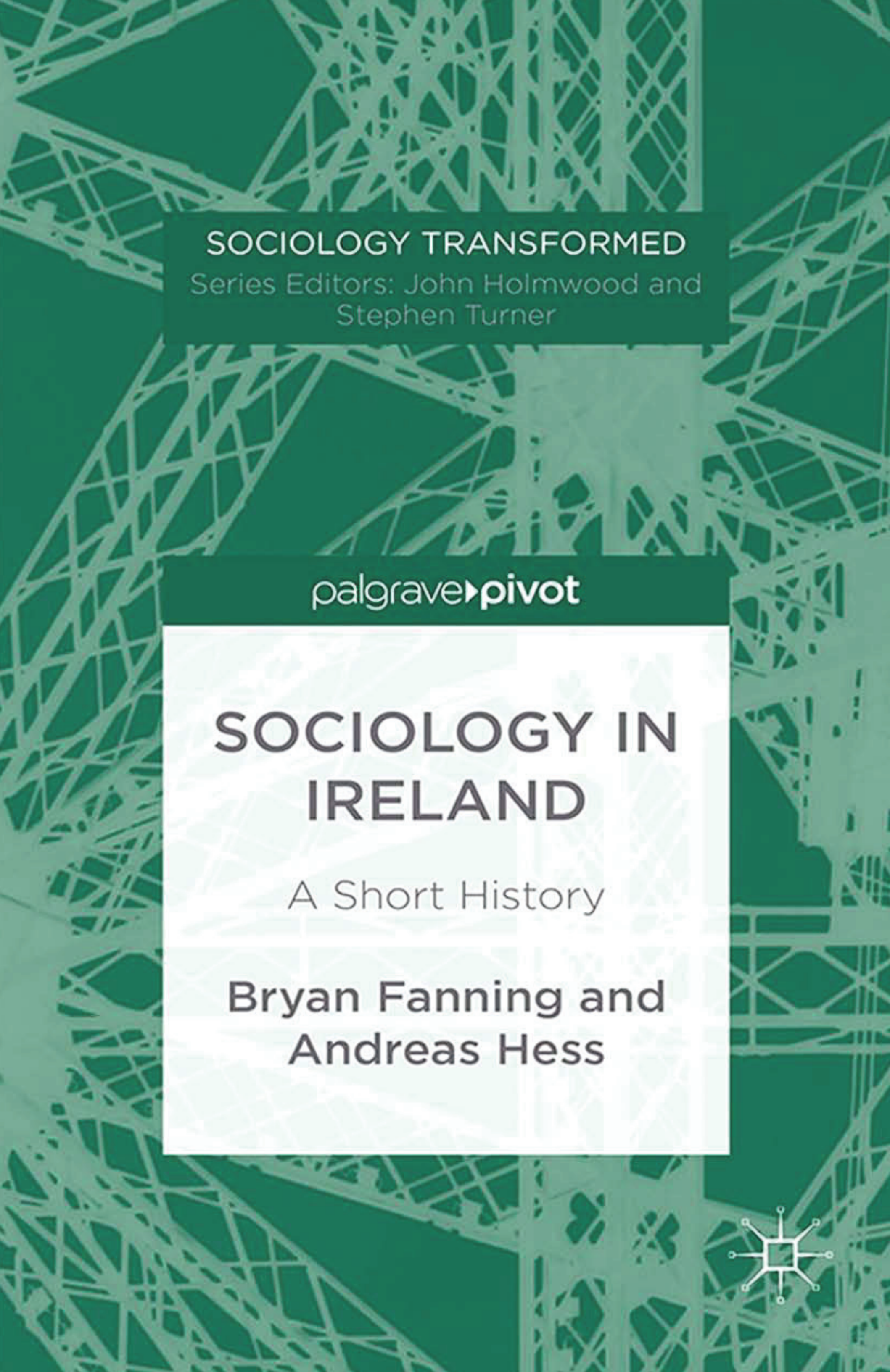

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SOCIOLOGY IN IRELAND

A Short History

Bryan Fanning and
Andreas Hess

Sociology in Ireland

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1

Introduction: Sociology in Ireland

Abstract: *The history of sociology in Ireland has been shaped both by dealing with Irish conditions and the aspirations of a discipline whose theories and conceptualizations usually transcend national boundaries.*

Keywords: academic discipline; Catholicism; founding of sociology; liberalism; nationalism

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In this book we chart the emergence and development of sociology in Ireland from the early nineteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first century. Such an approach is confronted with a number of problems: first of all, how do we distinguish sociology in Ireland from any other sociological tradition and context? And second, how do we define ‘sociology’ as a discipline? If we only mean the institutionalised discipline, our short history would be very brief indeed. To understand what came later, we must have an understanding of what was there before. This is why our approach also discusses some of sociology’s forerunners and discursive precursors. During the nineteenth century, these included political economy and statistical inquiries and in the decades after Independence, Catholic social thought. Throughout our text, we define sociology as both a discipline applied in Ireland and, for a long time only, to Irish conditions. We argue that for a number of reasons Irish sociology came to be institutionalised first as a kind of national sociology that was exclusive in more than one sense. We distinguish this from a more inclusive understanding of ‘sociology in Ireland’, which we take to mean the discipline in the wider sense as practised in Ireland and not necessarily focused on the study of Irish society and its conditions alone.

In the course of the nineteenth century, three ideological currents can be identified. Liberalism, as a political idea, emerged within the politics of Catholic emancipation before the Famine and within economics as political economy.[1] Catholic power emerged during a lengthy process for repeal of the Penal Laws, which culminated in the Emancipation Act of 1828. Until then, Catholics had been excluded from owning land and property and entering the professions. Particularly after the Famine, the Catholic Church exerted considerable influence over public morality, education, and intellectual life. Cultural nationalism also emerged in the wake of the Famine as a political and intellectual force, beginning with the Young Irelanders. Half-a-century later, the Gaelic League fostered an Irish language revival that together with Catholicism defined post-independence nation building. Within cultural nationalist circles, the decolonising project often intersected with opposition to liberal political economy. In particular, cultural nationalists opposed the utilitarian case for the abandonment of the Irish language made by the liberal Catholic leader Daniel O’Connell. In their opposition to liberal utilitarianism and to liberalism as an ideology of colonial domination, some cultural nationalists found common cause with Catholic anti-modernists.

These three traditions, liberalism, Catholic thought, and cultural nationalism, provided the main critique of social change and the ideological bases for the nation-building projects that shaped post-independence Ireland. In sociological terms, the post-independence nation-building project of the independent Irish state might be understood as a preoccupation with intergenerational social reproduction of Catholicism and of the Gaelic language. Nineteenth-century social modernisation, ideologies, and politics cast a long shadow over any attempt to study the social, political, and cultural conditions of Ireland. Conflicts emerged between political liberalism – which was the engine of Catholic Emancipation and of the Home Rule movement – and revolutionary nationalism. Alliances emerged between cultural nationalism and Catholic conservatism. Sociological imaginations came to be fostered within a tradition of liberal political economy. However, sociology came to be initially institutionalised within an education system dominated by Catholicism.

Sociology in Ireland was also built on analyses by visiting scholars. These included linguists interested in preserving the Gaelic language, whose scholarship examined communities where Gaelic was still spoken, and who facilitated the publication of written accounts of life in such communities in Gaelic and in translation into English. From the 1930s onward, social anthropologists from the United States came to conduct fieldwork in Ireland. Their work inspired subsequent emerging rural sociology.

Until 1922, Ireland was part of the United Kingdom. This was a unique arrangement that differed considerably from how Britain ruled the rest of its Empire. Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the only 'colony' which sent representatives to the Westminster Parliament. At the turn of the twentieth century, the island's political representatives, together with the Liberal Party, often had a say in who was to form the UK Government. At the same time, the popular wish to be independent of Britain and to be fully able to be self-governing remained strong. The Easter Rising of 1916 and the positions and decisions that were taken by the British and the emerging, now radicalised Irish nationalist movement in its wake, led first to a guerrilla-like war with the British, then to negotiations with Britain, and finally to the declaration of an independent Irish-free state. The agreement was followed by a Civil War, whose outcome cemented the split between a larger southern part that later became the Republic of Ireland and a smaller Northern Ireland (NI), which remained part of the United Kingdom.

The political, social and, inevitably, cultural splits of the island have been reflected in the way the social sciences emerged and developed in the course of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. The Republic of Ireland became, for its inhabitants, the fundamental unit of social and political organisation. The ideological conceptions of nationhood that were poured into its creation resulted in a political entity that some Irish nationalists opposed because as a container, it left out six northern counties. From such a perspective, the Irish nation and the Irish nation-state are not coterminous. The Civil War, after the War of Independence, did not settle the question even if what became the Republic of Ireland became a distinct political container and a specific unit that warranted sociological analysis. The sociological imagination that developed after independence was to some considerable extent caged by national borders. Methodological nationalism is a term coined by Hermino Martins to refer to how statistics and social science research based on these came to focus on 'national communities' as the natural unit of social analysis (1974: 274). Social science tended to equate society with the nation-state, or worse conflate national interests with the purposes of social science (Smith, 1983: 26). It has often been presumed that the boundaries of the nation-state delimit and define the unit of analysis. Such presumptions have reflected and reinforced the identification that many scholars maintain with their own nation-states. The extent to which this occurred in the Republic of Ireland for several decades after independence suggests that Irish sociology was, in effect, a national sociology.

Although methodological nationalism remains prevalent, especially when sociology is applied to the study of social problems, the discipline has in recent decades become more internationalised. For example, several of the Chairs of Sociology in Irish universities have been held by scholars who are neither Irish nor purport to undertake research solely on Irish society. Some 30 per cent of the staff currently employed at sociology departments are foreign born or were educated outside of Ireland. Add to those the social scientists of Irish descent or nationality who do not study Irish questions it makes no sense to speak of an Irish sociology in the strong sense of the term. Instead – and this is what we would like to suggest for the purpose of our brief historical account – it is more accurate to speak of 'sociology in Ireland', a sociology that certainly includes a considerable number of people who are occupied by Irish themes and issues, but that also includes those who do either comparative work in which Ireland figures (but just as one component), and those who do research or have epistemological interests that transcend Irish themes and borders.

We want our readers to understand how sociologists addressed the social conditions in which they were embedded. Yet, it is inconceivable that any social science worthy of the name – and that includes, of course, sociology – could emerge and maintain itself in total insularity. In any case, it is only through comparison, that it is possible to show that something is unique or exceptional or carries other distinctive marks and characteristics. And even if the focus of research is not explicitly and not always comparative, sociology draws on theoretical concepts and theories that, as Max Weber emphasised, have an implicit comparative dimension (Weber, 1993). At the same time, we must acknowledge that social sciences are hardly free-floating intellectual endeavours but tend to reflect particular social and political conditions. To make sense of such a constellation we must follow a thin, back-and-forth argument and oscillate between addressing the particular conditions (the peculiarities of a given social constellation, in our case Ireland) and the tendencially more 'universal' theoretical and conceptual framework (theories and concepts that were developed to account for wider circumstances and conditions). In other words, we need to reflect on both the unique conditions and themes that gave rise to the development of the social sciences in Ireland, including sociology and those frameworks, theories, and concepts that have come to constitute the larger sociological experience and which tend to transcend borders. Sociology can never succeed as an isolationist undertaking – even if Ireland remains, geographically speaking, an island. What is remarkable, though, is the extent to which sociology in Ireland attempted for so long to remain insular. In particular, Catholic Sociology followed a distinctive national, if not to say nationalist path, in how it framed its sociological discourses and how it became institutionalised, and it was not until the 1970s that sociology in Ireland began to connect with external sociological traditions and paradigms.

It is not always easy to disentangle relationships between the discursive and institutional dimensions of sociology. The following chapter, on 'forerunners', addresses the history of what in the widest sense can be termed sociological topics and interests during the nineteenth century and earlier. These writings contributed considerably to an understanding of Irish society but contributed very little to the subsequent institutional development of the discipline. However, it would be a mistake to write off this early discursive history, as this contributed to framing subsequent debates.

We have included in our history the kinds of social and political thoughts that came closest to sociological thinking, insofar as it tried to make sense of the social and political conditions of the island, even if there was not necessarily a conscious attempt to contribute to the emergence of a discipline that was later called sociology. We will also pay some attention to statistical enquiries that have contributed to a sociological understanding of Ireland's past although, hopefully, avoiding the danger of prolepsis or anachronism, that is, of projecting sociological interpretations onto the past, which could not have been articulated in such terms at the time.

In making sense of this history, we found Peter Baehr's and Mike O'Brien's distinction between discursive and institutional founders in sociology helpful (Baehr and O'Brien, 1994: 4ff). Baehr and O'Brien distinguish between so-called discursive founders, who provided the major ideological framework, some founding ideas and concepts of how society operates, what holds it together, and what major drifts and currents can be detected; on the other hand, we can also encounter institutional founders, who have, as the label suggests, helped to set up an institution, a department, a journal, or a degree that has come to define the discipline in one way or another. Of course, discursive and institutional founders can overlap, but they do not necessarily have to.

As to institutional founders, Baehr and O'Brien use the example of Albion Small who set up the world's first sociology department and the sociology programme at the University of Chicago but did very little to contribute to the discursive development of sociology (ibid.). On the other side, we have a figure like Karl Marx who had absolutely no interest in developing or contributing to sociology as a discipline; yet, Marx is still regarded as somebody who has contributed considerably to our understanding of how society works and what holds it together (even though opinions are divided as to how much of that is still valid). Between these extremes of purely discursive and purely institutional founders, there is of course a another category: figures like Emile Durkheim or Max Weber, who contributed both institutionally by establishing associations, professional journals, or even departments, and discursively by developing major theories and concepts that help us to understand society.

In distinguishing between sociology in Ireland and sociology of Ireland, we in effect pose the following question: is the development of the discipline better explained by wider Irish history and conditions or with reference to the international development of the discipline? The answer is something of both. As Baehr and O'Brien have noted, in most cases, the founding of an academic discipline has been a political act in the sense of establishing paradigms and promoting these (1974: 24ff). We will see that this is also the case in the Irish context; yet, in many ways, Ireland also differs in the way political and religious influences came to bear on the emerging discipline. After independence, two of the three main currents of nineteenth century Irish thought found themselves no longer in opposition to the state, and what had been Ireland's third nineteenth-century intellectual current, liberalism (discursively and institutionally represented by the discipline of political economy) was crowded out. Catholic sociology grew to prominence after independence as part of the institutionalisation of the Church in education and other domains.

The situation was further compounded by other factors. Ireland is an island on the fringes of Europe, next to a bigger island, which continued to play both a positive and a negative role as an intellectual point of reference. The shadow of colonialism, both real and perceived, impacted considerably on how sociology in the Republic developed something of a 'national' or even 'nationalist' tradition. Its nativist tendencies were often manifested, although not always and under all conditions, in religious terms. The small size of the country, with just a handful of universities and a sociological output that equalled those conditions, makes it difficult to talk about traditions, canons, and classics the way Baehr, O'Brien and others do when referring to the sociological traditions of countries like Germany, France, Italy, or North America. These were not just larger in terms of populations but were also marked by a richer and larger pool of cultural, political, and social currents. What we encounter in Ireland then is far more complex than Baehr's and Brian's 'normal' model of sociological discourse and institution-building suggests.

Chapter 3 examines the period of Catholic hegemony that ran from about 1912 to 1970, a period and influence which affected the gradual institutionalisation of sociology. By the 1960s, Ireland had begun to open up under pressures that came from both within and from without: from within in terms of the slow disintegration of the moral monopoly of the Catholic Church and the numerous political scandals that rocked the Republic, which in turn led to widespread distrust of Irish citizens vis-a-vis both state and church; from without through beginning to live up to the norms and practices that membership in the EU entails. The net result was that the traditional forces and political cultures did not entirely disappear but metamorphosed into a new amalgam that drew on international debates, but that in many ways also still paid its dues to Irish conditions, just now in a more contextualised way.

Looking at the history of sociology in modern Ireland, which of course also reflects wider changes in Irish society, we can observe a constant oscillation between continuity and rupture. However, we are somewhat reluctant to see this as a kind of Irish *Sonderweg* or Irish exceptionalism. What remains noticeable, though, is a relatively late willingness to connect to the outside world – culturally and intellectually. In comparison with other smaller traditions and cultures in Europe, sociology in Ireland remained at least until the early 1990s, institutionally and discursively speaking, marked by considerable intellectual insularity. This does not mean that internationalisation or a tendency towards more universalised forms of discourse were not present. Prominent conceptual threads within Irish sociology have variously included functionalism, modernisation theory, an emphasis on the role of ideology and hegemony and, more lately, discourse, cultural capital, and habitus. Rather, it meant that the twin ideological forces of Catholicism and Nationalism still persisted, if in less overt and powerful fashion.[2]

Such developments were complicated by other factors. We agree with Andrew Abbott's observation that sociology is the least defined discipline of the social sciences (Abbott, 2001, 3). Throughout the development of sociology in Ireland, disciplinary boundaries were often not clearly delineated. Abbott emphasises that sociology has always been open to acquiring new topics and areas and that 'no form of knowledge about society is alien to it' (6). This might explain why 'the discipline is rather like a caravansary on the Silk Road, filled with all sorts of people and beset by bandit gangs of positivists, feminists, interactionists, and Marxists, and even by some larger, far-off states like Economics and the Humanities, all of whom are bent on reducing the place to vassalage. The inhabitants put up with occasional rule by the gangs and pay them tribute when necessary, but when somebody more interesting comes along, they throw off the current overlords with little regret' (ibid.).

We follow Abbott in his assessment that it is very hard to identify a hegemonic discourse in the discipline that manages to 'win' even though sociology in Ireland remained marked by Catholicism. Abbott uses the notion of fractal distinctions to depict how in the course of the history of the social sciences binary heuristic dualisms came into existence. These heuristic dualisms can be seen to play out again and again in reinvented forms within social sciences and within the discipline of sociology at all levels of debate and analysis.[3] These include positivism versus interpretivism recast variously as analysis versus narration, and behaviourism versus culturalism and realism versus constructionism (Abbott, 2004: 75). We can certainly witness similar disputes within institutional settings in Ireland (Chapter 4). Yet, Abbott also emphasises that distinctions between empirical and interpretative sociologies are rarely fixed for all the violence that protagonists identifying with one tendency might vilify those on the other side. In practice, positivism and interpretivism are in constant dialogue. The methodological and epistemological turns between one or the other over time are part of an ongoing churn all across the social sciences. It is of course perfectly possible for a positivist sociologist to engage in interpretivism at any stage or level of her analysis just as it is for an interpretivist to reach for some kind of positivist approach (80).

As readers of our short history will detect, we make no great secret of the fact that we also agree with both Abbott's and Wolf Lepenies's observation that the social sciences have always occupied, and continue to occupy, a delicate middle position between the humanities and the natural sciences, and that they form a third culture (Lepenies 1988). This is another reason why sociology is unlikely to police its constituent parts or its academic boundaries despite attempts by the disciplinary powers that be – in Ireland and across the globe – to do so. Social knowledge constantly changes directions or adds dimensions, whereas old preoccupations or fields rarely just pass away. There is always something new that undermines a stable intellectual hegemonic power; or, alternatively, in the case where a strong current begins to occupy a more prominent place; this current has to take up some of the problems or even use the language of those who went before the new paradigm (Abbott, 2001, 20). To explain changes in the discipline, one needs therefore to address the 'pattern of splits, conflicts, and ingestion' (21).

So, how then can the history of sociology in Ireland (or elsewhere) be analysed? The answer, according to Abbot, is by identifying 'combination(s) hitherto unknown' (29). For sociology, this means first and foremost, a new mix of quantitative and qualitative forms of knowledge. What we get in the end is not a steady progressive curve of knowledge accumulation. What can be observed, instead, is a pattern that still allows us to treat sociology as a disciplined knowledge in the Kuhnsian sense (ibid. 30, Kuhn, 1970); yet, with the qualification that if and when sociological research begins to address a number of social problems, the order of things and the discipline itself are often called into question, not at least because what is defined as a problem is power-driven or relates to agendas that frequently lie outside academia (Chapter 5). As we will see, this applies also to sociology in Ireland, particularly if we study the disciplinary developments of the last 20 or 30 years. It also explains some of the contradictions and complexities of the academic field called 'sociology'. Because Ireland's sociological community is relatively small, such tendencies are sometimes harder to detect or to decipher and even harder to describe in detail. Size does matter – and differentiation within a small-sized group matters even more. We will come back to this problem when we address the more recent developments within sociology in Ireland and the future they might hold.

Notes

1 The initial cause that triggered the Irish Famine (1845-1849) was crop failure resulting from potato blight. It is estimated that one million people died and that another million emigrated, mainly to England and the United States. For a detailed account of the Famine, see Woodham-Smith (1962) and O'Grada (1993); for a general account of modern Ireland and its society, culture, and politics, see Foster (1988).

2 An analysis of what Foucault called 'traditional intelligentsia' in Ireland has emphasised the role of nationalist intellectuals in defining the wider intellectual climate and their efforts to establish a kind of closed shop within the educational and administrative systems of the Irish state (O'Dowd, 1988: 9).

3 Abbott defines a fractal as something that looks the same no matter how close we get to it, analogous to the woodland fern whose fronds are each made up of little ferns made up in turn by even tinier ferns. The great methodological debates in sociology are fractals in the sense that these seem to be similarly composed at every level of discussion and analysis. The fern within the social sciences is the distinction between positivism and interpretivism; 'between thinking that you can and should measure social reality formally and thinking that you can not and should not' (Abbott, 2004: 78).

2

Forerunners

Abstract: *One of the forerunners of sociology in Ireland was political economy, a paradigm that can be traced as far back as William Petty's seventeenth-century writings on Ireland. Because of the Famine and the effects of large-scale Irish emigration on Britain, Ireland became the focus of statistical inquiries and of analyses by such important figures as Malthus, Tocqueville and Beaumont, Martineau, Marx and Engels. The establishment of political economy within Irish universities did not foster the institutional development of sociology. More generally, Ireland's intellectual landscape worked to hinder the development of the discipline. This is in stark contrast to some other European countries, which by the turn of the twentieth century witnessed a discursive and an institutional take-off of sociology.*

Keywords: Dublin Statistical Society; Catholic Emancipation; Political Economy; the Famine; Whately Commission

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The roots of political economy as a discipline can be traced to the writings of William Petty who drew analogies between the science of medicine and attempts to understand the workings of interdependent elements of society. Petty had briefly served as secretary to Thomas Hobbes and had been a Professor of Anatomy at Oxford before being appointed as Chief Surgeon to Oliver Cromwell's army in 1653. He directed the first extensive mapping of Irish lands, the 'Down Survey', which was used to reallocate these during the subsequent plantation. The preface to Petty's *The Political Anatomy of Ireland*, written around 1672, began by announcing the birth of a new social science out of this experience of counting, weighting, and measuring Irish lands, wealth, and population. The 'new science' that Petty championed, and wished to extend to the study of social phenomena, was to fuse both reason and material facts and thereby to elaborate upon previous understandings of the world. Political arithmetic would take account of that which could be counted or measured and leave deliberations that depended 'upon the mutable Minds, Opinions, Appetites, and Passions of particular Men', to the consideration of others. In short, political arithmetic, Petty maintained, could be applied 'neutrally' to all matters (Petty, 1970).

But Petty mostly used his new approach to calculate how many Catholics would need to be deported in order for Protestant plantations to succeed. His intellectual presumptions (empiricism as understood by Francis Bacon and by Petty's mentor Hobbes) were attacked by Jonathan Swift on several occasions, most spectacularly in his satirical essay *A Modest Proposal for preventing the Children of poor People from being a Burthen to their Parents or the Country, and for making them Beneficial to the Public* (1729). Swift lampooned beliefs in progress, the 'positivism' of the Royal Society and of the Royal Dublin Society of which Petty was a founder member.

More sophisticated analyses of the condition of Ireland that focused on the consequences of discrimination against the Catholic majority, were put forward by later political economists such as Thomas Malthus. Malthus published two articles on Ireland in *The Edinburgh Review* in 1808 and 1809. He argued that the condition of the rural Catholic poor could never be improved while penal laws against Catholics were in force. These, he maintained, prevented them from adopting prudential habits. Malthus wondered how the Irish themselves might be improved economically so that their living standards might rise. His focus on the improvement of character was accompanied by a sense that poverty was a problem of individual failure or improvidence. Malthus argued that the Penal Laws had effectively made it impossible for the Catholic poor to improve themselves and the lands that they farmed. In his *Principles of Population*, Malthus noted that in recent centuries continental Europe (unlike Ireland) had witnessed at most only a slow growth in population (Malthus, 1798). He attributed this slow growth in considerable part to prudential social mores that inhibited marriage in circumstances where having children would result in descending the rungs of the class system (ibid., 20). Malthus argued that a preventive check to population operated, albeit with varied force, among all of England's social classes.

The first Chair of Political Economy was endowed by Richard Whately at Trinity College Dublin (TCD). Whately, before coming to Ireland in 1832 as the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, had held such a Chair at Oxford. From the early nineteenth century various state commissions of inquiry examined social problems in Ireland as well as in England using social science methodologies. There were numerous investigations as a result of the growing economic and social crisis in rural Ireland after 1820. Grain production had declined, the textile industry outside of Ulster had collapsed and the population continued to grow. From the state's perspective the issue of Irish poverty became urgent at that time for a number of reasons. Ireland did not have a poor law system of parish relief as did Britain. There had been a massive influx of Irish poor into cities such as Liverpool and Manchester. This became a political issue with British ratepayers. It was also clear that Irish conditions differed substantially from those in Britain. A series of commissions of inquiry into Irish poverty were established in the 1830s.

Whately in an 1831 letter to Nassau Senior, who preceded him as Chair of Political Economy at Oxford, described 'a continual ebb-tide of returning Irish, some labourers, and some beggars, but mostly *both* by turns'. 'In the absence of Poor Laws in Ireland,' he explained, 'many presented themselves in England as persons of distress and could not be told, as might be said to Englishmen, "Go to your Parish"' (cited in Whately, 1886: 95). Whately's own seminal contribution to the emerging field of political economy was overseeing the report of *Commission for Inquiry into the Conditions of the Poorer classes in Ireland* (1835). This examined 17 counties and sampled one parish in each Barony within each county. Some 7,600 questionnaires were circulated to Catholic and Protestant clergy of which about 3,100 were returned giving details of rents, wage levels, numbers of destitute persons and the nature of institutions for the relief of the poor

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in about 1,100 parishes. Conditions in parishes were also investigated jointly by an English and an Irish assistant commissioner. These recorded testimonies from hundreds of interviewees 'as near as might be possible' in their own words. It was a large-scale exercise but was not unique for its time. In 1824, the Royal Commission on education distributed a questionnaire to all Parish Priests and Ministers in Ireland asking them to catalogue every book and printed paper used in schools, including the so-called 'hedge schools' run privately but overseen by Catholic clergy (Brenan, 1935). Whately supplemented such questionnaires by adding different categories of people in the parish such as Catholic priests, teachers, shopkeepers or pawnbrokers, tradesmen, farmers, cottiers and widows. Recorded findings about the circumstances and communal interdependencies of the sick poor, those 'impotent through age' and the able-bodied out of work' were similar in many different parishes. As depicted by the Whately Commission, the poorer classes in pre-Famine post-Catholic Emancipation rural Ireland perpetually teetered on the brink of catastrophe.[1]

Having gathered considerable experience leading the Commission that bore his name, Whately continued to be involved in enquiries that helped to gather information about Irish conditions. He became the first President of the Dublin Statistical Society (DSS, founded in 1847), which continued to collect the type of information that the earlier Whately Commission had compiled. The disaster of the Famine and the wrath caused by the hunger years called out for more organised and regular assessment of the situation, something which was not covered by the British Census, and therefore became the main *raison d'être* of the DSS. The DSS was later renamed, and from 1862 onwards became the Social Inquiry Society of Ireland (SSIS). As one would expect from the political and cultural context of the time, the society consisted mainly of the academic, professional and economic elite of the time, which was predominantly Protestant and included only a few Catholics (Daly, 1997). Its main orientation reflected the values of British political economy of the time. Whilst earlier figures in this tradition focused on inequalities experienced by Irish Catholics (e.g., Malthus and John Stuart Mill) at a later stage, other interpretations of a more dubious type would become prominent. For example, the 1847 inaugural lectures by William Hancock, the first Whately Chair of Political Economy at Trinity College, which marked also the founding of the DSS, advocated a *laissez faire* approach to the Famine (Hancock, 1847).[2]

Although there are no sources to confirm it, it is likely that in his role at Trinity College Dublin (TCD) Whately met also two French observers, Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont, with whom he shared not only a friendship with Nassau Senior and an interest in political economy but also the study of Irish conditions from a comparative perspective. We know of Tocqueville's and Beaumont's stay in Dublin in 1835 from their notebooks and letters. The two Frenchmen attended a meeting at TCD and met various other informants (among them most likely Whately and Beaumont's future *L'Irlande* translator William Cooke Taylor) and, after the gathering in Dublin, travelled around the country for six weeks in order to get an impression of the social conditions of the island.

Tocqueville himself never published anything on Ireland.[3] His writings focused on the United States and France. However, he strongly encouraged his friend Beaumont to concentrate on Ireland and make a case of it. During their travel, the two friends came to a kind of semi-official agreement about their division of labour; while Tocqueville looked at the larger picture, that is, the development of modern democracy in America and France, Beaumont would focus on those who had been left out in the process: American Natives, slaves, women – and Irishmen (Beaumont, 1999; Beaumont, 2006; Garvin and Hess, 2009; Hess, 2009b).

It is worthwhile adding in this context that despite the agreed division of labour between the two, they continued to read each other's manuscripts, exchanged notes, and discussed their findings in numerous letters. We can therefore read Beaumont's assessment and views of Ireland as the ones that were shared by Tocqueville. After a second visit in Ireland in 1837 and after having compiled enough evidence, in 1839 Beaumont published his *L'Irlande: sociale, politique et religieuse*. Later that year, the title also appeared in English translation, right at the eve of the Famine, of which Beaumont detected early signs but which he could not foresee. However, the sixth French edition of the book, which was published in 1863, included a long afterword which also dealt with the consequences of the Famine (reprinted in Beaumont, 2006).

In style and organisation, *L'Irlande* resembled very much Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Of course, in contrast to *Democracy* its central message was rather critical, even depressing. Beaumont's analysis of the Irish situation seems, if anything, more drastic than that of most English commentators of the time. Crushing inequalities, so Beaumont maintained, kept the Irish so poor that no efforts they might make could change this with detrimental consequences for Irish character. But Beaumont was also radiating hope. He argued that the future of democracy in Ireland depended on the rising middle classes who comprised the leadership of Daniel O'Connell's Catholic Party (Beaumont, 2006: 244ff). Hitherto, the development of such a middle class had been stymied by the Penal Laws, which had kept Catholics out of the professions and politics. However, Beaumont also argued that it was not enough just to replace a Protestant with a Catholic aristocracy. He thought that the instinctive and hereditary contempt that the rich in Ireland felt for the poor would persist in an Ireland dominated by Catholics.

Beaumont's ideal solution to Ireland's problems, particularly its mass poverty, was first to remove political power from the aristocracy and end the impositions of tithes by the established Church. Rather than transferring power to the emerging Catholic middle class, which in his view would wield it badly, Ireland needed a strong administration 'beneath whose shadows the middle classes might grow up, develop themselves, and acquire instruction whilst the aristocracy would crumble away' (303). Reform, in effect, needed to be driven by the British state. Second, he advocated peasant proprietorship, a reform in land ownership unconcerned about the persistence of small farms:

> So long as the Irishman is merely a tenant, you will find him always indolent and wretched. What energy can you expect from the agriculturalist who knows that, if he improves his farm, his rent will be augmented? ... Suppose him, on the contrary the proprietor of the two or three acres ... Of what efforts will he not be capable, when he sees a reward attached to every toil, an advancement at the end of every furrow. (310)

Referring to the developments in France since the French Revolution, Beaumont argued that moral improvement would follow the passing of ownership of land to the peasants. In general, he claimed, marriage follows the acquisition of land, farm owners would learn about 'order, economy and foresight' and, as a result, become better men and citizens (309).

In his analysis, Beaumont was highly critical of the measures the British had introduced so far. He described workhouses as 'mansions of corruption and idleness'. By corruption he meant 'the fatal notion that it was possible to live without work' (288). It was not possible, he concluded, to create industrial employment for the two million of so 'half-occupied or idle hands' of the lower classes. One of the stumbling blocks was that English oppression of Ireland had long been rooted in commercial protectionism against Irish trade. A key difficulty, Beaumont believed, was the lack of Irish capital to invest in industry or in the improvement of agricultural land. England had huge amounts of surplus capital that might be invested in Ireland, instead of it being sent thousands of miles away. However, an Englishman still preferred to invest his capital anywhere else than in Ireland, precisely because the country and the state it was in was directly before his eyes. In other words, the potential English investor had the risks directly paraded before him. In order to change this, peace, law and order, the end of agrarian violence were, Beaumont argued, preconditions for capital investment. Yet he also realised that industrial development was unlikely. Industrial employment for Irishmen would continue to be found mainly in English factories – hence his promotion of sorting out the land questions first (264).

Beaumont also doubted whether by halving the population by 'exporting it' the miseries of the country would cease (272). Ireland's agricultural export economy depended on most of the population living on potatoes with all surplus value – rents paid by agricultural labourers or from the sale of pigs, which the poor could never themselves afford to eat – contributing to such exports. Remove half the people, Beaumont reasoned, and exports would also decline. Emigration was ongoing in any case, and the areas from which most people emigrated did not seem to benefit from improved living conditions or improved wages. Beaumont concluded that it would take the emigration of at least three or four millions to have a perceptible effect. However, he could not see how this could be done, mainly because it would not be sufficient that three or four millions should have the possibility of leaving Ireland; it would be further necessary that they should be willing to do so:

> It would be in their interest to emigrate, and they would be wrong to refuse the means – such is our feeling. But would their judgement be in accordance with ours? Their refusal to emigrate would render the system impossible, for forced emigration is a penal exile. And on what would be founded the right of treating the poor Irish as male factors? It would be first necessary to proclaim poverty a crime. Now, though in English habits poverty is doubtless, a great misfortune, and sometimes almost a misdemeanour, it has not yet become a crime. If voluntary emigration is the only possible system, we must conclude that a system on such a scale as that which we have examined, can never be executed. (275)

Clearly, in 1839 Beaumont could not foresee the cataclysm that a few years later would propel the Irish population into exactly such a long downward spiral and force them into emigration for existential fear of starvation (281). Only many years later, in an address to the Académie de Sciences Morales et Politiques that he gave in 1863, would the Frenchman refer to the disaster of the Famine and its social and political consequences. As in his original assessment, Beaumont remained highly critical of the British government, its attitude and its politics towards Ireland, and argued for a change of hearts and minds and for more radical social and political reform. However, Beaumont made no case for Irish independence or revolution. He remained at heart a constitutionalist who sympathised with poor Catholic Ireland but who also still believed in the superiority of the French and English Enlightenment tradition in the form of reform-minded political economy.

Like Beaumont, Harriet Martineau wrote before and after the Famine about Irish conditions. Together with Beaumont she qualifies as being the author of one of the first treatises about Ireland that had a more modern sounding sociological argument to it, *How to Observe Morals and Manners* (Martineau, 1838). Her 1000-page translation of August Comte's *The Positive Philosophy* (twice as long in the original French) was published in 1853 and, re-translated into French, became the standard, readable version. As is well known, Comte coined his approach 'sociology', and this is also one of the reasons why Martineau is often regarded as a prototype sociologist (Conway and Hill, 2009: 62). In *How to Observe Morals and Manners*, Martineau combined impressionistic day-to-day field reports drawn from travels around the country with information supplied by the Dublin Statistical Society and the Belfast Social Inquiry Society, thus using a similar approach to Beaumont.

Martineau also wrote a didactic novel, *Ireland*, which can be seen as a supplement to her multi-volume *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832). Additionally, a post-Famine visit generated her *Letters from Ireland* ([1852] 2001). Like Malthus, Martineau emphasised how prevailing environmental conditions had fostered 'habits of slovenly cultivation, of dependence on the potato, and of consequent idleness'. In effect, she advocated a shift away from the traditional Irish peasant culture towards a more rational organisation of agricultural life centred on 'regular and punctual labour' and greater 'observance of hours and rules' (all quotes ibid., 53). Her account also included examples of tenants not being permitted to improve lands they rented, but in the main she appeared to be exasperated – and thus very different when compared to Beaumont and Tocqueville who always showed respect for the poor and the needy – about the unwillingness of Catholic peasants to adopt new techniques of working. She argued that solely giving peasants legal rights of tenure or land ownership would not improve social conditions. The solution she advocated was to require landlords to improve lands and housing while passing the costs of improvements to the tenants over time (Martineau, 2001: 53).

Like John Stuart Mill, Martineau also asserted that the plight of the poor was in large part attributable to their being misgoverned. She shared Mill's *laissez faire* perspective and advocated greater freedom for the Irish (as distinct from redress of inequalities) as a means of fostering rational improvement and social reform. Like Whately, she advocated education and capital development rather than Poor Law relief as a means of improving the condition of Ireland. She endorsed emigration, land clearances and argued, at a time when much land was changing hands, that 'the best hope for Ireland lies in the settlement of British capitalism' – meaning by new (non-Catholic) English settlers as part of a rational reorganisation of Ireland's rural economy (109–114). In her *Letters from Ireland*, she could describe the sadness associated with emigration yet depict 'emigration as a means of modernizing the country' and criticize the 'impatience with [which] these wilfully childish people ... cling to outmoded associations and practices' (16).

There existed a critique of the liberal rhetoric that Mill and Martineau and others subscribed to long before Marxism entered the scene. William Thompson, a Cork landlord, aptly identified by James Connolly as an Irish forerunner to Marx, wrote a number of pamphlets that contested the arguments of liberal political economists. Thompson is generally credited with having conceptualised the term 'surplus value' that would later play such a significant role in Marx's writings.[4] In his 1827 pamphlet *Labour Rewarded, the Claims of Labour and Capital Conciliated; or, How to Secure to Labour the Whole Product of its Exertions*, he declared that for about 12 years he had been 'living on what is called rent, the produce of the labour of others'. Another pamphlet he wrote, *Appeal of one-half of the Human Race – Women – against the Pretensions of the other half – Men – to retain them in Political and thence in Civil and Domestic Slavery*, demanded the extension of voting rights to all the adult population

(Thompson, 1825). However, his criticism fell mainly on deaf ears, perhaps a punishment for having come too early and failing to reach a public that was not yet ready.

Marx never visited Ireland and relied heavily on whatever information he could distil from his friend and collaborator Friedrich Engels. Some of Marx's writings used the 'Irish question' as a lens – just like traditional political economy had done earlier. Marx's discussion of Ireland began with an article setting out a comparative analysis of land clearances in Scotland and Ireland (Marx, 1853a). A second article, entitled 'Forced Emigration' and published in the *New York Tribune*, discussed the high levels of Irish migration, again mainly in comparison with England and Scotland (Marx, 1853b). In September 1859 Marx published another article in *The New York Tribune* on Irish crime statistics in which he pointed out that Ireland was the only part of the United Kingdom in which crime had actually decreased. How was it possible, he asked, to 'harmonise this fact with the public-opinion slang of England, according for Irish shortcomings?' Falling crime rates (the 'happy change in Irish nature'), he concluded, were 'simply the consequence of a famine, an exodus, and a general combination of circumstances favourable to the demand for Irish labour' (Marx, 1859).

Marx's most profound discussion of the condition of Ireland can be found in the first volume of *Das Kapital* (1867) in a chapter outlining the general law of capital accumulation. This detailed how the population of Ireland had fallen from 8.2 million in 1841 to 6.6 million in 1851, to 5.8 in 1861 and to 5.5 million in 1866, which was about its level in 1801. Total emigration from May 1851 to July 1865 numbered 1,591,487. During the same period the number of holdings between 15 and 30 acres increased 61,000, those over 30 acres by 109,000, whilst the total number of all farms fell to 120,000, a fall, therefore, solely due to the consolidation of farms under 15 acres. Marx emphasised the ongoing destruction of the poorer classes that had earlier come under Whately's scrutiny. He also identified some degree of ongoing rationalisation of larger farms deemed not to be economically viable that he predicted would lead to further emigration of about 1.7 million persons in an ongoing 'agricultural revolution' – this calculated as the number of farms likely to be absorbed, numbers of farmers and dependents and an estimate that some of those who lost their land would be reabsorbed into the economy.

Marx's radical critique of political economy emphasised at once how emigration contributed to the internationalization and growth of global capitalism by providing a constant injection of labour power into the American economy:

> The Irish famine of 1846 killed more than 1,000,000 people, but it killed poor devils only. To the wealth of the country it did not the slightest damage. The exodus of the next 20 years, an exodus still constantly increasing, did not, as, e.g., the Thirty Years War, decimate, along with the human beings, their means of production. Irish genius discovered an altogether new way of spiriting a poor people thousands of miles away from the scene of its misery. The exiles transplanted to the United States, send home sums of money every year as travelling expenses for those left behind. Every troop that emigrates one year, draws another after it the next. Thus, instead of costing Ireland anything, emigration forms one of the most lucrative branches of its export trade. Finally, it is a systematic process, which does not simply make a passing gap in the population, but sucks out of it every year more people than are replaced by the births, so that the absolute level of the population falls year by year. (Marx, 1867: Chap 25)

Marx's companion, Friedrich Engels, was much more interested in Irish conditions and had more insider knowledge. After all, he was running a family-owned factory in Manchester which employed Irish labourers and he was in a relationship with an Irish woman (later succeeded by her sister). Thus Engels was clearly more inclined to follow news from and about Ireland than Marx who had no deeper interest in Irish matters – actually, for him Ireland would pretty much qualify as a country and people without history, just like the many other British colonies, who were destined to be sucked into the capitalist enterprise by having had the luck of having been colonised by one the most advanced industrialised countries.

When Engels wrote *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845), much of his focus was on migrant Irish workers. He drew on public health reports detailing such conditions and eyewitness accounts detailing the appalling conditions in which they existed.[5] Engels also relied extensively on, and quoted extensively from the conservative critic of industrial capitalism Thomas Carlyle's *Chartism* (1832).

Despite their critical view of Irish affairs neither Marx's nor Engels's writings on Ireland influenced Irish discussions at the time. Some of those more bizarre Marxist notions of a people without history were only later criticised by James Connolly, a radical political activist, who came probably closest to being called the founder of Irish Marxism. Just like Otto Bauer in Austria and Antonio Gramsci in Italy, Connolly saw the

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national question related to the question of what it means to achieve a just society. In *Labour in Irish History*, he positioned himself as the heir of William Thompson rather than as a follower of Marx (Connolly, 1910a). In his efforts to fuse Irish nationalism with socialism, Connolly sought Irish precedents for socialist ideas. He wrote for an audience well versed in John Mitchel's nationalist critique of colonialism (Fanning, 2014: 134). *Labour in Irish History* drew explicitly on the analysis of post-Famine depopulation, land clearances, farm consolation, and emigration, which was richly documented by Mitchel in *The Last Conquest of Ireland, Perhaps* (1873) that also had considerable influence on some leading Irish nationalists.

By the late nineteenth century, nationalists began increasingly to regard liberal political economy as a manifestation of colonisation. Mitchel argued that Ireland had become intellectually dominated by liberal political economy. In his view, Catholic Emancipation in 1829 had ushered in a new phase of conquest that bound better-off Catholics to the British Empire and led directly to the clearance of many poorer ones from the land, thus driving a wedge between the interests of such peasants and the wealthier and educated Catholics who benefited from access to the professions, politics, and official posts. Catholic Emancipation, Mitchel insisted, was a measure for the consolidation of the British Empire.

During the second half of the nineteenth century and particularly towards the turn of the century the ideological dominance of liberalism (including its critique) was also contested by the rising influence of Catholicism and by the emergence of cultural nationalism which sought to reverse the utilitarian abandonment of Gaelic in favour of the English language that O'Connell had championed. The conflict was often framed within the nationalist camp as one between culture and economy. In *Ireland in the New Century* (1905) Horace Plunkett, a Protestant Unionist and advocate of the cooperative movement, education and scientific improvement, gave an analysis of the Irish case that to a certain extent mirrored Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Indeed, that Irish Catholics needed something like a Protestant ethic had been the implicit thesis of several nineteenth century liberal political economists. Plunkett argued that

> Roman Catholicism strikes an outsider as being in some of its tendencies non-economic, if not actually anti-economic. These tendencies have, of course, much fuller play when they act on a people whose education has (through no fault of their own) been retarded or stunted.... I am simply adverting to what

> has appeared to me, in the course of my experience in Ireland, to be a defect in the industrial character of Roman Catholics which, however caused, seems to me to have been intensified by their religion. The reliance of that religion on authority, its repression of individuality, and its complete shifting of what I may call the moral centre of gravity to a future existence – to mention no other characteristics – appear to me to me calculated, unless supplemented by other influences, to check the qualities of initiative and self-reliance, especially among a people whose lack of education unfits them for resisting the influence of what may present itself to such minds as a kind of fatalism with resignation as its supreme virtue. (Plunkett, 1970: 101–2)

Such arguments came to a considerable extent to be internalised by subsequent generations of Catholic modernisers. Other strands of the Catholic intelligentsia emphasised centuries of discrimination as a causal factor or advocated a decolonising cultural nation-building project designed to expunge the liberal political economy that Mitchel described as the last conquest of Ireland.

It is perhaps interesting in this context to note that Max Weber had actually visited Ireland in October 1893 but never published anything about any observations or thoughts the visit might have produced. However, Weber took notice and read in German translation one of the few notable Irish contributions that also caught the attention of a wider European and American public, W. E. H. Lecky's two-volume *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe* (1865). Later, Weber drew on some of Lecky's material in his essay on the disenchantment thesis (published in English as 'The Economic Ethics of World Religions' in 1919/1920). Lecky's own intellectual influences included Herder, Hegel, and Comte and, from Trinity College Dublin where he had studied, Whately. For Lecky, political economy was the intellectual expression of industrial civilisation and the 'complete theory of human progress' insofar as it viewed wealth as the basis of all intellectual and social development (1865, 2: 361–362). However, his interests went far beyond what fin-de siècle political economy would usually cover. Lecky's follow-up book *A History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemange* (1869) focused on variables that might be identified in all civilisations as common in relation to moral culture, such as shifts between emotional and rational approaches to ethical conduct, shifts between ascetic and worldly forms of moral culture within institutional religion, and the presence of one or more coherent doctrinal systems for explaining evil and prescribing social behaviour (Kavolis, 1989: 102–6).[6]

Lecky, like William Thompson decades before him, showed a sociological imagination that was not confined to the Irish case. Yet his most regarded works were multi-volume histories of the eighteenth-century England and eighteenth-century Ireland. Like Malthus and Beaumont, but unlike his contemporary Horace Plunkett in *Ireland in the New Century*, Lecky suggested that Catholicism was no less potentially favourable to the development of enterprise and industry than was Protestantism. In his *History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* he argued that the potential for such development among Catholic tenants had been destroyed by laws that consigned them to utter ignorance. This, however, was not the case in other Catholic parts of Europe. Lecky mentioned France, Flanders, and the northern states of Italy which demonstrated what might have been achieved in the absence of religious discrimination (Lecky, 1906: 218).

As we have seen, social and political conditions in Ireland were subject to a wide spectrum of deliberations, ranging from early political economy (Petty, Whately, Malthus), critical pamphleteers (Swift, Thompson) and visitors like Beaumont and Martineau whose observations were steeped in the language of political economy but occasionally transcended this to include wider sociological observations of morals and customs. They also drew on official statistics, information collected by Royal Commissions and statistics collected by the Dublin Statistical Society. However, during the second half of the nineteenth century liberal thinking on the condition of Ireland came also to be portrayed as an expression of colonialism. Analyses of the condition of Ireland were variously produced by champions of liberal economic modernisation, their opponents who regarded Ireland as a case in point to show the weaknesses and possibilities of emerging capitalism and also those who used cultural, religious and linguistic arguments in order to rally support for the nationalist cause.

None of these attempts achieved the kind of momentum which would allow for what Baehr and O'Brien call proper institution-building in sociology. To be sure, statistical data continued to be gathered but did not lead to the development of a more empirical sociology nor did it ever reach beyond the narrow confines of the Dublin Statistical Society. It remained mainly a tool for politicians and policy makers. Similarly, while it is true that nationalist, religious, and even Marxist arguments eventually metamorphosed into oppositional voices who took issue with the social, political and cultural conditions of Ireland, such critical reflection never converged to such an extent that it would find expression in some systematic form or gather institutional momentum to form something that would resemble academic sociology in a more institutionalised form or at least in *status nascendi*.

Our short nineteenth-century overview shows that, at least discursively speaking, there were scholars and intellectual moments that can clearly be identified as being forerunners to modern sociology. However, most of these discourses remained locked into political camps and agendas that were too far away from each other to gain momentum and gel. Driven either by an English-dominated political economy, Irish nationalism or the emerging Catholic opposition, the scholars who represented one of the political traditions often talked past each other. There were some exceptions when various epistemological interests converged in one person, particularly Gustave de Beaumont and Lecky come to mind here. Both relied on political economy, both were liberals, both showed sympathy for Irish conditions and the plight of the Irish and both were open to the religious dimensions and took an interest in the way Catholicism and modernisation were related (Beaumont from a French Catholic perspective, Lecky as a Protestant from the North who lived in Dublin). However, it takes more than just the intellectual power of one scholar to establish a school, an institute or a paradigm. By the end of the nineteenth century when the founding process of sociology as a discipline was under way in at least three other countries (the United States, France, and Germany) the Irish intellectual scene was devoting most of its energies to cultural nationalism. The few sociologically inspired essays that challenged such nationalism inevitably had no influence.[7] As we will see, these tendencies not only delayed the development of the social sciences in Ireland but also overshadowed much of their subsequent growth.

Notes

1 In Ireland, where population had risen from 5.4 million in 1804 to 8.2 million in 1841, early marriages and the subdivision of rented smallholdings were common practices among the poorest. In a testimony given to the Whately Commission William Scanlan, a North Clare school teacher, pointed out that ‘it is always the poorest who marry the earliest (...). The sons of farmers, who have been accustomed to greater comforts, generally remain single for a much

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longer time than others, and will not marry without some portion (dowry). It is however, considered most desirable by farmers that their daughters should be settled while young, that they may be withdrawn from the dangers and schemes to which their fortunes expose them' (Whately Commission cited in Comber, 1996: 28). We cite testimony from County Clare because it subsequently became the site of influential twentieth-century studies of rural social change in Ireland.

2 One of the more problematic aspects of the last few decades of the nineteenth century British political economy and early Spencerian British sociology (what separates the two is sometimes hard to determine) was that both became obsessed with social Darwinism and the question of whether there was something of a 'race' problem. Ireland and the Irish in particular were singled out for arguments related to the 'survival of the fittest'. In clear contrast to arguments based on race and social Darwinism is Stephen Lanigan's (1879) *Home Rule: A Study of Social Science.*

3 Tocqueville's diaries and other notes written during his trip to Ireland were only published some 150 years later (Tocqueville, 1988).

4 As put by Thompson in an 1824 pamphlet: 'As long as the accumulated capital of society remains in one set of hands, and the productive power of creating wealth remains in another, the accumulated capital will, while the nature of man continues as at present, be made use of to counter-act the natural laws of distribution, and to deprive the producers of the use of what their labour has produced ... As long as a class of mere capitalists exists, society must remain in a diseased state. Whatever plunder is saved from the hand of political power will be levied in another way, under the name of profit, by capitalists who, while capitalists, must be always law-makers' (Thompson, 1824).

5 *The Condition of the Working Class in England* was first published in German in 1845; a second German edition did not appear until 1892. By then two English-language editions had been published, one in New York in 1887, the other in London in 1892.

6 In *The Sociological Imagination*, C. Wright Mills name-checked Lecky alongside Comte, Durkheim, and Weber (1959: 6). It should be noted that Mills also wrote a foreword to a reprint of the *Spirit of Rationalism* and referred to Lecky in several other essays.

7 Stephen Brown, a Jesuit priest, applied Ernest Renan's seminal *Qu'est ce qu'une Nation* to the Irish case in two essays 'What is a Nation' and 'The Question of Irish Nationality' (Brown, 1913a, 1913b). In the former Brown defined culture as 'that code of law, unwritten and traditional, which rules the habits of a people, and by long iteration, furrows deep traits in its character'. Brown examined the extent to which the Irish case fitted criteria for nationhood identified in the literature that dealt with 'national character' and 'race'. His challenged essentialist and primordialist claims about national distinctiveness

made by European writers like Herder and Fichte which obviously appealed to Irish romantic nationalists. At the time the debates Brown sought to engage with stimulated no discussion in Ireland. This was perhaps because he was in effect speaking a different language to most other members of the Irish intelligentsia.

3

Catholic Sociology and 'Traditional' Society

Abstract: *Irish sociology remained, institutionally and intellectually, dominated by Catholic social thought for more than half a century after independence. Catholic sociology did not dismiss social research but sought to smother the influence of what was perceived as 'secular' sociology. This Catholic antipathy explained to a considerable extent the narrow empirical focus of much of sociology at the time. The little innovation that was there came from abroad and mainly from a sister subject – social anthropology. In its wake, rural sociology became stronger; it focused on the decline of a 'traditional' social order that had emerged after the mid nineteenth-century Famine. Despite some newly gained insights and some attempt to popularise itself Catholic sociology remained locked into its own agenda, preoccupied with the decline of the social order, which it saw as crucial to the reproduction and future maintenance of its influence.*

Keywords: Arensberg and Kimball; Catholic sociology; *Christus Rex*; Clare; rural sociology; secularization; *Studies*

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Following Catholic emancipation and the Famine, the Catholic Church expanded its influence during the second half of the nineteenth century in what came to be called the devotional revolution. It expanded and came to institutionally control most of the educational system.[1] With it a distinctive Catholic sociology emerged in the early twentieth century Ireland. It was strongly influenced by post-1891 papal encyclicals setting out Catholic social thought aimed at responding to the increased political significance of Europe's industrial working classes and a need to compete with the appeal of socialist responses to industrial injustice (Camp, 1969: 12). Socialism was not a threat in the Irish case because, except for the Belfast region and perhaps in some areas of north Dublin and Cork, there was no substantial industrial working class to be found. In contrast, late nineteenth-century nationalism could become a major force because it appealed to the countryside, the rural population, and the peasants, mainly by focusing on land reform. As a consequence, in Irish politics, Catholic anti-liberalism came to be superimposed upon an existing tradition of secular nationalist anti-liberalism. Educators were particularly preoccupied with the intergenerational reproduction of religion. More specifically, Catholic sociology came to be seen a weapon in the battle of hearts and minds. It presented itself as an alternative for the faithful to secular social theory and was promoted in Irish universities to prevent the latter from getting a toehold.

In 1912, Timothy Corcoran, a Jesuit and Professor of Education at UCD, argued for the introduction of sociology courses in Irish universities. He argued that Catholic social teaching set out inviolable truths about society and as such could be presented as sociology (Corcoran, 1912). What came to be called Catholic social thought or 'Neo-Thomism' emerged during the late nineteenth century as an intellectual response to modernity aimed at competing with socialism and liberalism. It was rooted in understandings of natural law set out in the thirteenth-century writings of Thomas Aquinas which in turn had Christianised conceptions of natural law set out by Aristotle. Drawing on Aristotle, Aquinas maintained that natural science abstracted unchanging rules from the study of changing matter and, in doing so, gave human beings knowledge of the material things that existed outside the mind. This included knowledge of human nature. Aquinas understood the natural world to be governed by a natural law which concerned the rational human apprehension of those principles of eternal law that affected human nature and its natural ends. Aquinas took from Aristotle an emphasis on the social nature of mankind and on the necessity of mutual cooperation and government. From the late nineteenth century Neo-Thomism provided the basis for intellectual and political opposition to liberalism, socialism, and secularism.[2]

The Neo-Thomist critique of modernity resembled, at least superficially, Emile Durkheim's argumentation in *The Division of Labour in Society* (1894), particularly his understanding of those traditional 'mechanistic' forms of social solidarity, which had in modern times given way to more organic forms of solidarity. Such 'traditional' forms of social solidarity, which Durkheim's German contemporary Ferdinand Tönnies termed *Gemeinschaft,* were considerably similar to Neo-Thomist representations of traditional social cohesion. These were now under threat. But while Durkheim employed the concept of anomie to depict the ruptures in social solidarity and the sense of belonging that came with the decline of traditional moral authority, Catholic social thought continued to promote the conception of God-given natural law and with it the idea that communities are organised and need to be protected as religiously obedient entities. Unsurprisingly, Catholic sociology rooted in such natural law eschewed reference to secular sociology. By design it could never support Durkheim's embrace of modern forms of organic solidarity, despite the sociologist's accompanying preoccupation with anomie, a term that captured the dislocation Catholic sociologists associated with modernity and sought to counter.

In a 1912 article for *Studies*, Corcoran listed a range of sociological problems, such as housing, education, and employment that were to be understood and addressed by recourse to Catholic social thought rather than secular social theory. Sociology, so defined, was to be taught within applied social work courses. Such courses would replicate much of the curriculum of British social work courses but substitute Catholic social thought for secular social thought. The National University, he argued, would have 'no difficulty in building its superstructure of applied sociology on such pronouncements as the great encyclicals of Leo XIII on Labour, on property, on the Constitution of States' (Corcoran, 1912: 545). Corcoran proposed outreach programmes in philosophy, sociology, and commerce modelled on the Central Labour College in London (1912: 548). Catholic sociology, so the argument went, could influence the emergent Irish labour movement; and Catholic organisations should, like British Labour, put forward their 'picked men.' Scholarships should be awarded not principally on the basis of intellectual capacities but based on tests in 'mental alertness, in Catholic and public zeal, in community spirit and initiative, not merely book knowledge' (397–400).

Socialism was hardly a threat to Catholicism. In an article in *The Workers Republic* (29 January 1916) James Connolly referred to a 'splendid speech' made by a Catholic priest to an audience of Catholic working men and women. Connolly claimed that there was much similarity between Catholic doctrine on social justice and the principles of socialism and that unless the Church moved with the people, then the people would move without the Church as had happened in France (Nevin, 2005: 613). After his death, a Catholic Truth Society pamphlet on Connolly, written by a Jesuit claimed, in the other direction, that there was much that was in accordance with Catholic social thought in his writings.[3] In an earlier 1910 pamphlet, *Labour, Nationality, and Religion*, Connolly responded in kind to a series of lectures by a Catholic priest that attacked socialism in a more typically aggressive manner.[4] Catholic efforts to dominate sociology education were in keeping with this conflict. Connolly's effort to win hearts and minds for socialism had met with little success in Ireland.

By 1938, Catholic sociology had been introduced onto the curriculum at University College Cork (UCC). Echoing Corcoran, Alfred O'Rahilly, a Jesuit who had left the order to become Registrar of UCC (and later UCC's President), made no secret of the motives and the rationale behind it:

> We have started a course in sociology – the papal encyclicals are for the first time prescribed as official texts. It is obligatory for students in commerce. It may be capable of extension so that all our students during their course may learn something about the living issues – family, state, communism, fascism, and so on – on which they read about in newspapers and see in the cinema…this year there has been another experimental innovation – the introduction of the 'elements of psychology, ethics and sociology' into the pre-medical year. (1938: 545)

In the previous year the first professor of Catholic Sociology, Fr Peter McKevitt, had been appointed at St Patrick's College Maynooth to a Chair endowed by the Knights of Columbanus (Conway, 2006: 13). Like some other Catholic priests sent to universities as sociologists he had been directed to the Catholic University of Leuven for his doctoral education. In 1951, Fr James Kavanagh was directed by Archbishop John Charles McQuaid to establish a Catholic Institute of Sociology in Dublin that, along the lines proposed almost four decades earlier by Corcoran, would focus on educating workers and trade unionists. Later, in 1966, Kavanagh became Professor of Social Science at University College Dublin.

Both McKevitt and Kavanagh published textbooks that were widely used. In fact, McKevitt's *The Plan for Society* (1944) was Ireland's first sociological textbook. It related general principles of Catholic social teaching to specific Irish problems such as emigration and rural decline, with the latter seen as particularly undermining the social base of Catholicism. McKevitt's chapter on the family asserted that it was 'absurd' to admit claims of gender equality and that a woman's natural place was in the home. But other chapters argued that totalitarianism and racism were also against the natural law as revealed to reason. In *The Manual of Social Ethics* (1954), a book that Kavanagh used to teach sociology at UCD, he similarly paraphrased what papal encyclicals had to say about family, industrial relations, the role of the state, and social problems.

McKevitt was one of the founders of the Catholic Sociology journal *Christus Rex*, which appeared between 1947 and 1970. The targeted audience of the journal consisted of young priests interested in social work that had participated in study circles on social problems at Maynooth and had become members of the Christus Rex Society established by McKevitt in 1941 (Daly, 1947: 27–33). The name of the journal was also its main programme: *Christus Rex* was primarily a journal of applied Catholic thought and was, for example, very different from the intellectually more adventurous and independent Jesuit journal *Studies*.

From its inception in 1912, *Studies* published many articles on Marxism, all implacably opposed to its doctrines, but these contributions often explained and engaged with Marxist ideas and concepts (Fanning, 2008: 73–78). For example, a 1912 article 'Variations of Socialism' distinguished deterministic Marxism from the utopian tradition exemplified by Robert Owen (Somerville, 1912). A 1926 review article by UCD Professor of Economics George O'Brien praised R. H. Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*. O'Brien compared Tawney's book to Max Weber's critique of the role of Protestant asceticism in understanding the rise of capitalism. He took some umbrage at the dichotomy implied by Weber and, to a lesser extent, Tawney, between progressive Protestantism and backward Catholicism without challenging the core argument that the modern industrial spirit was brought into being by the Reformation (O'Brien, 1926).

By design, *Christus Rex* explicitly excluded engagement with the main currents of secular sociology. The first paper of the first issue was appropriately entitled 'Why Catholic Priests should Concern Themselves with Social and Economic Questions' (Browne, 1947). Its author stressed that the education of Irish public opinion in the social teaching of the Church was the right and the duty of every priest. Like Corcoran before, he argued that there should be a focus on educating people, particularly those who informed national public opinion, such as members of trade union and employers' organisations. In terms of appealing to the hearts and minds, Christus Rex Society was obviously very successful. It grew from 136 members in 1941 to some 1,900 members in 1967.

Two traditions of 'sociological' engagement with social problems emerged over time in *Christus Rex*. One simply defined social doctrine and natural law as sociology. Sociology, thus conceived, was mainly preoccupied with ideological dangers but could, in fact, only propose abstract remedies. A later, second approach was rooted in imported models of Catholic social action. This was different because it at least encouraged the empirical study of social problems at a local level.

A content analysis of articles published in *Christus Rex* reveals that the most popular focus was on rural Ireland (15.5 %); however, articles on industrialisation (5.45 %) and industrial relations (11.15 %) together accounted for a slightly higher percentage. Urbanisation was considered to encourage materialism and sow the seeds of secularisation, while industrialisation was considered to exacerbate class conflict and to undermine individual and family autonomy. The list of later special issues very much reflected such concerns: *Faith and National Revival* (1959), *The Challenge of Television* (1962), *The Renewal of Society, Education, and the Future* (1963), *Work and Man* (1964), *Renewal and the Church* (1966), *The Vocations Situation* (1967) and *Vocations to the Sisterhood* (1968). The latter two contained articles by McKevitt's successor Rev. Jeremiah Newman as editor of *Christus Rex* which empirically charted the beginnings of Catholic decline.

The project of Catholic sociology was to provide an intellectual platform for Catholic social thought while keeping at bay rival theories of social order. Almost to the end *Christus Rex* maintained a firewall against most of the mainstream theorists and texts of Western sociology thanks to its doctrinal *imprimatur*. The sort of international books reviewed closely reflected the preoccupations of the journal; those preferred were, as one reviewer put it, the ones worth a place in every priest's library that could be read and studied by any (Catholic) layman (Phillips, 1962: 222).

Between the 1950s and 1990s, Newman wrote more than 20 books. These included not only Catholic polemics but also works of conservative political philosophy, a book on racism in South Africa and the United States (Newman, 1968) and even, on the principle that one's enemy's enemy must be a friend, on how post-modern theory challenged the secular state (Fanning, 2014: 172). As editor of *Christus Rex* he was preoccupied with the sociology of Catholic decline – evidence of this was to be seen in the decline of religious vocations which he charted in a number of articles – and epistemological conflicts between Catholic and secular sociology. A number of his reviews engaged with the relationship between natural law principles and use of empiricist and positivist theory by some Catholic sociologists, in a context where the influence of natural law sociology was in decline. There remained, he insisted, a fundamental ontological difference between Catholic sociologists who used empirical data and the secular 'followers of Comte and Durkheim, who did not believe at all in the validity of ethical norms, whether within or without the field of Sociology'.

Newman concluded that Catholic sociology should unblushingly stand by the truths about human nature represented by the Christian tradition yet seek to integrate these with factual knowledge of all kinds in an effort to solve social problems (Fanning, 2014: 176). Very much in line with such reasoning was a review by Newman directed against the main thrust of American and continental sociological understandings of individualisation and the anti-religious philosophy of Comte (Newman, 1961: 323). However, Newman also accepted that the priest-sociologist could fruitfully employ the methodologies of secular positivists as long as he combined them with 'that reverence and understanding of spiritual realities which is only to be expected by a sociologist who is also a priest'.

Sociology so defined was the study and manipulation of human norms by those who believed in eternal truths. Socialisation, a 1962 article explained, referred to 'conscious or unconscious, spontaneous or imposed, mutual adaptations of personality and personal action to society and social action' (Dougan, 1963). The point of healthy socialisation had to be the sustenance of the human person and his supernatural destiny. The requirement for doctrinal orthodoxy discouraged intellectual engagement with the sociological imagination although empiricism, as practiced by priest sociologists like Newman and Ward, was deemed safe enough.

The opinions offered in *Christus Rex* proved the point. The critique of social change that the journal offered bore some similarities with secular sociological accounts of modernity, but time and time again the journal kept avoiding a thorough discussion of and engagement with secular sociology's key concepts such as anomie, alienation, and rationalisation. Newman repeatedly insisted that a fundamental ontological difference existed between Catholic sociologists who used empirical data and the secular 'followers of Comte and Durkheim, who did not believe at all in the validity of ethical norms, whether within or without the field of Sociology' (Newman, 1970). Sociology so conceived acknowledged the works of secular sociologists like Weber, Durkheim, and the 'brilliant misfit' Marx, though a reader of *Christus Rex* would be hard pressed to extract any hard information about their work from its pages. The sociological classics were regarded as pessimistic, one-sided, and exaggerated in their analysis of the modern social condition because they 'did not conceive of society working out its destiny in the mystical body of Christ' (70).

So far our chapter has focused on dominant ideological perspectives that identified goals for sociology and how these became institutionalised. But during the twentieth century, as during the nineteenth, some of the major contributions of social research in Ireland were produced by visiting scholars and writers – and to great acclaim. If the archetypical visitor during the nineteenth century was a liberal political economist concerned with the improvement of the Irish, the twentieth century witnessed the influence of social anthropologists interested in mapping the remains of the 'traditional', meaning post-Famine, rural social order. Irish rural sociology came to be very much defined in relation to Arensberg and Kimball's celebrated anthropological study of County Clare. For example, studies like Hugh Brody's *Innishkillane; Change and Decline in the West of Ireland* (1973) took the book as a starting place to discuss whether Ireland was really such a stable and homogenous peasant society after all.

Arensberg and Kimball's fieldwork formed part of a wider Harvard University Anthropology Department study of Ireland conducted between 1931 and 1936 and funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. It resulted in the publication of two books, *The Irish Countryman* (Arensberg, 1937) and *Family and Community in Ireland* (Arensberg and Kimball, 1940). The Harvard study included archaeological fieldwork and physical anthropological research as well as a social anthropological study of communities in north County Clare and in the town of Ennis.[5] The Irish research was envisaged as a methodological testing ground, which ideally should contribute to developing the theoretical and conceptual debates in social anthropology. It was aimed at revealing the structural dynamics of community in general rather than just being a study of rural Ireland for its own sake. County Clare, in effect, was studied as an example of a modern social system that by its very nature implied 'a state of equilibrium in which elements are in mutual dependence' (1940: 310). Partly for this reason, Arensberg and Kimball were preoccupied with functional and economic familial relationships and placed less influence on the direct role and influence of the Catholic Church.

The research in County Clare was perceived as providing the classic account of what pre-modern rural Irish society had always looked like (Byrne, Edmondson, and Varley, 2001: 53). This was despite the fact that the rural communities they undertook their fieldwork in had been subject to radical transformation since the Whately's commissioners had collected data on North Clare in the previous century. Among the most obvious noticeable changes was a collapse in population resulting from the Famine, emigration, fewer marriages and changed inheritance patterns. For example, in 1841 Clare had a population of about 250,000, by 1926 the county had about 95,000 inhabitants (99). The Famine and the continued late marriage and bachelorhood explained the decline. In 1841, when the population peaked, only 43 per cent of males between 25 and 35 were unmarried compared to 72 per cent by the 1930s (315). By 1852, subdivisions of smallholdings had practically ceased. In Arensberg and Kimball's analysis these demographic changes were less the result of individual flight from intolerable conditions, but the effect of such causes as the dominant family system, which predisposed it to disperse population in order to protect family landholdings (156). Within such a system, they argued, individual attitudes towards sex and marriage reflected status within the familial farm economy (204). Sexual roles, no less than economic roles, became integral to the system. The role of the Catholic Church in all this, they suggested, was an adjunct one for all that 'the Church fathers and the country people seem to have attained quite an unanimity'(15). This social system, not the pre-Famine Clare revealed by the Whately Commission, was the baseline against which social change in rural Ireland came to be measured.[6]

Longitudinal research on the condition of rural of Ireland used Arensberg and Kimball's work as a geographical (much of the research focused on County Clare) and methodological baseline. As one reviewer pointed out, 'for the forty years after Arensberg and Kimball completed their research in County Clare, ethnographers have utilized the same unit of analysis (the community), the same focus for the analysis of social life (kinship and social structure) and the same theoretical model of local society (structural-functionalism) (Wilson, 1984: 1).

Arensberg and Kimball's study has become part of an extensive canon in which visitors to Ireland have recorded their impressions of the island of Ireland (Byrne and O'Mahony, 2012: 62). During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries German, Scandinavian and English scholars contributed to the analytical reconstruction of the Irish language and of life in Irish-speaking communities (Byrne, Edmondson and Varley, 2001: 12). Gaelic-speaking parts of rural Ireland had also been the subject of visiting linguists such as Robin Flower who were interested in preserving the native language. In the process they recorded testimonies that provided accounts of vanishing ways of Irish life. Notable examples of such literature were Tomás O'Crohan's *An tOileánach* (published in English in 1937 as *The Islandman*) and Maurice O'Sullivan's *Fiche Blian ag Fás* (published in 1933 in English as *Twenty Years A Growing*).

Until the 1960s, Catholic sociology in Ireland produced little substantial empirical or field research for all that it pronounced upon the dangers of rural decline, urbanisation, and secularisation. That said, claims made about rural society by Catholic sociologists did not differ hugely from those made by Arensberg and Kimball. The visiting Americans were as positively optimistic about the society they encountered in 1930s Clare. They saw it almost akin to how John Ford's movie *The Quiet Man* benignly portrayed 1930s County Mayo. While undertaking his field work in North Clare, Arensberg gave an interview to the *Clare Champion* in 1933, full of enthusiasm for the life of a rural smallholder: 'At times like this, when most nations are groaning under the weight of vast city populations who can no longer support themselves, it is a relief to watch people capable of providing for nearly all their needs by their own independent efforts. Of course, Ireland has her own problems too, but she is, I think, fortunate in still having her small self-supporting farm families' (cited in Byrne, Edmondson, and Varley, 2001: 54). None of this seemed to have contradicted de Valera's bucolic rural ideal as articulated most famously in a 1943 radio broadcast, 'The Ireland that we dreamed of':

> The ideal Ireland that we would have, the Ireland that we dreamed of, would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as a basis for right living, of a people who, satisfied with frugal comfort, devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit – a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contest of athletic youths, and the laughter of happy maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age. The home, in short, of a people living the life that God desires that men should live. (de Valera, 1943: 205)

In fact, de Valera had facilitated the Harvard research, as had the Catholic hierarchy. The implicit privileged moral status of Arensberg and Kimball accorded to rural Irish society sat easily with the official nationalist political mythology of the period. Nor did the study contest the claims of Catholic sociology about what was in accordance with natural law. However, subsequent sociological studies of rural Ireland, Hugh Brody's *Inishkillane: Change and decline in the West of Ireland* (1973) and Nancy Scheper-Hughes *Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics; Mental Illness in Rural Ireland* (1977) revealed disfunctionalities and anomie within the social order that Arensberg and Kimball depicted as offering an admirable way of life.

These later studies identified considerable change whereas Arensberg and Kimball had portrayed an almost unchanged and somewhat static rural idyll. For example, Brody's study showed that by the early 1970s 'Inishkillane' had a population of 231 households, of which 52 were occupied by acutely isolated people – bachelors, spinsters, widowers and widows – who lived alone and had no family or close kin in the area. A further 31 households comprised bachelors or spinsters. An additional 188 unmarried adults shared the remaining households with other family members. Added to this, another 65 couples living alone with no children in the parish amounted to 116 households, or just over half the total in the parish. Brody calculated that only 20 per cent of the parish farms had much of a chance of lasting another generation (1973, 90). His case studies included a bachelor in his late 50s who had been inhibited from marrying by his parents who were now dead. He had lived alone for a decade, became increasingly isolated from the local community partly due to the stigma of mental breakdowns that were a manifestation of his loneliness (105). As the number of local residents fell steadily, the kinds of communal social life documented by Arensberg and Kimball that once had also characterised towns like 'Inishkillane' had gone into decline.

Debates within rural sociology, unlike most other areas, extended to theory as well as to differences of ethnographic findings and the interpretation of these findings. A chain of Irish books and articles followed on from Arensberg and Kimball's work. Rural sociology in particular thus managed to plug into the mainstream of Irish scholarship. It found an international audience because it addressed Ireland's great claim to social and demographic exceptionalism, the Famine and its consequences. Rural sociology became also the only domain of research where interpretative sociology flourished. Much of the rest of sociology at the time was limited in its scope by focusing on social policy and social problems.

Despite its self-imposed limitations, Catholic sociology still seems to have flourished briefly in the 1960s. It did so mainly by using methods and concepts appropriated from other secular sociological traditions. In other words, while the concerns were Catholic ones, the methods were not. Despite this obvious contradiction, the opening of minds indicated at least that some liberalisation process was on the way. Newman's own East Limerick study examined migration from some County Limerick parishes with the aim of fostering sustainable rural communities (Newman, 1961) and exemplified a new openness to debate. Newman first travelled to the United States to consult a number of sociologists on the design of the study. The initial plan had been to bring in outside experts to undertake the research; however, it was subsequently agreed that an Irish graduate would travel to Holland for 'further formation' under the tutelage of a Dutch sociologist who later contributed to its planning and design.

Newman argued that his survey findings provided 'a sober counterbalance to those critics who claimed that lack of adequate marriage opportunity was the primary cause of rural depopulation. In the parishes surveyed, less than a quarter of the 117 persons who had migrated between 1951 and 1956 had married by 1959. The fact that so few married was taken to undermine the hypothesis that obstacles to marriage were compelling reasons for migration' (19). This interpretation was prominently challenged by the then Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Sean Lemass – of all places, in *Christus Rex*. Lemass argued that Newman's findings indicated that social reasons for migration predominated over economic ones. He added that it was also the case that young men and women from rural areas and smaller towns found it easier to go Britain for employment than to migrate to other parts of Ireland (Lemass, 1961). With the latter point, Newman concurred. According to his 'theory of rural centrality', in the face of ongoing rural decline, the only way to conserve rural population was to develop a number of towns in each county with adequate social and cultural facilities. For this purpose Newman came up with an index of social provision for towns and villages in Country Limerick, which quantified the availability of public utilities, different kinds of commercial activities (the presence of various kinds of shops, banks, etc), public transport, 'places of assembly' (social facilities such as churches, libraries, public houses, cinemas) and social organisations. In short, Newman's proposal was to concentrate on building up a number of sustainable communities in the country. Where the Arensberg and Kimball and their successors sought to observe rural society, the purported aim of Catholic sociologists was to preserve it, even though they signalled – as the discussion between Newman and Lemass showed – a new willingness to debate.

In line with a tradition that ranged from Beaumont and Martineau to Arensberg and Kimball, quite a few of the standard works on Ireland in political science, anthropology, and sociology continued to be written by foreign academics and visiting researchers (Lee, 1989: 623). One such contributor was Alexander Humphries, an American Jesuit. His study, *New Dubliners: Urbanization and the Irish* (1966) focussed on familial relationships. It too was regarded as a follow-up study to Arensberg and Kimball's earlier analysis of rural family structures (2) just that this time the focus was on the city. Humphries compared urban family structures with those characteristic of rural Ireland three decades earlier. The 'new Dubliners', country people who migrated to Dublin found there 'the same over-arching Irish culture' and differences that they experienced were not, he argued, due to ideological variations but 'the effects of the distinctive way the modern city organizes its life' (4). The effects of urbanisation were seen to affect Catholic attitudes and practices but not, so the author argued, to the extent that had sometimes been claimed (5). The social systems that defined rural economic and familial relationships also influenced the terms of migration from such communities, including moving to Dublin (17). Arensberg and Kimball had charted the customs that enabled the small farm family to retain its identity and status in the community. Marriages coincided with the inheritance of land. Dowries received into the family made it possible for the heir's sisters to marry in turn. Other siblings who wished to remain on the farm had to accept subordinate roles and were not permitted to marry. Migration to Dublin or emigration was part of this system of familial regulation, which secured the family farm from one generation to the next.

Notwithstanding such continuities and ongoing relationships between new Dubliners and their rural families, the new urban dwellers became subject to other influences including secularism, particularly its 'individualistic variety' associated with English liberalism, and the role of larger social organisations and non-familial agencies in weakening inter-familial solidarity traditionally based on kinship relations and neighbourliness (29). The regular and extensive economic cooperation between rural kin and neighbours and the channelling of trade along familial lines had virtually disappeared among new Dubliners (36). Urban marriage patterns identified by Humphries were no less providential than those of their rural kin even if the purpose was no longer to protect family land and if the social sanctions for deviance were less severe. Early marriages were frowned upon within artisan class families.

Similarly, Fr Liam Ryan's *Social Dynamite: A Study of Early School Leavers* (1967) was a landmark study of urban poverty in Ireland; it paralleled research conducted in other countries at the time. Actually, Ryan's study had been the first survey work to be commissioned by *Christus Rex*. The previous year, he had published an empirical analysis of unequal access to university education on the basis of social class (Ryan, 1966). *Social Dynamite* was a sequel to that and emphasised the role of educational disadvantage in creating urban inequalities. It was based on qualitative research undertaken in 1965 and 1966 of 100 respondents between 14 and 16 years, all of them either leaving school or attending the one-day-a-week schools put in place to allow them to remain (technically) in education until reaching the new statutory school leaving age. Ryan's starting place was that about one-third of all school leavers had been condemned to unskilled labour, unemployment, or emigration. Ryan argued that the introduction of free secondary education of itself would not solve the problem. There was a need to take into account the 'total situation' of a child's life rather than focus on poverty and income levels alone.

The frankness about sexuality distinguished *Social Dynamite* from other reports.[7] What was also new was the qualitative methodology employed by Ryan. Whilst earlier clerical surveys canvassed the opinions of other priests, Ryan went straight to the source by conducting interviews with 50 boys and 50 girls. The local clergy, teachers, police, social workers and shopkeepers were also interviewed to place the information in proper context. For Ryan it was crucial that the research reflected the world of youth as it was experienced by themselves. Thus, the study symbolised a noticeable change; it was no longer enough to repeat the value-laden mantra of Catholic sociology.

In order to be plausibly Catholic, sociology had to demonstrate that it was possible to be of Catholic faith but still produce sociological work worthy of the name. Such change was perhaps most noticeable in the newly founded journal *Social Studies* under the editorship of Ryan. Both the editor and the new journal replaced *Christus Rex* and Newman. Ryan also succeeded Newman as Professor of Sociology at Maynooth. *Social Studies*, unlike its predecessor, did not limit its contents to articles that accorded with Catholic doctrine.

By the end of the 1960s, sociology was a university subject in St Patrick's College, Maynooth; University College Cork; and University College Dublin. University College Galway appointed a joint Chair in Politics and Sociology in 1969. Trinity College Dublin remained outside the Catholic sphere of influence and the changes noted; it did not appoint a Chair of Sociology until 1974. Maynooth continued longest to be dominated by clerical academics. St Patrick's College was in essence a seminary that transformed under Newman's leadership as university president into a liberal arts college. UCD did not appoint a lay Professor of Politics until 1984. This was indeed remarkable and hints almost at some form of hibernation due to non-decision at a higher level. As one observer has pointed out, this was the very period when the expansion of education in Ireland became a social and political issue (Lee, 1989: 587).

The Catholic Archbishop of Dublin effectively still controlled the appointments to five UCD Chairs in Ethics and Politics, Logic and Psychology, Education, Sociology and Metaphysics. The professors who held these Chairs were clergy. As put by Tom Garvin, who experienced this system as an undergraduate and who would later become UCD Professor of Politics, the names of individual departments

> (...) reflected nineteenth-century scholastic ideas as to how philosophical enquiry should be broken up. Ethics is the science of how one should behave, and Politics is the science of how one does behave, or so someone appears

> to have thought back in 1908, when this arrangement was dreamed up. Similarly, Logic was the science of how one should think, Metaphysics, or the science of that which is beyond the natural world, presided (naturally) over Philosophy and kept a baleful idea out for the possible infiltration of Politics and Psychology by all kinds of terrible people, and in particular by the ideas of those two brilliant Jews, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. (1998: 309)

John Whyte had to resign from the Politics Department in 1966. He had been prevented by his professor, Fr Conor Ward (later to become the Head of Sociology at UCD), from studying the Irish Church-State relationship from a critical point of view. Whyte finally managed to complete his book at Belfast's Queen's University. *Church and State in Modern Ireland* (1971) was to become a modern classic. White later returned to UCD (in 1984), but it should be remembered that he first was forced to leave in order to come back.[8]

Despite such examples and the fact that Ireland seems to have been under Catholic hegemony and control, the 1960s witnessed signs of growing secularisation, increased urbanisation, and the expansion of education. This was to a large extent due to Ireland subscription to pursuing a new technocratic developmental nation-building project, exemplified best perhaps by the joint Irish government/OECD report *Investment in Education* (1965), stewarded by UCD Professor of Economics Patrick Lynch. A few years earlier, in 1963, Lynch had established a Social Research Committee at the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) to inform public policy. Lynch, when he had been a civil servant had also been an active member of the SSIS; and the civil service had long been an audience for statistical data. During the 1960s the idea that it might take social research seriously was mooted (Lee, 1989: 621).[9]

The post-1950s generation of Irish developmentalists, exemplified in politics by Lemass, in the civil service by T. K. Whitaker and in academia by Lynch, were able to pursue the modernisation agenda partly because of the decline of cultural nationalism as a political project. Catholicism, and more specifically Catholic sociology, was also apparently unable to come up with viable alternatives for the future. In political and academic debates, to caricature this only a little, OECD reports came to replace the papal encyclicals that set out the theory of Catholic sociology (Fanning, 2008: 190).

Even before the institutional demise of Catholic sociology a significant social research infrastructure had begun to develop outside the remit of universities. The Economic Research Institute (ERI) had been founded in 1960, with funding obtained from the Ford Foundation. Whitaker played a major role in this by relying on networks that Irish government officials had developed at the United Nations. Because this philanthropic organisation preferred to deal with non-governmental organisations, the funding agreement was with the SSSI. Its founding director, Roy Geary, was an Irish economist who had been working for the United Nations in New York. All four of the initial senior researchers employed by Geary were recruited from outside Ireland, as were eventually their later replacements. From the outset the ERI achieved a high level of publication output. Within five years four ERI researchers had moved on to take up Chairs in Economics at Irish or British universities (Kennedy, 1993: 231). The institute's junior staff were, for the most part, recruited from Irish universities. Although the ERI grew out of the SSSI, Geary was critical of what he called 'literary economics' (ibid.). His emphasis, and that of the ERI, was on the development of econometrics. This would have consequences for sociology when in 1966 the ERI expanded its remit to become the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI).

The expansion came about when the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) set up a Social Research Committee (SRC) in 1963 with the goal of soliciting non-exchequer funding. The UN Social Affairs Division appointed Henning Friss, then Director of the Danish National Institute for Social Research, to 'report on the extent to which the needs for empirical social research exist in Ireland' (Kennedy, 1993: 240). In his response to the Friss Report (1965) Geary claimed that there was no valid distinction between social and economic research as this was defined by the ERI (ibid.). To a considerable extent the new ESRI defined social research in econometric terms, and this in time would exert considerable influence over sociology in Ireland. For example, its journal, *The Economic and Social Review* (founded in 1969) was quantitative in focus. The ESRI developed into the most prominent and influential producer of social research in Ireland. It relied heavily on data collection and empirical social science methods and was openly hostile to other sociological pursuits and traditions. This antipathy would find expression, in the decades that followed, in conflicts with university-based sociologists who endeavoured to pursue other theories and methods – difficult enough to do in an environment where any search for alternatives had long been blocked by Catholicism.

For almost half a century sociology remained dominated by Catholic sociology. It succeeded because it managed to present itself as the only alternative after the crowding-out of the suspect 'English dominated' political economy. After Independence, Irish political nationalism and Catholicism opted for a division of labour: Catholicism was to deliver on educational grounds, including higher education, as long as the Catholic leadership would not challenge the newly gained political independence. While a Catholic sociology began to dominate, new and fresh thinking came only from abroad in the form of American social anthropology. However, in the Irish context of the time a *fait accompli* was achieved in which the structural functional approach of social anthropology sat comfortably with the social and political status quo. For a period it seemed that the only progress being made was in rural sociology. Towards the end of the 1960s Catholic sociology opened up but it seemed too little too late. The new Irish modernisation project demanded better and more reliable sociological analysis than the gospel of Catholic sociology was able to provide. To be sure, sociology underwent a significant institutionalisation process but at the same time that founding process was hindered by Catholic and nationalist ideology.

Baehr and O'Brien rightly emphasised the political dimensions of the discipline's founding process; however, in Ireland, this took on a distinct ideological meaning because in the crucial founding period approaches to sociology that flourished elsewhere were crowded out. The institutionalisation of Catholic sociology stymied the development of the discipline for almost half a century. There existed clearly some continuity in terms of discursive elements: in the course of the first 50 years after Independence, nationalist ideas and Catholic thought, which had begun to take shape in the course of the nineteenth century, had become omnipresent. Before Independence, these had functioned in opposition to the powers that be. For half a century after Independence, these sought to defend the status quo. The demise of Catholic sociology proved to be an early harbinger of the wider decline of Catholic power. However, it nevertheless provided the foundations for the subsequent institutional development of sociology in Ireland.

Notes

1 This cannot be the place to explain all the details of how the Irish educational system works. Suffice to say that Catholic influence before Independence fulfilled a very different function since it saw itself as operating mainly in

opposition to the 'official' British-dominated Protestant form of learning. In contrast, in the new Irish Free State, Catholic influence became predominant. This change from oppositional force to becoming a state building and 'official' character-forming exercise led to major anomalies. For example, TCD, which since its foundation during the reign of Elizabeth I had been regarded as the Protestant university, was now funded mainly by the new Irish Free State, and took in some Catholic students. UCD, founded originally as a Catholic university to challenge Protestant higher learning, became part of the new National University of Ireland, together with the non-denominational Universities of Cork and Galway that were founded in 1845 (at the same time as Queen's University Belfast). These attracted mostly Catholic students and came to be strongly influenced by the Catholic Church. Maynooth was founded in 1795 as a Catholic seminary.

2 Neo-Thomism found its first full expression in the 1891 papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, a document aimed at Europe's Catholic working class (Leo XIII, 1891). *Rerum Novarum* idealised the pre-Enlightenment and pre-capitalist Middle Ages as the form of society that most epitomised the Christian ideal of social solidarity.

3 The same Catholic Truth Society pamphlet, *The Social Teachings of James Connolly*, also argued that Connolly was not a true Marxist because he was hardly a historical materialist in the full sense of believing that religion was merely the expression of material conditions (McKenna, 1921).

4 The Church, according to Connolly, was 'ever counselling humility, but sitting in the seats of the mighty; ever patching up the diseased and broken wrecks of an unjust social system, but blessing the system which made the wrecks and spread the disease; ever running divine discontent and pity into the ground as the lightning rod runs and dissipates lightning, instead of gathering it and directing it for social righteousness as the electric battery generates and directs electricity for social use' (Connolly, 1910b).

5 It is perhaps noteworthy here that Arensberg and Kimball had previously worked as student fieldworks on the pioneering Yanky City community studies and ethnographies led by William Lloyd Warner that had resulted in monographs including *The Social Life of a Modern Community* (1941) and *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups* (1945).

6 Because the Famine and the peculiarities of the Irish population question loomed so large the study of demography came to be institutionalised as a university research subject. During the 1960s, K. H. O'Connell, author of the seminal *The Population of Ireland, 1750–1845* (1950), set up a department of economic history in Queen's University Belfast that had considerable intellectual influence on demography scholarship in other Irish universities.

7 In *Social Dynamite,* Ryan described the difficulties encountered by interviewees in their own frank language. As put by one respondent: 'At present you must

have four children to qualify for a house. But how can they have children. They live either with a relative for a while. Then they get thrown out and move into the City Home. He is put on one side, and she on another. Where are they supposed to have sex; is it in the street? These were young married people' (40).

8 By comparison economics as an academic subject experienced far less clerical control. By 1921 there were already five economics or political economy chairs in Ireland (Lee, 1989: 599). It was obvious that economists had achieved a higher degree of both independence from the Church and influence upon the state. This was far beyond what sociologists would ever be able to achieve.

9 The kinds of research that flourished built both upon the presumptions and the institutions of political economy. It reflected a re-emphasis on improving the Irish as a means of achieving economic growth. Nineteenth century political economy in Ireland might be interpreted as a vehicle for concerned reform, yet was also the bearer of a colonial civilizing mission (Boylan and Foley, 1992). In theory it posited a natural harmony if free markets and individual self-interest was allowed to prevail. In practice it was concerned with moral education and provident behaviour that in essence amounted to a top down dissemination of social habits. Education was the vehicle that Whately imagined might bring about the improvement of the Irish. But what came to pass included the internalisation of prudential habits within family structures that were also explicitly economic units. Thus, Catholicism came to facilitate the social regulation of Ireland's post-Famine moral economy.

4

Institutional Growth

Abstract: *The early 1970s marked the slow decline of Catholic sociology. The sociology that emerged from its ruins was marked by the recruitment of a number of sociologists from outside of Ireland; however, despite such changes, research by Irish sociologists remained to a large extent focused on Ireland. There was significant institutional growth but any progress was hindered by tensions between different research agendas, epistemological concerns and interests, mainly but not only between empirically oriented sociologists employed by research institutes and university-based sociologists who pursued different research agendas.*

Keywords: ESRI; internationalisation; National University of Ireland; Northern Ireland; research agendas

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The early 1970s witnessed a significant expansion of higher education, and as part of that, an expansion of the social sciences and sociology. This was mainly in response to the rapidly changing economic, social, and cultural conditions, particularly the change from a rural dominated Ireland to a more modern, urban society, a change that was perhaps more visible in Dublin and Cork and in the North than elsewhere in Ireland. The 1970s saw the expansion of sociology within the National University of Ireland (NUI) and outside the NUI system, at Trinity College Dublin (TCD). With the exception of the latter, there still remained a considerable Catholic influence in all these sociology departments. However, a gradual secularisation of both academic staff and ethos occurred from the early 1980s onwards. Slowly but steadily Ireland's universities opened up to Europe and beyond. In its wake sociology in Ireland became to some extent internationalised (both in terms of personnel and in relation to themes and topics) and continued to become even more so during the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Three events suggested that the early 1970s heralded the beginning of a new era of sociology in Ireland. First, in 1970, Damien Hannan, a rural sociologist and sociologist of education, employed by the ESRI became the first lay professor of sociology at University College Cork (UCC). This appointment would mark the beginning of the slow end of Catholic sociology's hegemony. Second, the replacement of *Christus Rex* by *Social Studies* signalled not only the existence of a growing secular trend but also that Catholicism was trying to adjust. In an article, published in the final issue of *Christus Rex*, Rev. Jeremiah Newman discussed for the first time secular ideas and authors that he, as editor, had previously kept out of the journal. Newman's 'glasnost' article referred to hitherto unmentioned social scientists ranging from Herbert Marcuse, Ferdinand Tönnies, John Kenneth Galbraith, Desmond Morris, Thorsten Veblen, Lloyd White, Marshall McLuhan to Richard Hoggart (Newman, 1970). Although the first issue of *Social Studies*, published in 1972, described itself still as a journal of the Christus Rex Society and while its editorial referred to the journal's Christian remit, the difference with its predecessor was the marked absence of any requirement that articles had to accord with Catholic doctrine. For the first time the clerics on the editorial board were also joined by two lay members. One, Jerome Connolly, worked for the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, a body that represented the Catholic Hierarchy; the other, Eileen Kane, was a lecturer in anthropology from Maynooth.

The journal was a huge improvement on *Christus Rex* and served as a more open platform for research, scholarship and debate related to the social sciences in Ireland. Six issues were published per annum. All the 1972 issues contained bibliographic articles by Maire Nic Ghiolla Phadraig (UCD) that identified a substantial body of social science research literature both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland. The first such bibliography focused on 'Social Problems and Social Services in Ireland'. It included books and research reports based on post-1950 field work along with post-1960 journal articles, reports on social services, and unpublished M.Soc.Sci theses (Nic Ghiolla Phadraig, 1972). Subsequent and equally comprehensive bibliographies dealt with the sociology of religion, the sociology of education, social aspects of the legal system, politics and administration, demography, emigration, rural and urban sociology, and economic sociology (Nic Ghiolla Phadraig, 1972a, 1972b, 1972c, and 1972d).

What was evident from these bibliographies was that there had been a substantial acceleration, accumulation, and thematic spread of research and publication in the course of one decade, ranging from the social and psychological characteristics of young offenders, children's health, the care of the aged, unmarried mothers, drinking among young people, mental illness, community development, research on social needs of communities, alcoholism, drug use, rural development, plans for the settlement of Travelling People, welfare rights and entitlements.

The third and perhaps symbolically most important event was the founding of the Sociological Association of Ireland (SAI). A first meeting took place in May 1973 in Dublin. This meeting was attended by two dozen sociologists from both north and south of the border. A constitution was drafted, which was officially adopted at the first annual conference in Dublin in the following year. In 1975, there were some 85 members, increasing to 104 in 1976 and rising to a peak with 189 members in 1979 (Kelly, 2011, Appendix). Although the association had started out as an all-Ireland project it would take until 1980 before an annual meeting could take place in the North, at the University of Ulster. Appropriately, for the time, the conference theme was 'States in Ireland: Power and Conflict'.

What flourished during the 1970s was mostly empirical sociology. There was scant evidence of flowering of the kinds of secular social theory that *Christus Rex* had sought to block. In a critical article in *Social Studies* in 1975 Tony Fahey argued that none of the work produced by

Irish sociologists went beyond a common-sense view of society or contained insights about social problems that could not have been discovered by a good critical journalist. He suggested that no systematic attempt had been made to use more sophisticated theoretical frameworks and concepts. The toothless character of much of sociology revealed itself in the piecemeal and often superficial treatment of social problems. Sociology in Ireland, Fahey argued, within the university and within state-sponsored bodies had merged harmoniously with the established political-industrial system, sharing its ideals and common sense. What Fahey hinted at was that the declining influence of religion and nationalist mythology had created a vacuum that had not yet been filled with anything meaningful in terms of sociological research. What was missing still was an intellectual movement that might challenge the complacency of post-Catholic sociology that lacked critical sociological imagination. *Social Studies,* for its part, focused mostly on Irish topics, mainly by relying on empirical methodologies. Only about one-fifth of all articles was dedicated to the discussion of sociological theories.[1]

Fahey pointed out the obvious: Ireland had no indigenous equivalents of a Marx, Durkheim or Weber. In contrast, Irish Studies, rooted in the work of writers of the calibre of W. B. Yeats, James Joyce or Samuel Beckett flourished not just in Irish universities but had established Chairs, graduate programmes, and academic journals in other countries, especially in the United States. Catholic sociology could not possibly compete with this because almost by definition it intended to keep other kinds of sociological imagination at bay. While it remained open to social research it had sought to smother the influence of anything that smelled of secular sociology for a long time and this legacy proved hard to overcome. To complicate matters, even after having gained independence Ireland had very much remained under England's intellectual influence. This contributed to delaying the development of a range of academic disciplines, particularly in the social sciences (with the exception perhaps of economics).[2] Problems often tended to be defined by academics in imported terms. Analytical tools, Lee argued, 'were rarely refined and honed to respond to the specific challenge of understanding the Irish situation.' Instead, social problems were defined and analysed in conformity with imported assumptions or, 'to put it more paradoxically, the answers defined the questions.' The theory gap, according to Lee, was that conceptual approaches designed to understand larger societies were not easily adaptable to address the Irish case (all quotes in ibid.: 628).

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One obvious response to the homemade lack of theory and theorists has been the attempt to import academic expertise. Few observers could miss out on the irony that in 1970 Michel Peillon, a Marxist sociologist from France, had been hired temporarily by Fr James Kavanagh for the purpose of introducing Marx to UCD students. (Peillon was later contracted by Maynooth where he remained until his retirement in 2009.) Peillon went on to produce *Contemporary Irish Society: An Introduction* (1982), Ireland's first proper sociological monograph, as distinct from a work of social anthropology, political economy, social administration, or Catholic thought. It set out a broadly Marxist analysis of contemporary Ireland focusing, as one would expect, on social class, which led him to a critical discussion of power relations derived from the said class distinctions. Rather than examining rural change and urbanisation as Catholic sociologists had done, he considered the Church as an interest group alongside other interest groups. In Peillon's analysis, groups such as farmers, the working class, the bourgeoisie, and the state identified interests and often pursued contradictory projects. He argued, for example, that the drive for economic growth had become the principle preoccupation and that the Church had won a place in the state's project only in so far as it had remained the main provider of education and in the field of social policy. For him, that was also the main reason for the state's continued protection of the Church.

Peillon's book was one of the first attempts comprehensively to analyse Irish society. Another was *Ireland: A Sociological Profile*, edited by Patrick Clancy, Sheelagh Drudy, Kathleen Lynch and Lyam Dowd, the former three all sociologists of education from UCD, the latter a generalist from Queen's Belfast (Clancy et al, 1986). The first two parts of the book focused on the social structure and institutions of both the Republic and Northern Ireland while the third part dealt with 'Issues and Processes in Irish Society'. Topic of discussions ranged from demography, rural social change, industrialisation and employment, stratification and social class, the reproduction of the class system through the education system, to religion, marriage and the family. The effect was a comparative sociological analysis of both the Republic and Northern Ireland. Interestingly, the introduction located the contributions as standing between two opposite approaches on the sociological spectrum. The overwhelming majority of chapters were seen as analysing a 'structural' component by which the editors meant that 'the primary source of evidence in the majority of cases is statistical rather than ethnographic'. In contrast, just one contribution, an ethnographic study of Northern Ireland, followed a more interpretative approach.

Another key study *Understanding Irish Society: State, Class and Social Development in the Republic of Ireland* (1990), edited by Richard Breen, Damian Hannan, David Rottman and Christopher Whelan was a synthesis of a decade of empirical research on social change. Except for Rottman, the authors were all ESRI researchers (Hannan had returned to the ESRI from UCC). The book was as much an economic history of Ireland as a sociological one, an analysis of the effectiveness of Irish economic policy, as a Weber and Goldthorpe–influenced sociological analysis of the Irish state. *Understanding Irish Society* concluded that the main determinant of the class structure of the Republic of Ireland was the state, whether through the payment of welfare benefits or as a result of the significant participation of the labour market that was employed directly or indirectly by the state.

Understanding Irish Society located its analysis of the Irish case in comparative sociological debates on variations of capitalism and on the nature and role of the state (Breen et al, 1990). Methodologically, it exemplified the dominant statistical strain within a discipline in which interpretative, ethnographic, and qualitative research enjoyed considerably lower status. *Understanding Contemporary Ireland* underlined the ESRI's quantitative approach to sociology. It drew extensively on Irish political science and economic history literatures rather than the work of sociologists like Peillon, who were based in the universities.

Obvious tensions existed between a rather narrowly defined, yet highly productive and verifiably positivist sociology as most ESRI-affiliated sociologists understood it, and a very different understanding of the subject of mainly university-based sociologists who had, conceptually and theoretically speaking, very different aspirations for the discipline. Some participants in the Royal Irish Academy (RIA) conference that took place in 1988 – the topic was *The State of Social Science Research in Ireland* – went as far as to suggest that the discipline was perhaps in deep crisis. A new schism was to be inferred within which theory stood little chance of being taken seriously unless it somehow adapted itself to the social problem agenda that defined the remit of the dominant quantitative strand of sociology in Ireland.

The main reason to call the RIA conference had been a proposal to establish a Social Science Research Council with the aim to unite the discipline and direct research funding towards university-based

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researchers. Such a proposal was supported by Liam O'Dowd from Queen's University who undertook the difficult and challenging task to present an overview of the state of sociology in the 1980s. In his talk O'Dowd noted that sociology had developed earlier in the South than in the North due to the interest of Catholic social philosophers in empirical research. He argued that since the late-1960s the development of empirical social research in the Republic had been bound up with the expansion of state institutions. The social change accompanying economic modernisation provided a 'loose sociological framework' in the South. The North, just like the South, was a peripheral open economy with high rates of unemployment and associated social problems. In the North sociology had a dual focus – on violence and ethnic conflict on one hand and upon the impact of British social and economic policies on the other. In the North, sociologists were largely recruited from Britain, while in the Republic nearly one-third of university sociologists were also recruited from outside Ireland, just not necessarily from Britain. However, despite such developments, there had been little recruitment to full-time permanent posts since 1980 and particularly in the wake of cutbacks to education funding and 'the growing unpopularity of social science in some political circles' (O'Dowd, 1988: 9).

In his response to O'Dowd, the ESRI's Damian Hannan delivered a withering attack on university-based sociologists and their complaints about perceived barriers to undertaking research that the proposed Social Science Research Council was meant to address. He criticised particularly what he regarded as the methodological weakness of most university-based sociology since the 1960s. As Hannan saw it, this weakness was the result of a rejection of empiricism and positivism and the inability to come up with an alternative epistemological consensus that enabled university academics to work together:

> Basically, three contending paradigms – neo-positivist, phenomenological, and neo-Marxist – have co-existed in uneasy alliance or unresolved or hidden conflict with each other, often within the same department. These contending and unresolved theoretical methodological positions have weakened rather than enriched the discipline. Only when such paradigmatic agreements exist among a group of colleagues within an institution – as they do, I think, within the ESRI as well as in some other organisations – can one develop that *esprit de corps* and those cooperative morale-boosting colleague relationships that are the necessary prerequisites for a good research organisation. (Hannan in O'Dowd, 1988: 28)

The conflicts that Hannan identified were obviously played out between the ESRI and the universities. Hannan complained about the gaps in research skills of Irish sociology graduates on one side and those in social sciences on the other, such as economics and geography (the latter being obviously those who were more likely to be hired by the ESRI). Many university-based sociologists, he argued, had marginalised themselves by rejecting Popper's rules of evidence that counted in public policy research and failed to keep up with advances in statistics. He interpreted O'Dowd's call for a Social Science Research Institute that would fund university-based research as an exercise in self-delusion:

> The assumption is that only if resources were made available and effective strategic planning and coordination were carried out by the 'philosopher kings' of an idealised future SSRC, the day could be saved not only from the non-institute sector but would also bring necessary reform to the state sector bodies themselves. (1988: 28)

Hannan's diatribe captured perhaps how some members of the ESRI perceived university sociologists and *vice versa*, but his declared epistemological fundamentalism was perhaps also an attempt to come to terms with recent changes in the ESRI. Funding cuts and the enmity of Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Charles Haughey had recently changed the ESRI from a state-funded institute whose members could determine their own research programmes to a self-funding contract research organisation. The ESRI had, in effect, been something close to the ideal SSRC now being mooted. Hannan's urgently sounding rhetoric aimed thus as much at the ESRI as at anyone else. Hannon had worked in the ESRI from the late 1960s. He became Professor of Sociology in Cork but returned to the ESRI after a few years apparently frustrated with the quality of sociology there. He owed his professorship to his contributions to rural sociology and the sociology of education. *Understanding Irish Society* drew on research funded by the ESRI at a time when the ESRI members could determine their own programme of research and were funded entirely by the Department of Finance to do so. Once this financial source was lost, the capacity of ESRI members to determine the kind and scope of their own research would, predictably, diminish.

The 1990s economic recovery precipitated growing investment in higher education. Three developments were noticeable; first, the links with the EU and, more recently, the impact immigration has had. Second, Irish academic migrants, including doctoral students, increasingly began to move back and forth between Ireland and abroad. At the same time returnees and new blood, that is, academics from both the EU and North America brought new life and ideas to the island. As a result, sociology in Ireland began slowly but steadily to internationalise. Third, with increasing international contact relationships with sociologists in other countries improved, sometimes to such an extent that such contacts became institutionalised. Some of the mentioned contacts led to new waves of perception. Finally, the new paradigms, themes, and topics, so it was hoped, would also be reflected in a much bigger and better output.

Perhaps the most representative book from the time period of the take off of sociology was the revised and expanded version of Clancy, Drudy, Lynch and O'Dowd's book, now re-titled *Irish Society: Sociological Perspectives,* which appeared in 1995. It contained sections on population, work and social change, class politics and the state and education, culture, and social movements, and in each of the three sections also chapters on Northern Ireland. The opening chapter defined the discipline of sociology in line with themes that had developed in conjunction with its classical cannon: Marx (class and conflict), Durkheim (function, order, and consensus), Weber (legitimacy, power, and social stratification). More so and better than its predecessor, it connected these themes to Irish conditions. Additionally, so the editors argued, sociology now had to contend with postmodernist challenges such as fragmented social groups and related identities. As a consequence, Irish sociology faced the challenge of sub-fields or hyphenated sociologies having little contact with each other (Clancy et al, 1995: 15).

Another seminal volume, *Women and Irish Society* (1997), edited by Anne Byrne and Madeleine Leonard, contained essays from 35 female social scientists (and some males) on education, family, employment, rural society health, sexuality, reproduction, violence, and politics. Many of these became prominent social researchers and academics in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland. The editors foreword traced a history of Irish scholarship about and by women that grew out of and reflected post-1970s second-generation feminism in Ireland and a set of ideas about gender that developed first outside of Ireland but found later expression within Irish society including academic debate. Ever since its emergence as a distinct academic field, feminist critics in Ireland have emphasised the persistence of gender-based inequalities within education in general and Irish higher education in particular.[3]

Institutionally speaking, the take-off of sociology continued. At UCD the growth was particularly noticeable. Its Department of Social Science had become too big and separated into a Department of Social Policy and Social Work and a Department of Sociology. In 1993, the latter appointed Stephen Mennell to Chair. Mennell, who had worked with Norbert Elias, was a leading expert in the sociology of food but had also published widely in other sociological areas (Mennell, 1974, 1996). His research collaborators were mostly fellow Eliasian scholars based in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Together with his wife Barbara, he also co-founded the University College Dublin Press. The press went on to become Ireland's largest academic press with an extensive list of history and social science titles. This included the 18-volume set of Norbert Elias' collected works in English (published between 2006 and 2012). Another key figure in UCD's sociology department was Pat Clancy, a former Irish civil servant whose research focused on education and, within that, particularly Irish higher education. However, tensions between a national Irish sociology and a sociology that was based in Ireland but wanted to go beyond Irish borders remained visible: whilst UCD hired a number of non-Irish sociologists most people in the department were Irish, researched Irish topics and published mostly in Irish periodicals such as *The Irish Journal of Sociology*.

Similar processes occurred in other departments of the National University. Arpad Szakolczai, who became Professor of Sociology at UCC in 1992, published mainly on historical sociology, especially Weber and Foucault (2003, 2013). Still, most of the other sociologists in Cork were Irish and remained focused on Irish themes. These included the sociology of education (O'Sullivan, 2005) and crime and deprivation (Hourigan, 2011). Galway continued to have a particularly strong Irish research focus (Byrne, Edmonston and Varley, 2001; Varley and Curtin, 2002). An exception to the rule was Sinica Malesevic who later went on to become Chair of Sociology at UCD (in 2011). His work on the sociology of war, violence, and nationalism had an international dimension and was certainly not reducible to the Irish case (Malesevic, 2010, 2013). Similarly, the Irish-Argentinean Ronaldo Munck, who became Professor of Sociology at Dublin City University, and who published extensively on sociological theory (Munck, 1999, 2002). However, Munck has also written about the impact of globalisation on Ireland (Munck, 2003) and co-edited (together with Bryan Fanning) the open access journal *Translocations* which focused on immigration and social change in Ireland.

In 1969, John Jackson became Professor of Social Theory and Institutions in at Queen's University Belfast. He had published a pioneering study *The Irish in Britain* (1963). However, it was only in 1977 that a Department of Sociology was established, with Roy Willis appointed as Professor. It was Liam O'Dowd, one of his successors, who more than any other sociologist in Ireland grappled with the state of the discipline and the sociology of intellectual life in Ireland (O'Dowd, 1988, 1991, 1996). O'Dowd continued also to publish extensively on the sociological aspects of the Northern Ireland conflict (O'Dowd, Rolston and Tomlinson, 1980; Anderson and O'Dowd, 1999). A huge volume of academic publications have emerged out of the 'Troubles'. For example, John Brewer, President of the British Sociological Association from 2009 to 2012, who has held posts in QUB twice during his long and distinguished career, has published extensively on the Northern Ireland conflict and the subsequent peace process (Brewer, 2010; Brewer, Teeney and Higgins, 2011). It is worthwhile pointing out in this context that writings on the North's ethno-national conflict have proved attractive not just to social scientists in Northern and Southern Ireland but to an international audience, more so than any other Irish topic.

At Trinity College Dublin (TCD) sociology as a subject appeared first on the curriculum in 1968. In 1975 John Jackson had became the first Chair of Sociology there and remained in that position until he retired in 1997. In contrast to the sociology departments of the NUI universities many key members of the TCD department were either English or English educated (like Jackson) or had some other strong links with the United Kingdom. Jackson was succeeded by Robert Holton as Chair of Sociology (2001–8). From 2010 onwards, TCD entered into a strategic teaching and research partnership with the Economic and Social Research (ESRI). In 2014 Richard Layte from the ESRI was appointed Chair of Sociology after the position of Chair had remained vacant for some time.

Of the notable non-Irish sociologists employed by Irish universities, at first, only Michel Peillon worked on Irish themes. The Irish colleagues he collaborated with at Maynooth have been particularly dynamic in building up the Irish sociological literature. In particular, a series entitled *Irish Sociological Chronicles,* published from 1998 onwards, appealed to a wider public. Its success can partly be explained by its bringing together a wide range of Irish themes and theoretical approaches and researchers from different universities (Peillon and Slater, 1998; Slater and Peillon, 2000; Corcoran and Peillon, 2002; Peillon and Corcoran, 2004).

In 2002, Sean O'Riain became the first non-clerical Professor of Sociology at Maynooth. Unlike the recently appointed Chairs of Sociology at UCD and UCC, he was Irish (returning from the United States), and the focus of his research was also on Ireland. At the same time his work built on the sociology of industrial development attempted by ESRI researchers before these were compelled to become more focused on contract work. As a sociologist of the institutional policy-making and technocratic context of Ireland's economic boom (*The Politics of High-Tech Growth*, 2004) and crisis (*The Rise and Fall of Ireland's Celtic Tiger*, 2014), O'Riain's audience included those who looked at institutions such as the ESRI and other analysts of the Irish economy. To an extent then, O'Riain might be grouped with the former-ESRI researchers who came to be appointed as Chairs: Cristopher Whelan in Sociology at UCD (2009), Brian Nolan in UCD in Social Policy (2009), and Richard Layte in Sociology at TCD (2013).

For much of the first half of the new century's first decade, as a 2002 symposium in response to the publication of the first comprehensive Irish textbook, Hillary Tovey's and Perry Share's *A Sociology of Ireland* (2000)[4] demonstrated, some of the old turf war between the research institutes and the universities still lingered on. The big guns were brought in to deliver the research institute's verdict: John Goldthorpe amplified what appeared to be a long-running schism within the discipline. In his talk, Goldthorpe distinguished between 'sociology of the university departments' and 'sociology of the research centres.' His sympathies lay firmly with the latter. Goldthorpe himself had, together with Christopher Whelan, edited *The Development of Industrial Society in Ireland*, a book that, among other things, 'had its origins in ties built up over two decades' between Nuffield College Oxford and the ESRI. He referred to the fact that a number of ESRI researchers had received their graduate training in the United Kingdom, particularly in quantitative methodologies (Goldthorpe and Whelan, 1992: 2). The point he made by referring to such circumstances was that in his opinion university sociology in Ireland claimed to be pluralistic, but just like Hannan in the 1988 debate, he reiterated that university-based sociology in Ireland was methodologically rather weak; it was poorly integrated with other social science disciplines such as economics and political science, and it tended not to be very comparative. Worse, university sociology tended to attach 'warning labels' when it referred to the sociology of the research centres, using disparaging terms such as 'positivist', 'empiricist'

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or ‘a-theoretical’ (Goldthorpe, O’Dowd, and O’Connor, 2002: 108). Interpretivist sociologists were, as Goldthorpe inferred, at times similarly scathing of the kinds of sociology that he himself championed. For example, an article in the first issue of the *IJS* had referred to the ‘stultifying empiricism’ of *The Economic and Social Review*, the house journal of the ESRI (Bell, 1991: 93).

Another participant in the *IJS* symposium, Liam O’Dowd from Queen’s, criticised Tovey’s and Share’s decision to focus on the Republic of Ireland rather than on Ireland as a whole. ‘Their project was,’ he declared, ‘to “nationalise” the discipline, or more precisely to underline the extent to which sociology and Irish society had been shaped by the Irish state (ibid.: 101).’ O’Dowd’s position was that of a Northern Irish nationalist critical of a partitionist national sociology that excluded the North. However, his criticism of methodological nationalism applied no less to ESRI research, which used mostly data sets for the Republic of Ireland collected by the Irish state. By the beginning of the twenty-first century so he maintained much sociology in the Republic of Ireland still warranted the label ‘Irish sociology’. Whether interpretive or empirical, it was still predominantly focused on Ireland and mostly published for Irish audiences whether in local journals or edited volumes or, in the case of the ESRI, in bulletins and reports aimed at policy makers. In the end, it remained unclear how far O’Dowd’s criticism really went: while his critique of methodological nationalism of those sociological practitioners south of the border and in particular of the ESRI type seemed justified, his own normative approach – a united Ireland – was neither less problematic nor methodologically speaking less nationalist.

In any case, by the late 1990s, a considerable body of sociological literature has increasingly sought to understand Irish society from a range of conceptual vantage points, in ways that could not have been achieved by pursuing a narrow empiricism. Examples of sociological monographs have included analyses of contemporary Northern Irish society (Coulter, 1999), of 1980s Irish emigrants (Corcoran, 1999), Marxist critiques of Irish corporatism and Irish economic development (O’Hearn, 1998; Allen, 2000), sociological analyses of the institutional drivers of Irish economic growth and crisis (O’Riain, 2004; O’Riain, 2014), of Irish language television (Watson, 2003) and the media (Devereux, 2003), sociologies of crime (McCullagh, 1996; Mulcahy, 2006), of accelerated social change (Keohane and Kuhling, 2004) and studies of racism and immigration (Fanning, 2002 and 2009; Loyal, 2011). A number of themed edited volumes have been published (Munck and O'Hearn, 1999; Coulter and Coleman, 2003; Connolly and Hourigan, 2006; Fanning, 2007; Fanning and Munck, 2011; Inglis, 2014). Additionally, there were edited volumes on public intellectuals and public sociology that went beyond the scope of a nationally confined sociology (Fleck, Hess and Lyon, 2009; Fleck and Hess, 2014).

The most prominent university-based sociologist of Ireland from the 1980s onward has perhaps been Tom Inglis, the author of one the few classic Irish sociological monographs, *Moral Monopoly: The Rise and fall of the Catholic Church in Ireland* (1987, revised edition 1998) and a number of other books which mostly focused on the influence of religion on Irish sexuality (Inglis, 1998a; Inglis, 2003). *Moral Monopoly* proved so influential because it radically questioned the Catholic 'master narrative' of post-Famine Ireland by exploring how the Catholic Church acquired a regulatory role in a society where many inheritance and marriage patterns and a number of other taken-for-granted forms of social life had either radically changed or disappeared. The book was widely cited by historians and others outside the sociological discipline who have written about the modernisation of Irish society, the decline of Catholic power, and the regulation of sexuality.

Yet, despite all the developments internationalisation arrived creepingly slowly. Still, most of the papers delivered at SAI conferences in the period from the 1970s to the 1990s focused on Irish topics. By the time *Social Studies* came to be replaced by the *Irish Journal of Sociology* in 1991 the emphasis remained on local and national circumstances and conditions although attempts were now made to locate these within wider and international intellectual debates. For example, some noteworthy ISJ articles focused on the implications of postmodernism (Bell, 1991; Aya, 2004; Saris, 2004) or feminist research methodologies (Lentin, 1993) or on topics such as immigration (Mac An Ghaill, 2002; Feng-Bing, 2009). Other articles exemplified the emergence of a more outward-looking sociology. Examples here were articles that addressed intellectual reactions to 11 September 2001 (Hess, 2004), the Irish fixation with and the limitations of community ideology (Hess, 2007), masculinities (Scheff, 2006; Cleary, 2005) and globalisation (Beck, 2011). To these we can add some monographs that engaged with the wider world. These included a wide range of topics and books: on American society (Mennell, 2007), social stratification (Hess, 2001b), Basque modernisation (Hess, 2009), American social and political thought (Hess, 2001a and Hess, 2014), European poverty measurements (Nolan and Whelan, 2011), and the sociology of war and violence (Malesevic, 2013).

If some of the many sociological analyses of Ireland found a wide audience in Ireland and perhaps in countries where the Irish diaspora is strong, few of the contributions that had an exclusively Irish topic seemed to have found a significant international audience, whether this was indicated by citation indices or publication in higher ranked sociology journals. As pointed out, one exception has been the sociology of the Northern Ireland Conflict. Another exception has been the work of rural sociologists who build on the widely cited works and conceptual debates of social anthropologists. Notable examples here included the work of QUB's Sally Shorthall (1999) and TCD's Hillary Tovey. To take just one example, Tovey's 1997 article on food, environmentalism, and Irish rural sociology became the most cited sociology journal article on an Irish topic. The appeal of such work to Irish and international audiences is perhaps due to not only its engagement with earlier internationally widely cited social anthropological studies of rural Ireland but also its engagement with comparative research issues and debates (Tovey, 1997: 97). Crucially, such rural sociology had a strong theoretical focus from the outset – Arensberg and Kimball's functionalism. When this was challenged subsequently, the result turned out to be a rich theoretical debate. This debate was captured in the 100-page introduction essay by Anne Byrne, Ricca Edmondson, and Tony Varley to the 2001 republication of *Family and Community in Ireland* (Byrne, Edmondson, and Varley, 2001), which is itself a major contribution to the literature.

Another achievement of the early twenty-first century Irish sociology has been the aforementioned *Irish Sociological Chronicles*, edited by Mary Corcoran, Michel Peillon, and Eamonn Slater from Maynooth. Several volumes, each consisting of multiple succinct essays on aspects of recent social change have demonstrated the sociological imagination at its best. Each volume focused on a specific year, beginning with *Encounters with Modern Ireland: A Sociological Chronicle 1995–1996* (Peillon and Slater, 1998). Collectively these volumes depicted a society exhibiting the characteristics of so-called late modernity, having leapfrogged, at least in part, the industrial stage but also a society exposed to the threats and potentialities of globalisation. The essays looked at celebrity culture, suicide, urban gentrification, immigration and cultural commodification. Where a century earlier *céile* dancing had been fostered by Gaelic League cultural nationalists to promote a sense of distinctive Irish identity, now

Broadway-style stage shows such as *Riverdance* commodified and sold such identities to global audiences (O'Connor, 1998: 51) and deserved to be analysed with a critical sociological eye.

In an earlier chapter we described how Catholic sociology emerged to keep secular social theory at bay. In the absence of such theory Catholic sociology permitted narrow empiricism (for all its objections to Comte and positivism). If the empirical tradition dated back to the nineteenth century (statistics and political economy), critiques of what Bacon called 'numbers, weights and measures' dated back to the time of Swift, although his polemics against the number crunchers, most famously in his *Modest Proposal* (1729), had no discernible impact upon the Irish sociological imagination. Later it did not help that post-Catholic sociology experienced serious schisms of its own: on one side the empirical positivism of the ESRI and on the other side an ill-defined amalgam of allegedly 'critical' sociologists of various backgrounds, mainly based in university departments. However, one can also read the situation as one of the glass being half full. The trials and tribulations of sociology in Ireland show that there was actually a common concern – a preoccupation with modernisation.

The problem was not the concern for modernisation but the schisms which followed from such concern: how to achieve it, how to control it, or how to critique it. This brings us back to both Abbott's and Lepenies' take on the historical and fractured development patterns of sociology. What sociology in Ireland lacked and is still lacking is not a common concern or focus but a lack in understanding its own pluralist disciplinary history. Unfortunately the kind of intellectual environment that might have fostered a mutually enriching intellectual pluralism between empirical, interpretive scholarship and other emerging paradigms hardly existed at the time. As Abbott has shown, not only is it perfectly possible to operate a heuristic dualism but also all sociologists, wherever they position themselves on the continuum, are in a sense fractals that embody this dualism. Simply put, all empiricists are to some extent interpretivists and *vice versa.* A more mature and nuanced epistemological discussion might have taken the notion of fractual distinctions on the chin. Similarly, an awareness of how sociology had emerged as a third culture between science and literature, particularly in France and England, could have helped. However, such disciplinary introspection did not occur. This, we are convinced, had partly to do with the wider political and ideological agendas that have affected the university system and the way sociology responded to such agenda setting.

Perhaps the tight link between these agendas and the related two main factions of the discipline were also partly due to size. After all, Ireland is a small constituency and financial support and infrastructure are limited and competitive. Going by membership of the SAI we are talking about a core group of approximately 200 professional sociologists, a small number if we compare this to the 1,600 members of the German Sociological Association or the 14,000 of the American Sociological Association.[5] Surely, such larger groups allow for more differentiation and specialisation, which also means that a constellation in which the state of the discipline is discussed and only theorists and empirically oriented sociologists would be taking part would be unheard of, at least nowadays. This does not mean that discussions about the pros and cons of various sociological approaches and paradigms are not happening in other countries, it just means that the conflict does not always take on the exclusionary rhetoric it did, and to a certain extent still continues to do, in Ireland.

Notes

1 Between 1972 and 1989 articles in *Social Studies* covered the following themes and topics: social policy/social problems (29 contributions), religion (23), Northern Ireland (23), education (14), work/economy (9), family/gender (5), and rural issues (4). Theoretical debates also figured (21 contributions; as tabulated in Kelly, 2011, Appendix).

2 Referring indirectly to E. P. Thompson's critique of French Structuralism, and in particular to Louis Alhusser, J. J. Lee explained the poverty of the Irish sociological imagination in the following terms: 'Reliance on the English model allowed a seductive economy of intellectual effort in Ireland. Irish experience appears sufficiently similar to English to seem merely a deviation, sometimes substantial, more often quaint, but still only a deviation from the English norm, and not a difference in kind. Ireland was not sufficiently backward at independence to seem to require any fundamental reorientation of familiar propositions in the social sciences' (Lee, 1989: 628).

3 For analyses of the relationship between gender, inequality, and higher education, see O'Connor (1999, 2006 and 2010). For a specific focus on how such inequalities are discussed within sociology in Ireland, see Goldthorpe, O'Dowd and O'Connor (2002, 97–109).

4 This book has since been updated and republished several times. It covered much of the same ground as the Clancy, Drudy, Lynch and O'Dowd books

alongside additional areas such as sexuality, crime and deviance, the media, new social movements, environmentalism, and globalisation with some of these later topics framed within debates on post-modernism (Tovey and Share, 2000). Most of the contributions to the 2002 symposium in which the book was discussed were later published in the *IJS*. In terms of format, the successor to *Irish Society – Sociological Perspectives* has been *Contemporary Ireland: A Sociological Map* (2007) which similarly consists of themed chapters by different authors.

5 Having said the numbers for all undergraduate students enrolled in sociology programs at universities in the Republic are still impressive. For 2003/2004 the numbers were as follows: UCD: 1200, UCC: 950, NUIM: 800, UL: 1693, and NUI: 1700 (for the joint degree with politics). No numbers were available from TCD. It should also be added here that these numbers do not distinguish between majors and minors. Traditionally, Irish students study two subjects for their undergraduate degrees (numbers are taken from Kelly, 2011, Appendix).

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Uncertain Future

Abstract: *Although Ireland has experienced globalisation, large-scale immigration, and has been exposed to international debate, it still remains excessively national in its intellectual orientation. This hardly provides a sound basis for the further development of the discipline. At the same time, sociology in Ireland experiences roads not taken; it remains a story without heroes. In this situation, it does not help that the social sciences, including sociology, have become subject not only to serious cuts but also to dubious academic norms within an increasingly market-oriented managerialist university.*

Keywords: future of sociology; Irish Research Council; Irish studies; managerialism; metrics

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As we write this short history of sociology in Ireland (it is the summer of 2014), we find the discipline to be firmly established in all of the island's universities and in a number of institutes of technology. Additionally, the discursive influence of sociology is to be found within a range of other human sciences, academic programmes, and departments. As a taught subject, sociology has flourished in combination with other social science and humanities subjects: a number of universities have strong social science undergraduate programmes, and over the last few decades, there has been continuous growth in the number of students who opt for a social science degree that often combines sociology with other subjects such as social policy or politics or who opt for sociology as part of their Bachelor of Arts degree. There has also been a dispersion of sociology across various academic fields. Academics with doctorates in sociology can now be found teaching in commerce, business studies, economics, politics, social work, social policy, health and illness, medical sociology, European studies, American studies, or criminology programmes. Sociologists have also found employment in various university institutes and research centres.

Crucially, the number of sociology doctorates has expanded considerably since 1990s. Before then, it was not unusual for tenured academics in the Republic not to hold doctorates or to be still in the course of completing their doctorate (in some cases, it took many years to do so). New funding opportunities facilitated this expansion of graduate research. In 1995, the Social Science Research Council was established under the auspices of the Royal Irish Academy (RIA). It had a relatively small budget of almost half a million Irish pounds. Funding opportunities for sociologists further increased with the establishment of the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) in 1999. These developments, first mooted by Liam O'Dowd during the 1988 RIA seminar, have proven important building blocks which have consolidated the institutionalisation of sociology on this island. However, commitments to such policies were seriously undermined by the 2008 economic crisis and the financial repercussions it had for higher education. Funding for social science research, including the funding for doctoral and post-doctoral research either stagnated or went down. In many respects, the current cuts to university budgets and the halt to new recruitment recall the dire times of the 1980s.

Until recently, most of the funding for research came from the IRCHSS and Science Foundation Ireland. During the economic crisis, the IRCHSS was absorbed into a new body: the Irish Research Council (IRC), an institution that offered hugely reduced amounts of funding to doctoral and post-doctoral researchers in the social sciences.

In this critical situation, the growing influence of science research models and metrics on academic outputs is a matter of concern. Increasingly, universities have come to be portrayed as part of a utilitarian knowledge economy where 'the unruly intellectual life of the university is seen as something that needs to be disciplined and corralled' (O'Riain, 2006: 2). Against this, the ideal of academic freedom emphasises and values intellectual inquiry and curiosity within a wider definition of what universities and especially a liberal arts education are supposed to be. It is perhaps worthwhile remembering that Albion Small, one of the institutional founders of the discipline, almost a century ago argued that more than on any other factor, the future of sociology depended on liberal education (Small, 1921).

Ireland never had a great tradition of liberal education in the first place. The universities have variously been beholden to Church, state, and to the imperatives of economic development. The result has arguably been the absence of a sense of purpose that might protect higher education against new forms of technocratic and managerial colonisation. The wider dominance of science models in decisions about research funding, in how research is evaluated, in how academics are promoted, and in how professionalism is defined has worked to undermine the social and human sciences, except where these present themselves as empirically focused. This *realpolitick* hangs like a baleful shadow over debates between empirical and interpretive approaches to sociology. According to the kinds of metrics that have become prevalent in the social sciences – bibliometrics and citation indexes – the empirical approach exemplified by the ESRI has for several decades 'outscored' university-based sociology. Their policy relevance (something that some of the best university-based sociologists never strove for) in turn owed much to the epistemological status of their methodologies in the eyes of the state. One critique of university-based sociology in the post-1970s era might be that it was never sufficiently excellent to win the kinds of praise internationally that might sway (provincial) audiences at home. A few excellent non-Irish sociologists were recruited to sociology departments in the hope, perhaps, of securing a post-Catholic expansion of the discipline. But nowhere was there the level of commitment and investment that followed the establishment of the ERI (later the ESRI).

Yet, university-based sociology has made valuable contributions to the understanding of Irish society that – for all that these might have scored poorly using the kinds of metrics now used to judge scholarship – have found their way into the wider society. What scholars like Goldthorpe missed in disparaging such sociology was that its influence was never just limited to sociology departments. Like other countries, Ireland had its fair share of newly developed sociology-relevant programmes and hyphenated sociologies like the sociology of education, urban sociology, women's studies, equality studies, or interdisciplinary research-led undertakings like the study of social change that for one reason or another – size, differentiation, money, and funding structure – could not always be accommodated and contained within sociology departments. Accordingly, both the South and the North saw their fair share of newly founded institutes, ranging from the Women's Studies Centre at UCG, the Centre for Women's Studies at Queen's, the Centre for Social Justice at UCD, and the Institute for the Study of Social Change (ISSC), later renamed Geary Institute, after the founder of the ESRI, and presently more geared towards economics and social policy than sociology), also at UCD.

The false choice for sociology departments is whether to embrace such hyphenated sociologies (thereby imagining themselves as part of a larger community of sociological scholarship) or to engage in forms of curricular border maintenance to protect the intellectual core or cannon of the discipline. They should do both. A good case can be made for sociology programmes focusing on the core of the discipline and engaging in joint teaching programmes with applied versions of the discipline. Sociology in Ireland throughout its history has faltered from having to serve external masters, be it the pre-independence and post-independence state or the Church in the decades after independence. In this era of hyphenated sociologies, the pressure is arguably one to serve civil society and the ideologies that drive its campaigns and institutions (feminism, anti-racism, human rights, and so on); and at times, it seems, the temptation for the university sociologist is to take on a priestly role. Of course, sociology should reflect dilemmas of the wider society. There is a place for a more public-spirited intellectual debate. That is what often draws students to study sociology or the social sciences. However, the focus must also be on scholarship and intellectual rigour.

Although sociology is and will remain an 'impossible science' (Turner and Turner, 1990), a bit more self-awareness and self-critique might be in order.

To name just a few critical points, first, since the discipline became institutionalised in Ireland, it has produced no major innovator. Second, it does unfortunately not have much local intellectual capital to draw upon because of its fractured history (O'Dowd, 1996; Fanning, 2008). Third, the nativist and methodological impulses behind much sociological research and publication in Ireland are not hugely of interest to international audiences and periodicals. The two main exceptions to this have been the Famine and the conflict in Northern Ireland. Yet, were sociologists in Ireland universally to ignore the Irish case in order to meet criteria for publication in top international journals, and hence, for career advancement, this would be of course the wrong solution. However, an obvious weakness – the lack of comparison and conceptual sophistication – if addressed properly, might hugely benefit both sociology in Ireland and its publics.

As to the first point, sociology in Ireland will have to become more comparative and more focused on transnational dialogue and interdependencies, yet without losing itself in a mass of data or grand theory. Empirical research of the kind that the ESRI have specialised in has been consistently more comparative than other sociological traditions. Of course, comparisons between Ireland and other EU or OECD countries immediately suggest themselves because of the availability of comparative data sets. The intellectual weakness of single-country studies is often the presumption of national exceptionalism. However, although it is true that ESRI-led research covered at least the most important aspects of how Ireland figured in the context of other EU countries and even beyond, this type of research ran all-too often up and down the scales of economic performance indicators and social stratification databases but said precious little about some Irish peculiarities beyond the interpretation of standard data sets. What is lacking is a comprehensive comparative analysis that locates Ireland culturally and historically either by making like-with-like comparisons (e.g. by comparing small European countries or regions with a Catholic tradition) or by working with like-unlike contrasts and scenarios. To date, there has been no systematic comparative analysis of Irish modernisation, although glimpses of what this might look like are suggested by O'Hearn's *Inside the Celtic Tiger: the Irish Economy and the Asian Model* (1998) and O'Riain's *The Politics of High-Tech Growth* (2004). But what these books compare are political economies rather than societies as a whole. They offer a starting place for further and more wide-ranging comparative analyses, but they are hardly comprehensive in their comparison.

Second, comparative perspectives are maybe not the only way forward for sociology. The field of Irish Studies has become perhaps Ireland's most significant intellectual export, with Irish Studies programmes now in place in some leading universities around the world, particularly in the United States. Its success as a distinctive academic field derives from the international reputation of writers such as W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, and many other literary giants. To date, sociology remains institutionally and intellectually marginal within Irish Studies but also within Irish public intellectual life. There are historical reasons for this. Dublin has always been a city of literature – not of sociology. The comparison with Vienna is perhaps revealing. Vienna, the capital of Austria, a Catholic Central European country, was much more open to philosophy and the emerging social sciences than Dublin and Ireland have been. The names that contributed are legend. They range from Popper and the Positivist Vienna Circle, to Neurath and Wittgenstein, to Lazarsfeld and Yahoda. The reasons why Vienna proved to be so attractive to the emerging social sciences are manyfold. At the beginning of the twentieth century Vienna was the capital, hub, and the crossroads for an Empire that included many cultures and languages, but Dublin was not. Vienna was cousin to and had strong links with Berlin. But, it was not subordinate to Berlin. Although Dublin had close ties to London, these were dependent and unequal ones. Vienna, although capital of Catholic Austria, was much more pluralistic and more secular in orientation than Dublin. After all, Vienna was also a city that immigrants came to (at least until the fatal Anschluss to Nazi Germany).

An earlier unfavourable comparison between Ireland and Scotland has also been made (O'Brien, 1995). The Scottish Enlightenment drew scholars such as Francis Hutchenson away from Dublin. Universities in Edinburgh and Glasgow competed with Trinity for students. Trinity, the university of the Protestant Ascendency, was embroiled in the political conflicts that dominated Irish intellectual life: detachment and independence of mind, essential then as now to the prevalence of intellectual freedom, could not flourish in a society at war with itself (128). This does not mean that Dublin did not have a vibrant intellectual tradition – Swift and writers who followed him proved otherwise. But this literary tradition was the wrong kind of soil in which to plant a viable sociology in Ireland.

Irish Studies, as an academic discipline with its focus on this literary tradition, came to be strongly influenced by the emergence in the early 1980s of post-colonial literary theory. A cluster of mostly nationalist and mostly Northern Irish scholars applied the themes and concepts of critics of colonialism such as Franz Fanon and Edward Said to disputes within Irish historiography (Howe, 2000: 121). From a sociological perspective, there are inevitable problems with using literary criticism as a proxy for social or political history or in explaining what kinds of society once existed and how they changed over time (Connolly, 2004: 144). A recent effort to inject sociological perspectives into Irish Studies has been a collection of essays edited by Tom Inglis, *Are the Irish Different?* (2014).

Rather than challenge Irish Studies from the margins, a more strategic, and a variable approach could draw on new cultural sociology. This new cultural sociology draws not just on classic sociology but on conceptual tools derived from linguistics, dramaturgical and performance studies, social anthropology, and other fields (Alexander, 2003; Edles, 2002). Such tools have much to offer as an alternative to the primacy of literary theory within Irish Studies and have the potential to reinvigorate sociology in Ireland more generally. Their great advantage is a wide perspective on culture as something that runs through every social action and system.

More broadly, our concerns are for the future of interpretive sociology which, of course, should be widely defined to include a plethora of theoretical and conceptual approaches. For the most part, we have sidestepped conflicts between these various paradigms. We, of course, have our preferences (and both authors here would have different preoccupations) but would suggest some common ground that is necessary to cultivate for pluralist and sophisticated sociology to flourish, particularly in an institutional climate that favours narrower and perhaps more homogenised kinds of sociology.

Our history of sociology in Ireland is one with no specific intellectual heroes. We are only stating the obvious in observing that the necessary foundations are the wider intellectual traditions of the discipline, its theoretical movements and classic writings. Theoretical and conceptual debates (and conflicts) are most profitable when they are rooted in strong understandings of the rich intellectual history of the discipline. Pre-1970 efforts to construct an isolationist sociology in the Irish case were predicated on denying the intellectual roots of the subject. But any present-day syllabus that fails to give students a comprehensive grounding in the forerunners and cannon of sociological theory while promoting currently fashionable debates is, in a sense, similarly restrictive. The institutional history we have depicted accounts for the current state of sociology in Ireland, but it does not absolutely determine its future. Its best hope for a vital future is to play a part in what Abbott has called a world sociology that is engaged with the differences between countries, places, and cultures (Abbott, 2014).

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