

New online journal on migration and race hosted by DCU

Twenty-first century Ireland is a truly multi-ethnic society in which immigrants now make up nearly 10 per cent of the population. A new online journal will analyse the profound socioeconomic transformations in Irish society. Under the initiative of Prof Ronaldo Munck, DCU, and Dr Alice Feldman, UCD, academics from all nine Irish universities came together to form the *Irish Migration, Race and Social Transformation Review* (IMRSTR). The IMRSTR, hosted by DCU and sponsored by the DCU Educational Trust, is an Irish inter-university, open-access journal

aimed at addressing the complex interaction of 'race' and migration in contemporary Ireland. It hopes to disseminate information on relevant research and policy debates with a clear interdisciplinary direction. To this end, contributions are invited from the social sciences, humanities and law.

The university network will also serve as a platform for concerted research and policy development initiatives in the broad area of migration and social integration. At present the Irish presence in the relevant European research networks is muted and the journal will enhance Irish researchers' capacity to intervene decisively in this crucial policy development arena. It is doing this on an All-Ireland basis with the two Northern universities playing a full role.

The journal is not confined to academia, however, and hopes to reach out to practitioners such as policy-makers and civil society groups as well.

"The work of NGOs and community groups around issues of migration is of huge relevance," Prof Munck explains. "Therefore, we are not only looking for their contributions to the journal but we also hope to provide a platform to facilitate exchange between academics and practitioners."

The journal is made up of four sections, including academic articles, a practice platform, legal notes and a review section. The first issue should be online by the summer of 2006. From 2007 onwards the IMRSTR will appear twice a year. It is managed by Theme Leader's Office Research Associate, Torben Krings.

Prof Saskia Sassen: making waves at DCU

Saskia Sassen, one of the most-renowned sociologists in the world, was recently at DCU to deliver one of the Making Waves series of lectures on 'What is Migration?' As she told an attentive audience, this apparently simple question was in fact the right one to ask, when traditional concepts of migration were being replaced by a new reality of economic, cultural and people flows.

To be in Ireland to address this issue was particularly appropriate for Prof Sassen, given the country's traditional role as a sender country, in terms of 19th and early 20th century migrations. Now that Ireland is a receiving country, can it match its new-found economic prospects with a formula?

Prof Sassen is optimistic that a country, which has successfully managed the transition to a high-tech economy, will be able to address migration successfully. The question of citizenship is being



addressed across the globalised world we live in, and Ireland is no exception. We need to be innovative and rethink inherited notions of what it means to be a citizen.

Irish migration has long given scholars some of the key insights into the process of migration. Ireland has also shown us how its political economy can become part of a larger networked system that includes the EU but also a global scale. As a result, the Irish migrant is today a multiplex subject. There is no longer a clear definition or representation. I see this type of blurring of the figure of the ‘immigrant’ as pointing to a future when we will no longer speak of immigrants: we will speak of people (workers, mothers, sons, members of

the community, members of the opposition political party, and so on.) This would also unsettle the figure of the citizen, and the Irish represent a sort of vanguard in this regard.

As we listened at DCU to Prof Sassen, hundreds of thousands of ‘illegal’ migrants were mobilising in the US to press for a new conception of citizenship. Hispanic Americans are now some 42 million, out of a total US population of 290 million. There are many – including the very visible Irish minority – who are deemed illegal. And yet, as in Ireland, the economy needs their labour and the political system needs to be creative.

– *Ronnie Munck*

Trafficking for Forced Labour Project

International awareness of the problem of human trafficking has increased greatly. Many reports now highlight that it is a growing criminal industry which exploits people and violates basic human rights on a variety of levels.

The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland has commissioned DCU’s Intercultural Workplace Programme to conduct research on trafficking for forced labour, which

is funded through the EC DG ‘Justice, Freedom and Security’ AGIS Programme.

Previously the main concern of research and public opinion was the appalling treatment of women trafficked for sexual exploitation. In recent times, however, there is a growing realisation that men, women and children are trafficked for a variety of reasons, including begging, cheap and expendable labour, marriage and sexual exploitation.

In fact, awareness of human trafficking to Ireland has only recently begun to be acknowledged. For years non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been arguing that a problem affecting the rest of Europe was unlikely to have passed Ireland by. At present, there are no official statistics on trafficking in Ireland and a lack of research has meant that the only available information in this area is largely anecdotal.

The project is led by Anti-Slavery International and

focuses specifically on persons trafficked for forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery and their access to justice in EU countries. It aims to identify effective policies at a local level for supporting people trafficked into labour exploitation. The research methods for the project involved a combination of questionnaires, interviews, media monitoring and case studies analysis. The findings from this project will be significant for two reasons. First, they will provide a profile of trafficked victims and their experiences. Second, they will shed light on the coercive practices of recruitment and employment that are being used to exercise control over migrant workers in highly competitive environments.

At DCU the research is being conducted by Deirdre Coghlan, research associate in the Internationalisation, Interculturalism and Social Development Theme Leader’s Office.