The experiences of recent migrants to Northern Ireland: towards a sense of belonging?

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It is traditional to describe Northern Ireland in terms of two communities, Protestants and Catholics. That simple binary is no longer sufficient to describe a situation where the arrival of new migrant communities has changed the force field in which inter-community relations are played out. This article will examine the experiences of the recent migrants, looking at the extent to which their social interactions are framed by legislation, and the shaping power of other influences, in particular economic, cultural and social factors. It draws upon research the author has been involved in since 2005, and is based on a series of interviews and focus groups with migrants themselves and the support agencies that work with them. The article begins with an account of the history of minority ethnic groups in Northern Ireland and their current numerical strength as detailed in the 2011 census.

The evolving demography of Northern Ireland

Belfast grew rapidly in the second half of the 19th century as it moved to become one of the engines of the industrial revolution. It was in this period that migrant labour first came to Northern Ireland. This included the settlement of German Jews in the late 19th century, and in the early 20th century immigration from India contributed to the establishment of ethnic communities.[1] The next major wave came in the 1960s with an influx of Chinese migrants and Vietnamese asylum seekers, sharply contrasting with subsequent decades of political and civil unrest when emigration was the norm.[2] While these new arrivals created a stir, it was only because there were so few people living in Northern Ireland with ethnic origins beyond these islands. The 2001 census recorded just over 99% of the Northern Ireland population as 'white'. The combined number for all people from ethnic minority communities was put at 14,000 people. The largest group was the Chinese community. The settlement pattern shows that most Chinese people settled in the Greater Belfast area, but with significant numbers in Craigavon, Lisburn, Newtownabbey and North Down. They, and the other groups to arrive in the 1970s and 1980s, such as

the Asian health professionals, are now sometimes described as the 'stock' community, to distinguish them from the much larger influx that came in the early part of the 21st century. During this latter phase migrants from Portugal and from South East Asia and the Philippines filled vacancies predominantly within the food processing and the health and social care sectors respectively. Subsequently, and following the expansion of the European Union in 2004 to include Accession 8 (A8) countries, there was a shift in the scale and pattern of migration. Figures from the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) indicate unprecedented levels of migration from Eastern European countries (most notably Poland and Lithuania). In total 25 per cent more A8 citizens registered with the WRS in Northern Ireland. It is estimated that over the ten year period from 2000, 122,000 international long-term migrants arrived in Northern Ireland, while 97,000 left.[3]

The current picture

It is now estimated that the largest minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland are from Eastern Europe – particularly Poland and Lithuania – followed by the Chinese and Irish Traveller communities. Irish Travellers are in fact the only minority group in the 2011 census to show a decease in numbers – from 1,701 to 1,301, a decrease of 24%. The white population has decreased from 99.2% of the population to 98.2%, and the populations of each ethnic categorization have increased. The breakdown is as set out on the facing page:

Ethnic group	Percentage
Chinese	0.35%
Indian	0.34%
Pakistani	0.06%
Bangladeshi	0.03%
Other Asian	0.28%
Black African	0.13%
Black Caribbean	0.12%
Black other	0.05%
Irish Traveller	0.07%
Mixed	0.33%
Other	0.12%

The percentage distribution of minority ethnic groups in the 2011 Northern Ireland census (NISRA). Note: Irish Travellers are designated as an ethnic group in the UK, including Northern Ireland, though not in the Republic of Ireland.

It should be noted that the NI Census employs a definition of ethnicity that excludes Caucasian and therefore all Eastern Europeans and others who could be classified as 'white'. Those with ethnicities other than white constituted 1.8 per cent of the population in the 2011 census, more than double the proportion in 2001.

The combined effect of the arrival of these new communities has been a significantly increased diversity, but within a spatially uneven pattern. The largest changes have been in the west and south-west of Northern Ireland, where the food processing industry drew in the first waves of the A8 population. During the five years from June 2004 three local government districts (Dungannon, Newry and Mourne and Craigavon) attracted almost half of the net international immigrants with considerable numbers settling in Ballymena, Magherafelt, Cookstown, Fermanagh and Armagh.[4] The largest rate of population growth has been in Dungannon District Council (21%). Within this council's boundaries particular areas have experienced significant changes, for instance the Ballysaggart ward includes 825 people, or 30% of the population, who are EU and other migrants.

The growth of the migrant population can be traced through other sources. For instance, the Labour Force Survey suggests that there were 80,000 people born outside the UK and Ireland living in Northern Ireland in 2010 or 4.5 per cent of the population.[5] The 2008 Needs Analysis identified 1,486 Travellers in 449 households across Northern Ireland.[6] Young (2012) estimates that 500 people from East Africa have settled in the Belfast area since 2010, following the recent political conflict and drought. Meanwhile between 2004 and 2011 the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) required A8 nationals to register if they wished to take up employment for more than one month's duration. This proxy for measuring immigration is regarded by NISRA as the most accurate way of measuring the stock of A8 migrants from 2004-2011. Proxies such as this or health card registrations provide a means of measuring the flow of migrants; although it has been noted that they may underestimate actual (stock) figures as they often do not record those who leave Northern Ireland.[7]

The statistics for translation services from the health service provide an additional dimension by providing a glimpse of language competence. As Figure 1 shows, in 2004/05 the total request for translation services was 1,850, and by 2012 it had grown to 63,868. In that year a total of 40 different languages were requested from the interpretation service. The top five languages, in decreasing order, were Polish, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Chinese-Mandarin and Slovak. The most common of these, Polish, is the first language of 17,000 people or 1% of the population.

Figure 1: Number of requests for interpretation services in health services in Northern Ireland 2004/5- 2011/2
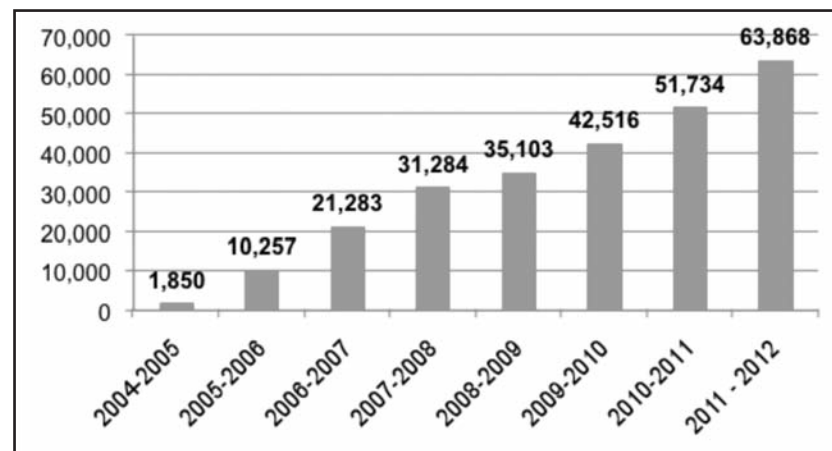
Source: NIHSCIS (Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Interpreting Service 2012)

The shifting contours of community

Statistics can hide the complex dynamics of inter-communal relations by assigning people to notional 'communities' which are then described in ways that suggest they are internally homogenous. In reality there is diversity within and between migrant groups. Newcomers create social, economic and cultural connections through their daily lives while navigating different boundaries. These connections are facilitated by the host society through rules and norms that are realised by individuals as they interact with one another. Cultural knowledge relates to aspects of the social world that facilitate these social interactions such as knowing how to behave in particular social settings be it work, school, within a neighbourhood or indeed within the more private sphere that is the family. Clearly the latter may be useful for return migration in the future, or even for visiting family members who still live at 'home'.[8]

Recent theoretical developments in migration have emphasised concepts such as 'transnationalism'[9] to suggest that the idea of 'home' is a complex one for the individual migrant. In the world of transnational labour markets 'common people...have created communities that sit astride political borders and that, in a very real sense, are 'neither here nor there, but in both places simultaneously'.[10] To succeed in the new place, whether for short stay or for a longer period, requires the cultural knowledge necessary for individuals to participate across a range of social domains and to operate within a particular legislative framework. Different individuals have different aspirations and varied expectations about how they believe their life will proceed. Their expectations of what they might expect from a society differ, as does the way in which migrants perceive their culture:

> 'Well, you find that there are two sides of the coin, some of them want to protect it [their culture] but then you also find some of the Polish and Lithuanian people are happy to change their culture' (Health Professional Stakeholder Focus Group, 18.05.09).

Some individuals could thus be described as 'hybrids'. Hall describes 'hybrids' as individuals who do not expect to return 'home' as that journey would uncover a place transformed by modernity.[11] One support worker described how aspirations to return to the home country are often tinted with nostalgia and routed in imagined notions of a place that was left behind. But this does not deter the accumulation of multiple identities as articulated by a Polish migrant:

> 'You make the decision yourself. This is why whenever I decide to stay here, I am aware of the fact that my child was born here, but she is Polish. We have Polish roots and our own culture etc. but I can see myself living here. And I'll be happy if my child wants to stay here too.' (Polish Focus Group, 19.01.10).

Even though social structures require individuals to assert a single nationality through forms of citizenship, this does not accurately reflect the way in which modern migrants transcend boundaries and live a transnational existence. With a physical presence in Northern Ireland, many migrants retain daily personal connections to their home country through various means including telephone, email and Skype. Meanwhile television ensures connections with culture, language and popular media. At the same time they may establish new links in the host country, such as those who become involved in local churches or civic society organisations. In this way they are experiencing a transformation of culture, values and ideas about society. Thus the degree to which individuals choose to make connections in the new destination varies according to particular circumstances and so:

> 'it depends very much what your expectations are when you come over here, if you are going to be staying for 3-6 months well really they don't see it necessary to integrate and we don't see it necessary to spend a lot of time with them' (Health Professional Stakeholder Focus Group, 18.05.09).

Differences need to be acknowledged as this influences the extent to which individual are motivated to make connections; 'there are some families and they are happy to remain at home and socialise within their own small family network' (Volunteer Support Worker Stakeholder Focus Group 18.05.09). This in turn will influence their decisions to participate more widely across society. A representative from the Housing Executive describes how they had co-ordinated:

> 'a number of events especially for foreign nationals and some migrant families came but not in the numbers that we had hoped or expected, we were disappointed...but whether they didn't feel yet that they were part of the local community, or whether they didn't feel ownership of the facilities, I don't know. You would hope that the critical mass has now been reached, and you would imagine that they would move out of these immediate circles that they might feel safe outside of this immediate family network' (Stakeholder Focus Group, 18.05.09).

Clearly many different individuals comprise what are understood as minority and migrant communities. They have different expectations of what life in a new destination entails. The needs of Paulius from Lithuania, a purely economic migrant, differed considerably from many of those who had moved with partners and children. He described how he was:

> 'working all of the hours that God sends...last job I was working in [a toy superstore] in [XX] shopping centre…And I was working from 7 to 7, that's 12 hour shifts and travelling to and from work (laughs).

> So you were getting up leaving to go to work your shift and coming home, going to bed, getting up and doing it all over again?

> That's right.

> What 5, 6 days a week?

> Seven!'

He regularly sent money to his parents and his wife who, at the time of the interview, were all still living in Lithuania. He explained how he wished to work in Northern Ireland for a few years so that he could save money before moving back home. Paulius' needs contrast sharply with individuals who wish to settle in the area and participate in various social structures.

It has to be recognised that in coming to Northern Ireland migrants enter a particularly dense web of social networks, where skin colour is visible and apparent, while the social markers of religion and territory are more difficult to understand but are of fundamental importance – not least in terms of physical safety. Simply 'by dint of living in one area or another, and sending their children to local schools, they can become 'accidental' Protestants or Catholics'.[12] The hazards of falling foul of local paramilitary groups was made clear in 2009 through two particularly stark incidents: the expulsion from their homes of 100 Romanian families in South Belfast, and, also in South Belfast, attacks on 40 Polish homes following skirmishes associated with a World Cup qualifier match. In such extreme situations it is of fundamental importance to have legal protection, but legislation is not just of benefit in protecting against physical harm; it can also provide the framework for the cultivation of positive relations. Unfortunately the development of public policy in this area lags behind that in other parts of the UK.

Legislating for diversity

Currently a patchwork of legislation attempts to address inequalities: it was over 20 years after equality legislation was passed in the UK before similar legislation was enacted in Northern Ireland. *The Race Relations (NI) Order (RRO) 1997* was passed to broadly replicate the provision of the Race Relations Act 1976 that covered the other jurisdictions of the UK (Scotland, England and Wales). The RRO makes it illegal to discriminate, harass or victimize on the grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin (including the Irish Traveller community) in the fields of employment, goods and services, education and housing management and the disposal of premises. The Order was brought into line with an EU Directive on race discrimination in 2003, and again updated in 2009 to clarify that indirect discrimination is also unlawful. However perceptions of shortcomings relating to this legislation persist, not

least of which is the fact that the Act was not amended to incorporate the criminal justice system. Structural change under this Act is limited as it is mainly prohibitive rather than encouraging of positive action regarding equality of opportunity. This is in contrast to other jurisdictions in the UK where the Single Equality Act (2010) replaced nine major pieces of legislation and addresses discrimination, equality of opportunity and the development of good relations.[13]

Issues of equality were addressed in the 1998 Northern Ireland Good Friday Agreement. It brought with it a raft of major changes, not least of which was a new constitutional status and a vision of the future: 'The achievement of reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual trust, and to the protection and vindication of the human rights of all' (p.2). The accompanying equality legislation that is Section 75, although borne out of political and religious tensions between Protestant and Catholics, has attracted national and international prominence because of its pioneering nature guaranteeing human rights, equality and participation.[14] Emulating American models,[15] Section 75 places positive duties on public authorities to have due regard for the promotion of equality of opportunity in formulation of policy which includes promoting good relations between different racial groups. This mainstreaming approach attempts to address institutional forms of discrimination.

The vision set out in the Good Friday Agreement was not followed by operational plans. In 2005 the policy document *A Shared Future* set clear targets for the improvement of community relations between Protestants and Catholics. This was accompanied by the less specific but nonetheless helpful *Racial Equality Strategy.* In 2010 this was due for renewal but a lack of government attention meant that no successor document followed. It was expected that the new good relations strategy document issued by the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, *Together- Building a United Community* in 2013 would incorporate a racial equality strategy, but again the issue was placed on the back burner, with the promise that it would follow in due course - a clear, if unintentional ordering of priorities.

The importance of such a strategy is that it would provide leadership to government departments on, for example, the barriers to employment equality experienced by minority groups, the development of baseline information and targets that need to be aimed for to show progress in this area. Government departments such as DETI/ DEL are key in developing baseline data on the numbers of people from minority groups accessing employment and training supports. A Racial Equality Strategy is needed to set and agree targets for employment and skills development of ethnic minorities. Central Government measures the number of people who move from unemployment into employment, self-employment or training, but there are no specific measures

set for the number of people from ethnic groups moving into employment or training. Targets are needed in these areas and performance against these should be measured on an on-going basis.

In the absence of such an overarching policy framework, the integration of new migrants has had to be a process of negotiation with neighbours, work colleagues and the broader civil society.

Neighbours, civic space and a sense of belonging

The space in which migrants locate is pivotal to positive integration. Cultural knowledge relates to aspects of the social world that equip social agents and so facilitate their interaction with one another. It encompasses knowledge on how to behave in particular social settings such as in work, in school, within a neighbourhood or indeed within the more private sphere that is the family. Migrants to Northern Ireland greatly value acts of neighbourliness with many of them recalling specific acts that helped to make them feel welcome:

> 'I also have a neighbour who welcomed us as soon as we moved in. She came over with cookies; she kept coming over to make sure that we were fine and offer help if needed' (Polish Focus Group 19.01.10).

These interactions provide opportunities to exchange pleasantries, practice language and find out about the 'other'. Developing such cultural awareness is important as both assimilation and integration are connected to culture.[16] Different locations provide different sources of cultural knowledge:

> 'Also, in groups and institutions like this one (community centre), they are very open, keen to listen, exchange experiences and talk to us. We can learn from them, see how they live, celebrate holidays – talk about our traditions.' (Polish Focus Group 19.01.10)

Some spoke of long periods where they were confined to their home and how during this time they did not interact with others. It was important for such migrants to find openings into communal space that would allow them to mix with others:

> 'After these 2 years, since I've come here, to the centre, it all changed. It has brought me back to life. Once you come out of your house, once you start meeting people, everything changes. Your brain can assimilate more information, its functioning improves. So having conversations with people is the key. It does not matter that your grammar isn't perfect. It doesn't matter' (Polish Focus Group 1.12.09).

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These mechanisms present opportunities for the development of language skills. Equally importantly they allow individuals to develop specific knowledge including familiarity with culture and legislation. The significance of this was amply demonstrated by the experience of one immigrant, Rasa, and her subsequent interaction with social services. She had gone to the pharmacy for medicine leaving her sick daughter at home. Rasa's neighbour reported her to social services who then visited and indicated that she could find herself in serious trouble should the event be repeated. That same neighbour approached Rasa and offered to sit with her children during specific times. Subsequently the two women provided mutual childcare support. Rasa was simply unaware of the legal obligation relating to young children; she described how in Lithuania no-one felt any duty towards others' children. Meanwhile the legislation demarcated what is and is not acceptable behaviour in Northern Ireland. However, the way in which these two individuals interacted with this legal framework resulted in social interaction and increased knowledge of the other's social and cultural norms and values. The welfare of the child was important to both women, but the way in which this was realised diverged due to differing social practices.

The fact that the neighbour wished to intervene in the situation suggests that she recognised the migrant family as legitimate members of the community. The neighbour believed that Rasa ought to comply with social rules and regulations. This recognition resulted in deeper social relations as beliefs were questioned and perceptions re-balanced.[17] A deeper sense of belonging ensued for Rasa as she indicates:

> 'I find the people here are friendly, not like in Lithuania...[ ] In Lithuania, nobody cares. You leave your children in the house – nobody cares, not like here....If anything happened, if there is an accident, nobody cares' (Interview 26.03.09).

For Rasa this encounter was opposite to her experience in Lithuania and showed that people in Northern Ireland were bothered about her welfare and that of her children. Rasa's neighbour was mindful of basic rules governing the care of children and took action accordingly; both individuals developed a deeper understanding of each other's culture. The legislative framework was realised through an active agent, the neighbour. A disinterested neighbour might have ignored Rasa's actions and the legislation would have remained dormant and ineffective.

Services and the workplace

The random nature of support proffered pioneering migrants through various sources including neighbours, NGOs or faith based groups may by sheer chance be sufficient to ensure proper integration and associated parity of life chances with other members of the community. This is not guaranteed and the statutory provision of services attempt to provide a safety net across society. But even statutory service delivery can be arbitrary:

> 'I know there's one family and the Council said that technically they shouldn't be supporting them because there's no WRS, so legally they could and should step away from them, because there's no hope of getting a job, so there's all these things and they could step away, but if they step away then there could be 5 kids on the street and that would be bad, it would be bad for the children and for the Council profile. So I know they're really worried about that in the next year, that it's just going to explode' (NGO Support worker, Stakeholder Focus Group 18.05.09).

By flexibly interpreting rules and regulations, staff within the Council afforded the family in the above example social support, even though in theory they did not have to do so. Even with a safety net of legislation, institutional support was not available and could have resulted in persistent inequalities for this family. Such random acts greatly affect how individuals experience life in a new place, their associated sense of belonging and ensuing patterns of integration.

Despite the existence of equality legislation, positive outcomes do not always follow. For instance employers operating with impunity may discriminate against ethnic minorities and specific issues relating to forced labour have been highlighted in Northern Ireland.[18] Services may not be delivered to groups who are not deemed worthy by individuals in positions of power – there is evidence of discrimination against Roma children born in Northern Ireland as they are not given full access to particular services. There were perceptions among some of the research respondents that their ethnic group was treated differently than others in the workplace through less access to overtime. One important point that was articulated on numerous occasions was the fact that individuals from ethnic minorities did not necessarily have knowledge of employers' responsibilities, nor indeed did they understand their rights as employees. There was a sense that language barriers hampered this understanding.

Facilitating economic mobility

More recently the economy has benefited from immigration[19] but other labour market problems exist including evidence of low pay; lack of recognition

of overseas qualifications; and barriers to setting up business.[20] The net effect is that individuals from ethnic minority communities represent an under-utilised resource for the economy.[21] The different ways in which this was manifest is explored in this section.

Guidance was not in place to ensure appropriate avenues of employment for qualified migrants. This caused some frustration among professionals including Angela who was employed by a health service provider:

> 'I know Polish people who are qualified Psychologists and that, who I know that they could be integrated into the team and I know that we should be in a position so that they could help to provide the services that we offer to their own community, but it's like banging my head off a brick wall, no-one will listen.' (Focus Group Stakeholders 18.05.09)

Given that language is a barrier for some migrants in accessing services, this appears to be an opportunity overlooked. Many of those interviewed held a number of degrees but most of those in employment were doing blue collar or menial jobs, often in poor conditions, including Audra who had completed University level qualifications in accountancy in Lithuania but was working as a cleaner in Armagh. Similarly Tvesta, an Agricultural Economist from Bulgaria, was employed in jobs far below her skill area. She worked as a kitchen assistant for a primary school in the morning and then as a cleaner in a hospital during the evenings. Additionally, at the weekends she worked evenings in a local restaurant. She describes her feelings about this situation.

> 'That makes me sad, because I spent so many years studying and you come over and it's hard to find a place to work with your qualifications. First of all to find a job with the equivalence of your qualification, it's hard. I did that, but they put me at one level less than I had and it's quite hard to get registered in an economic organisation or association and to start working as an economist... I am qualified to teach people in colleges and higher education. And the other thing is that I will probably try and get my diploma for here just to get registered and I will probably try and cover some exams. It's hard to do because always if you go to a course they will look and say but there is no point because they say you have this already there is no point you doing this course and the employer will say that you need to do the course. So one person is saying one thing and the other [person is saying] something else' (Interview 08.04.09).

Even though DEL has a scheme for recognising overseas qualifications, the extent to which it is implemented and the resultant impact remains unclear.[22] Significantly for an economy that is stagnant, barriers to recognising overseas

qualifications may result in human capital being overlooked with missed benefits for society more widely. Economic mobility is hampered by a degree of labour market segmentation. Many individuals described an employment pathway achieved through personal contacts. This tends to confine different ethnic groups to particular sectors, or indeed in some cases to specific employers. This can cause friction within ethnic groups, with research respondents citing jealousy and aggressive competition amongst their particular group. Inter-ethnic tension can also ensue:

> 'My brother used to work…[in] some sort of a factory, I never paid attention to what type of factory it was. All I know is that there were many Russians. And he told me that they were very nasty towards him. Not the Irish, because there were maybe two Irish people, but the Russians. And they told him: this is where we work, not the Poles, but the Russians. We work here, you- Poles, are not allowed here' (Polish Focus Group 01.12.09).

Meanwhile in Newry the extent to which Polish migrants work in the meat and food processing sector was noted by many participants, one of whom commented that the company 'is like a waiting room where everyone goes to when they arrive and wait until they get other jobs...' (Polish Focus Group Jan 2012). Many do not progress to other jobs, instead remaining with their co-ethnic group and so:

> 'you might have people working in the same place on the same production line for five or six years who get a wage increase of maybe 5p in the year. And they are happy because they get their wages and these are much higher than where they come from and so they can get by…but at the same time they might have skills that are not recognised' (Trade Union rep Focus Group Stakeholders 03.04.12).

This has the added impact of not supporting interaction between different communities, both between migrant groups and with more established majority groups in Northern Ireland. It does little to facilitate cultural awareness of 'others' and it does not help with the development of language skills. Effectively migrants become locked into a vicious circle where as a Trade Union representative articulated 'they are dependent on that particular employer and in that particular sector …they are completely dependent and helpless'. The economic situation for many does not afford time for them to develop skills such as language and thus break free from the circle. The scenario described by a supporting agency illustrates:

'Dad's working in a meat factory and Mum's cleaning – and they want to develop their English language skills, well who gives up their work? So say Mum does her cleaning job in the evenings and Dad's got the kids. If she's lucky to go to a class during the day and she leaves children in the house then that's an issue for social services because she cannot leave her children unattended. This is a real vicious circle' (Focus Group Stake-holders 03.04.12).

Employers are operating within the legislative framework, and yet there is no impetus to nurture skills and develop progression routes for migrants. This is part of a wider structural issue that relates to attitudes towards migrants and is encapsulated by the following comment made by an individual working for an NGO supporting minority ethnic communities:

'I also think it's something to do with where we're at in terms of Northern Ireland and in terms of our systems and our understanding. There's a lack of any proper employment strategy or of a qualification strategy and it's almost as if the people who are coming here are still visitors and the idea is that they are going to go home again... It's reflected in the work we would do with refugees who have got their leave to remain and yet when they would sign up at jobcentre plus or wherever they are not called in for interview in the same way as locals would be [i.e. those from the majority communities] because the thinking is that it's easier to keep them on benefits than to train them. That's a real problem and I really do think that we haven't really, as a system, got our heads around the fact that people are here to stay…' (Focus Group Stakeholders 03.04.12).

Comment and conclusions

Northern Ireland suffers from a lack of leadership in the legislation necessary to create a truly inclusive society. The delays that were previously explained by the Troubles have no justification in the present climate. A date of 2010 had been set for the renewal of the Racial Equality Strategy. That deadline was let slip and the relegation of racial equality to second place in 2013 when the OFMFDM produced its *Together- Building A United Community* is testament to the problem local politicians have in focusing on issues not strictly to do with Protestants and Catholics. In reality that old binary divide has now been superseded: Northern Ireland is no longer a majority/minority society, but rather a place where 'we are all minorities now'.[23]

This has to be seen as a plus. Migration is not a zero sum game where the arrival of a migrant to take up economic opportunities represents loss for an individual from the majority communities. Instead the arrival of migrants to a fairly conservative community brings with it many new opportunities – economic, social and cultural. The perception of culture as something that is alive and as having transformative values would be of great benefit to Northern Ireland where long-standing debates on essentialised notions of community have created blind spots. This could help to make the transition to a cultural identity that 'belongs to the future as much to the past'.[24] Such recognition would provide space for the identification of many different social groups, acknowledging heterogeneity within migrant communities and indeed within majority communities. Ethnicity must therefore take account of many different groups and how they are effectively 'layered' onto a society with entrenched divisions, but in so doing it is vital that society moves beyond essentialised notions pertaining to majority/minority; or immigrant and host.[25]

Changes will have to come both from the top down and the bottom up. It is not the argument of this article that legislation alone can create integration. Clearly that is not the case. A legislative framework however could provide the institutional backdrop which takes on additional meaning when acted upon by other social actors, such as employers, local government officials, cultural programmers, and all those involved in the criminal justice system. The benefits that would accrue are not only for the new communities, but for the whole society.

Notes

[1] NIAR, 2011

[2] Ibid.

[3] Russell, 2012

[4] NISRA, 2010

[5] NIAR, 2011

[6] NIHE, 2008

[7] Wallace et al.,2013

[8] Valentine et al., 2008

[9] Castles, 2007, p.353

[10] Portes, 1997:3

[11] Hall, 1993, p.362

[12] Nolan, 2013, p.141

[13] Hepple, 2010

[14] Chaney and Rees, 2004; Hill et al, 2006

[15] Hepple, 2010

[16] Schneider and Crul, 2010

[17] Creppell, 2008

[18] Allamby et al., 2011

[19] Oxford Economics, 2009

[20] See Wallace et al for a fuller discussion.

[21] Oxford Economics, 2009

[22] Wallace et al., 2013

[23] Nolan, 2013

[24] Hall, 1990, p.225

[25] Craig et al., 2012

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