

Irish Migrants and their Identities in De-territorialised Transnational Position

Irski migranti in njihove identitete v kontekstu deteritorializiranih in transnacionalnih izkušenj

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Abstract

The article examines the contemporary Irish migrants, who have become recognised as 'the Ryan Air generation', an 'emigrant aristocracy' and the 'new wave' emigrants in popular media, as well as in the academic discourse. The focus is on migrants that once emigrated from Ireland and at some stage of their life returned. Their social practices convey simultaneous presence of two places and constant movement across borders while creating certain social memories, discourses and feelings of belonging. In order to represent the complexity of migrants' identifications, belongings, and connections, the focus is on their individual experiences, observing that personal stories elucidate perspectives on the life-situation and actions they have made in migration processes. According to the growth of global communications, media, consumerism and popular culture, which has greatly affected the world today, migrants negotiate traditions, memories, and feelings of belonging in never-ending struggles to form and re-form new ambivalent identities.

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Key words: Ryan Air generation, personal narratives, ambivalent identities

Povzetek

Besedilo obravnava irske migrante, ki so v popularnem medijskem kot tudi v akademskem diskurzu dobili oznako 'Ryan Air generacija,' emigrantska aristokracija' in 'novi val' emigrantov. V ospredju zanimanja so predvsem emigranti, ki so se v določenem obdobju svojega življenja odločili za vrnitev nazaj na Irsko. Njihove družbene aktivnosti zaobjemajo sočasno prisotnost v dveh prostorih ter označujejo nenehno gibanje preko meja. Migranti pri tem ustvarjajo določene socialne spomine, diskurze in občutke pripadnosti vezane na transnacionalne izkušnje. Njihove zapletene identifikacije in povezave so prikazane preko osebnih zgodb posameznikov, ki osvetlujejo njihove poglede na življenjsko situacijo ter poti v migracijskem procesu. V svetu, ki ga označuje porast globalnih komunikacij, množičnih medijev, potrošništva in popularne kulture, morajo migranti neprestano prilagajati tradicije, spomine ter občutja pripadnosti in so tako vpeti v nikoli ustavljen proces oblikovanja in preoblikovanja novih ambivalentnih identitet.

Ključne besede: Ryan Air generacija, osebne pripovedi, ambivalentne identitete

Introduction

The underlying thought of the article lies in the presumption that stories that people tell each other are eloquent of culture. They offer an insight into shared beliefs, values and worldview of a given group (Cashman 2008). Herein, I attempt to capture narrations of Irish migrants while considering narratives as a primary embodiment of our understanding of

the world, of experience, and ultimately of ourselves (Rapport and Overing 2003). Migrants, whose narratives are at stake, are people being constantly on the move. In contemporary anthropological, sociological and other perspectives tackling with migration, Irish migrants have become recognised as transnational migrants, capable of creating new forms of their economic, political, social, and cultural incorporation into the societies they live (Gray 2000, Corcoran 2002, Ní Laorie 2008). They are cognitively and physically attached to their social worlds stretched between two or more nations. They are regularly moving from one country to another, both physically and imaginatively and thus creating embedded spaces with indistinct boundaries. Their social practices convey simultaneous presence of two places and constant movement across borders while creating certain social memories, discourses and feelings of belonging. In order to represent the complexity of their identifications, belongings, and connections, the focus is on individual experiences of transnational migrants, observing that personal stories elucidate perspectives on the life-situation and actions they have made in migration processes. The latter seems to be important especially in the world where imagination “is now a critical part of collective, social and everyday life and is also a form of labour” (Appadurai 2000: 231). Furthermore, a life story entails an accounting of an individual's movements through life - geographical as well as social, economic or cultural - in terms of presenting a reflection of the narrator's sense of self. Therefore, life stories are constructed along a fine line between movement and change, continuity and identification (Rapport and Dawson 1998).

The focus is on Irish migrants that once emigrated from Ireland and have now returned, as well as on those that were born to Irish parents abroad and decided to move to Ireland. Their migration paths are not just directed movement with a point of departure and a point of arrival. The

current processes of restructuring and reconfiguring global capital and rapidly advancing transportation and communication technology have affected the ideas and perspectives on migration, place-making and identifications (Glick Schiller et. al 1992; Glick Schiller and Basch 1995; Appadurai 1996; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Vertovec 1999, 2001; Rapport and Overing 2001). According to the fact, that they are migrants who participate in transnational social spaces, it became inevitable they had regular connections with the homeland even before return. On this point, an important question arises, therefore, if they were in a way already there, imaginatively and physically through regular visits, what does it mean then to come back, or is this really a return and what is this 'back'? How the latter influences on their self-perception and identification? I attempt to find the answer in stories, which I obtained with depth interviews and ethnographic methods in Ireland during the years 2008 and 2009.

However, storytelling is always informed by and in many ways a response to a changing social, historical, economic, and cultural environment. Understanding the contents of but also the motivations for these stories requires appreciating a certain amount of prior context (Cashman 2008). In order to situate the migrants' situation in time and space, we need at least to sketch a role that migration has played in Irish society and briefly describe the prevailing public discourses on the issue.

Migration and Irish society

Emigration and exile, the journeys to and from home, are the very heartbeat of Irish culture. To imagine Ireland is to imagine a journey (O'Toole 1997, cited in Heaney 1987: 21).

Migration processes are embedded in Irish reality and have always played a crucial role in political and social contexts of the country. Irish emigration presents an intricate process embracing not only political and economic context influencing centuries of the Irish past but also illustrating various experiences of Irish people seeking the new future in globe-wide destinations. Emigration is inextricably connected with what it seems to be Irish, and thus presents inevitable path leading us to understand how they perceive and imagine themselves.

Until the last decade of the twentieth century, Ireland mostly experienced emigration, with the exception of the 1970s when a pattern of return emigration was identified. Irish emigration can reveal certain transformations and changes in perceiving national identity, class affiliation, the role of religion and, nowadays, globalisation, while it has often presented itself a useful tool for legitimising ideas of dominant social groups over the society.

Discourses on emigration have been in hands of the three dominant groups; the Catholic Church, political nationalism and the middle-classes interpretations of emigration as a defence mechanism of traditional categories of thought which enabled them to interpret the twentieth century emigration in comforting customary ways (Ryan 1987). Emigration has been a mechanism for resolving regional inequalities in income, employment and standards of living between Ireland and other countries, but viewed over the long term, it has long been inextricably linked to the process of class formation and capitalist development. In the past, discourses on migration were influenced by prevailing political orthodoxies concerning Ireland's right to self-determination and by conflicting attitudes towards nation-building and nationalism. More recently, the discourses have been shaped and simultaneously have shaped its rightful contribution to international labour market. (see Mac

Laughlin 1997: 5-29.133). Accordingly, emigration presents a source for self-ascription and self-definition not just for the Irish migrants, but also for all the others, those who did not leave Ireland. As Maurice Hayes quotes : “Nothing exemplifies this to too-timing Irish mind better than our attitude to emigration which is capable of being portrayed as both triumph and disaster: on the one hand the Irish taking over the world, on the other the Irish banished and expelled from their own land by political, religious and economic oppressions” (1987: 13).

Certainly, there is a tremendous distinction between Irish emigrants and the Irish diaspora since the nineteenth century and contemporary migrants. In popular media, as well as in the academic discourse, they have been variously described as ‘the Ryan Air generation’, an ‘emigrant aristocracy’ and the ‘new wave’ emigrants. Especially the media in the Republic of Ireland have appropriated the emigrants as a symbol of a new and confident country implying that these emigrants have been leaving ‘new’ Ireland (Gray 2000:65). Irishness is nowadays put into de-territorialised transnational position. The prevailing perceptions of emigration and feelings of belonging have been undermined by a transnational perception of migration influenced by globalised communications and market system. (Grey 2000). The dominant discourse has put emigrants into the frame of a new globalised reality where they can perform as rightful participants in an international labour market where emigration is normalised by market centralization, by European Union, by the homogenising of global-village transport and communication networks and by non-employment peripheralised areas (Buckley 1997).

The idea of Ireland has become inextricably connected with the idea of diaspora. For instance, it has become widely accepted among Irish population “that Ireland is really an American country located in the

wrong continent” (Dunkerley 2000, cited in Fagan 2002: 135). According to Kearney, the Irish sense of belonging is no longer predetermined by the borders of the island. Therefore, it is connected also with international (or transnational) communities abroad and subnational communities at home (1987: 109). Those perspectives have been expanded through all pores of the Irish social reality. They are alluding on global understanding of community and simultaneously referring to local or regional identification.

‘New wave emigrants’

Nowadays, Irish emigrants have become recognised as transnational migrants, capable of creating new forms of their economic, political, social, and cultural incorporation into the societies they live. They have regular contacts with their homeland and they pay their regular visits at least once a year. They have been inventing new traditions in Irish emigration by frequently returning home on holidays. Large numbers of families throughout Ireland today could be classified as ‘transnational households’ simply because they have so many family members living at home and abroad (Mac Laughlin 1997). Irish emigrants have increasingly become a part of global population that actively participate in world-wide economic and social activities. Newer, cheaper and more efficient modes of communication and transportation have allowed migrants to maintain different relationships and interests in emigration. As one of the ‘new wave’ emigrants expressed:

I ponder on my own departure for New York in 1987 on an Aer Lingus jet with a rucksack on my back. I’d only intended spending the summer there and stayed for twenty years. I always came back on holidays though and my mother said she was dizzy looking at the revolving doors

at Dublin airport; that one time when someone left for America, you never saw them again. In the 1990s crossing the Atlantic became as casual as hopping on a bus. We were always in touch by telephone too, and in later years by text and email. We always felt close to home. As we soar over the Irish Sea today, I'm struck by how much nearer England is and yet some of the people who spent half a century there, felt so distanced from their homeland (see Browner 2008: 27-28).

For the destinations of the 1980s emigrants included cities in Britain, North America, Australia and continental Europe. Britain accounted for about 70 per cent of those leaving at the end of the decade (Gray 2000). The destinations themselves did not differ much from previous ones, but the whole situation did. The emigration processes changed so much, that even the older generation of emigrants became aware of it. As one the returned migrant from San Francisco expressed:

For the Ryanair generation there is not the same feeling of being wrenched away from a place. There is not the same feeling of finality that there is on the boat; not the same goodbyes that there would have been fifty years ago. There is much more movement now (see Browner 2008: 27-28).

Migrants pay regular visits to homeland and maintain contacts with relatives and friends living in Ireland. Those connections are tied up with their everyday reality. As one of the migrants described his situation, he is still connected with America although he has returned to Ireland recently:

I have a lot of cousins; kids from my brothers are living there, so I keep staying in touch with them. We made a kind of a decision that we bring kids to America every year because they have cousins there... and I also

think that it would be nice for the kids to remember where they came from.

Those connections were established before the return and linked his family with Ireland:

I have a big family and my wife has a big family, the girlfriend that I came there with and we got married, so we both have a big family so we went home, for twenty years that I was in America, it was only one year that I didn't come back. The most of the times we would go back for weddings, Christmas... Ok, when we were illegal there, we didn't do that. But when we became legal we came back all the time...

In articulating transnational diaspora, it becomes evident that emigrants do not make a sharp break with their homelands. According to Lie (1995), rather pre-migration networks, cultures, and capital remain salient. In the recent decade, transnational connections have become stronger because they are facilitated with relatively cheap transport and communications between countries. The situation of those who have migrated to England is even more specific because of the proximity of both countries. They are able to pay more regular visits and thus the imaginative boundaries created between the countries are even more blurred. One of the migrants stressed her regular visit to Ireland, while she was living in London:

My grandparents, my aunts and uncle all lived here and mostly in summer, we came back to Ireland. We came over for six weeks, and the weather was great... The family didn't visit us as much as we did them but we got people coming over once, maybe twice a year. My mum's brother and sister also moved to us for a while.

Therefore, the migration to England carries certain characteristics

because of the proximity, but there is also a great impact of a historical background on their regular relations. The discourses on emigration have held a great impact on construction and imagination of emigrants' destinations. However, the political environment within which Irish lives are lived out in Britain and the United States is quite different (Buckley 1997). Migration to Britain never had the glamour of migration to the new world (Ryan 1987). Quite the opposite, the attraction of America was tangible and irresistible – the land of opportunity, good wages, enticing descriptions returning in every envelope, often accompanied by solid evidence in the form of passage money. America had an additional attraction of being free from British rule. The material aspirations of many Irish people were further fuelled by letters from Irish emigrants and by the incessant propaganda of shipping companies (Swift 1992). As one of the migrants, a returned migrant from Boston, explained it:

It was the most exciting, and it was cheap to get there if you compared it with Australia, so it was closer than Australia. England...I wouldn't have gone to...England wasn't much better than here at that time.

The USA still holds a special position in migrants' imagination. Nowadays, the connections between Ireland and the USA are tightly linked with accelerated consumerism. As one of the migrants expressed himself:

People here perceive America in two ways. One is a George Bush, which they don't like, but the culture, the social part they love. America has all, McDonald's, iPod... they love the consumerism. Irish people did really become consumptive. So many thousand people go to New York for Christmas shopping. Irish people definitely identify themselves more with America than they do with Europe.

Many flying companies offer cheap flights for the shopping tours over

the ocean. Beside the issue of consumerism, there are a lot of Irish associations in the USA that keep regular connections with Ireland and organise many events in order to maintain memories on Ireland and preserve Irish identity. Moreover, there are a lot of tourist agencies constantly advertising 'back home' trips. Tourist advertising has an important role, while it has an inherent emotionalising potential. According to Wulff, such advertising provides an especially useful example of how images can release emotions of displacement and longing often connected with Irish nationalism in the narratives of 'home', 'our land' and 'sociability' (2007: 528). Nowadays, referencing to Anderson (1983), the diaspora should be considered as a global imagined community, while the influence of Irish nationalism in the form of long-distance nationalism can be seen as a discourse that links the Irish at home and the Irish abroad (Wulff 2007: 528). It has been argued that the "US culture is itself partly an Irish invention" and that "Irish culture is inconceivable without America" (O'Toole 2000, cited in Fagan 2002: 141).

A way back to Ireland – a way back to home?

"'Homecomings' are never simply returns from exile, but are also the unsettling of pasts and the making of future" (John Borneman, cited in Stefansson 2004: 3).

In the recent decade, many of Irish migrants living abroad, decided to return to Ireland. Nevertheless, their return is not just simply coming back. Transnational connections offer new insights into migration patterns and at the same time they emphasise the issues of individuality and flexibility. According to Roth, focus on flexibility has changed the view on earlier paradigms of cultural change and assimilation. The

concept of flexibility allows us to acknowledge that migrants have a degree of agency in deciding how they may identify and act, while depending on the context with which they are engaged (2007: 202). Herein, migrants are considered as individuals that can make decisions about their life and organise strategies by means of which they take control of their life to the certain extent. They are, however, embedded within networks of social relations, cultures of adaptation, and political and economic institutions as well. Transnational social spaces should be considered as sites of resistance whereas multi-layered identifications and transnational practices present a conscious effort to escape control of capital and the state (Guarnizo1998; Low and Zúñiga 2003) although they cannot totally escape from their influence.

Transnational migrants could turn to advantage their participation in transnational social spaces. On the one hand, transnational connections stimulate return while they facilitate movement. Therefore, regular connections between countries accelerate the adjustment to a new environment and after the return the social network of migrants is not essentially different. On the other hand, migrants often return because they organise their life to do so. For instance, one of migrants returned to Ireland from America, but he is still working for the same company as before. He chose the job connected with Ireland and he has intentionally changed the position in the company to come back. His story reveals that he has returned because of his emotional attachment to Ireland, and there is an important role of his agency in return migration. Besides, the transnational connections made his return as non-irreversible process, which is an important issue in the return migration:

I came back because first of all I was able to convince my firm to send me back, so my job sent me back here, and they paid me a lot of money to come back. But the real reason, so the money was one thing, but the real reason was family. My wife is from a big family and we want to be close

to our family. I have never really felt that I am American and neither did my wife. We have never really felt that we belong there. We like it, and we like the standard of living there. But it is something different..., the culture...: and also you have to remember that as well that because of the communications and travelling, nowadays everything is so easy that it is not important where you live; it is not a big step. Like, I have just decided that I'm going to America for a week in January, so you can do that (An interview with a returned migrant from Boston).

It is often impossible to separate social or cultural factors from economic ones, as the social context often influences economic factors and vice versa. The majority of the examined migrants shared similar experiences. Transnational migrants are the ones who maintain connections, build institutions, conduct transactions, and influence local and national events in both, the country of residence and the country from which they emigrated. Their return is non-irrevocable and their arrival to Ireland is not stressful for them. The important role of transnational connections in their return is becoming even more evident while comparing the experiences of transnational (or new wave migrants) with older generations.

For instance, a return migrant from England expressed his hard feelings after the arrival:

My wife and I came back to Ireland in January 2006, and it was very hard at first. Ireland is nothing like it was forty, even twenty years ago; absolutely nothing like it. I found the quietness and the slowness of the place a bit strange at first. We couldn't sleep with the quietness...Amenities are very scarce here. The public transport system around here is very poor so if you don't drive you're knackered... (Browner 2008: 11)

The new wave emigrants experience the changes in Ireland as more positive after they return. They feel more confident. As a part of global diaspora they sense changes in Ireland as inevitable consequences of modernisation. Their participation in transnational social spaces and regular contacts with the family and friends present a crucial advantage in their return, seeing that personal and familial reasons are the basis of their decision-making (Corcoran 2003). One of the migrants who came from Boston described his return as really positive and equally the changes that Ireland has gone through:

I really liked it initially because immediately I got to live in a really nice place, Blackrock, and it was great to be with my mother and see the family, and then, Dublin is so much different from what it was in 1985 when I left. And it is much different from Washington. You know public transport, everything is small, I can go there for a coffee, and there for something just by bike. In America I was driving all the time. So I like that, and I like the culture, and what I really like is this new Irish, all this Eastern Europeans, I think that because of them there is a great impulse in the town. I don't think that the Irish like it, but I like it. I think it makes Dublin very cosmopolitan and I think we really benefit from the immigration.

Aside from this, he noticed the difference between them (migrants) and those Irish living in Ireland, as a consequence of the experience living abroad:

Ireland has changed for the better. People who live here don't see that. And a lot of people said why did I come back, if I am crazy? The Irish people said this straight away...

Decisions for coming back are subject to different factors which are often

overlapping. Social networks are powerful elements in the return process. Links to kinship and friendship networks are significant both in the country of origin and the migrants' destination. The majority of migrants have remained in a close contact with their relatives, sending remittances regularly and promising ageing parents that they will return at some stage. Ni Laoire argues that return migration is likely to coincide with key life-course events such as family formation, child-bearing, child-rearing, relationship breakdown or ageing of parents, while emigration in the 1980s was characterised with individuals in their teens and twenties who came back in their thirties and forties (2008: 198).

As it was mentioned above, it is difficult to discern between economic and personal factors leading someone to return. Nevertheless, the economic ones are more seen as the reasons that enable the realisation of other factors. Popular discourses associate high levels of return migration with the 'Celtic Tiger' phenomenon and the recent economic transformation in Ireland. Nevertheless, Ní Laoire in her research of return migration (2008) discovers that the economic boom was not a primary narrative among returnees but more of an underlying theme instead (see also Jones 2003; Corcoran 2002). She evidently describes economic factors as something that "provided a set of circumstances that enabled return and set a series of events in motion" (Ní Laoire 2008: 199). Therefore, migrants decide to return after having achieved a certain stage in their life. For instance, after having reached the goals which they set years ago or after having they established their own family or finished a certain job. As one of the migrants who came from United States described:

"I came back probably because the business that I was working on was sort of, setting up my objectives but when I had set up and running... I did not have any objectives anymore, I need to find something new, it was rewarding and everything... I was doing well financially but I needed

to find new goals, new objectives and the job I was doing was a little bit too hard and I found myself a little bit stressed out... work was too hard for me, so I decided that I need to do something a little bit different. And I decided to come back and go to school again and train to be something and maybe try to be a teacher. And the relationship that I was in sort of ended, so I had opportunity I was free to do stuff. And as well, my family, my brother got married and has kids and I started to miss my nephews and my nieces. And when you start to get older., I got a little bit homesick. I wasn't homesick when I was thirty, but when I was thirty-5, thirty-six I started to become homesick, which is strange. And that probably dropped me home."

Primary reasons to return back to Ireland are mostly a desire to be near to the family, elderly parents, younger siblings, extended family, a need to change a job or career, or a general narrative of 'settling down' or 'making a new start' (see Ní Laoire 2008: 199). Gray (2003) argues that the sense of transnationality and diaspora has highlighted the complex system of responsibilities that tie together family members who stay and those who migrate. There is a strong feeling of responsibility present among migrants. According to Ní Laoire this phenomenon is significant for 'new wave' migrants, as many of the 1980s emigrants have experienced this particular life stage at a time when economic transformation has made return migration possible. Reflecting the strong role of obligation and family in narratives of return migration, the migrant constructs her/himself as a provider of support to others in the family network, in particular ageing parents (2008: 198-200). There is a strong narrative comprising issues of adventures in youth and settling down in adulthood.

"I would like to add that it is important in the immigration and returning home and things like that, as getting older and mature your perspective

changes, and mine did. And I think that probably some people depending on their responsibilities, if you're married, or get children, your choices would be more limited. And some have friends and they wouldn't want to come back. As you go through life things change and you can be back where you started and you come back different. I think that the country that you return to benefits a lot because of all that mix of people living abroad and coming back with all those experiences. It is far more interesting for the country as they would not have gone in the first place" (An interview with a returned migrant from Spain).

Migrants have brought forward various reasons influencing their migration to Ireland. They all sense their return as coming back home, and have always constructed Ireland as the point of origin. They have perceived it as the motherland or ancestral land, and the source of identification, notwithstanding the tremendous social and cultural transformation Ireland has gone through. While living abroad, Ireland presents to Irish migrants a substitute for home. They perceive Ireland as a homeland where they belong to and where they can feel safe. Narratives describing home and homeland are often overlapping. It is of great importance to consider that despite recent notions of postmodernism referring that the bond between people, culture and territory is becoming more and more blurred, place and home, often in the shape of localised homelands of nation-states, continue to be of vital importance to individuals and communities as sources of identity, livelihood, legal rights and social relations (Stefansson 2004: 3).

Nevertheless, returning back to Ireland is not only a result of a nostalgic relation to homeland and a myth of return, but it also presents "a charter for new social projects" (Appadurai 1996; Stefansson 2004: 3). Prevailing reasons leading migrants to Ireland are predominantly linked to practical issues regarding a better occupation, social and economic safety. Also the elders have come to Ireland because of better social

safety and many of them have joined the Irish programmes which take care for retired, ill or disabled people, as for instance Safe-Home Programme.² Besides, it is important to take into account that searching for roots in transnational migration can take over an instrumental value once again, seeing that feelings of origin act as rhizoidal trans-local system in which individuals are able to establish multi-layered and changing identifications (see (Repič 2006: 186).

Migrants' participation in transnational social spaces and regular connections between countries has significant impact on their self-identification. Migrants have to negotiate their identification in relation to their homeland and the place they immigrate to, or after the return – the place they migrated from. Their feelings of belonging indicate a certain level of ambivalence. One of the migrants lived in Spain for many years and his attachment to the former place of living is so strong that he still perceives himself as a part of it. He described his return thus:

I have no regrets, I really liked it. I miss the weather, I miss food, I miss people there, but I didn't sever all the links that I have had there. I go regularly there now, just as I used to go to Ireland before; now I do the same just the other way around. And I keep up my links because the fourteen years is the part of me now, all the things I did. I did many things there, I bought my first car, I bought my first house, everything I did in Spain so I consider myself a little bit of Spanish now and I go there maybe two, three times a year to see all my friends.

Migrants' life is marked with constant negotiation between 'here' and 'there'. They cannot just revoke the connection with one country after the immigration, or after the return. There is a tense negotiation between perceptions of 'roots' in Ireland, but also a sense of being deeply marked by their 'routes' abroad and back to Ireland again. These

² <http://www.safe-home-ireland.com/> (18. 2. 2009)

routes involve career plans, marriages, children and other commitments that further complicate relationships to place and identity (see Gray 2000: 80). Furthermore, the descendants of emigrants are facing this complex situation, as well. For instance, a returned migrant from Boston, emphasised the situation of his children:

They were both born in the US, and when we came back in 2004 Alex was eight and the girl was three years old... and they consider themselves as American now, they have passports, American passports. That's four of us in the house and we have eight passports. So they perceive themselves as Americans, but I think that when they grow up, because they are growing up here, more and more they will perceive themselves as Irish. The little one, she is seven now and she has got the Irish accent I think, but the older one, you would know that he is not Irish. But I think more he loses the accent, more will he consider himself as Irish.

Dual, ambivalent attachments and a multi-layered feeling of belonging do not necessarily present a burden for them. Quite the opposite, I argue that negotiation of identities presents a crucial part of migrants' strategies giving to understand the individual power to control their life. After the immigration they are not subjected to assimilation. They create ambivalent identities to make the adjustment easier. They are able to choose and switch their identities in certain occasions. For instance, one of the migrants, a returned migrant from London, described such situation:

I had some problems with my accent in my first job in computer programming. I had to temper my Irish accent so that they would understand me and still have nowadays, if you hear somebody from my home town and the way I talk it's very, very different. My accent has

become more neutral. Let me say you something, when I rented a house in Mayo from web, I was talking with a woman, and when I phoned her up first, I thought she was English, but she was Irish. She dropped her Irish accent when she was in London. But when she came back to Ireland and had been there for a couple of days, her accent was really Irish again. And later when I was talking to her, and she was back to England, her English accent was back.

Migrants can consciously choose and switch between multiple identities, seeing that for immigrants involved in transnational activities, success does not so much depend on abandoning their culture and language to embrace those of another society as on preserving their original cultural endowment, while adapting instrumentally to a second one (Portes et. al. 1999). Identifications could take over an instrumental value and accordingly present a significant role of individual's agency in migration processes. Therefore, migration processes constantly demand transformation and redefinition of someone's identity although multi-layered and changeable identifications present an essential and effective strategy for migrants (Repič 2006). According to the growth of global communications, media, consumerism and popular culture, which has greatly affected the world today, migrants negotiate traditions, memories, and feelings of belonging in never-ending struggles to form and re-form new ambivalent identities.

Conclusion

In situation of Irish migrants, transnational connections obviously stimulated return, while they facilitated movement. Therefore, regular connections between countries accelerated the adjustment to a new environment and after the return the social network of migrants is not

crucially different. Besides, migrants often return because they organise their life to do so. Their participation in transnational social spaces and regular contacts with the family and friends present a crucial advantage in their return, seeing that personal and familial reasons are the basis of their decision-making (Corcoran 2003). It is often impossible to separate social or cultural factors from economic ones, as the social context influence economic factors and vice versa. The majority of my informants had similar experiences. Their return was non-irrevocable, and their arrival to Ireland was unstressful for them. The important role of transnational connections in their return is becoming even more evident while comparing the experiences of transnational (or new wave migrants) with older generations.

There is a big difference noticeable between the 'new wave' migrants and the previous generation in adjusting and perceiving a new life after return. Because of such transformations of place and identity, homecoming often contains elements of rupture, surprise, and variety of practical problems that returnees usually confront in their new life (Stefansson 2004: 4). For the older generation, the return is often stressful, many things bother them at the beginning for the environment they return to is not what they remember to have been. Quite the opposite, the so called 'Ryanair' generation does not experience the feeling of anxiety as the older one. They are migrants who participate in transnational social spaces and have regular connections with the homeland. They are experiencing social transformations, which are conditioned with global processes that connect different regions of the world through trade and labour exchange.

As international laws and organizations, and as rapidly advancing transportation and communication technology have changed the contemporary world situation, it seems to be an intricate issue what

return actually means for individuals. Regarding the majority of my informants, the return is not just simply coming back. Nevertheless, they all sense their return as coming back home. While living abroad, Ireland represents Irish migrants a substitute for home. They perceive Ireland as a homeland where they belong to and where they can feel safe. However, migration experiences and transnational activities have greatly affected their imagination of the selves and the 'homes', which is well evident after their return. In diaspora they were producing Irishness. Nevertheless, when they returned to Ireland, their image of Irishness became contested.

Migrants' feelings of belonging indicate a certain level of ambivalency, and in relation to transnational activities they have all established multi-layered, ambivalent transnational identifications. Migration processes constantly demand transformation and redefinition of someone's identity. However, multi-layered and changeable identifications present an essential and effective strategy for migrants. In this context, transnational migration enables migrants to connect to new communities and social networks. Therefore, dual, ambivalent attachments and multi-layered feelings of belongings do not necessarily present a burden for them. Quite the opposite, I argue that negotiation of identities presents a crucial part of migrants' strategies helping to understand the individual power to control their life. They create ambivalent identities to make the adjustment easier. They are able to choose and switch their identities in certain occasions. Accordingly, coming back home, is not only a result of a nostalgic relation to homeland and a myth of return, but it also presents "a charter for new social projects" (Appadurai 1996; Stefansson 2004: 3). Migrants' life is signified with a set of social projects which are primarily oriented toward creating better, more satisfying future lives.

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