



Centre européen
de sociologie
et de science politique



Working Papers

**The interplay between national and
transnational capital in the education
of the Irish elites.**

par Aline COURTOIS

*n°3g
juin 2015*



The interplay between national and transnational capital in the education of the Irish elites¹

Aline Courtois²

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the apparent paradox between Ireland's economic globalisation strategy and the relatively discreet promotion of international cultural capital and mobility in both its second-level elite schools and its higher education sector. Ireland's international education policy is largely dominated by short-term strategic goals aimed at generating revenue, in line with the rampant commercialisation of the sector. Unsurprisingly, third-level student mobility remains the preserve of a privileged minority but the neighbouring (and culturally similar) UK is by far the preferred destination and strategies of distinction are not easily discernible in these mobility patterns. In comparison to the third-level sector, the second-level sector – where elite institutions are distinctly visible – is still attached to a form of cosmopolitan cultural capital partly informed by the European humanist tradition. However it is largely overshadowed by other principles of distinction based on social and moral capital and by the continued primacy of the national over the cosmopolitan/international in the (overlapping) national and international fields of power. The national is not devalued by those who identify as the global Irish elite; instead it is deployed strategically in international business settings where Irish habitus and Irish cultural capital are perceived as carrying more symbolic power and as being more valuable and profitable resources than the cosmopolitan capital and mind-set cultivated in more traditional elite circles. This may be due to its proximity to American business culture, to the strategic role of the Irish diaspora in bridging the national and international and to the increasingly aggressive marketing of the Irish habitus and culture. In both discourse and policy, the national interest and the advancing of global capitalism are inextricably tied; key national players and those identifying as the global Irish elite have a strong commonality of interests cemented both by a belief in the neo-liberal ideology and by their cultural identification to Ireland. This paper does not argue that international capital is side-lined entirely but calls for an interrogation of its nature and uses and highlights the need for further research into international mobility strategies in Ireland.

Keywords: globalisation; internationalisation; elite education; Ireland; cultural capital.

RESUME

Cet article interroge le paradoxe apparent entre les stratégies économiques relatives à la globalisation menée par l'Irlande et la promotion plutôt discrète de la mobilité et du capital culturel international à la fois dans ses écoles d'élite du secondaire et de son secteur universitaire. Les visées internationales de la politique éducative irlandaise sont largement dominées par des stratégies à court-terme visant à engranger des revenus, conformément à la commercialisation effrénée du secteur. Il n'est pas étonnant que la mobilité des étudiants du supérieur soit le lot d'une minorité privilégiée d'Irlandais, même

¹. Working paper. Please do not quote.

². Université de Paris 1 – Panthéon Sorbonne.

si la Grande-Bretagne toute proche (y compris culturellement) reste la destination première et que des stratégies de distinction, dans ces modèles de mobilité, ne sont pas faciles à discerner. Par rapport au secteur universitaire, le secteur du secondaire – où les institutions d'élite sont clairement visibles – est encore attaché à une forme de capital culturel cosmopolite imprégnée pour partie par la tradition humaniste européenne. Mais il est occulté largement par des principes de distinction d'autres types, fondés sur le capital social et moral, et par la primauté persistante du national sur l'international/cosmopolite dans les espaces (entrecroisés) nationaux et internationaux du pouvoir. Le national n'est pas dévalué par ceux qui se pensent comme élite globalisée irlandaise ; il se déploie stratégiquement dans les milieux du commerce international où l'habitus et le capital culturel irlandais sont perçus comme rapportant davantage, en termes de pouvoir symbolique et de profitabilité, et comme ayant plus de valeur que ne le sont le capital cosmopolite et l'esprit cultivé dans des cercles élitaires plus traditionnels. En cause sa proximité avec la culture commerciale américaine, le rôle stratégique de la diaspora irlandaise qui réduit l'écart entre national et international et le marché de plus en plus agressif de la culture et de l'habitus irlandais. Que ce soit dans le discours ou dans la pratique, l'intérêt national et la promotion du capitalisme globalisé sont inextricablement liés : les acteurs clés du pays et ceux qui se pensent comme élite irlandaise globalisée ont une forte communauté d'intérêt cimentée à la fois par la croyance dans l'idéologie néolibérale et par leur identification culturelle à l'Irlande. Cet article ne dit pas que le capital international serait entièrement mis de côté mais il propose d'interroger sa nature et ses usages et il souligne la nécessité d'une analyse plus poussée des stratégies de mobilité internationale en Irlande.

Mots-clés : globalisation ; internationalisation ; éducation des élites ; Irlande ; capital culturel.

Since the beginning of the 2000s, the Irish economy has been hailed repeatedly as one of the most globalised in the world, coming second only to Singapore on a number of occasions. Ireland scores high on a variety of globalisation indicators including openness of the economy, volume of and lack of restriction to economic flows, foreign direct investment (FDI), gross domestic product (GDP), technological development, volume of travel, etc. The Irish strategy based on low corporate taxes and labour flexibility has been successful in attracting thousands of high-profile multinational companies and in making Ireland a notorious if understated tax haven, where billions of Euro transit quietly on their way to the Cayman Islands, Barbados and the Isle of Man. In the context of the ongoing economic crisis, Irish leaders have renewed their vows to develop a knowledge economy and to boost Ireland's status as a choice destination for FDI, in a bid to resuscitate the economic prosperity of the 1990s and 2000s.

While globalisation has prompted elite schools in several other countries to adopt internationalising practices (e.g. Aguiar and Nogueira 2012; Koh and Kenway 2012; Wagner 1998), there is surprisingly little evidence of such a process being undertaken in Ireland. Some prestigious second-level Protestant schools are keen to attract pupils from abroad but do not promote their international orientation on the home market. As for the leading Catholic schools, they remain focused on their traditional Irish Catholic clientele. In the third-level sector, internationalising practices are focused on the imperative of attracting foreign students to generate

revenue. This paper is an attempt to understand this paradox. It draws on the Bourdieusian notion of capital and in particular Wagner's reconceptualization of international capital (2012) and seeks to interrogate them in the light of the Irish situation. It is informed by fieldwork conducted in Irish second-level fee-paying schools between 2007 and 2012 (Courtois 2012, 2014) and work currently underway on Irish students' international mobility. As such it is largely exploratory in nature. For the purpose of this paper, recent policy documents concerning the internationalisation of the third-level sector (in particular the Department of Education and Skills 2010, 2013) were analysed as well as position papers issued by the Global Irish Network and video recordings of the 2013 Global Irish Economic Forum meeting, available online. The Global Irish Network, launched in 2010, gathers 350 senior Irish and Irish-connected business people based in over 40 countries. Its role is to provide international business expertise and to promote FDI in Ireland. It has been instrumental in a number of initiatives such as the "Invest in Ireland" event hosted by Bill Clinton in New York in 2012 (www.globalirishforum.ie). A number of Irish government members and other State officials as well as the presidents or provosts of seven Irish universities were present at the 2013 forum, where the purpose and direction of education were keenly discussed.

Firstly I seek to outline the policy orientations which frame the internationalisation of education in Ireland. Secondly I explore available evidence on the international strategies of elite students and schools and finally I attempt to re-examine the nature and perceived value of international cultural capital and its interplay with national capital in the context of Ireland's global economic strategy as illustrated by the Global Irish Economic Forum.

1. Neoliberalism, globalisation and the internationalisation of the Irish education system.

Irish economic policy has long been neoliberal in nature, even before the UK's neoliberal turn in the 1980s (O'Hearn 1998). The promotion of the knowledge economy at European level and the emphasis on global competitiveness accelerated and legitimated the deployment of neoliberal policies throughout the higher education sector. In Ireland these are channeled through the Higher Education Authority (HEA), a statutory body in charge of funding and advising the third-level sector. In its policy statement, the HEA lays out its goal to achieve a "transformation" of the sector and to produce "empowered, dynamic, entrepreneurial, well-resourced and autonomous higher education institutions" (HEA 2008, p. 5). Under its aegis and against a background of reduced State funding, the move towards commercialisation, privatisation, managerialism and casualisation has accelerated dramatically (Allen 2007; Lynch *et al.* 2012; Courtois and O'Keefe 2015).

The second-level sector underwent a less spectacular transformation given that long before neoliberal reforms came to prominence internationally, the system in Ireland was already characterised by local management of schools and a fully functioning education market as the post-primary education system had emerged principally from local, private initiatives with minimal state interference (Power *et al.* 2013). Yet educational policy issued by the Department of Education and Skills (DES)

took an increasingly neoliberal stance over the years, which, after the 2010 bank bailout, culminated in a renewed push for managerial methods of evaluation, control and unabated casualisation of the workforce (Mooney Simmie 2012).

In this context it is perhaps unsurprising that the internationalisation of education in Ireland is envisaged primarily as part of a broader economic strategy to generate revenue, as already noted by Khoo (2011). International students are estimated to contribute €1 billion to the Irish economy³, with international students in higher education contributing around €700m (of which €240m constitute tuition fees) and English language students in private schools around €300m (Education in Ireland 2012, p. 4, p. 9)⁴. It is suggested that incoming international students could generate the revenue cash-strapped colleges desperately need to maintain baseline services (DES 2010), which is consistent with the dominant ideology. According to this ideology, instead of relying on public funding, universities should operate according to business principles and generate their own resources. As a response to a paper reviewing the current progress made towards these strategic goals (DES 2013), the Irish University Association regretted that the DES failed to adequately emphasise “the vital source of foreign earnings for the state” and the “increased purchasing power” represented by incoming foreign students. Throughout the paper, foreign higher education systems were referred to either as “competitor brands” or as “priority markets” (IUA 2013) rather than as partners. This suggests higher education managers broadly concur with the instrumental, commercial view of international student mobility promoted by the DES. In this context, the fact that increasing numbers of Irish students are lured by British universities can even be perceived as a potential loss of revenue (Irish Independent 2012b)⁵.

It is hoped that beyond the direct economic contribution during their stay in Ireland, some international students will become “advocates for Ireland” upon return to their home countries. Thus a key proposal in the strategic plan of the DES is to “identify and target” students who are “likely to become the next generation of leaders, entrepreneurs and decision-makers in countries of importance to Ireland” (DES 2010, p. 57). To this effect a number of scholarship schemes have been put in place in order to draw high-calibre students from target countries in various regions of the world. This strategy was discussed further at a meeting of the Global Irish Economic Forum in October 2013, where the deputy Prime Minister gave the example of 5,000 Brazilian students who had been “put up for tender” by their government and “won” by Ireland. He highlighted the opportunity they represented for future FDI from Brazil and suggested that further effort be made to draw students from other high-growth economies (RTÉ News 2013). At this event, participants spoke confidently of education as a “business” (RTÉ 2013) and of the

³. In comparison, international students represent a *cost* of €3 billion to the French state (Fauconnier 2014) although presumably this figure does not take into account their contributions as consumers.

⁴. In a pattern similar to that observed by Altbach (2013) in Australia, the unregulated private sector allowed sham institutions to proliferate and issue fake attendance certificates for the purpose of non-EU visa renewals. A dozen such institutions have closed after such practices were exposed and failed to refund fees already paid, leaving thousands of non-EU students without visas or money (ICOS).

⁵. At the same time, given the present funding crisis, the capacity of the third-level sector is questioned as student/staff ratios approach critical levels (Humphrey 2014).

financial opportunities represented by “exporting our education system”. At the core of Ireland’s strategy lies a belief that fostering a sentiment of loyalty in future global elites will help influence and manipulate their future financial decisions in favour of Ireland. This gives further credence to Geuens’ argument that, far from being disembodied, global financial flows are negotiated by real individuals in the context of personal interactions within restricted social networks (2007 as cited in Wagner 2007a). Although in the present case it is difficult to predict how this loyalty will be fostered or how it will play out in practice.

Higher education institutions, whether State-funded or independent for-profit, are supported in their efforts to internationalise by Enterprise Ireland, the government organisation responsible for subsidising Irish businesses targeting world markets (it took over this particular role from the International Education Board Ireland in 2009, another indication of this paradigmatic shift), and by a broader effort to promote “the Education Ireland brand” (DES 2010). English language schools, for their part, are promoted under the umbrella of Tourism Ireland. The flourishing private for-profit higher education sector is particularly active in establishing partnerships with institutions abroad. However, these tend to be one-way relationships in which the Irish college sets up an offshore branch and delivers Irish qualifications in ‘target markets’ such as Malaysia, Bahrain and Russia (OBHE 2005a, 2005b, 2008). These relationships do not necessarily entail any travel or contact between Irish and foreign students. In addition it is estimated that 3,000 students are enrolled on online courses in Irish-based private for-profit colleges and that the proportion of distance students is growing (Education Ireland 2012). Other examples reported by the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) include new degrees in Irish colleges financed by multinational companies such as Pfizer and Intel and the acquisition of the Dublin Business School by the American private education provider Kaplan (OBHE 2003, 2005a). Multinationals Education Study Group and Education First also run lucrative operations in Ireland, with the former operating in partnership with two State-funded universities. Although these are clear indicators that the Irish higher education sector is taking on a global dimension, evidence that this fosters a culture of outward student mobility is lacking.

2. International strategies in education.

Student mobility has become a mass phenomenon and the object of an increasing body of research worldwide. Yet existing literature on Irish students’ mobility tends to be quantitative rather than qualitative, to focus on incoming rather than outgoing students and/or to frame arguments solely in terms of national economic strategic goals (e.g. DES 2010, 2013, Education in Ireland 2012, HEA 2013a). In a report entitled “Investing in Global Relationships: Ireland’s International Education Strategy 2010–15” (DES 2010) less than two pages are devoted to both staff and student outward mobility in an 80-page document encompassing the targets and strategic actions necessary to make Ireland a choice destination for international students. The explicit rationale for encouraging outward student mobility is in fact to increase inward mobility as, beyond the individual benefits accrued to mobile students, two-flow systems are preferred by foreign ‘client’

institutions and recommended at EU level; and foreign students are more at ease in institutions where they can mix with local students who have experienced student mobility themselves (DES 2010, p. 62).

According to the latest available figures, in 2012–13, Ireland received 6,277 Erasmus students and interns but there were only 2,762 outgoing students and interns (www.ec-europa.eu). Most Irish universities have now embarked on active promotion campaigns to encourage students to avail of these exchange possibilities.

Degree mobility seems to be more widespread than programme mobility (sources differ widely in their estimates) which is atypical in the European context (Erlich 2012) but it remains a largely spontaneous and under-researched phenomenon. Sources indicate that 9% of current Irish students have studied abroad and a further 12% (Harmon and Foubert 2009) or 16% (HEA 2013b) intend to do so. Geographical distance to college(s) within Ireland increasingly constrains third-level choices (Cullinan et al. 2013) and Irish students are more likely to rely on their families or partners for income than students in any other European country (UIS 2009), which suggests international mobility, no matter how desirable, is out of reach for many. Available data (Harmon and Foubert 2009; HEA 2010; UIS 2009) indicate that as is the case in other countries (Erlich 2012), or perhaps even more so, student mobility might be affordable only to a select few.

As previously mentioned, available research largely overlooks outward degree mobility and as such fails to capture students' circumstances, motivations, strategies and experiences. One thing we know is that the preferred destination for degree mobility is by far the UK. Over 80% (15–18,000) of Irish students enrolled abroad were located in the UK in 2010 (OECD 2001, p. 337). English-speaking countries typically draw disproportionately high numbers of incoming students from non-English speaking countries as many seek linguistic immersion in addition to a cultural experience. Obviously movements from Ireland to the UK are underpinned by different motives and point to various possible strategies such as strategies of distinction or avoidance/re-appropriation of the institutional field at the national level. The limited number of places available on highly-sought courses in Irish universities and the high number of points required for admission prompt financially privileged, academically average students to apply for equivalent courses in British universities, thus bypassing the merciless centralised application system (CAO). UCAS, the British counterpart of CAO, allows Irish students to convert their leaving certificate points into 'tariff points' applicable for entry to British higher education institutions. Some British universities, such as the University of Edinburgh and Bangor University, are particularly active in recruiting Irish students. A lower cost of living, lower point requirements and geographical and cultural proximity are core arguments in their self-promotion to Irish second-level students (Irish Independent 2012b)⁶, selling points which depart significantly from the cultural discourse promoting European exchange programmes. Another emerging 'avoidance' strategy is to enrol in Eastern European colleges. Many offer medical, dentistry and veterinary courses in English – Budapest and Prague being among the most popular destinations for Irish students, who organise their own social networks and shared

⁶ Conversely Irish universities are courting UK students, promoting their lower fees (Collison 2012).

accommodation before leaving the country via internet boards and social networks. It is unclear however whether Irish graduates returning from Eastern European colleges can then re-integrate and re-appropriate the Irish institutional field or job market, which is saturated in some of these targeted medical sectors. Whether anticipated professional outcomes motivated these particular mobility decisions and whether such strategies proved successful is unknown⁷.

The choice of a British university might also be motivated by specific strategies of distinction. In the UK, degree mobility is associated predominantly with high achievers looking for top-ranked universities (Gordon 2001, Brooks and Waters 2014a). Presumably Irish students applying to top British (or American) universities have a similar profile. Oxford had 133 Irish applicants in 2012 (Irish Independent 2012a). The total number of Irish students at Oxford and Cambridge is currently slightly below 500. Of these a meagre 31 were accepted at undergraduate level (Fan 2013). King et al. (2010) found that in the UK students of independent schools were twice as likely to apply for university abroad as students of State schools. These are also notoriously over-represented in Oxbridge. Similarly in Ireland, secondary students applying for courses in Oxford and Cambridge are likely to be found in fee-paying schools. The present fee-paying sector consists of 56 schools of varying sizes, two-thirds of which are Catholic (the others being mainly Protestant). They cater to slightly over 7% of the school-going population. As indicated by the figures mentioned above, however, even if all 31 Irish students in Oxbridge were from these schools, it would still represent a tiny fraction of their student numbers⁸. Interviews at leading Catholic schools revealed that staff members encouraged students to apply for Irish-based universities, in particular the two most prestigious. Although, one guidance counsellor admitted that occasionally students opted for courses abroad which were less competitive than those in Ireland. Rarely did students of Catholic elite schools envisage studying abroad as a strategy of distinction, which is congruent with the local (day schools) or national (some boarding schools) institutional ethos also evident in their recruitment patterns. Focused on their traditional Irish, Catholic, wealthy clientele, these schools do not market themselves abroad. One boarding school in particular takes care to recruit students from all Irish regions in order to reflect the geographical diversity of the country, and I have argued elsewhere (Courtois 2013) that it remains faithful to its historical mission to train future Catholic national leaders and fosters a sense of duty to the nation. While there is not necessarily a contradiction between being attached to the national interest and becoming a key player in the globalisation of the economy (the dominant discourse now frames the national economic recovery as dependent on the continued expansion and acceleration of global capitalism), the national remains the primary frame of reference in these schools. By contrast, Protestant schools actively encourage their students not to limit their choices to the Irish higher

⁷. Board and social network discussions suggest that this is the main concern for students considering medical courses in Eastern Europe. Some share the difficulties they faced in trying to secure internships in Ireland and a number of participants finally opted for a career in Eastern Europe although it was not their initial plan.

⁸. Another entry route is via a British public school. Only one Irish primary school operates according to the British prep school model, sending about 1 in 3 of its pupils to public schools.

education landscape but to look “further afield” to the UK, the US or other countries. These schools also market themselves abroad and in some of them 30% of students are foreign. They have now adopted the international, multicultural features that international schools present in other national contexts, (e.g. Wagner 1998) although this requires some monitoring and negotiating: two principals reported racial tensions within their schools, and one suggested that his school was criticised for its high intake of foreigners. All interviewed principals were prompt to mention that a large proportion of their foreign students were in fact Irish by descent. Furthermore, as in the UK (Brooks and Waters 2014b), these features remain discreet in the schools’ promotional material, and it should also be noted that in comparison to their Catholic counterparts Protestant schools operate on a secondary market.

Nonetheless, both elite Catholic and Protestant schools take part in international competitions and events and organise school trips abroad. School trips tend to fall into two categories: on the one hand cultural or leisure tourism, mainly in Europe, as is typical of international socialisation practices in privileged families (Wagner 2007b), and on the other hand charity work in developing countries, in line with the missionary work historically carried out by the religious orders associated with these schools. Exchange programmes, where they exist, are organised with private schools in Europe in line with denominational affinities and with a traditional curricular offer in languages (French, Spanish and German). Latin and Greek are taught predominantly (for Greek, exclusively) in fee-paying schools, which signifies their attachment to the European humanist tradition, in accordance with the aristocratic understanding of cosmopolitan cultural capital. However, while it is understood they are not mutually exclusive, national forms of social and moral capital are valued more highly and play a more prominent role in the construction of elite identity in these schools (Courtois 2015).

3. National, international capital and transnational elite strategies.

The Irish *Who’s Who* (Phelan 2006) compiles short biographical notes for 1,390 “influential” Irish individuals and an approximately 250 additional individuals of Irish extract around the world. Only 29 of these individuals appear to have been educated in British public schools. Furthermore, these are predominantly academics, clergymen, artists and journalists rather than politicians or business people. Of those who went to an elite Irish Catholic school, very few went on to study abroad and these were also more often involved in the arts or media than in business or politics. Overall, Irish elites who have achieved strategic positions of power in Ireland (which often signifies their involvement in economic globalisation) were educated at home at both the second and third level. While the Irish economy has gone global, the national field of power seems largely defined by national rather than international capital. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests that even for Ireland’s internationally mobile elite, a traditional Irish boarding school education is still the preferred choice⁹. In addition, only one second-level school offers the International

⁹. For instance, Peter Sutherland, former EU Commissioner, head of WTO and now chairman of Goldman Sachs International, enrolled his sons in one of Ireland’s top boarding schools while he was based in Brussels.

Baccalaureate programme. The only self-styled international school is a small, independent primary school, whose application for state funding failed. The international school model is therefore strikingly underdeveloped in Ireland at second level, while existing elite schools, and secondary schools in general, do not display a strong international orientation (Courtois 2014)¹⁰.

One possible explanation for the relatively low priority given to the construction of a cosmopolitan or international cultural capital could be the fact that Irish national capital has become a valuable currency not only within but also beyond national borders. Inglis argues that the Irish are viewed as one of the most successful and popular ethnic groups in the world, a success due to “the increased value of embodying an Irish habitus – an Irish way of being in the world and presenting oneself – and accumulating Irish cultural capital in the form of music, literature, art and so forth” (Inglis 2008, p. 92–93). Based on the biography of Akio Morita, Wagner (1998) suggests that acquiring an American way of managing social and symbolic capital is what guarantees success in international business circles but according to Inglis, Irish cultural capital may now have acquired a higher value than American cultural capital.

This reliance on the popularity of Irish cultural capital and the Irish habitus is at the core of Ireland’s strategic economic thinking. “Culture Ireland” was established in 2005 in order to promote Irish culture and arts internationally and ultimately to “utilise Ireland’s [global] cultural profile as a driver of trade and investment” (DAHG 2012, p. 5). A young member of the Global Irish Economic Forum, who organised the first Saint Patrick’s parade in Singapore, explained that her primary goal in doing so was to promote “the fantastic opportunities for FDI in Ireland” and to “send business home” (RTÉ 2013b).

The Irish diaspora is expected to play a key role in Ireland’s economic recovery, firstly as a ‘target market’ for both tourism and education, and secondly as an active player in the promotion of Ireland for FDI. Descendants of the Irish diaspora enjoy preferential treatment. Currently, there are plans at government level to fast-track their visa and citizenship applications in order to strengthen their connection to Ireland – as well as to increase the inflow of international students. Yet a 2004 referendum removed the right to citizenship for those born in Ireland to non-Irish parents¹¹. This again suggests that the national dominates the international as even the international diaspora is defined culturally as primarily Irish for strategic reasons.

The official ‘Education Ireland’ promotional video states that “we are the warmest friendliest people in the world” – a theme which also runs through tourism advertising. It is a similar construct of Irish habitus which is deployed on the

¹⁰. By contrast, one of the leading Irish business schools, in its promotion to international students, boasts an “international blend of students” and highlights the opportunities this blend provides for building international professional networks. Its international accreditation and respectable global ranking are also used to assert its position as a strong player on the international education market, in another effort to draw selective education consumers.

¹¹. On this Loyal (2003) warns that the “hegemonic construction” of Ireland as “an open, cosmopolitan, multicultural, tourist friendly society” must be mitigated by strong evidence of racism and by the persistence of exclusionary cultural nationalism inherited from the post-colonial context.

international business scene. Members of the Global Irish Economic Forum believe Ireland's status as an ex-colony and the friendly, debonair behavioural characteristic of the Irish habitus are valuable assets in business negotiations. An Irish businessman based in Paraguay thus commented on the "extraordinary affinity between Irish people and people in Latin America". He continued: "we get in the door before everybody else, in trading situations we regularly beat the French, we regularly – always actually – beat the English and we almost always beat the Americans and that is because we are seen as a country with a colonial past as they have and we are easy to deal with". Irish symbolic capital is also advantageous to the Irish in Africa; while the Chinese are perceived as "too opportunistic", the Irish enjoy a "tremendous reputation" thanks to the "goodwill from missionaries in the past". Ireland's history is thus also mobilised in the construction and presentation of this positive Irish identity.

Cosmopolitan cultural capital, in comparison, was devalued during the forum discussions. The Irish's poor record in foreign languages was raised by the floor as a potential barrier to international trade on a number of occasions. Such concerns were dismissed by a speaker whose account suggested that the Irish habitus might exempt the Irish from mastering foreign languages. He reported a personal anecdote from a business meeting in Venezuela, where he attempted to say a few introductory words in a very poor Spanish and actually said that he was "pregnant by a Spanish man", which provoked the audience's benevolent hilarity. He used this anecdote to highlight the fact that his poor attempt and his humorous demeanour were welcome as further evidence that he did not think of himself as "a conquistador". This contrasts with the common understanding of cosmopolitan cultural capital as a valuable asset in elite circles. Cosmopolitan capital signals a transnational worldview, knowledge of the world and its languages – in line with the aristocratic ethos – and often as well, a critical distance to national capital. To the global Irish, this form of cosmopolitan cultural capital may not be pertinent on the global business scene: "If you do business the European way you're going to fail miserably" said another panel member at the forum. As someone on the floor suggested dropping Irish from the school curriculum in order to make way for more useful languages, one panel member answered that Irish had another part to play, namely that of defining "what it means to be an Irish person" and that therefore it should be kept. "With no disrespect to our European colleagues", he went on to say, "we should think twice about teaching people a language where they can get to speak to, if you're lucky, 20 million people" (presumably referring to French and German, the most frequently taught languages at secondary level, with Spanish) and suggested that these be dropped from the curriculum in favour of Spanish, Chinese, Russian and Hindi (RTÉ 2013a), thus putting a final nail in the European coffin.

Such views may not be unanimously held within the Irish business community. A past pupil of an elite Catholic school, now a prominent national businessman with significant international experience, viewed both the moral teaching he received in school and his international experience as key to his ability to rise above the "pettiness" of local networks and cronyism and to understand "the bigger picture". Cosmopolitan capital and moral capital are associated in this account, which also echoes a more traditional conception of international

experience and cosmopolitan capital as key elements of elite status and legitimacy. Furthermore, the emergence of student mobility as a strategy of distinction (of which unfortunately we know little), suggests that national and international capital are not necessarily mutually exclusive but may well have a cumulative effect.

*

In spite of Ireland's deliberate economic strategy focused on facilitating global financial flows, Ireland does not encourage outward student mobility in any significant way and its elite schools are largely focused on the national rather than the international. In this regard the Irish situation contrasts sharply with that of Singapore as described by Koh and Kenway (2012). Given that the benefits of economic globalisation for the nation are widely contested (e.g. Allen 2007), Koh and Kenway's title "deploying the transnational in the national interest", could almost be reversed. It is in fact the national, rather than the international, that constitutes symbolic power in Ireland. Irish habitus and cultural capital are thus deployed strategically in international business settings in order to advance economic globalisation and consequently to further the interests of the Irish and global Irish elites.

The symbolic power of the Irish habitus on the international business scene could be attributed to the cultural proximity of the Irish and American business cultures, a proximity further cemented by the Irish-American diaspora and by the circulation of Irish cultural products. Furthermore, national leaders and those identifying as the global Irish elite on both sides of the Atlantic have a strong commonality of interests enhanced not only by their cultural identification to Ireland but also by their strong belief in the neo-liberal ideology.

The discourse of Ireland's leaders betrays a distinctive if mild form of cultural imperialism. Irish cultural capital and Irish habitus are invested with such symbolic power that they are perceived as instrumental in business negotiations to the extent that they could significantly influence strategic financial decisions in particular in the developing world.

While the strategic deployment of an Irish habitus constitutes a helpful if partial explanation for the paradox outlined in the introduction, it should not obscure the fact that national and international capital are not mutually exclusive. There are indications that cosmopolitanism and international student mobility are valued by certain privileged fractions, and their motivations and strategies deserve further attention. The career trajectories of those who identify as global Irish would also require closer examination; although these promote and embody an Irish habitus, other modalities of distinction and strategies are at play in the construction of both national and international elite careers.

Bibliography

Aguiar A. & Nogueira M. A. (2012), "Internationalisation strategies of Brazilian private schools", *International studies in sociology of education*, vol. 22, no. 4, pp. 353-368.

- Allen K. (2007), *The corporate takeover of Ireland*, Dublin, Dublin Academic Press.
- Brooks R. & Waters J. (2014a), *Student mobilities, migration and the internationalization of higher education*, Basingtoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brooks R. & Waters J. (2014b), "The hidden internationalism of elite English schools", *Sociology*, advance online publication 2 April 2014.
- Collison P. (2012), "Save £25,000 at university and join the 'tuition fee refugees'", *The Guardian*, 17 August.
- Courtois A. (2012), *Educating elites: power, privilege and excellence in Ireland's top fee-paying schools*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, UCD and Paris 1.
- Courtois A. (2014), "Internationalising practices and representations of the 'other' in second-level elite schools in Ireland". Submitted article.
- Courtois A. (2015), "'Thousands living at our gates': Moral character, legitimacy and social justice in Irish elite schools", *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2015.
- Courtois A. & O'Keefe T. (forthcoming 2015), "Precarity in the ivory cage: neoliberalism and casualisation of work in the Irish Higher Education sector", *Journal of critical education policy studies*, Spring issue.
- Cullinan J., Flannery D., Walsh S. & McCoy S. (2013), "Distance Effects, Social Class and the Decision to Participate in Higher Education in Ireland", *Economic and social review*, vol. 44, no. 1, pp. 19–51.
- Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) (2012), "Government Decision to critically review Culture Ireland with a view to its functions being merged into the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht".
- Department of Education and Skills (DES) (2010), "Investing in Global Relationships: Ireland's International Education Strategy 2010–15", Dublin.
- Department of Education and Skills (DES) (2013), "Review of Ireland's International Education Strategy 2013", *Consultation Paper*, Dublin.
- Education in Ireland (2012), "International Students in Higher Education in Ireland 2011/12".
- Erlich V. (2012), *Les Mobilités étudiantes*, Paris, La Documentation française.
- Fauconnier P. (2014), « Renflouer nos universités grâce aux étudiants étrangers ? », *Le nouvel observateur*, 26 March.
- Fan X. (2013), "Irish students at Oxford doubled over last decade", *Cherwell*, 1 March, 2013.
- Gordon J. (2001), "The internationalisation of education – Schools in Europe and the SOCRATES Programme", *European journal of education*, vol. 36, no. 4, pp. 407-419.
- Grabher A., Wejwar P., Unger M. & Terzieva B. (2014), "Student Mobility in the EHEA. Underrepresentation in Student Credit Mobility and Imbalances in Degree Mobility", *report to the Institute for Advanced Studies*, Vienna.
- Harmon D. & Foubert O. (2010), "Eurostudent Survey IV. Report on the Social and Living Conditions of Higher Education Students in Ireland 2009/2010", *Report to the Higher Education Authority*, Dublin
- Higher Education Authority (HEA) (2008), "Strategic Plan 2008–2010", Dublin.
- Higher Education Authority (HEA) (2013a), "Higher Education Key Facts and Figures 2011/12", Dublin.

- Higher Education Authority (HEA) (2013b), "The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) Summary Report", Dublin.
- Humphreys J. (2014), "Universities warn student-staff ratios near 'critical levels'", *Irish Times*, 15 February.
- Inglis T. (2008), *Global Ireland: Same Difference*, New York, Routledge.
- Irish Independent (2012a), "So just what do you have to do to get into Oxford", *Irish Independent*, Education section, 25 November.
- Irish Independent (2012b), "Irish students head to UK over fee fear. Applications to British and Northern Irish colleges have surged by 14%", *Irish Independent*, Education section, 27 November.
- Irish Universities Association (IUA) (2013), "IUA Response to Review of Ireland's International Education Strategy 2013 Consultation Paper", *Report to the HEA*, Dublin.
- Khoo S.-M. (2011), "Ethical globalisation or privileged internationalisation? Exploring global citizenship and internationalisation in Irish and Canadian universities", *Globalisation, societies and education*, vol. 9, no. 3–4, pp. 337-353.
- King R., Findlay A. & Ahrens J. (2010), "International Student Mobility Literature Review", *Report to HFECE*.
- Koh A. & Kenway J. (2012), "Cultivating national leaders in an elite school: deploying the transnational in the national interest", *International studies in sociology of education*, vol. 22, no. 4, pp. 333-351.
- Lynch K., Grummell B. & Devine D. (2012), *New managerialism in education: commercialization, carelessness and gender*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- O'Hearn D. (1998), *Inside the Celtic Tiger: the Irish economy and the Asian model*, London, Pluto Press.
- Loyal S. (2003), "Welcome to the Celtic Tiger: racism, immigration and the state", in C. Coulter & S. Coleman (ed.), *The end of Irish History? Critical reflections on the Celtic Tiger*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, pp. 74–94.
- Observatory of Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) (2003), "Kaplan strides into Europe with the acquisition of the Dublin Business School", December.
- Observatory of Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) (2005a), *Other news from around the world*, 28, May.
- Observatory of Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) (2005b), *Other news from around the world*, 30, July.
- Observatory of Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) (2008), *Other news from around the world*, 141, April.
- OECD (2011), *Education at a glance 2011*, OECD Publishers.
- Power M., O'Flynn M., Courtois A. & Kennedy M. (2013), "Neoliberalism and education in Ireland", in D. Hill (dir.), *Immiseration capitalism, activism and education: resistance, revolt and revenge*, Brighton, Institute for Education Policy Studies.
- RTÉ News (2013a), "Panel Debate: Trade, Tourism and Investment with High Growth Markets" (live streaming), *Global Irish economic forum 2013*, October.
- RTÉ News (2013b), "Farmleigh Fellow Laura O'Connell talks about her success – and the success of the Irish community – in Asia" (live streaming), *Global Irish economic forum 2013*, October.

Unesco Institute of Statistics (UIS) (2009), "The Bologna process in higher education in Europe. Key indicators on the social dimension and mobility", *Report for the European Commission*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Wagner A.-C. (1998), *Les nouvelles élites de la mondialisation: une immigration dorée en France*, Paris, PUF.

Wagner A.-C. (2007a), *Les classes sociales dans la mondialisation*, Paris, La Découverte.

Wagner A.-C. (2007b), "La place du voyage dans la formation des élites", *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, no. 170, pp. 58-65.

Wagner A.-C. (2012), "L'internationalisation de la formation des élites: vers une recomposition des classes dirigeantes?", in M. D. Gheorghiu, *La mobilité des élites. Reconversions et circulation internationale*, lasi, pp. 79-96.