

Multicultural Ireland

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Irsko jako země otevřená přistěhovalcům a problémy, kterým čelí.
Největší etnické skupiny a jejich vliv na moderní Irsko.
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ABSTRAKT

Bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na migraci v Irsku, která se stala fenoménem poslední doby. Součástí textu je úvod do historie emigrace a imigrace v Irsku, soustředující se na tři nejvýznamnější události v irské historii. Práce pak dále srovnává dvě největší etnické skupiny žijící v Irsku a závěr se zabývá začleněním přistěhovalců do irské společnosti.

Klíčová slova: Irsko, multikulturní, Poláci, Číňané, imigrace, integrace

ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis focuses on the recent phenomenon in Ireland – immigration. The beginning of the work deals with the history of emigration and immigration in Ireland, focusing on three most important periods. The thesis then compares the two biggest ethnic groups living in Ireland and the conclusion deals with integrating immigrants into Irish society.

Keywords: Ireland, multicultural, immigration, Poles, Chinese, migration, integration

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INTRODUCTION

It is inconceivable how Ireland has travelled over the last 20 years and beyond. Historically it was so poor that the Irish emigrated in their thousands and indeed millions to escape poverty, poor standards of living and starvation. Indeed Ireland's emigration trends can be traced back to 1845 during the period of the Great Famine when the potato crop failed causing one million of its' population to die and a further one million to emigrate to the shores of North America, Australia and Britain.¹ This mass emigration formed a key role in the history of Ireland and permanently changed the Irish population structure and culture forever.

As recent as twenty years ago Ireland could still be characterized by economic failure with associated high unemployment but within ten years Ireland had become the fastest growing economy in Europe with the so called 'Celtic Tiger', transforming it forever. Ireland had now become a multi-cultural society welcoming and embracing its new found wealth and with it, its' new found citizens. In 2004 ten countries of Central and Eastern Europe followed by Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 joined the European Union, however only Ireland, Sweden and the UK did not implement restrictions on their citizens entering their shores.² This was the beginning of multi-cultural Ireland as it is today. Ten years ago you wouldn't have gone into a pub in Ireland and seen anyone other than a traditional Irish singer-songwriter. Now you see musicians or comedians from anywhere in the world.³ But the question remains was Ireland prepared or ready to welcome this mass immigration and throughout this thesis this topic will be explored and discussed from both the Irish and the Immigrants points of view.

With this multi-cultural society came the formation of sub-societies made up of the largest of the ethnic groups in Ireland, namely the Polish and Chinese. The massive

¹ Wesley Johnston, "Effects of the Famine 2: Emigration," *The Ireland Story*, <http://www.wesleyjohnston.com/users/ireland/past/famine/emigration.html>.

² Hannah Zackrisson, "Labour Migrants Unbound? EU enlargement, Transitional Measures and Labour Market Effects," *Innovations Report*, (2006), <http://www.innovations-report.de/html/berichte/studien/bericht-66518.html>.

³ Adam Dawtrey, "Irish film, music more multicultural: benefits from increased immigration," *Variety*, (2009), <http://www.variety.com/index.asplayout=awardcentral&jump=features&id=oscarwildeawards09&articleid=VR1118000285>.

number of Poles who immigrated to Ireland inspired the spread of Polish culture in Ireland through arts, education and food. Chinese immigrants have also continued this trend. This thesis will also peruse these influences, both positively and negatively and explore how these ethnic groups have impacted on Irish culture and how integration has been both challenging and beneficial to the Irish as a nation.

During the Celtic Tiger years Ireland had become one of the richest countries in the world with mass immigration vital for its success and sustainability. The Irish Government in response to its new citizens introduced many new policy changes in Irish Law to not only protect immigrants but to protect the Irish State. These ranged from reformed social welfare and family laws that could restrict and indeed curtail the abuse of the social welfare system with the view to discouraging those who would not contribute to the economy. Throughout this thesis many topics including how these immigrants have actually integrated into Irish society will be critiqued.

Has Ireland become a victim of its own success to the detriment of its own citizens and its thousands of new immigrants or has it merely succumb to a worldwide recession where no country has been left unscathed? Has multicultural Ireland been as welcoming as is perceived throughout these emigrating countries? Is Ireland facing a new era of mass emigration of its own which will only be measured on par with that of the Great Famine?

1 FROM EMIGRATION TO IMMIGRATION

For Ireland the “inward migration” is a relatively new term, nevertheless it is global process that is happening all over the world. Migration to Ireland is an important part of its social and economic development in the last twenty years and it is not only about movement of workers, but also movement of skills, talents, experiences, abilities and cultures.⁴ Over a short 20 year period Ireland has changed from the country of emigration to the country of immigration. Immigrants are an important part of the transformation of the country as they contribute to the Irish society and enrich it.⁵ Nowadays the immigrants from all corners of the world such as Eastern Europe, Africa or Asia, are seeping into the country's life and developing it into the cosmopolitan society.⁶ Walk through Parnell Street in Dublin, Ireland's most multi-ethnic thoroughfare and discover the rows of Polish food shops, Nigerian barbers, restaurants catering for Chinese migrants and Korean travel agents.⁷ Former president of Ireland Mary Robinson said that immigration brings “new and complex challenges into the Irish identity and that Ireland has no longer been a land of emigrants and now is becoming a land of immigrants, making Ireland a younger country with a wider variety of heritages.”⁸

Historically, Ireland was so poor country that many Irish were forced to emigrate,⁹ so unfortunately, for many years Ireland has been a country often characterized by emigration.

However, as Ireland changed from a relatively poor country with traditions of emigration and limited job opportunities, it has now become more attractive for people outside the country.¹⁰

⁴ Community Workers Co-operative, “Migration: the experience of migrating to Ireland and the challenge facing community work,” <http://www.cwc.ie/news/art04/migration.html>.

⁵ Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, “Immigration and residence in Ireland,” <http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/SummaryEn.pdf/Files/SummaryEn.pdf>.

⁶ Dawtrey, *Irish Film*.

⁷ Henry McDonald, “Ireland’s immigrants return home as slump sharpens fear of racism,” *The Observer*, (2008), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/may/04/ireland.immigration>.

⁸ Workpermit, “Former president speaks about Irish immigration,” (2007), <http://www.workpermit.com/news/2007-10-18/ireland/mary-robinson-notre-dame-immigration-speech.htm>.

⁹ Dawtrey, *Irish Film*.

¹⁰ Piaras Mac Éinrí, “Current Immigration Debates in Europe: A Publication of the European Migration Dialogue,” (report for National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism, Brussels/Dublin, September, 2005),

http://www.migpolgroup.com/multiattachments/3006/DocumentName/EMD_Ireland_2005.pdf

In particular the following three periods described below are synonymous with ground-breaking changes in Irish history. The Great Famine period 1845–52 shows how millions of people left Ireland because of the hunger and also it is the time when massive emigration began. Another period taking place 150 years later also shaped Irish history, was the Celtic Tiger era which on the other hand lured millions of people back because of the fast rising economy and numbers of job opportunities. And the last period, the most recent, the EU enlargement of 2004 and 2007 which saw the movement of Eastern European workers and massive numbers of immigrants arriving to Ireland.

1.1 The Great Famine 1845-52

The Great Famine was not the first nor the last period that changed Irish history but it was the one that left the unforgettable mark in Irish memory because of its duration and years of misery and suffering. It can be considered as a relatively short period but the impact that it left is remarkable. No social class in Ireland was left without change. In 1840s Ireland was an undeveloped country where poor hungry rural people lived and depended on every year's potato crop. Many people were forced to live in the great poverty. The labouring class almost disappeared and many small landholders started to merge together into the large landholdings. By these changes Ireland created the new population structure which continued throughout the nineteenth century.¹¹

Emigration was one of the main effects of famine. About a million Irish left the island before the Great Famine, followed by other two million in the next years. Moreover, the increase in the numbers who died of hunger and disease saw the country's population halve from 8 million to 4 million.¹²

The Famine is an important part of the Irish history as it shaped the Irish nation and had significant influences on economic and social issues, which are still influential

¹¹ R. Dudley Edwards, T. Desmond Williams, *The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History 1845 -52*. (New York University Press, 1957), 7 – 16.

¹² Robert James Scally, *The End of Hidden Ireland: Rebellion, Famine, and Emigration*. (New York, Oxford University Press, 1996), 3.

today.¹³ Ireland's population is nowadays about 6 million but around the world there can be found about other 55 million people who are descendants of Irish emigrants.¹⁴

1.2 The Celtic Tiger 1995-2007

1990s brought Ireland years of prosperity and wealth, in so-called Celtic Tiger era.¹⁵ Twenty years ago Ireland was a country characterized by economic failure, slow growth and high inflation. Deemed as one of the Europe's poorest countries, it transformed within years to its wealthiest. The economists in that time were describing the Ireland without any trace of irony as one of the countries of the Third World as Ireland was left far behind the most member states of EU.¹⁶

However, the Celtic Tiger made Irish economy one of the fastest growing in Europe helping Ireland change its homogenous society into the multicultural one. Ireland was not only offering the economic changes but also a welcoming environment and friendly people together with generous social welfare programmes. This economic boom captured attention of many people around the world and both legal and illegal labour force were coming to Ireland in that time.

It took Ireland more than ten years to achieve such a success but the years of emigration, poor living standards, high taxes and volatile economic situation have finally gone. These changes took the great combination of many factors and policies bringing enormous social, cultural and economic benefits. The government invested in education, adopted new fiscal policy and created a new tax system. Moreover, Ireland opened its market to the world which lured many foreign investments interested in starting new business there. However, the biggest success was creation of many new jobs in Ireland

¹³ Edwards, Williams, *The Great Famine*, 7-16.

¹⁴ Wesley Johnston, "Prelude to Famine 4: Demographics," *The Ireland Story*, http://www.wesleyjohnston.com/users/ireland/past/famine/demographics_pre.html.

¹⁵ Martin Ruhs, "Ireland: From Rapid Immigration to Recession," *Migration Policy Institute*, (2009), <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=740>.

¹⁶ Colin Coulter, Steve Coleman, *The End of Irish History?: A Critical Approaches to the "Celtic Tiger."* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2003), 3-4.

resulting in increasing population. From 1996 to 2005 the population increased by 15 per cent and employment by 5 per cent.¹⁷

1.3 The European Enlargement 2004 and 2007

In 2004 ten countries of Central and Eastern Europe joined the European Union followed three years later by Bulgaria and Romania. Almost eighty million new EU citizens wanted to travel, live and work in other European countries. Ireland received the largest number of emigrants according to its population, size and economy. About five per cent of the working population in Ireland is originally from EU enlargement 2004 in comparison to other member states with one per cent. The Irish immigration rate peaked in 2006 and began to decline the following year.¹⁸

However, Ireland has undertaken important policy changes from 1 May 2004. The access to the labour market was restricted by 12 out of the 15 pre-enlargement EU member states. Only Ireland together with Sweden and United Kingdom did not implement such restrictions. Although the Irish government allowed unrestricted access to its labour market, it restricted access to welfare benefits to those who are residents for two years or more. Other restrictions influenced certain work categories which were not applicable before 2004. Comparing the Irish Immigration rate in the period of twelve months May 2004 and April 2005, with Sweden's immigration rate (2, 100 workers) and the United Kingdom rate (176, 000 workers) Ireland's figures became remarkable (85, 115 workers) in proportion to its size.¹⁹

¹⁷ Sean Dorgan, "How Ireland became the Celtic Tiger," *The Heritage Foundation*, (2006), <http://www.heritage.org/research/worldwidefreedom/bg1945.cfm>.

¹⁸ Charlie Taylor, "Report highlights benefits of EU enlargement," *Irishtimes.com*, (2009), <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/breaking/2009/0220/breaking54.htm>.

¹⁹ Mac Éinrí, *Current Immigration Debates in Europe*.

2 THE BIGGEST ETHNIC GROUPS IN IRELAND

Ireland can be viewed as somewhat unique in terms of migration. The diversity of groups of immigrants who come to Ireland is an interesting mix of people from all over the world who have come to Ireland via different routes and for different reasons. They have different legal statuses, different civic and political entitlements, different social-cultural characteristics and are of many different ethnicities, however they have also many issues in common. To understand this uniqueness this thesis will examine the case of two of the largest contemporary migrant groups – Polish and Chinese – in Ireland, a country to which they have little prior connection. Immigrants also come via different routes and for different reasons, however, mostly to work and study.²⁰ The official total number of immigrants into Ireland in the year to April 2006 was 86,900. Nearly half (43 %) of all immigrants were nationals from the European enlargement in 2004 from those 26% were Poles, 23% immigrants came from outside the EU or the USA.²¹

2.1 Poles

According to the 2006 census revealed by Central Statistic Office there were 63, 276 Poles in Ireland, representing 5% of all population and 90% of them arrived in 2004 or later which makes them the biggest ethnic community living in Ireland. However, it is felt that gross underestimation of figures for that year, could mean the actual number was twice that of this 60,000 approx. Poles, and UK nationals, are the only minority living in every town and city in Ireland, however Dublin still remains the most popular.

Ireland quickly became a second home for Poles, especially with its job opportunities and the fast growing economy. To avoid the lack of information about job offers in Ireland, an Irish jobsite was established in Poland and got over 170,000 hits on its first

²⁰ Rebecca King-O'Riain, "Target Earning/Learning, Settling or Globalising?: Polish and Chinese Immigrants in Ireland," (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, TBA, New York, New York City, August 11, 2007), http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p182424_index.html.

²¹ Central Statistic Office, "Population and migration estimates April 2006," http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/population/2006/popmig_2006.pdf.

day.²² Apart from better job opportunities and positive economics, many Polish decided to come to Ireland because they had a network of family and friends already in the country. This created a chain of migrants, ensuring they avoided high unemployment and low wages in Poland. In Ireland the wages are four times higher than in Poland. Ireland is also a country easy to access, close to Poland and good option for those who want to work legally as Ireland doesn't require work visa for the migrants from EU countries.²³ It is also widely believed that the Polish and Irish are strongly connected through Catholicism, both countries' main religion. Polish priests regularly hold mass on Sundays in Polish for the new community.

The Poles view Ireland in a very positive light, immersing themselves in their new found country and developing Polish communities through opening their own shops, bakeries, pubs, printing their own newspapers and offering translation services to help them avoid language difficulties as this is often one of their biggest problems. On the other hand, *Newsweek* article in 2005 claimed that many of Poles are not received well by Irish society and have trouble fitting in. It also claimed some Poles live in sub-standard conditions or are homeless, do not speak English and are unemployed. For all this the *Newsweek* blames Polish media for inciting “fairytale” about Dublin's street being paved with gold Euro coins. Such stories make Poles believe a new life in Ireland is easily achieved.

Polish community can be divided into two groups. The first group come to Ireland just to work, earn money and after that they return back to Poland. On the other hand the second group come to Ireland experience new people, culture and life. The first group usually take jobs requiring a lot of physical strength, such as in the construction industry. Their English skills are very poor and they usually stay close to Polish communities in Ireland, depending solely on Polish services.²⁴ Colonizing is a big minus for the Polish communities living in Ireland as it hinders their development greatly as individuals. They only speak Polish and think as a group not as individuals.²⁵ The second group is more

²² RTÉ Business, “New Irish jobsite a hit in Poland,” (2004), <http://www.rte.ie/business/2004/0519/internet.html>.

²³ King-O'Riain, *Target Earning/Learning*.

²⁴ Adelina Krupski, “Polish culture spreads in Ireland,” *Krakow Post*, (2007), <http://krakowpost.com/article/661>.

²⁵ King-O'Riain, *Target Earning/Learning*.

opened and takes advantage of living in Ireland. They simply enjoy the experience outside of Poland.²⁶ They take a chance to assimilate with Irish and integrate into Irish society.²⁷

High numbers of Poles in Ireland are making a permanent mark in their new home. They spread Polish culture all over the country through arts, education and food. In 2007 the National Gallery in Dublin launched an exhibition, titled “Painting from Poland: Symbolism to Modern Art (1880-1939).” Moreover, Irish audiences could experience for the second time The Polish Film Festival held by Irish Film Institute in Dublin, screening 20 feature-length Polish films. These art and film exhibitions presents the Polish history, talent and beauty to the Irish audience enabling them to understand and learn about Poles and their culture. Also for Poles living in Ireland it is opportunity to keep in touch with their own culture.

In the same year throughout the country several language schools were opened teaching only in Polish. The schools are funded by the Polish government and teach subjects like geography or history from a Polish perspective with the aim to help Polish children living in Ireland to integrate easily when they return back to Poland.

Also, there is a great demand for Polish food by the Irish so Irish retailers supply Polish bread, eggs, sweets, chocolate, pierogi, also fruit juices and yoghurts. This demand is reflected by Poles opening shops and restaurants which attract Irish customers.²⁸

But besides all these positive aspects of contributing to the Irish society there are some negatives as well. Some parts of Irish society believe that because the Poles are willing to work for lower wages (sometimes below the minimum wage) it puts them at a distinct advantage when competing with an Irish person for the same job. This in turn creates resentment which often spreads within small communities and therefore generates negativity towards the Polish community. Others feel that Poles within the social welfare system who can legally claim for Irish child benefit for children living in Poland is exploitation of the Irish Social Welfare System at its worst. The average Irish tax payer fails to see why it is aiding in the support of children in other EU States regardless of where their parents live. The vice versa of this scenario does not exist within the Polish social welfare system therefore it is viewed as grossly unfair to the Irish tax payer. Surely this was not the intention of the Irish Government when opening its borders to EU States

²⁶ Krupski, *Polish culture spreads in Ireland*.

²⁷ King-O'Riain, *Target Earning/Learning*.

and was a loophole that could never be closed. However, it can also be argued that this is a legitimate right of Poles to claim such benefits regardless of how their host nation may see it.

2.2 Chinese

Central Statistic Office in Ireland revealed in 2006 census that there are 11,161 Chinese living in Ireland, however, as with the numbers for Polish immigrants in Ireland, the numbers that year were highly underestimated. Other sources give much higher numbers of Chinese in Ireland varying between 50,000–60,000. For example a 2004 article in *Business Week* claimed ‘As many as 60,000 Chinese now live in Ireland, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao noted during a visit to Dublin in May.’ On the other hand, in 2008 Chinese Embassy estimated that 30,000 Chinese were living in Ireland, of whom 3,000 were students. Census 2006 makes Chinese the fifth largest non-Irish national group²⁹ but according to other sources it makes them the biggest non-EU community living in Ireland.³⁰ Nevertheless, being one of the largest groups, Chinese people are almost invisible in other ways.³¹

The Chinese people living in Ireland are relatively young, the average age being 26,9 years, and mostly single. As with Polish immigrants, Dublin and its suburbs remain the most popular area for the Chinese to settle in. One of the main reasons for Chinese coming to Ireland is for studying, however there is quite high number of those who are working. The main source of employment remains the hotel and restaurant industry, occupations such as chefs and cooks, waiters and waitresses and also sales assistants. According to students in Ireland the courses in social science, business, law and computing were very popular among Chinese people.³²

²⁸ Krupski, *Polish culture spreads in Ireland*.

²⁹ Ying Yun Wang, “The Chinese Earthquake Appeal Network in Ireland,” (paper written for Trinity Immigration Initiative, 2009), <http://www.tcd.ie/immigration/css/downloads/chineseearthquake26.05.09.pdf>.

³⁰ King-O’Riain, *Target Earning/Learning*.

³¹ Nicola Yau, “Celtic Tiger, Hidden Dragon: exploring identity among second generation Chinese in Ireland,” *Translocations: An Irish Inter-University Open Access E-Journal* 48, no.2, issue 1 (2007), <http://www.translocations.ie/volume1issue2/volume1issue2-4.pdf>.

³² Central Statistic Office, “Census 2006 Non-nationalities living in Ireland,” <http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/non-irishnationals.htm>.

The Chinese people have been living in Ireland since 1950s which make them also one of the longest established migrant groups in Ireland. In 1950s the majority of Chinese came from Hong Kong and it was mainly the migration from villages of the New Territories and as Commonwealth citizens they were allowed free access to Britain, so many Chinese travelled first to Britain before travelling to the Republic of Ireland. During 1980s there was a wave of Malaysian Chinese who came to Ireland mainly to study and presently Chinese migrants originate mostly from the People's Republic of China. The Chinese community in Ireland can be also divided in to two groups. The first group, the older immigrants who settled in Ireland many years ago and the second group young generation who came to study. Members of the first group, namely older Chinese, settled in Ireland permanently and many ran their own businesses, especially in the food and catering sector. Those, owning their own business, brought many of their members of family to Ireland as employees, creating the same chain of migrants as Poles do.³³

As mentioned above, many Chinese don't come to Ireland to work but they come through the student visa programme to study. However, despite work not being a main reason for coming to Ireland, Chinese students have to work to pay their tuitions and fees (approximately 10,000 Euro per year) and visa costs. On their student visa they are allowed to work 20 hours/week in term and 40 hours/week out of 7 terms in low wage jobs.³⁴ The high numbers of Chinese studying in Ireland is the result of state level education cooperation between the Chinese and Irish governments. 'Asia Strategy', a strategy by the Irish government, was implemented to encourage the third level institutions to reach out to the Chinese student market. Many young Chinese are looking for undergraduate education in western English-speaking countries and the demand to study in Ireland is very high. When compared with 1997 when just a few hundred Chinese students studied in Ireland numbers nowadays are reaching nearly 30,000. Because of poor English language skills, many Chinese start their studies in private English schools. Without improving English they are not able to move on to third-level education.³⁵

In China there are not enough university places for all applications. There are 9,5 million students for 2,6 million university places, so for many Chinese students international study became an another option. There were many reasons why Chinese

³³ Wang, *The Chinese Earthquake*.

³⁴ King-O'Riain, *Target Earning/Learning*.

chose Ireland to become their destination for studying. One of the important reasons is that Ireland is an English-speaking country and the other is that Ireland is more accessible than for example the US. Also an Irish visa is easier to obtain than in the US and even in the UK. Nevertheless, Chinese students are only temporarily residents in the Republic of Ireland, so when they finish they won't be allowed to stay and work in the country any longer. This can be felt by many Chinese as discrimination as they don't have same rights and freedom as migrants from the EU states.³⁶

Coming to Ireland is quite a big challenge for Chinese people. Not only do they have the obvious language barrier but they are also entering a country with completely different cultural traditions, habits, lifestyles and expectations. For most of them it has to be 'cultural shock' and maybe because of this Chinese are a tight knit community and tend to mix within their own which often impairs their integration into Irish society.³⁷ Another factor which seems to be evident with the Chinese integrating successfully is the very distinct Asian appearance of Chinese people. Unlike other migrants from the EU the Chinese are instantly recognisable and seen as foreigners despite their language skills and education and some Chinese immigrants find this a hindering factor when trying to integrate successfully into their new found society. This can be seen by many Chinese as racial discrimination. According to Chinese visa status they know they have to go back to China, so don't make effort to integrate. Also the cultural differences are often too great for some Chinese that they are not able to socialize with the Irish, feeling they do not share a common ground which can make basic conversations difficult to maintain. Therefore, the Chinese stay in touch mostly with non-Irish nationals from South Africa, the Philippines or Japan.³⁸

The Chinese have had little cultural impact on Irish society, their main contribution being food goods and restaurants.³⁹ However, their monetary contribution has been far greater and they contribute more in fees to language schools in Ireland than any other

³⁵ Wang, *The Chinese Earthquake*.

³⁶ King-O'Riain, *Target Earning/Learning*.

³⁷ David Cameron and Wendy Cox (ed.), "Chinese students in Ireland: new opportunities, new needs, new challenges," (paper presented at the ICOS seminar, Dublin, Ireland, January 26 2001), http://icosirl.ie/publications/general_reports/chinese_students_in_ireland.

³⁸ King-O'Riain, *Target Earning/Learning*.

³⁹ Kerry Capell, "Ireland: A Nation of Immigrants?," *BusinessWeek*, (2004), http://businessweek.com/magazine/content/04_30/b3893085_mz054.htm.

country. So much so that Irish-Chinese bilateral relations have been positively strengthened in recent years in economic, political and cultural fields.⁴⁰

Despite large numbers of Chinese migrants in Ireland they have remained somewhat low key in Irish social circles and their cultural heritages relatively unknown, apart from the Chinese New Year.⁴¹

2.3 Summation of Poles and Chinese

In summation it can be concluded that Ireland brings many opportunities for both Poles and Chinese in which to improve English, job training or getting international work experience. However, for Polish immigrants there is a possibility of legally remaining in Ireland and working in order to meet the habitual residence rule. This allows them to claim social and other welfare benefits. Chinese settlers, however, have the distinct disadvantage of not enjoying or even being entitled to these benefits because of their specific visa constraints and economic status in Ireland which sees them ineligible for long-term residency at present and often are in low paid employment.

In general, Poles or other European immigrants have advantage over Chinese and other Asian communities in easier access to the country, no needs for visas and can legally work without any restrictions or racial discrimination.

⁴⁰ Cameron, Cox, *Chinese students in Ireland*.

⁴¹ Wang, *The Chinese Earthquake*.

3 INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS

Definition of multiculturalism described in Phillippe Legrain's book *Immigrants: Your Country Needs Them* involves a 'live-and-let-live' approach. In order for immigration to be a successful transition for both the immigrant and the host country, it needs to be stressed that immigrants by their very nature, have their own language and cultural differences, which should, at all costs be respected by their host country and viewed as a basic social entitlement, which are protected by anti-discrimination laws. However, multiculturalism can mean different things to different people and many people don't even know what it means.

In recent years Ireland has seen a huge trend reversal from massive emigration to huge numbers of immigrants flooding the country from all corners of the world. This in turn has presented the Irish people with an unprecedented challenge in relation to their own self-identity. The notion of the Irish as an all welcoming and hospitable nation has changed in the face of what some see as the adversity of immigrants and this in turn has led to many of these immigrants facing a cold and often unwelcoming nation. Many social and moral questions now hang over the Irish people as to why this has happened. Ten years ago Ireland did not view itself as an immigrant country and Irish society has changed from relatively homogenous population into a multicultural one within a very short period of time. Nowadays, about 10% of the population are foreign-born. This has also meant that both nationals and non-nationals must live side by side and face the challenges that come with this new experience whether welcome or not.⁴²

Nevertheless, from this new experience many new problems and questions arose. The biggest focus question being how to best integrate new arrivals to Ireland if they decide to remain in the country. Functional policies also need to be implemented to provide some guidelines for the new arrivals in the country.⁴³ Because of the short period of this phenomenon Ireland has struggled with a lack of ideology, policy, legislation and support structures. Other countries such as France, Belgium, Germany and Britain which have been dealing with such integration problems for decades should be viewed by the Irish

⁴² Phillippe Legrain, *Immigrants Your Country Needs Them*, (London, Little, Brown, 2006), 245 -267.

government as the perfect learning curve from which they can gain valuable insights into dealing with such problems.⁴⁴

3.1 Integration as a Two-way Process

A pivotal area which must also be explored is the fact that successful integration requires both immigrants and locals to be open to each others' cultural and social differences. They both need to be willing to engage in the others' lives on a variety of levels, be it participating in local traditions and vice versa. If this willingness is not there then, it becomes an almost impossible challenge to integrate, with even the best intentions.⁴⁵

At the beginning of immigration to Ireland the debate naturally focused on who got into the country and on conditions of entry. But in recent years the focus has turned on integration and what happens to the people once they are in the country. Ireland as a nation has long been defined and also defined itself as a country steeped in cultural heritage. It has also famed itself on its exclusive linguistic and historical experiences and intertwined these traditions with those of their European neighbours. This phenomenon has been referred to as WHISC (white, heterosexual, Irish, settled, Catholic). Integration therefore can be seen by many immigrants as particularly difficult when they are faced with huge multicultural differences and a population which expects them to conform to these values. When such conformity does not happen conflict on very basic levels occur with seemingly little knowledge on both sides as to how to resolve them. How therefore can common ground be found on both sides for those immigrants who do not fit this mould?⁴⁶

Irish integration strategy introduces several examples of the integration process mostly consisting of the behaviour of the new and host communities. New communities should respect cultural differences, make an effort to understand and learn core aspects of Irish

⁴³ Houses of the Oireachtas, "Report on Migration and Integration Policy in Ireland," <http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=7414&CatID=78&StartDate=01%20January%202007&OrderAscending=0>.

⁴⁴ Piaras Mac Éinrí, "Integration models and choices," in *Immigration and Social change in the Republic of Ireland*, ed. Bryan Fanning (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2007), 214.

⁴⁵ Legrain, *Immigrants Your Country Needs Them*, 262.

society and way of life and contribute to this society through work and social engagement with the host community. It should also undertake and commit to basic integration skills such as language acquisition. Host communities should also respect the cultural differences, and inform themselves about the new communities rather than accepting stereotypical and mythical views. Within the corporate sector integration has been legislated for. Intercultural development has been part of the work place within the scope of equality and employment laws to promote integration in the work place.

Generally, immigration helps societies to think and learn about different cultures and ways of thinking, making our lives more varied and rewarding, broadening our minds, and enabling us all to learn from others. Despite all this positivity, immigration can also cause friction. Change for many, be it through immigration or otherwise, can be difficult to accept. This is true for many aspects of life including acceptance of immigrants who can sometimes be viewed as threatening to locals who do not understand or wish not to understand these people who they view as different in every way to themselves. They often feel forced into basic acceptance of these immigrants who do not share their own core values and tradition. Immigrants on the other hand may view this social exclusion as racism. It has to be questioned as to how well these two very different tribes can co-exist in harmony and to what extent can society embrace such diversity. For example should governments encourage and provide language classes to those who do not speak English or should this decision rest with the individual immigrant? Is the way forward to print all government leaflets in many languages to accommodate immigrants or not? When does the government step in to facilitate successful immigration and when is it up to the immigrant society as a whole to take charge of their own interrogational fate?⁴⁷

3.2 Two Models of Integration

“...we have little experience to draw upon as we seek to respond to enormous societal challenges in as many years as other countries have had generations. On the other

⁴⁶ Mac Éinrí, *Integration models and choices*, 215 – 232.

⁴⁷ Legrain, *Immigrants Your Country Needs Them*, 259 – 261.

hand...we are in a unique position to draw upon the wisdom of other societies in handling this difficult issue.” (Michael McDowell 2007)

The above quote captures the Irish approach to integration and highlights their inexperience with integration itself because of the very short period of time involved. The Irish government was not ready for such high numbers of immigrants and there were a lack of adequate policies in place to deal with these numbers. However, Ireland can use the experience of other countries such as France, Belgium, Germany and Britain to its advantage and gain valuable advice from these countries as to how they have dealt with these functional integration policies. In Ireland there is no proper long-term integration policy for immigrants and their descendants as Irish government was not able to provide any.⁴⁸ The only official integration report is from 1999 by Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform called *Integration: A Two-Way Process* but nevertheless this report deals only with the case of refugees not migrants in general.

As mentioned above many European countries have much longer experience with the integration process than Ireland so Ireland should take advice from them. Policies vary in each country but within Europe it is possible to distinguish between two models of integration. One is assimilationist which can be also referred as the French model. However, in recent years France has attempted to adopt multicultural approach of integration. The second model is multiculturalism or British model, even though Britain has not formally legislated for multiculturalism unlike for example Canada and Australia. Ireland still debates on these issues but it can be argued that the country is inclining to the version of British model. However, there is also need to consider the possibility of influence from the French model in conjunction with the British model.

3.2.1 French Model

According to French model one is simply French or immigrant. This fundamentally involves dealing with immigrants as a separate entity within French society and which

⁴⁸ Gerry Boucher, “Ireland’s Lack of a Coherent Integration Policy,” *Translocations: An Irish Inter-University Open Access E-Journal* 7-8, no.3, issue 1 (2009), http://www.dcu.ie/imrstr/volume3issue1/Vol_3_Issue_1_Gerry_Boucher.htm.

ensure social exclusions at every level and on an on-going basis. Even second and third generation immigrants are not seen as French citizens but still as immigrants. This labelling system has had adverse negative effects on any hope of successful integration as immigrants will always remain on the outskirts of a society that will never recognise them as French.

3.2.2 British Model

The British Model on the other hand view integration as something that would happen with or without intervention by government. Their approach was one of social inclusion on a pre-determined scale by which the immigrants were largely responsible for their own integration and would only receive government help when absolutely necessary. This approach while giving somewhat more rights than the French model also led to long term social exclusion of immigrants and has throughout history caused civil unrest by second and even third immigrant generations. It surely cannot be determined as a successful integration model either and this was acknowledged by the British government following the suicide bombings in London in 2005 by British born bombers. Had this social exclusion been a contributing factor?

3.3 Integration Models in Practice

The Irish government should not only learn from the mistakes and successes of both the French and British integration policies but see them as a valuable tool from which they draw on and also change accordingly where changes need to be made. This can only be a positive view point which provides the Irish Government with a basis for a successful integration model. It should also be recognised that continued marginalisation of immigrants by host countries diminishes the immigrant body in becoming an asset within its host nation. To embrace what immigrants have to offer will in turn empower immigrants to become valued contributing members of Irish society. To exclude them only ensures they remain on the outskirts of a society in which they must live and work in and which can carry on through generations. For successful integration the Irish

government must sure immigrants are legislated for and protected in all aspects of Irish law.⁴⁹

Britain did not initially perceive itself as a country of immigration. The newcomers from Caribbean, India and Pakistan were seen as isolated aberrations, legacies of empire and the regrettable consequences of a misguided labour-recruitment policy. But gradually, Britain has come to embrace a multiculturalism in practice, without developing an overarching strategy for how immigrants should be integrated. Ethnic minorities are not only left alone by the state to practice their faith, language or culture, but are actively encouraged and subsidized to do so. It is broadly accepted that the society is multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-faith, but the government has done little to help, or encourage, immigrants to integrate. People from ethnic minorities are becoming more prominent in all walks of life, from TV news-reading to politics, as well as in the arts and sport.

3.4 Criticism of Integration

One of the fundamental aspects which should be protected within multiculturalism is the autonomy of individuals and individual groups without encouraging primacy. While respecting cultural differences, care should be taken to avoid creating “mini-nations” which may lead to further segregation and to hostile feelings among the inhabitants of these “mini-nations” and, while diversity can be seen as a positive aspect within any society, extreme diversities can lead to social unrest. Nobel prize-winner Amartya Sen says, “Multiculturalism can be understood in terms of making it possible for people to have cultural choice and freedom, which is the very opposite of insisting that a person's basic identity must be simply defined by the religious community in which he or she is born, ignoring all other priorities and affiliations.”⁵⁰

Irish government policies are still at the early stages of legislation despite the fact that 167 languages are spoken within the island and some 27,000 asylum seekers are now legally settled there. By 2020s over one fifth of the Irish population will be made up of

⁴⁹ Mac Éinrí, *Integration models and choices*, 216 – 233.

⁵⁰ Legrain, *Immigrants Your Country Needs Them*, 274 – 277.

immigrants so therefore this legislation needs to be urgently addressed.⁵¹ A report entitled “A Two Way Process” by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform stated: 'Integration means the ability to participate to the extent that a person needs and wishes in all the major components of society, without having to relinquish his or her own cultural identity. This suggests the Irish Government will go down the road of both the French and British models of inclusion by ensuring lawful legal treatment for all its citizens regardless of nationality. This will also allow immigrants in their own right to include themselves in Irish society while protecting and respecting all cultural challenges both the Irish and the immigrant population will face.⁵²

⁵¹ Patrick Fitzgerald, Brian Lambkin, *Migration in Irish History, 1607-2007*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 231.

⁵² Bryan Fanning, *Racism and Social Change in The Republic of Ireland*, (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2002), 187.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis my aim has been to examine the theory as to whether Ireland has coped with the mass immigration that has occurred within a short space of time and whether it has welcomed or indeed even accepted its new citizens on every level of life.

Having lived in Ireland for almost a year and had direct contact with the two most prominent groups of immigrants – Polish and Chinese I feel their welcome and integration is often not what the expected. Many Poles I have met socially feel Irish society has, in recent years with the onset of a worldwide recession, turned its back on immigrants who they now see as direct competition for jobs, social welfare and endless stream of other issues which has driven a wedge between both cultures. Poles who came here during the boom report a completely different attitude, where they were welcomed by a society who saw them as a necessity to fill a gaping hole in the sky rocketing labour market. The Irish government made Ireland an easy accessible destination with many incentives for Polish migrants and a social welfare system which would support them in the event they needed it. This enticed many Poles to come here with hopes of a more prosperous lifestyle and grossly better paid jobs. However, with the labour market crash of the last three years many Irish see the Polish community as another drain on the social welfare system as many, like their native Irish comrades joined the unemployment lines. The Irish taxpayer sees this as grossly unfair and this in turn has hindered integration into the societies where they were once welcomed. Poor legislation by the Irish Government also means that many unemployed Polish who have children can continue to live off the social welfare system and still enjoy a far more comfortable lifestyle than in their native land. This very issue has driven a wedge between the immigrant and native communities as the Irish tax payer does not see this as a fair system and if the roles were reversed an Irish immigrant to Poland would not be entitled to the same benefits. Should this therefore be blamed on the government for poor forward planning for its mass immigrants or on Irish society for their seemingly non'-acceptance of the fact that these Polish immigrants also helped maintain the Celtic Tiger and fund the tax system many now claim from? The Polish people I have spoken to have a somewhat guarded attitude towards many of their Irish neighbours, however there are also many who feel that through common ground such as Catholicism they share a fundamental value with the Irish. Those who have learned to speak English and who get involved locally have in general been welcomed, those who haven't still

remain on the fringes of the communities they live in and that are where they will remain. They see no need to integrate with the Irish and mix solely with their fellow countrymen with little interest in their host nation. Despite intervention at local and national levels through government incentives it can be concluded that successful integration is wholly dependent on the individual immigrants' themselves.

As difficult as Poles have found their new country it can be strongly argued that their Chinese comrades have faced even greater difficulties. Their very diversities have made integration a slow and often unrelentless challenge which for many has only found racism. The Irish see the Chinese as fundamentally different in every way and the Chinese see the Irish culture as one that is so alien to their own that integration seems impossible. The Chinese people I have observed remain within their own social circles with little or no interest in the cultural aspects of Irish society Chinese immigrants often feel discriminated against through tougher visa and immigration laws and yet many living in Ireland pay expensive college fees with no good will policy in place to allow them work here on completion of these college programmes. Many others within the catering business simply live and work within their own communities, their only connection with Irish society been the people they cater for.

Another fundamental issue which influenced the many failures of Irish society to successfully integrate its new citizens was its complete lack of legislation to cope with mass immigration and the slow response of the government to address these issues. The first official policy dealing with immigrants was published in 1999 which was basic by its very inexperienced nature, yet further policies have yet not been put in place. This shows the Irish Government as somewhat unwilling and even uninterested in dealing with mass immigration which eventually led to massive restrictions when the Irish Social Welfare system attracted thousands of Eastern Europeans who saw Ireland as an easy target for a better life without the need to work or contribute in any way to Irish society. This very issue has also negatively impacted on every immigrant as the Irish tax payer grew less tolerant and certainly less welcoming to what they saw as drains on their already overburdened tax and social welfare system. Even those who work and pay taxes are often treated suspiciously by their Irish neighbours due to huge and ongoing media campaigns highlighting the loop holes the Irish government did not close in its immigration laws.

Ireland has now entered a new phase in its history. From the Great Famine which saw mass emigration to the Celtic Tiger which attracted thousands of immigrants, Ireland now

faces the worst recession in recent history and with it huge changes in immigration is yet again occurring. While immigrants were once deemed necessary and welcomed the damning recession has changed this on every level. Many Poles are returning to their native land as economic changes in Poland have improved job opportunities and salaries. Poland is co-host of the 2012 European Football Championships which will require huge numbers of skilled and manual workers to prepare for this event and provides the catalyst for the return to Poland of thousands of its emigrants. It is also reported that many Irish will immigrate to Poland in search of work reversing the trend in Irish immigration once again. Chinese citizens living in Ireland have always come and gone due visa constraints and it is also reported globally that China is emerging strongly from recession.

While many of the thousands of Polish and Chinese immigrants in Ireland on the whole would not view their time in Ireland negatively neither would it be described as a nation welcoming them with open arms. Irish society has massively changed over the last twenty years and with its new found people also came new found challenges. It can be argued that a lack of direction and political naivety influenced and sometimes drove negativity by the Irish towards immigrants with whom they had little understanding of and were often ignorant to their plight. Immigrants on the other hand were also guilty of lack of empowerment for their own plight which often cast them in a negative light by the Irish who throughout history had worked hard in foreign lands with no hope of government assistance. It was entirely up to each Irish immigrant no matter where they went in the world to live and sustain his or her family, a part of history that the Irish feel was not understood or valued by its new found citizens.

The irony of it all is that Ireland is again experiencing mass emigration, will these new generation of Irish emigrants to foreign soil be welcomed in the way their forefathers were or will their lack of willingness to accept immigrants to Ireland be a pre-cursor to a less welcoming host nation. This dilemma is now a reality which nobody saw coming.

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