'Ghettos of the Mind': Realities and Myths in the Construction of the Social Identity of a Dublin Suburb

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Abstract

The Republic of Ireland became a country of net immigration for the first time in 1996 and a large body of literature has since examined, at macro and meso levels, migration rates and flows, impacts on the economy, and issues around integration. However, there is a paucity of sociological literature on the effect of unprecedented immigration at local or community level. This article addresses this deficit by demonstrating how the social identity of a place, home to a particularly high proportion of immigrants over the past two decades, is differentially constructed in the perceptions of those situated within, and outside. We combine data sets from two qualitative studies of Irish people living inside and outside the north Dublin suburb of Blanchardstown firstly to underpin our argument that place identities are processes which can change in a relatively short time and that some place identities are more mythical than real. Secondly, we problematise the term 'ghetto', as employed by some participants in this study and argue that racial, ethnic and class positionality is implicated in the construction of the relational identities of the place. Our findings contrast residents' awareness of the heterogeneity of their area with outsiders' construction of a homogenous raced and classed identity for the place, namely, one where large numbers of lower class and black immigrants live.

Introduction

> The stranger is thus being discussed here, not in the sense often touched upon in the past, as the wanderer who comes today and goes tomorrow, but rather as the person who comes today and stays tomorrow. He is, so to speak, the potential wanderer: although he has not moved on, he has not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going. He is fixed within a particular spatial group, or within a group whose boundaries are similar to spatial boundaries. But his position in this group is determined, essentially, by the fact that he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself (Simmel 1950: 402).

1.1 Although historically a country of emigration, the pace and scale of the levels of inward migration that Ireland witnessed between 1996 and 2008 (C.S.O. 2011) were striking. Blanchardstown, formerly a rural village, now a large sprawling suburb, constituted one of the fastest changing parts of the country from a demographic point of view during this time. Its significant population growth and changing composition, in addition to its high proportion of non-Irish residents, make it a most suitable site to explore coexistent multiple - and mythical - place identities, and the raced and classed social relations and discursive practices that inform them, including the notion that Blanchardstown, or certain constitutive parts, is a 'ghetto'. The use of the term 'ghetto' is not unusual in contemporary popular discourses relating to urban spaces, areas of socio-economic deprivation, and immigration. For Peach (2007), a 'ghetto' is a single area where a high proportion of an ethnic or racial group lives and accounts for most of the population. In this article, we argue the perception of same, in the absence of empirical evidence, is sufficient for the term to be used. Wacquant (2004) however critiques the uncritical application of the folk-concept of 'ghetto' including by social scientists. For Wacquant, ghetto is specifically a

'socio-spatial mechanism of ethnoracial closure' (2012: 12) and so not applicable to any ethnic or economically deprived neighbourhood. True ghettos, he argues, exhibit both ethnic confinement and control but are also integrative and protective of their inhabitants: a product both of external hostility and internal affinity (Wacquant 2004). Although described by some participants as such, we argue Blanchardstown does not constitute a ghetto by either of the above definitions, nor is it constituted of 'micro-ghettos' as some residents suggest; rather the use of the term is indicative of what Simpson (2007) calls 'ghettos of the mind' and reflects both the realities and myths which inform the construction of the social identity of the place.

Methods

2.1   Our argument is supported by two sets of empirical evidence. Between 2007 and 2009, Ní Chonaill conducted six semi-structured focus groups, involving 35 Irish residents of Blanchardstown, on the perceived impact of migrants on the area. 'Irish', a social construct, was defined as people who are of Irish nationality or who describe themselves as Irish. All participants, who ranged in age from their 20s to 60s, self-identified as Irish. More females than males participated in the research, and three of the groups of residents were composed exclusively of females. Each focus group was recorded, and the data transcribed, coded and analysed for emergent themes.

2.2   Over the same period, Byrne conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 members of the Irish professional social class on their perceptions of the impact of migrants on Dublin and Ireland. The selection of interviewees was informed by the schema based on employment status and occupational skills devised by Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992). All were educated to third or fourth level and all lived outside the Blanchardstown area. All self-identified as Irish nationals. The sample was gender balanced and ranged in age from 30 to 60. Thirty hours of interviews were transcribed, analysed, and coded for emergent themes. Combining the data sets [1] provides a unique insight into the divergent raced and classed spatial identities constructed by those living within the (somewhat fuzzy) boundaries of Blanchardstown and their co-ethnics living elsewhere in Dublin.

Theoretical Influences

3.1   The classical social theorist Georg Simmel (above) described the arrival of the 'stranger' as one of the qualities of spatial forms found in the social interactions that turn an empty space into something meaningful (Urry 2004). The focus of this article is the immigrant to Ireland who, in Simmel's terms, is the stranger who comes today and, critically, stays tomorrow (Simmel 1950: 402) and in so doing influences social interactions which in turn lead to the construction of new, contingent, and altered identities for those spaces and places where s/he settles. In addition to the theoretical contributions of social geographers such as Massey (1994), Sibley (1995), Pulidio (2000), Simpson (2007), Peach (2007) and Wacquant (2004, 2012) this article draws on sociological theories on the intersection of 'race', ethnicity and class by Balibar and Wallerstein (1991), Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992), Wellman (1993), Bonilla-Silva (2001) and Watt (2006) in analysing the changed and changing identity of Blanchardstown, a suburb 10km northwest of Dublin city. Our analyses are also influenced by intersectionality theory with its emphasis on the importance of studying how different social divisions such as 'race', ethnicity, and class intersect simultaneously in individual lives and social practices (Davis 2008), including the discursive practices that contribute towards the formation of the identity/ies of a place. Intersectionality theory also seeks to avoid the construction of people as belonging to homogenised social groups, sharing so-called 'natural' attributes that differentiate 'us' and 'them'.

3.2   Following Massey (1994), we begin by arguing that places have identities and that these identities can and do change, even in relatively short periods of time, namely that identity is always 'in process' (Hall 1996). Indeed, to echo Jenkins (2008: 9), it is not identity *per se* but rather the 'ongoing, open-ended processes of "identification"' which constitute the focus of our discussion. Places are not static or frozen in time, so to speak, nor do they have clear boundaries separating 'inside' and 'outside'. Rather, building on Massey's work we conceptualise places as processes, and such processes as involving local, and much wider, sets of social relations, not least 'race', ethnicity and class. Furthermore, places are a multiplex of spaces with multiple rather than single identities (Massey 1991: 28-29).

3.3   Secondly, we explore the suggestion that not only do places have multiple identities but, as Shields (1991) argues, some identities are mythical, formed regardless of the materialities. Such images, writes Shields, can result from stereotyping or from prejudices towards places or their inhabitants that are formed by the discursive practices of a range of groups including politicians, the media and, importantly for this study, residents and non-residents. The influence of 'race', ethnicity and class positionality on such discursive practices is of interest. Moreover, as the title of this article suggests, one of the myths that we are particularly interested in

challenging is the notion of Blanchardstown itself, or its constituent places, as a 'ghetto'.

3.4   Finally, we look at the influence of the intersection of 'race', ethnicity and class on social interaction and, therefore, on the construction of place identity. As illustrated in Sibley's work on geographies of exclusion (1995), place images are related to processes of distinction and the way people ascribe identities to others as well as to themselves. One facet of the identity of a place is its racial and ethnic identity. As Pulido argues, all places are racialised and 'race' informs all places (2000: 13). Another important facet of the identity of a place is its class identity. Drawing on Bourdieu (1984), Watt (2006) describes the importance of class *habitus* and posits that social distinction can take implicit or explicit spatial form as people of varying class backgrounds endeavour to position themselves within a social *habitus* where they can be among people like themselves and, simultaneously, distance themselves from the raced and classed other. In the US, Wellman describes white middle class people as not 'objecting much to blacks *like themselves* living "next door"' (emphasis in original) (1993: 53).

3.5   To begin we provide some context for our research, firstly positioning it within the contemporary immigration narrative of economic growth and recession in Ireland, and secondly outlining the related economic and social restructuring that occurred in Blanchardstown specifically.

Ireland's 'migration turn' and its discontents

4.1   This section highlights the changing migration trends in Ireland and demonstrates how economics, mobility, and racism are constructed as fundamentally intertwined. Migration is part of a global process in which Ireland has undisputedly participated given its 'historically embedded tradition of emigration' (Mac Éinri 2012) and its transformation in recent decades to a destination for inward migration. However, the focus of this article on the intersection of 'race', class and place, is unusual in the context of the literature on immigration to Ireland. To date the focus has been on statistical analyses of rates and flows, the impact of labour migration, migrants' experiences of racism, asylum and refugee studies, children and migration, return migration, gender and migration, and integration and citizenship (Mac Éinrí and White 2008). The rapidity of Ireland's transition to a country of net migration in the mid-1990s (Ruhs 2005) and again to one of net emigration in 2009 (C.S.O. 2011) may be seen by some to support the contention that immigration to Ireland was, after all, exceptional, a 'blip' caused by the equally exceptional economic boom of the so-called 'Celtic Tiger' years. An implicit, and sometimes explicit, expectation in some recent popular and political discourse on immigration has been that the current recession in Ireland would result in the majority of immigrants 'going home', an expectation which has not been realised (Krings *et al.* 2009) and which, in any case, 'denies the reality of the migrant experience throughout the decades and across a range of geographical contexts' (Gilmartin and White 2008: 146). Simmel's (1950) so-called 'stranger' has remained.

4.2   Although the expectation that the recession would result in many immigrants leaving has largely proven incorrect, little attention has been paid to immigrant stasis i.e. to the medium to long-term settling that accompanies all forms of migration, beyond census analyses and mapping by the All-Ireland Research Observatory based at the National University of Ireland Maynooth (Airo/Cso 2011) and a longitudinal qualitative study on young Poles in Ireland conducted by the Employment Research Centre at Trinity College Dublin. The literature on immigration has so far tended towards 'routes in' or 'routes out' rather than on those putting down roots, or the places where they live, such as residential suburbs of Dublin like Blanchardstown.

4.3   The experiences of many migrants in Irish society challenge the myth of Ireland of the hundred thousand welcomes, which masks 'peculiarly naïve' and even 'particularly lurid brands of racism' according to Bacik (2004: 199). As Garner (2003) and Lentin and McVeigh (2006) argue, racism towards immigrants was a reality in Ireland throughout the economic boom. This view is supported by empirical research, both national (Mac Gréil 1978, 1996, 2011; O' Connell 2005) and international (Ess 2009; Garner and White 2001) which suggests a hardening of attitudes in Ireland on immigration issues between 1997 and 2003, despite the backdrop of an unparalleled economic prosperity (O' Connell 2005). In 2008, prior to recession, at the same time as our field work was being carried out, a survey regarding immigrants (including asylum seekers and refugees) found almost 80 % tended to agree that there was 'a limit to how many people of other 'races', religions or cultures a society can accept' and just over 67% believed Irish society had 'reached its limits' and that there 'would be problems' if there was further immigration (Haynes *et al.* 2008). Just over a year later, when recession had become the new economic reality, a survey of a national quota sample showed 72 % of those surveyed wanted to see a reduction in the number of non-Irish immigrants in Ireland. Of this figure, 29 % said they would like 'most immigrants' to leave (O' Brien 2009).

4.4 The immigration of the 1990s and 2000s did not 'cause' racism to emerge in Ireland. Racisms existed historically in the specificities detailed by McVeigh (1992) prior to Ireland becoming a country of net migration. Lentin (2001), similarly to Gilroy (2008 [1987]) and Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992), recognises an affinity between nationalism and racism, both of which exclude by the very nature of their inclusion. Miles notes the key part played by the discourse of 'race' in the creation of myths of national origin (Miles 1989: 31), Ireland being no exception (Fanning 2002: 9). The Irish 'nation' in the modern day has been described as culturally, religiously and even racially defined as a narrow exclusionary 'we' (Fanning 2002). As Mac Éinrí notes, for most of the twentieth century, Ireland functioned as an 'ethnically homogeneous state with an official monoculture' (Mac Éinrí 2004: 89) which left little room for the Other. Increased diversity is now calling the (not uncontested) Catholic, Gaelic, rural and indeed white norms of Irishness (Garner 2003: 248) into question. Lentin (2001) argues that, in the face of contemporary immigration, processes of top-down racialisation are constructing new versions of Irishness. Since 'much of the construction of ideas of national identity takes place at a local level, as people engage in drawing boundaries - real and symbolic - around their particular communities' (Thompson *et al.* 1999: 64-5), we are interested in the way in which the lived experiences of individuals in 'local' social contexts inform their understanding of the nation and national identity.

4.5 In Sweden, where immigration is also a relatively new phenomenon, Bråmå (2006) found residential areas with a high immigrant concentration tend to take the form of a division between the indigenous majority and a mix of different minorities rather than between the majority and a cluster of single ethnicity enclaves. We find the former is the case in Blanchardstown, which can therefore not be termed a ghetto per Peach (2007) (above). According to O'Boyle and Fanning, Irish immigrant settlement patterns do not suggest a 'widespread tendency towards ghettoisation' although Blanchardstown has been identified as one of two economically deprived areas of Dublin where relatively high concentrations of recent immigrants, in particular black immigrants, reside (O'Boyle 2009: 147). The second such area they identify is Dublin's inner city, although following analysis they conclude that even in these two areas indigenous population anxieties about ghettoisation are misguided. Simpson (2007) problematises the disproportionate association between areas of high immigrant populations and poor educational, housing and employment conditions in England and Wales, as do O'Boyle and Fanning (2009) in the case of Blanchardstown and Dublin's inner city. Accepting that poverty is a frequent, although not necessary, characteristic of areas termed 'ghettos', Wacquant (2004) writes that if poverty sufficed as a characteristic then most Third world cities would be 'gargantuan ghettos'.

4.6 Following Simpson (2007), we argue that the homogenous racial and classed identity we found projected onto Blanchardstown by people living outside the area is evidence of what Simpson calls 'ghettos of the mind' rather than 'ghettos of reality' and is related to majority population anxieties about the presence of the (visibly and culturally different) Other and to pessimism about the perceived self-segregation of ethnic and racial groups (Simpson 2007: 423). We return to the pivotal role of resources in the creation of real and perceived social divisions later. Before doing so we present our findings on the real and perceived changes in the identity of Blanchardstown in recent decades, most particularly, the last decade.

The changing identities and fuzzy borders of Blanchardstown

5.1 Situated 10km northwest of Dublin city centre, Blanchardstown was a rural village on the outskirts of Dublin until the late 1960s. It was one of three satellite towns planned for development around Dublin in the 1970s but never realised independence, remaining rather a 'peripheral, poorly planned suburb' (Williams and Shiels 2004: 10). During the 1990s, the area witnessed the economic development experienced nationally and in the 2006 census constituted one of the fastest growing areas in the country. Taking the eight Electoral Districts (ED) which bear the title Blanchardstown into consideration, its population reached 63,120 persons in 2006, an increase of 63.47 % in 10 years (Ryan 2008: 9). Immigrants comprised almost 22 % of the area's population in 2006 (Ryan 2008: 7), double that of the national average (C.S.O. 2007). This figure had risen to 23.8 % by census 2011 (C.S.O. 2012). Indeed non-Irish residents contributed 65 % of the increase of the area's population between 2002 and 2006 (Ryan 2008: 7).

5.2 Residents refer to the '*total change*' (B5) that the area experienced and the transformation from a '*small village*' in the countryside to a sprawling urban area as outlined by Mac Polin and Sobolewski (2001). The centre of Blanchardstown, historically the Main Street in the heart of the village, has since expanded into townlands such as Castaheany, Littlepace, Ongar and Waterville (Ryan 2008: 9). Residents allude to the shift in focal point towards a huge shopping centre, the Blanchardstown Centre. Built in 1996, this was one of the first major out-of-town shopping centres in Dublin and, as residents describe it, the '*area exploded ... the whole place sprang up around it*' (B7).

5.3 The reality of the large concentration of non-Irish nationals residing in the area underlined above, and the diversity of this cohort, needs to be acknowledged. The concept of skin colour as a marker of difference is pertinent too as, according to the 2006 census, Nigerians (1,822) comprised the largest group of non-Irish nationals in Blanchardstown, followed by Polish (1,261), Lithuanian (1,045) and British (954) (Ryan 2008: 25). This trend is reaffirmed in 2011 (AIRO/CSO). At 5.8 % , the number of black non-Irish/black Irish per ED across the area constitutes nearly six times the national average (O' Boyle and Fanning 2009: 150). This profile deviates from the national picture where British were the largest group of non-Irish nationals in 2006, followed by Polish, the nationality with the largest number of residents at a national level in 2011 (C.S.O. 2012). It is clear from our findings that people who are visibly different are most commonly being referred to when the immigrant population in Blanchardstown is being discussed.

5.4 The availability of employment in the Blanchardstown Centre and other local businesses, in addition to the affordability of housing were two factors that contributed to the population growth of the area. This is corroborated by a study of the housing experiences of Chinese, Indian, Lithuanian and Nigerian immigrants in Blanchardstown (Focus Ireland and Immigrant Council of Ireland 2009). Residents in Ní Chonaill's Blanchardstown study also back this up, describing how '*I saw a nice big house over here and I was swung by the house, nice big kitchen, so we landed in Blanchardstown for no other reason*' (B13). The mix of private and local authority housing, the large land banks available for further construction, the changes in housing density policy made by the local Fingal County Council, and the property boom in general, were other major contributing factors in attracting both Irish and non-Irish families into the area. The then local Labour Party TD (member of parliament) Joan Burton (2008) explains the population mixture of locals, new Irish residents, and new non-Irish residents:

> Probably because of all of the change it has gone through, even the Irish community in Blanchardstown tends to be at most... first generation into Blanchardstown, the core of the people from the Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, Dublin 7 area... they are probably 20 % of the population that are from the original core group [of the original village]. The rest are really newcomers from the rest of Ireland and newcomers from abroad.

5.5 From an ostensibly mono-cultural small village to large multi-cultural suburb in less than twenty years, Blanchardstown, we contend, exemplifies Massey's (1994) theory of space as a dynamic entity reflective of national and local demographic and economic changes, planning regulations and lifestyle alterations such as the popularisation of out-of-town shopping. It is also an example of the process of changing place identities due to in-migration. In the next section we see how and why the boundaries of a place are contested and how multifaceted and contradictory identities can co-exist.

Blanchardstown: Realities and Myths

6.1 Dualisms which 'oppose a perceived native/Irish/white/settled/host community to another foreign/non-white/non-Irish/nomadic/immigrant/newcomer community' (Ni Laoire 2011: 21) shape contemporary popular discourse in Ireland and yet, as Ní Laoire argues, these boundaries between host and newcomer are in fact 'blurred'. In Ireland's new migratory reality, Blanchardstown is one of the emblematic places where these blurred, socially constructed, boundaries are negotiated and re-negotiated. Drawing on our data sets, we now develop our argument that some place identities owe more to myth and stereotype than reality. Our data clearly demonstrate how the perceptions of Blanchardstown, the place, differ between resident and non-resident. First we look at the residents' attempts to describe the boundaries of the place where they live and posit a connection between this ambivalence and their perception that the place name 'Blanchardstown' has negative connotations for people living outside the area.

Insider and Outsider Perception

7.1 Delineating what constitutes the Blanchardstown area is a matter of interpretation. Participants corroborated Massey's representation of places as neither static nor bounded by describing the problematic nature of defining this rapidly changing area: '*When people say the Blanchardstown area they mean Blanchardstown and beyond, as far as Clonee, the county border, Ongar, Hartstown, Huntstown and Mulhuddart. The whole lot is called Blanchardstown when traditionally it wasn't*' (B21). Alluding to the multiple identities that places possess, this participant questions the use of *'the label Blanchardstown'* for a very diverse and *'huge area*', denoting the change from traditional to current perceptions:

> You know, traditionally Blanchardstown meant Main Street and the few roads off that. . .Blanchardstown, Clonsilla village and from that we have areas Corduff, Hartstown stretching to Clonee with no breaks now with the housing. If there is any trouble in that whole area on the news you will hear there was a shooting, a stabbing in the

Blanchardstown area. It's putting a label on a really huge area and sometimes I find that a bit inaccurate on [media]
reports when they say there was a shooting in Blanchardstown when really for me it was somewhere else (B21).

In keeping with Shields' (1991) argument of mythical place images being informed by discursive practices employed by politicians, the media, and both residents and non-residents, participants cited the media and non-residents as the source of negative stereotypes and images associated with the Blanchardstown area.

7.2 Another resident echoed the idea that '*Blanchardstown as an area has a bad name for itself*' citing someone from Clondalkin, (a suburb in the south side of the city which also includes areas of relative disadvantage), who said to her, rather ironically she felt, Blanchardstown '*must be real rough*' (B4). This was corroborated elsewhere: '*sometimes if I say to people I'm from Blanchardstown who may be from the south side* [of Dublin city] [2] *they do have a preconception that it's a violent area*' (B21).

7.3 While identifying the negative reputation of the place as something which is '*not just to do with immigrants but to do with* [local] *gangs*', a resident of a private housing estate notes the complete divergence in perceptions of the area among people residing there and outsiders whose views also contribute to creating the image of a place: '*I think it is viewed totally different by outsiders than it would be by the people that actually live in it*' (B4).

7.4 This concern with the reputation of the place and the rapid expansion of the area affects how residents self-identify their place of residence. In their *Social and Economic Study of the Greater Blanchardstown Area*, Williams and Shields found that 'most residents do not yet identify with a distinct local area' (2004: 8). In light of the expansion of housing referred to earlier, one Irish resident likened Blanchardstown to one big housing estate (B12), echoing the confusion regarding boundaries outlined above.

7.5 Longer term residents however identify with belonging to a smaller local area, part of the bigger whole, for example: '*I class myself from Corduff, Blanchardstown*' (B37). These and similar self-exclusionary comments are reminiscent of Elias and Scotson's (1965) description of the process of 'old'/established residents endeavouring to assert, at every opportunity, a distinct and superior identity from 'new'/outsider residents regardless of racial/ethnic difference and even where they share social class position. Instead Elias and Scotson find non-economic factors such as norms and values become increasingly important in the absence of economic differentials.

7.6 In contrast, the Irish professionals (resident outside of the area) interviewed by Byrne perceived few if any internal distinctions and referred to '*out in Blanchardstown*' as one distinct bounded place where large numbers of new/outsiders and (specifically black) immigrants live. There are similarities with the findings of Elias and Scotson (1965), in the way Frank, for example, distinguishes and contrasts his son's '*very, very homogeneous*' school in the south side of the city to the '*completely different picture*' in other 'new' and less 'established' areas of Dublin. Like many of his peers, unprompted, Frank used Blanchardstown to exemplify the type of place with a very different identity to that of his own white Irish professional *habitus*. Similar to his peers, he cites the media as his source of information:

I would imagine if you went out to a [inaudible] *school out in Blanchardstown* [ ] *that you'd find a completely different picture, and you can even see that in the media when you see things in classrooms* [during reports on education issues].

Process of Distinction

8.1 As outlined earlier, images of places are related to the process of distinction demonstrated in Sibley's (1995) work on the 'geography of exclusion' and the way in which people both self-identify and assign identities to, or categorise, others (Jenkins 2008). Processes of distinction, according to Sibley, are frequently expressed in terms of 'race', a contested social construct, lacking a singular definition shared by academics. While our findings support this theory, the term 'race' itself does not need to be used (indeed, it is avoided) as we found references to 'immigrant' and 'visible difference' are employed instead. This supports Balibar's argument that the term 'immigration' is a newly acceptable term for 'race' and racialised discourse, 'the chief characteristic which enables individuals to be classified by racist typology' (1991: 217).

8.2 The large number of visibly different immigrants that live in the area, as reflected in the statistics cited earlier, is recognised by residents and non-residents alike. Similar to Frank (above) and the professionals living outside Blanchardstown who frequently cited the 'visibility' of immigrants in the area, Blanchardstown residents also acknowledged the '*visible presence of migrants in Dublin 15* (B9) where '*there are more foreign people*

here, and blacks here in Blanchardstown than in Birmingham' (B18).

8.3   In keeping with Sibley's (1995) argument that exclusionary discourse draws predominantly on 'race', the relational construction of blackness in opposition to whiteness, often constructed as 'racially unmarked' (Goldberg 1997: 83) was underlined with regard to a local school: *'I was shocked when this classroom of children just came out and walked around and went back in but there was one in three children black'* (B45). The high proportion of 'newcomer' children in schools in the Blanchardstown area was frequently highlighted by residents: *'You only have to see the school yard'* (B8). Thus it is not just a perception but a reality that *'there's plenty of foreigners all over Blanchardstown'* (B2) and *'if you stand at the bus stop you will be hard pushed to hear English spoken'* (B23).

8.4   In addition to contrasting their *habitus* with Blanchardstown, the Irish professionals interviewed consistently emphasise their social and spatial distance from Blanchardstown, and more generally, the post code of Dublin 15, within which Blanchardstown is situated. Distancing can be seen in, for example, the frequent use of phrases such as *'out there'* as if to position Blanchardstown on the margins of both the city and normative Irish society generally. Other value-laden phrases used when talking about places where immigrants live such as *'ended up'* and *'impinged'* symbolise the undesirability of what happened *but in Dublin 15'*.

        Immigrants have ended up [ ] *out in Dublin 15 for lots of reasons. So that's where it has impinged most* (Barry).

8.5   Differences in economic capital are also emphasised with the availability of inexpensive rental accommodation commonly cited by the Irish professionals as a 'pull factor' to the Dublin 15 area. Interestingly, the idea that people categorised as immigrants might want, and be in a position, to buy property and settle down with their families was rarely alluded to by these interviewees. When it was, the expense of property in their own (professional) neighbourhoods (with the implicit assumption that immigrants are in low paid, low skilled employment) was seen as a barrier to immigrants moving there and an explanation for the racial and social class homogeneity of their own neighbourhoods and schools. Referring to one of the city's most expensive and exclusive residential areas, Ivan pointed out *'they [immigrants] weren't moving to Foxrock and that's just reality isn't it?'* Likewise, Edward, talking about his *'red brick, settled* residential area said, *'it's probably socially. . . and harder, I think, economically 'cos of the price of houses there... for a non-national to own a house* [ ]. *So there were a few non-nationals but there weren't many'.*

8.6   When the children of some of the professionals interviewed do attend schools with a racial and ethnic mix, as Alison explains of her child's private (fee paying) school, the social class of these racially and ethnically different children ensures there are 'no problems':

        I try hard to be PC [politically correct] *but having said that there's nobody coloured or foreign living on our road. There's one Sri Lankan child in* [son's] *class, now* [daughter] *goes to* [private fee paying school] *where 40 % of the children are non-national, of every description, but it's a fee paying school, they're people who are in various companies, there's embassy kids* [ ] ...*so they're of a particular level. And there's no problems* ...

        Dublin is semi-segregated in a sense. I can remember being [ ] *at my oldest child's sports day* [ ] *and I was just struck by it. . .*[ ] *you know, it's very, very homogeneous* (Frank).

8.7   Our findings indicate that while Irish professionals like Frank perceive Dublin city to be *'semi-segregated'* and immigration as *'not impinging on middle and professional class areas'* as Barry and his peers said, Blanchardstown residents describe internal segregation within the area. In real terms non-Irish residents are not equally distributed throughout the area: Roselawn, a more advantaged part, recorded the lowest percentage of non-Irish nationals in the area at just under 10 % in 2006, while the less advantaged Mulhuddart and Abbotstown, with 33 % and 36 % respectively, registered the highest percentages of non-Irish (Ryan 2008: 27).

'Micro-Ghettos' within a 'Ghetto'

9.1   In line with this reality, certain parts are recognised by Blanchardstown residents as having a high concentration of immigrants. These include *'more of the new areas like Ongar, Clonee'* (B30), where large housing estates have been built since 2001. Ongar was frequently referred to as an area where a large proportion of black people reside: *'I have been told 'you're moving up to Ongola'*[3] and *'you're moving up to black land'* (B13). Speaking of her sister, another participant added *'I wouldn't be surprised if she was, like, the only Irish people that live there [Ongar], every single one of them is like are migrants, like it would be more African people would be in around the area'* (B4). Ongar, situated in the Blakestown ED has the highest number of non-Irish nationals, including almost eight times the national average of black/black Irish (O' Boyle and Fanning 2009: 150). Other areas frequently mentioned include Tyrrelstown, where, according to (B38), *'everybody there is black*

so I'm the only white person on the block. . . I'm the foreign national up there'; and Waterville which is a new development located in the Abbotstown ED - '*the whole of Waterville is full of non-nationals'*(B37).

9.2   Although, as mentioned earlier, Blanchardstown does not meet either Peach's or Wacquant's criteria for a ghetto and while O'Boyle and Fanning (2009) maintain there is no evident trend towards ghettoisation in Irish immigrant settlement patterns, this does not prevent the term being used in everyday discourse by both residents of Blanchardstown and Irish professionals living outside the area. One Irish resident in Blanchardstown went so far as to say*: 'there are ghettos. I have seen big changes in my estate, people living in a lot of rental housing'* (B33). This is echoed by other residents: *'I think for the most part we are segregated, most of them live up in Ongar'* (B15), *'I do feel a lot of the migrants are in the newer areas'*(B21). Irish professionals also use the term ghetto as a descriptor of a place where they perceive a large immigrant (for which read black) population live. Larry says of himself and his peers '*in a way we're lucky. . . the huge influx. . . it hasn't had a huge impact in a lot of peoples' lives because unfortunately a lot of it has been ghettoised'*.

9.3   Blanchardstown, we argue, is a place of multiple and often contradictory identities some of which are grounded in reality and some which are classed and raced constructs produced and reproduced from the classed and raced positions of those living in, and outside of, the area. One such (erroneous) construction is that of Blanchardstown as constituting a 'ghetto' in its entirety or constituted of 'micro-ghettos'. In the next section we examine the influence of the intersection of 'race' and class on the construction of these identities.

Intersection of 'race', ethnicity, and class in categorising as other

10.1   According to Balibar, the term 'immigrant' constitutes a 'catch-all category, combining ethnic and class criteria, into which foreigners are dumped indiscriminately, though not all foreigners and not only foreigners' (1991: 221). In this section we show how our data sets support this argument in that we found a constructed hierarchy of who is classified as, and acceptable as, an 'immigrant', with blackness operating as one (but not the only) marker of difference. Similarities to Watt's (2006) evidence of place images and social distinction in London being understood in terms of respectability, roughness, and 'race' are found in both data sets.

10.2   We find that class intersects with 'race' in terms of *habitus*, including day-to-day interaction which, in turn, contributes to informing place identities subsequently constructed. As one of the Irish professional class participants, Frank, said: '*because of where most of them are living and where they're working*[Irish professionals] *have little or no interaction with immigrants.'*Similarly, Larry reiterated that:

> *. . .people living in particular parts of Ireland or parts of Dublin, would have been entirely unaware of the level of immigration that had occurred because it just wouldn't impact on them.* [ ] *I wouldn't see an immigrant from one day of the week to the next and my children wouldn't. So, I mean, to a large extent it happened under the middle-class radar.*

10.3   While we argue that social class rather than 'race' is the predominant factor in determining the frequency and level of interaction, the issue is more complex than simply social and economic class difference, because some who are 'obviously immigrants' (meaning black) are also members of the professional class. Echoing Balibar, Keith, an Irish professional, elaborates on who is considered an immigrant and explains that the '*local Indian or Pakistani doctor'*, or *'serious banker or investor'* is deemed '*okay*' or acceptable on the basis of their perceived contribution to the host nation:

> *. . .they're okay, we don't consider them to be immigrants because they're professionals. They're not real immigrants really because they are real members of society. I think we have in our head this idea that an immigrant is somehow a lower person in society because they don't make as valuable a contribution from our scale of judgement to what these guys have to offer.*

10.4   It appears that '*real immigrants*' belong to the lower social classes which, whether Irish or foreign born, are perceived not to make as '*valuable a contribution*' to the host nation. Being perceived by members of the Irish professional class to be of the same social class as themselves and making a contribution to society can diminish, if not remove entirely, an immigrant professional from the discourse of immigration. Again, implicit in this kind of remark is a self-identification as respectable, '*a real member of society*' and someone who makes '*a valuable contribution'*.

10.5   If professional class members produce categories of immigrants based on social class, lower class Blanchardstown residents also reproduce stereotypes of immigrants' welfare dependency describing them as '*freeloaders, that do not work'*(B17), and yet have '*mortgage-free houses, nice cars, you know they are getting*

their clothes allowance without an eye being blinked at them, [and baby] *buggies'* (B53), *'and our government pays for it'* (B17). Black people are particularly stereotyped: *'I know that people say the Africans are lazy, like, and they all get handed everything'* (B6), the assumption being made that they are living on welfare when, of course, this is not necessarily the case. Due to the introduction of the Habitual Residency Condition in 2004, many migrants are not entitled, or have restricted access, to social welfare. Indeed, research in Ireland indicates that, on average, migrants avail of welfare services less than the Irish (Barrett and Mc Carthy 2008).

10.6   A similar process of categorisation by class is produced. Contrary to the perception of those living outside the area, we find class as well as racial diversity within Blanchardstown. Blanchardstown experienced some positive impacts of the 'Celtic Tiger' economic boom, witnessing, for example, an increase in employment and commercial development, yet some significant areas of economic disadvantage persist. The government funded RAPID programme targets certain disadvantaged areas of Blanchardstown, although across the area there is heterogeneity in terms of relative affluence and deprivation (Ryan 2008). As one service provider in Blanchardstown says, despite '*being hit by the tail of the Tiger, some areas haven't seen as much'* (B70). Internal divergence is evident regarding employment, with inequality and disadvantage characterising certain pockets of the area. In 2006, unemployment in Tyrrelstown was 25.89 % and in Mulhuddart and Coolmine it was almost 17 % , significantly in excess of the area's average of 11.13 % (Ryan 2008: 24) and the national average of 8.5 % (C.S.O. 2007).

10.7   Among Blanchardstown residents, in keeping with Scheepers *et al* (2002) and resource competition theory, it is people in competition for an insufficient supply of local authority houses and for welfare payments who are likely to perceive immigrants as a threat. 'They' are seen as being treated differently from 'us', and the consequence of them '*getting far too many hand-outs from the country*' is that '*Irish people are becoming second class citizens'* (B53). Although the experiences are lived out locally, the local 'us' is aligned to the national 'us', the Irish. This resident's views are in keeping with Loyal and Allen's argument that 'for many disempowered sections of the population, racist discourses often constitute a description of, and an explanation for, the world they experience on a day-to-day basis' (Loyal and Allen 2006: 227). Notwithstanding the misinformation that exists around entitlements and the urban myths (Moriarty 2005) about free baby buggies and other items cited, people feel disenfranchised:

> *I think there's a strong over-riding sense of people in these areas feeling disenfranchised and it's not about racism. In some ways it appears like racism but it's about people feeling that other people are coming into the country and are getting everything* (B41).

Unwittingly, Jerry, an Irish professional, appears to reaffirm Loyal and Allen's point when he says that immigration: '*doesn't impinge on middle class peoples' lives. It only impinges on the people that have no power. Down lower.'*

The Racialised Other

11.1   It was apparent from both residents' and non-residents' comments that categories of 'visibility' (Gray 2004: 141) are an important factor in establishing identity. While whiteness was conflated with Irishness on a number of occasions, 'immigrant' or 'non-Irish' and black were also conflated on occasion. Both sets of interviewees told and re-told stories of immigrants getting preferential treatment over Irish people as regards local authority housing and welfare payments, their stories almost invariably involving 'black people'. Two examples will suffice. People spoke of '*black fellas driving '08 Mercs*' [new Mercedes cars] who '*must be getting grants'* (B53) and '*if you are black you will get provided with another* [house] *no problem'* (B35). The Irish professionals interviewed also engaged in 'blame gossip' (Elias and Scotson 1965: 93).

11.2   While immigrants in general can serve as a scapegoat, the role of the state has to be acknowledged. In addition to constructing identity, as Winant (2004: 24) argues, the state has the power to deliver resources along racial lines, to advance or impede racial discrimination. The focus on terms such as 'non-nationals', 'foreign nationals' and 'welfare tourism' in popular and political commentary on scarce state resources deflects attention from long-term inadequate planning and resourcing. In the case of the housing shortage, politicians and the media have been handed a scapegoat, not just in the form of refugees (Allen 1999: 106), but in the form of immigrants in general, and this emerges in both our sets of data.

11.3   Unlike local authority housing and social welfare, where only those in competition for an insufficient supply of local authority houses and for welfare payments perceived immigrants as a threat, characteristics of what Balibar termed 'crisis racism' (1991) surface in relation to education. 'Foreigners' are held responsible for

problems which, in fact, pre-dated their arrival in the Blanchardstown area. Among the Irish in Blanchardstown, issues regarding schooling crossed all social classes whereby immigrants were seen as contributing to the shortage of school places, a reality at the time (Downes 2006), as well as draining available resources in terms of resource teacher hours and teacher time in the classroom. Again the local and national 'us' was aligned: the perception is that non-Irish children receive language support when in reality many of these children are indeed Irish. The high proportion of children from immigrant backgrounds was highlighted in the data by both advantaged and disadvantaged residents of Blanchardstown and beyond, as was the delay experienced between the rapid construction of houses in the area and the provision of promised services such as schools. Residents of Blanchardstown also drew attention to the lack of planning regarding the larger migration issue and the government was cited as a 'source' of racism: *'I feel that the government have made - created a lot of racism'* (B54). However, on a local level, the government was not criticised for restricting the building of social or affordable housing, the origin of the housing shortage in the area, or the inadequate provision of schools, but rather the immigrant presence is used as a scapegoat. Residents feel that they are being treated unfairly and unequally, that '*it's different rules for the immigrants than what there is for us*'(B17), and immigration is seen as '*disproportionately impact*[ing] *on working class people*'(B36).

11.4   One group of Irish residents spoke of themselves or their children being discriminated against in the local school setting. The outcome is that children '*are not being sent* (to that school) *because we feel, most parents around here feel now that their children are being discriminated against because they are white'* (B56). The worrying issue of 'white flight' that surfaced in the McGorman and Sugrue report (2007: 60) is alluded to here and Irish residents also spoke of a reluctance to speak out about their reality '*for fear of being racist*' (B34). This view was voiced particularly strongly by one Irish group from a disadvantaged area of Blanchardstown, who feel they are not listened to, unlike those from affluent areas of south side Dublin:

> *I just think the Irish are being trodden down against because again we're afraid to say anything. It's all negative racism against the Irish* (B54).

11.5   On the other hand, for Irish professionals residing outside of the area *'immigration is not an issue'* and is rarely, if ever, discussed in their professional or social circles. One reason proffered was the shared understanding that the social norm for their social class is to be tolerant and welcoming of immigration and that making negative comments is what the lower classes do because they are uneducated, jealous of the immigrants' achievements, and simply more likely *'naturally'* to be racist. However another important reason why they distance themselves from the issue of immigration is that they recognise they are in a privileged position, in both 'race' and class terms, in that they do not perceive themselves, now or in the future, as competing with those they categorise as immigrants for employment, health care or, as we saw above, houses or school places. Keith's comments exemplify this privileged racial and social class position:

> *. . . it* [immigration] *doesn't impinge on my life and won't probably impinge on my life now for the next 20 years in that nobody is going to be competing for my job who's coming into Ireland. . .*

White privilege is complex (Jensen 2005) and often unacknowledged, and, as we illustrate in this article, it is often linked to both social class and place. Our data demonstrate that while white privilege is an 'attempt to name a social system that works to the benefit of whites' (Pulido 2000: 13) not all whites are advantaged to the same extent (Gabriel 1998: 4).

Conclusion

12.1   In this article we analyse the perceptions of people living in, and outside of, the Blanchardstown area, in relation to changes brought about by immigration, to provide an insight into the socio-spatial identities of a place in a moment in time. We show the rapid and significant changes that are shaping the multiple and, in some instances, mythical, identities of a Dublin suburb. Rapid and significant changes which we argue are reflective of the rapid and significant changes in the Irish nation as a whole. For Irish professionals, Blanchardstown has become an 'out there' place where immigrant 'ghettos' 'impinge' on the lives of the 'people with no power', the Irish lower classes. While these 'ghettoes of the mind' conjure a spatial identity of racial and class homogeneity, people who live there are aware of the racial and class heterogeneity in the area. If anything, it is the professional class areas which are more homogeneous in terms of 'race' and class.

12.2   We have also shown that colour is just one signifier utilised to construct racialised boundaries (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992), class being another and while racism concerns power, it intersects with, and fortifies, other power differentials including ethnicity and class. This means that not all whites, and not all members of the

dominant ethnicity, enjoy the same degree of privilege or advantage. Power relations exist within the categories of whiteness, and indeed blackness, just as they do between blacks and whites, indigenous and foreign, on both sides of the metaphoric boundary of Blanchardstown. As our data demonstrate, there is a tendency for people at a distance economically, geographically, socially and experientially, to deem as Other not just certain categories of people based on racial, ethnic, or class difference but also entire spaces and places.

12.3 Finally, this article argues that in terms of the effects of immigration on local populations, some places become emblematic, assuming mythical and real identities differentially produced and re-produced by residents and non-residents. Blanchardstown is one such place, and its changing identities and perceptions serve to illustrate Sibley's 'geographies of exclusion' contributing towards the construction of 'ghettos of the mind' (Simpson 2007) in contemporary Ireland.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] In order to distinguish between the two, data from Ni Chonaill's study of Irish residents of Blanchardstown is identified using an alpha-numeric code while data from Byrne's Study of Irish professionals living and working outside Blanchardstown is identified by pseudonyms.

[2] O'Toole (2012) questions the validity of the traditional Dublin north side/south side class divide namely the perception that the majority of wealth and power in Dublin city is located in the south side.

[3] A portmanteau term which combines the local area Ongar with Angola.

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