration pathways. The male/female ratio of the population is 55:45 and the average age is 26.6 years. Most live in Dublin and east coast towns. Comparative with the other Census profiles, a relatively high number were unemployed or looking for their first job (31 per cent). One in five women work in the home and 17 per cent are students. The

dominant industry is health and social work, and among the top occupations were care assistants and attendants (11 per cent), security guards (7 per cent), sales assistants (7 per cent) and doctors (6 per cent) (CSO 2008, pp. 23–43).

Six focus groups were held in Dublin and the east coast, and two of these were held in state-run accommodation centres. The participants ranged in age from twenty-six to forty-five with the vast majority in their mid-thirties, and all of the focus groups were gender-mixed. More than half of the participants were studying and/or working, three women were working in the home, and the participants involved in asylum-determination cases are prohibited from work or study. Nearly all the participants had been living in Ireland for at least four years, and a third of them for more than seven years (this calculation excludes those seeking asylum).

These discussions present a picture of media worlds networked across Ireland, Nigeria, the UK and elsewhere. Individual practices within this mediascape are intimately shaped by personal experiences of dwelling in and between nations, regions and localities, and of feelings about this experience at particular moments in time and in varying familial, domestic and social contexts. Media use invariably plays many roles in the participants' lives, yet there is an important focus on how media practices act as a locus of wider questions of orientation and belonging. In common with the Chinese experiences, there is a high level of media monitoring and evaluating news, however, it is informed by the near-history of overt racism directed at Nigerians in Ireland (Lentin 2007). As John elaborates: 'In Ireland I've made a conscious decision not to read particular newspapers…just because of their racist disposition towards the immigrant community, especially the African community'. Mike captures a widespread sentiment when he discusses how different types of news have political resonances in lives intimately affected by state decisions and public opinion:

> I watch either the 6 o clock news or the 9 o clock on RTE. It tells me what is happening in Ireland. This is my place today. It's where I live. Maybe it's where my children will live, I don't know. They were born here and this is their country. But I like to hear about everything that is happening…what the government is saying, especially about immigrants. You know that they are always changing their minds about us. Today they want us to stay and tomorrow they are sending us away.

Mike's reflection is marked by the disjunctures of civic stratification. The legitimacy granted to parents of 'Irish-born' – as distinguished from 'Irish' – children has been a central trope of migration debates

since the 2004 Citizenship referendum (Lentin 2007). His ongoing monitoring is shared by discussants in direct provision; Mary, living in state-run accommodation, provides a heuristic analysis:

> I think I know what my sister here was saying about Irish TV and their coverage of immigrants. I watch news on RTE and on TV3 but I think RTE presents more information when they report about immigrants. TV3 only show the surface and they appear not to be interested in issues involving immigrants. If you watch the same news item on both channels, you will be surprised at how little the information presented by TV3 is. You really get the impression that they have no time for immigrants. RTE is better and fairer. I'm against TV3 because they don't explain any thing. They just show a small clip and rush through as if they never wanted to do it anyway.

Rendered beyond the scope of 'integration' and public participation, many of the discussants in direct state provision are nevertheless immersed in the proceedings of the national public sphere, and this sphere is reformed through contrapuntal relations. There is an irony that the frayed, modern integrative modalities of national broadcasting remain relevant in this kind of space; one focus group discussed how the 6.01 evening news acted as a shared way of organizing time in their accommodation centre. Others in the same context talk at length about Irish national and local, UK, Nigerian and African news; the category of 'international' news is positional; it is a genre of personal, translocal importance, and its significance shifts across scales. It is discussed as an indicator of the 'openness' of Irish society to the world out there, and in here – coverage of Africa is significant for coverage of African migrants, and vice versa:

> RTE does not show enough news about immigrants or about Africa. In fact it doesn't show much about other parts of world. I watch Al Jazeera when I want news about the world. I also watch the South African station – channel 230 on Sky – for news about Africa. Sometimes I watch CNN and BBC but only sometimes.

This near ubiquitous criticism of narrowness is also made concerning some Nigerian broadcasters, and often contrasted with CNN and Al Jazeera. It is an implicit criticism of how international news is produced by national broadcasters, and its comparative adequacy for media audiences that live in environments of instantaneous, transnational coverage. Yet this transnational media space is also a space of unsettled relations; of being excluded from social imaginaries in Ireland, and for many, also finding their relationships with Nigerian media to be complicated by personal processes of settlement, social

integration, and negotiation of diasporic relations. Bey, a man in his thirties working in the Dublin area, describes his position explicitly in terms of boundary work:

> There is a home and there is a residence. There is a difference between the two. Ireland is my residence. My brother here...said Nigeria is his home. I don't know where my home is. I'm a Diasporan. I don't know where I belong. Nigeria is still not ready for anything. It's still killing its talents and forcing them to flee to other countries. Ireland does not want us. Read the newspapers, listen to radio or television. None of them speaks about us as members of this society. We're the permanent visitors. They create a distinction where they don't need to.

For many, the idea of future return is important, yet it functions as a dimension of home-making, particularly where family multiplies the vectors on which home is made. Emmy, in her thirties and working at home, expresses this in terms of everyday routine:

> I watch OBE or Ben TV because they give insights into events at home. Nigeria is my home. I'm also part of here but I'm more part of there. I've two children, born here. So I do feel that this is my place but I belong more to Nigeria. I watch RTE for local news and...the weather reports are important for me because, being a mother, I've laundry to do.

While those awaiting asylum determination frequently develop a media literacy at odds with their formal right to participate, many discussants with secure status connect their criticisms of poor representation with demands they are entitled to make. Irish media are constantly reminded that they are in competition for the discussants' engagement within a convergent mediascape. In contra-distinction to the Chinese focus groups, RTÉ's intercultural pro-grammes are referenced and dissected, and the general evaluation proposes a contrapuntal variation on multiculturalism's relations of recognition – why should we watch what we do not recognize ourselves in? The fact of paying a television licence fee is similarly used to contest the dynamics of tolerant recognition in terms of rights: we pay for better representation.

Conclusion

This article has presented a reading of shifting lines of contra-puntal engagement. It provides a glimpse of migrant media practices informed and shaped by identifications with intersecting communities

and social realities. By integrating Irish media relationally into transnational repertoires of reference and possibility, they suggest the situated ordinariness of multivalent and reflective practices of integration. In a political context where transnational attachments and affiliations can be rendered suspect, the rehearsal of contrapuntal interpretation disturbs the established either/or disciplinarity periodically applied to the wrong kinds of transnationalism. However, the context of Irish domopolitics unsettles any conclusion that would seek to frame these practices through claims to '...difference and heterogeneity as vehicles of critical transformation and progressive change' (Ang and St Louis 2005, p. 293). As the discussion of ephemeral, culturalized trajectories of governance in Ireland suggests, the subject of domopolitics is not necessarily or not only difference as identity, as the celebration of difference has been intrinsic to the theming of integration. Instead, as the tiered legitimacy of civic stratification attests, it is difference as the potential for political contestation and conflict over the distribution of socio-economic resources.

A prevalent, contrapuntal dimension of the interpretative media work discussed here is the disjuncture between cultural integration and the possibilities for citizenship and residency. This is at its most acute in the experiences of the discussants living through their asylum determination processes. The time and space that allows them to cultivate an intimate engagement with mediated public culture in Ireland are products of political structures that exclude them from the public. As well as the implications of this interplay of discursive inclusion and structural exclusion for meaningful ideas of the integrated society, for media and audience research it suggests that attention to culture as a site of agency must be more carefully related to the uses of culture in a neoliberal era.

Note

1.   The November 2008 budget ended funding for the National Consultative Committee on Racism, and coincided with a decision not to extend the work of the National Action Plan Against Racism. The annual budget of the OMI was cut by twenty-six per cent of an overall budget of approx eight million Euros. The provision of English language teachers in schools with migrant children was significantly scaled back. See Watt, Philip 2008 'Budget cutbacks weaken State's capacity to combat racism', The Irish Times, 11 November. Whatever the relative merits of these agencies, their disposability supports a reading of integration as a strategic political narrative.

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