Diaspora Nation: Ireland’s Diaspora and Asylum Policies, and the Attempt to Deterritorialise the Irish State

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ABSTRACT

The Irish government is attempting to use its diaspora and asylum policies to reterritorialise the Irish state into a diaspora nation. This strategy aims to police the boundaries of the Irish nation by incorporating members of the diaspora and emigrants (predominantly Irish Americans and the “undocumented Irish”), while at the same time excluding asylum seekers in Ireland. Through its diaspora policy, embodied by Global Irish, and asylum policies, represented by the Direct Provision system, the Irish government is attempting to blur the lines between state and nation by connecting the former’s borders to the latter’s bodies. This has produced a backlash amongst Irish citizens, who have sought to disentangle diasporic kinship from the rights of Irish citizenship by placing these communities into conversation with each other. This contrasts the state’s attempt to reconfigure the same communities into markers of the borders of the Irish state and boundaries of the nation.
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INTRODUCTION

Article 2 of the Irish Constitution refers to the symbolic importance given to the Irish diaspora by the Republic of Ireland. It states that “the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage,” which symbolically entrenches the diaspora into the Irish state’s understanding of nation. Article 2 attempts to position both Irish Americans who have never stepped foot in Ireland and Irish citizens as belonging to the same nation by acknowledging the emigration of over 10 million Irish since the eighteenth century.1 This recognition by the state, however, glosses over grassroots Irish and diasporic understandings of the traumas of emigration. It ignores the tensions between the ideas of abandonment, emigration, exile, and “returning.” These insecurities are uniquely manifested across different parts of Ireland and its diaspora, as communities attempt to configure who can be a part of the Irish nation.

Diaspora, within the context of Article 2, connects both the experiences and memories of emigration to a collective Irish identity. Kevin Kenny, one of the foremost diaspora theorists and scholars of the Irish diaspora, refers to diaspora as a malleable idea rather than an entity. It is paramount that scholars focus on its use and definition by different peoples, at different times.2 As James Clifford, one of the pioneers of this approach to diaspora studies, expressed, it is more useful to analyse what diaspora does, rather than try to determine what it is.3 Article 2 invokes diaspora to reconfigure the borders of the Irish nation to include generations of emigrants and their descendants who have never stepped foot on Irish soil. In doing so, it demonstrates the importance of migration in defining community within the Republic of Ireland.

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1 Kevin Kenny, “Two Diasporic Moments in Irish Emigration History: The Famine Generation and the Contemporary Era,” Studi Irlandesi, no. 9 (2019):43.
2 Ibid., 46.
3 Ibid.
The Irish Constitution focuses on the emigration of generations of Irish – not the present-day immigration of racialised “others” to Ireland. This paper aims to place this Irish focus on diaspora, as embodied by *Global Irish* – the state’s official diaspora policy, into conversation with Ireland’s asylum policies. Both are crucial to understand who is allowed to be considered Irish and the effects of this perception on the territorial boundaries of the Irish state. This thesis argues that the Irish government is attempting to deterritorialise the Irish state through its diaspora and asylum policies. This will be demonstrated through an analysis of 1) *Global Irish*’s attempt to repurpose diasporic bodies into a valuable resource for the development of the state; 2) the role of Ireland’s asylum policies in policing the boundaries of Irish citizenship; and 3) which bodies the state and grassroots Irish allow to return to or remain in Ireland. The introductory chapter will explore the theoretical and historical underpinnings of this project. This will occur through an analysis of how the Irish state is attempting to blur the line between the Irish state and nation via its diaspora and asylum policies, an overview of the scant existing scholarship that addresses the deterritorialisation of Ireland, a summary of the primary sources used for this work, and provide a preview of the following chapters.

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4 “Racialised” refers to members of marginalised communities who are considered to be “foreign.” This includes immigrants from outside of the European Union, who are not associated with the traditionally homogenously white ideas of Irishness and its collective memories.

5 Similarly to Ronit Lentin’s description of the racial state, which will be expounded upon on page seven, this thesis defines a state as an entity that governs by connecting an understandings of race and nation to territorial borders. It attempts to condition the populace residing within these boundaries, including both those who are documented and undocumented, by establishing hegemonic norms, which it polices through governments and legislation, including biopolitical technologies, such as constitutions, cultural norms, and invented histories and traditions. This forces people wanting to enter positions of power, including elected office, to operate within these socially acceptable norms. It also explains why two centre-right parties, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, have been the only two parties to form Irish governments since 1927. This top-down dissemination of power cannot fully rob those living within the territorial boundaries of the state of the agency to resist. It does, however, often force grassroots movements to adopt specific neoliberal terminologies to create messages that will disseminate throughout the public.

Blurring the Line Between The Irish State and the Irish Nation

The Republic of Ireland’s focus on diaspora defines who is welcome within the boundaries of the Irish nation. Diaspora, as propagated by the Irish government, refers to a transnational community of kinship. At the same time, this governmental categorisation excludes certain bodies by defining them as alien. This begs the questions of which bodies are foreign, and how the Irish state uses its transnational understanding of diaspora to reconfigure the borders of the Irish nation. By solely looking at the Republic of Ireland’s diaspora policy, it becomes impossible to determine how these boundaries are policed; rather, it must be contrasted with one of the most restrictive asylum policies in the European Union, which employs a system that incarcerates and racialises asylum seekers into “others.” The arrival of these immigrants forces both the Irish state and public to come to grips with the generations of migrant related trauma that they sought to forget. As a result, Irish diaspora and asylum policies attempt to condition generations of migrant bodies in order to deterritorialise the Republic of Ireland into a “diaspora nation.” The Irish state is attempting to detach itself from the limits of its territorial borders by fastening its political borders to the Irish nation. Including the Irish diaspora in its definition of “nation,” and arguing that the Irish state is the heart of this nation, allow Ireland to blur the line between the two entities. This would enable Ireland to reterritorialise itself into a “diaspora nation” of over 70 million Irish, which far exceeds the 5.1 million people living within its official territorial borders, while serving as the arbiter of who is entitled to be a part of the nation.

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Members of the diaspora represent an uncomfortable duality. Despite being considered kin, they are also “foreign.” This insecurity is manifested in Ireland through the creation of stereotypes like the “returned Yank,” a term originally invented to distinguish native-born Irish who did not emigrate from the financial immorality and cultural differences of their “returning” diasporic kin during the mid-20th century. The stereotype has evolved from its earlier critique of capitalism into a denunciation of the kitschy outdated memories of Ireland in Irish America. For very different reasons, the perception of foreignness places “returning” members of the diaspora into conversation with immigrants who do not fit into the imagined homogenously white Catholic memories of Ireland. The latter refers to the increased presence of racialised communities from the developing world living in Ireland. As it stands, roughly 1/7 of people living in the Republic of Ireland are not born in the Irish state. Most of these migrants are from European Union member states. Irish media and political elites, however, focus a disproportionate degree of attention on racialised communities from the developing world. These migrants are tied to conversations about “illegal immigration,” and the closely associated terminology of “asylum seeker” and “refugee.” The latter two terms are used to categorise migrants by determining whether they deserve to receive support from the Irish state and warrant being considered as members of the Irish nation. In addition, categorisation produces a form of “psychological distancing” between racialised migrants and Irish society.

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9 Throughout Ireland’s history, there have been racialised and marginalised communities, including Black slaves and Jews. This is commonly excluded from anti-imperialist nostalgia of Ireland under British rule. Ronit Lentin, “Asylum Seekers, Ireland, and the Return of the Repressed,” Irish Studies Review 24, no. 1 (2016): 24-25.

10 According to Lentin, “asylum seeker” is a governmental term used to deny migrants access to state resources by allowing the state the sole right to serve as arbitrator of whether a migrant is a refugee or not. Lentin, 436.

Both Irish elected officials and the citizens whom they represent have questioned which migrants from outside of the state’s territorial boundaries are allowed to be included within the imagined borders of the Irish nation. This forces the Irish to address the issue of “diasporic responsibility” - a question of whether Ireland’s traumatic history of emigration requires the state to embrace “others” currently seeking refuge.\textsuperscript{12} This is influenced by overlapping understandings of diaspora and immigration. Even though these terms are used to refer to different peoples - the former, white Irish emigrants; and the latter, racialised “non-white, economic” migrants from outside of the E.U., both terms connect Ireland to traumatic memories of “lost generations.”\textsuperscript{13} This overlap transforms the idea of a diasporic responsibility into a source of angst, as both “diaspora” and “immigration” force Irish citizens to re-engage with the memories of emigration.

The Republic of Ireland sought to overcome the overlap between “kin” and “foreign” by categorising immigrant bodies. Which people are already, and who is eligible to become Irish? Current understandings of migration and diaspora differ across Ireland and the diaspora. These differences, however, are transcended by a modern promotion of a neoliberal understanding of individual success that has attached itself to a transnational understanding of Irishness.\textsuperscript{14} Between 1995 and the financial crash of 2008, the Republic of Ireland underwent a period of economic growth known as the “Celtic Tiger.” The state provided enormous tax breaks to


\textsuperscript{13} Even though Ireland’s diaspora is associated to the generations of people who emigrated from Ireland, the state’s official diaspora policy, \textit{Global Irish}, has acknowledged a growing diversity within it, which will be addressed during discussions of Ireland’s diaspora policy in Chapter 1. Eleanor O’Leary and Diane Negra, “Emigration, Return Migration and Surprise Homecomings in Post-Celtic Tiger Ireland,” \textit{Irish Studies Review} 24, no. 2 (February 17, 2016): 129. Global Irish, \textit{Global Irish: Ireland’s Diaspora Policy}, March 2015 (Dublin: Department of Foreign Affairs, 2015).

\textsuperscript{14} Within the context of this paper, neoliberalism refers to the veneration of individualist success, which it connects to racial respectability of whiteness. This distances communities, such as Irish America, from belief in a reliance on state supports, such as welfare, which racialises its recipients into being undeserving of either Irish or American identities. Irish America’s celebration of success and American identity is connected to the adoption of this individualist neoliberal ethos.
multinational corporations, became an information technology sector hub, and developed a growing middle-class by cutting its social safety net and busting unions via social contracts. In doing so, it launched an exodus of rural and “unskilled” Irish, who were replaced by migrants from both inside and outside of the E.U. Migrant workers from outside of the E.U. were viewed as transients, passing through an economically necessary revolving door, as their bodies were denied a sense of permanence due to their replaceability. At the same time, Irishness became redefined to match the individualist and neoliberal successes of their Irish American kin, who lobbied for increased investment in the growing Irish state. This newfound economic prosperity was rooted in modern success, rather than memories of hardship and emigration. It produced a cultural amnesia that lauded its economic achievement, while glossing over the exodus of the poor and rural Irish being left behind.

This state encouraged omission is challenged by the presence of asylum seekers in the Republic of Ireland. Migrant bodies, and their perilous journeys and experiences, force the Irish public and state to re-engage with the traumas of emigration. Irish politicians and members of the media frame asylum seekers to the public as embodying a “return of the repressed” - the “unskilled” and “prehistoric” pre-Great Famine migrants who emigrated for their own survival. Irish print culture, in particular, portrays these famine migrants as pre-modern “creatures reduced to pure appetite, bereft of conscience of reason.” Incidentally, supporters of asylum seekers also invoke the plight of Irish famine emigrants to justify why these migrants deserve the state’s support. This unintentionally associates asylum seekers with “primitive” historical

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representations of Irish, which leads many Irish citizens to question whether these migrants can indeed adapt to or thrive in a modern Ireland. The Republic of Ireland avoids engaging in conversations of diasporic responsibility by employing what Lorraine Ryan refers to as the “mnemonic strategies of Celtic Tiger identity” to hide asylum seekers and their traumas from the public. This includes an attempt by the Irish state to laud itself as a colour-blind society that celebrates interculturalism and the contributions of immigrants to Irish society, while increasingly policing membership into the Irish nation by excluding bodies that enable migrant trauma to re-enter Irish collective memory. The Republic of Ireland enforces this separation through its highly restrictive asylum system. During the twenty-first century, the Irish state had the second-lowest overall acceptance rate of asylum seekers in the European Union, despite receiving the second-lowest number of asylum requests per capita.

The Irish state polices its national boundaries by classifying and denationalising “foreign” bodies. To do so, it engages in its historical tradition of using incarceration as a tool for policing the boundaries of community. According to Ronit Lentin, Ireland has transformed itself into a racial state, or a state designed to enforce homogeneity via policies of exclusion, by engaging in biopolitics of care. This refers to Foucault’s idea that the territorial state is a “state of population,” and that, through the use of various technologies, such as constitutions, border controls, policies, and invented traditions and histories, the population becomes “docile bodies” that must be cared for by the state. Citizens devolve into objects of its control. In Lentin’s own words, the state becomes conceptualized as a “‘body’, and the use of state power becomes vital

17 Thornburg, 39,45; Lentin, 25
19 Lentin, 437.
20 Ibid., 439.
to protecting the ‘life’ of the ‘nation.’”\(^\text{21}\) Her invocation of the concept of racial state stems from Ireland’s 2004 citizenship referendum, which ended birthright citizenship by implementing the 27\(^{th}\) amendment of the Irish Constitution; she argues that this broke the link between birth and nation, and, “Like the Nuremberg laws in Nazi Germany, the Jim Crow laws in the American south and the Apartheid laws in South Africa, it ‘denationalised’ people, stripping people of rights and citizenship.”\(^\text{22}\) Ireland is denationalising the bodies of asylum seekers by denying Irish-born children the right to become citizens. It is excessive, however, to invoke the extremes of the Nuremberg laws, which were used to justify genocide. Apartheid is a more suitable reference. Despite state-imposed restrictions on asylum seekers and the deplorable conditions in Direct Provision facilities, which segregate asylum seekers from Irish society, asylum seekers could eventually become Irish citizens with full rights if granted asylum. The possibility of being citizens with full rights never existed in either of Lentin’s three points of reference.

Ireland has historically used institutionalisation as a tool for policing its religious and moral boundaries of community. The incarceration of women in the infamous Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries, as punishment for having children out of wedlock, resulted in the forced adoptions and deaths of thousands of children, and the confinement of these women in a system of forced labour at the discretion of the Catholic Church.\(^\text{23}\) A secular Ireland did not end this tradition of incarceration. Rather, it evolved from policing religious understandings of morality to policing citizenship based on racial fitness.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 440.  
\(^{22}\) Lentin, 443.  
The deterritorialisation of the Republic of Ireland is reliant on the techniques used by the Irish state to police membership in the Irish nation, most notably the Direct Provision system. These predominantly privately run facilities originated in 2000 as a short-term solution to handling the increasing number of asylum claims.\textsuperscript{24} Successive Irish governments have claimed that these facilities are a necessary evil that provide housing to asylum seekers, while the state processes their applications. This system, however, produces a parallel society managed by private contractors that allows the Republic of Ireland to confine asylum seekers under substandard conditions to the margins of Irish society before they may eventually be deported. Asylum seekers risk having their applications removed from consideration if they leave the Direct Provision facilities, which are predominantly scattered across underserviced rural Irish towns. The consequences of this state-sanctioned incarceration are magnified by the fact that asylum seekers were only granted the right to work in 2018. This forced many to abandon the system and become undocumented migrants in Ireland.\textsuperscript{25} The ability of migrants to appeal their deportation orders through the Irish court system has simultaneously been used by the Irish state to justify the overcrowded nature of these facilities, and, ultimately, blame “bogus refugees” and “economic migrants” for their own plight, while draining Irish coffers.\textsuperscript{26} The recent release of the \textit{White Paper to end Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service}\textsuperscript{24} Applications peaked at 11,632 in 2002, and have decreased ever since. Whereas “asylum seeker” is used to define migrants living predominantly in Direct Provision facilities and whose asylum applications are being processed by the state, “undocumented migrant” is commonly used by politicians and the media to refer to undocumented immigrants living outside of state supervision, without applying for asylum. Lentin, 437.; Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), \textit{A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service}, February 26, 2021 (Dublin: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021). \textsuperscript{25} Bairbre Ni Chiosáin, “Dispersal and Direct Provision: A Case Study,” \textit{Studies in Arts and Humanities} 4, no. 2 (2018): 15; Fiona Murphy, “Direct Provision, Rights and Everyday Life for Asylum Seekers in Ireland During COVID-19,” \textit{Social Sciences} 10, no. 4 (2021): 10; Lucky Khambule, “The Challenges of the Right To Work and Their Effect on Residents in Direct Provision,” \textit{Studies in Arts and Humanities} 4, no. 2 (2018): 143-145. \textsuperscript{26} Burroughs and O’Reilly, 65.
Service by the current Fianna Fail – Fine Gael – Green Party Coalition government provides an opportunity to explore the evolution of state-sanctioned policing of migrants.

The infamous citizenship referendum of 2004 that enshrined the 27th amendment into the Irish constitution became an essential tool for policing the boundaries of the nation. This authorised the state to end birthright citizenship. As a result, Irish citizenship became based on Jus Sanguinis instead of Jus Soli, with the exception of the children of migrants who have a parent who had legally resided in the Republic of Ireland for at least three of the previous four years. This further entrenched the right to [Irish] citizenship of any member of the Irish diaspora who had family in Ireland up to three generations prior, despite never having lived there. Over 79 per cent of voters supported a referendum to protect “common sense citizenship.”

Diasporic communities, like Irish America, who are depicted as gradually losing their connection to Ireland, became connected to the policing of Ireland’s national borders.

Ireland’s attempt to prevent a “return of the repressed” is foiled by its effort to appeal to the national and cultural sentiments of young, successful, and skilled members of the diaspora to “return.” Central to Global Irish: Ireland’s Diaspora Policy is the idea of attracting the recent emigrants who left Ireland in 2008, following the economic recession, as well as developing connections with younger generations of the diaspora. Irish American youth are repeatedly referred to throughout policy positions published by the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It should also be noted that emigrants and members of the diaspora are often interchangeably used by Irish journalists and everyday citizens, when referring to the skilled peoples they want to “return” or immigrate to the Republic of Ireland.

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27 Lentin, 434.
28 Global Irish, Global Irish: Ireland’s Diaspora Policy.
29 Irish Independent, “Huge Appetite for outrage but no stomach for real problems,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), January 10, 2015; Dona O’Conghalie, “Diaspora should get the vote here: Letters to the Editor, Irish
Despite most having never stepped foot on Irish soil, the Irish state advocates that young Irish Americans should return both to enhance their connection with and eventually help develop their “homeland.” The American diaspora is imagined as a neoliberal beacon of success that can provide a pool of talented future citizens for developing the state. To produce these connections with its diaspora, the Republic of Ireland must overcome the cultural distinctions between diaspora and “homeland.” Irish American identity was constructed around a memory of Ireland as an individualist agrarian Eden that never surpassed pre-Famine times. This was used to help an immigrant community integrate into American society by championing a neoliberal identity that focuses on current successes instead of historic struggles. Legal immigration from Ireland had largely come to a halt following the passage of the the American Immigration and National Act of 1965, which ended national immigration quotas, and prioritised family reunification and skilled labour. It was initially believed that this legislation would maintain existing demographics. Immigrants from northern European nations, especially the Republic of Ireland, however, were replaced by growing Asian communities, who had legally arrived after World War 2. Significant Irish immigration to the United States had ceased long before.30

As a result of this watershed legislation, Irish identity in America began to gradually shift into both “late-generation” and “symbolic” ethnicities. The former refers to the loss of a generational connection to Ireland due to a lack of immigrants that “replenish” the memory of their homeland. The latter refers to the ethnicity becoming a choice instead of an inherent aspect of Irish American identity that affects their socio-economic or political realities.31 These related

[Independent) (Dublin, ROI), February 25, 2015. The Irish public often refers to emigrants when invoking “diaspora.”
30 With the onset of World War 1, the primary destination of Irish emigration became the neighbouring United Kingdom. A.P. Lobo and J.J. Salvo, "Resurgent Irish Immigration to the US in the 1980s and Early 1990s: A Socio-demographic Profile," International Migration 36, no. 2 (1998): 258; Duffy, Irial Glynn et al., 1.
31 Liam Kennedy, “A Sense of an Ending: Late-Generation Ethnicity and Irish America,” Irish Studies Review 27, no. 1 (February 2019), 23; Duffy, 207.
concepts must be addressed by the Republic of Ireland to ensure that it does not lose this diasporic resource. To do so, the government has sought to challenge Irish American perceptions of Ireland as a “primitive” state that their ancestors fled, while simultaneously laying the groundwork for a massive cultural outreach program.  

This attempt to exclude the “return of the repressed” while encouraging a “return” of “successful” diasporic kin complements Ronit Lentin’s writing on the deterritorialisation of the Irish state into a “diaspora nation.” In addition to explaining that the incarceration of racialised migrant bodies is used to demarcate the boundaries of the nation, she also includes the Irish state’s support for the “undocumented Irish”—a community of between 10,000-50,000 Irish citizens living as undocumented migrants in the United States—as part of an attempt to reterritorialize itself into a diasporic nation of more than 70 million people. Since the late 1980s, every Irish government has lobbied the United States to “legalize” the “undocumented Irish”, while paradoxically incarcerating and “denationalising” undocumented migrants in Ireland for doing precisely the same thing. 

Lentin’s works on Ireland’s transformation into a diaspora nation were written prior to the release of Global Irish – the state’s first formalised diaspora policy – in 2015. Without benefitting from recent primary sources, including debates in the Dáil Éireann, the elected lower house of the Oireachtas, or any edition of Global Irish, Lentin asserts that the state’s public support of the “undocumented Irish” is more than symbolic. This is challenged by Global Irish’s acknowledgment that any effort to address the status of the

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33 Estimates vary of there being between 10,000 and 50,000 “undocumented Irish”, depending on whether Irish or Irish American sources are used. Many of the latter choose to use the lower estimate as they believe that it would make it easier to push for their regularisation. This discrepancy also stems from the unwillingness of many “undocumented Irish” to participate in state-run institutions due to fear of being deported, or lack of trust in the Irish state. Lentin, 24-27.; Lentin, 434-435,440. Martina Devlin, Ireland must not turn a blind eye to torture as we tango with trump,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), January 28, 2017.
“undocumented Irish” is contingent on American Congressional approval, which it views as highly unlikely.\textsuperscript{34} It should also be noted that the state-sponsored push to regularise the “undocumented Irish” occurs without any attempt to provide an Ireland for them to realistically return to. These undocumented Irish citizens provide an unused, but essential, vantage point for understanding the role of the idea of “return” in Ireland’s deterritorialisation policy, and which migrant bodies, including Irish emigrants, are worthy of the rights of citizenship in Ireland.

These Irish citizens do not fit into the neoliberal model of Irish success that has proliferated across the Irish Atlantic – the exact model of Irishness which produced the very Celtic Tiger that led to their exodus. This has resulted in the steady growth in rhetoric that equates the “undocumented Irish” with “illegal immigrants.” Debates have ensued in both the Republic of Ireland and Irish America about whether they are “Irish,” “Irish American,” or an “other” forced to live in limbo.\textsuperscript{35} Even symbolic support from the Republic of Ireland, however, can have serious repercussions on the configuration of national boundaries. Bodies are transformed into markers that legitimise boundaries of the state; although, it is false to assume that citizens automatically accept state policy and attitudes.

**Methodology and Significance of Study**

Liam Kennedy’s engagement with Irish diaspora policy, the development of generational understandings of Irishness in Irish America and its relationship to the Republic of Ireland, fills the diasporic gap in this conversation. His works prioritise diasporic voices, including institutions, grassroots membership, as well as the “undocumented Irish.” Kennedy calls for the development of a care agenda, or reciprocal relationship, that both engages with members of the diaspora as co-nationals and allows the Republic of Ireland to benefit from a respectful two-way

\textsuperscript{34}Global Irish, *Global Irish: Ireland’s Diaspora Policy.*

\textsuperscript{35}Kennedy, 23.
relationship. In order to preserve its connection with its American diaspora, the Irish state must demonstrate that its kin are both an “asset and a responsibility.”36 It is essential to explore how, or whether, *Global Irish*, attains such a standard, and how this could be used by the Irish state to expand its borders.

Kennedy provides agency to diasporic voices across generations, including the “undocumented Irish,” who have largely been absent from scholarship, since Jennifer Nugent Duffy’s book, *Who’s Your Paddy* was published in 2013.37 Whereas Lentin discusses how the Irish state influences its citizens’ understanding of Irishness, Kennedy explores how different generations of the diaspora understand Irishness, their relationship to the Irish state, and how the Republic of Ireland can salvage a relationship with a community that has increasingly grown distant. His inclusion of “undocumented Irish” voices in his work reveals that they feel excluded by Ireland’s diasporic outreach.38 Lentin and Kennedy represent growing bodies of scholarship on Ireland’s diaspora and asylum policies; however, there remains a dearth of literature that addresses the deterritorialisation of the Irish state by placing both topics into conversation with each other. Irish journalists, citizens, and politicians repeatedly use each of these policies to make sense of the other. In the Irish state’s attempt to deterritorialise itself, it has incidentally unearthed tensions between Ireland and the Irish diaspora, as well as the limits of a transnational

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37 Duffy uses the city of Yonkers as a microcosm to explore how neoliberal conceptions of race have been conditioned into Irish diasporic life in the United States. Duffy, 5-6.

38 Liam Kennedy, *Next Generation of Irish America: Report of a research project commissioned by The Irish Abroad Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*, report, Clinton Institute, University College Dublin (Dublin: Clinton Institute, University College Dublin, 2019), 48-62; Liam Kennedy and Gemma McNulty, *Irish Chicago: Late Generation Ethnicity and the Future of Irish America: A Research Report Commissioned by the Irish Abroad Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*, report, Clinton Institute, University College Dublin (Dublin: Clinton Institute, University College Dublin, 2017),31-37.; Kennedy et al., 21.
Irish nation. Whereas previous scholarship has treated Ireland’s asylum and diaspora policies as separate subjects, this paper provides agency to Irish voices by producing scholarship on a connection and tension that they, themselves, repeatedly invoke.

Such projects must include the diversity of voices within the established and undocumented diasporic communities. These diasporic voices should be placed into conversation with Irish citizens, as well as undocumented and incarcerated migrants in Ireland. It is necessary to include the perspectives of both the people who legitimise and who resist the state’s attempt to reconfigure its national borders. If the deterritorialisation of the Irish state requires the categorisation of bodies, it is essential to include grassroots understandings of state policy to determine whether it differs from the intent of the state. From these voices, it becomes evident that diasporic insecurities overlap with public understandings of migrant marginalisation and incarceration.

**Primary Sources**

This project began as an attempt to study the impact of the “undocumented Irish” on understandings of Irishness in both Irish America and the Republic of Ireland. Since the publication of *Who’s Your Paddy*, which includes the “undocumented Irish” in a discussion of how the Irish in America are socialised around racial identity, there has been a lack of scholarship on this topic, outside of the works on Irish America by Liam Kennedy. When looking through Irish and Irish American newspapers and the minutes from sessions of the Dáil Éireann, it becomes evident that the “undocumented Irish” and undocumented migrants in Ireland are repeatedly put into conversation with each other during debates on asylum policies and diaspora engagement, as well as the definition of membership in the Irish nation. The Irish government’s support for the “undocumented Irish” is often accompanied by parliamentary
language used to justify incarcerating undocumented migrant bodies in Ireland. This showcases the transnational paradox in Irish attitudes towards immigration. These works, however, miss an opportunity to explore the importance of the idea of “return,” and the role that it plays in determining whether Irish citizenship equates to being a part of the Irish nation. Scholarship has also yet to explore whether the plight of the “undocumented Irish” impacts the Irish public’s understanding on immigration in Ireland. This is rather surprising, as there is an abundance of primary sources found in Irish parliamentary sessions and media that clearly forms a connection.

Since 2014, sessions of the Dáil Éireann, the elected lower house of the Irish parliament, consistently connect Irish asylum and diaspora policies. Debates also repeatedly link the plights of the “undocumented Irish” and undocumented peoples in the Republic of Ireland. Scholarship, however, has predominantly focused on expressions of support for the former that come at the expense of the latter. This ignores that many federally elected politicians in Ireland use their support for “legalising” the “undocumented Irish” to improve the conditions of undocumented peoples in Ireland, push for their “regularisation,” and even overturn the 27th amendment. These arguments are often made while assailing the state’s infamous Direct Provision system. Governmental technology used by the Irish asylum system is criticised across the entire political spectrum - from the far-left People Before Profit-Solidarity Party to far-right anti-immigrant hawks like rural independent Mattie McGrath. The “undocumented Irish” are invoked by almost every political party, and they are repeatedly used as an opportunity to address the failings of the Irish asylum system.

It is also essential to incorporate the policy positions articulated by the state. Since 2014, the Republic of Ireland has produced important policy positions in the fields of diaspora and

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asylum, including, in 2015, the release of *Global Irish: Ireland’s Diaspora Policy*, the state’s first formalised diaspora policy, which was followed by two sequels. The second edition was published in 2017 under the *Global Irish* banner and the final edition was released in 2020 under the banner of *Global Ireland*.40 Although the stated primary goal of Irish diaspora policy is to support the welfare of vulnerable members of its diaspora, the documents also allocate significant attention to facilitating connections with young and skilled members of the diaspora, with the goal of encouraging them to “return” and help develop Ireland. The Irish state is simultaneously providing support for vulnerable citizens, like the “undocumented Irish,” to stay abroad while attempting to attract skilled members of the diaspora to immigrate.

The next important policy paper pertinent to this study is the *White Paper to End Direct Provision*. Launched by the current Fianna Fáil – Fine Gael – Green Party coalition government in 2021, this document promises to dismantle and reconstruct Ireland’s asylum system by ending Direct Provision by the end of 2024, while maintaining a system that deters undocumented migration.41 It should be noted that neither of these policy papers is supported by existing legislation. They, however, champion some changes that have already been implemented, while projecting directions for future innovations. Both *Global Irish* and the *White Paper* have received broad support, but these policy papers have also been criticised for being aspirational,

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41 Since the election of the Fifth Dáil in 1927, Fine Gael (and its precursors, which merged to form the modern incarnation of the party) and Fianna Fail have been the only two political parties to lead Irish governments. Collectively, both parties occupy the centre-right of Irish politics. DCEDIY, *A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service*. 
due to the Irish government’s track-record of failing to implement promised systemic changes in the realms of diaspora and asylum policies, as well as for a lack of concrete details.\textsuperscript{42}

This project will also incorporate newspapers from both sides of the Irish Atlantic to explore grassroots understandings of diasporic identity and immigration, and their roles in shaping perceptions of Irishness and the boundaries of the Irish state. Although media is often cited as being a tool for the state to disseminate and legitimise its powers of control, newspapers also provide grassroots agency via “letters to the editor.”\textsuperscript{43} This project uses the \textit{Irish Times} and the \textit{Irish Independent}. The former is the largest centrist newspaper in the Republic of Ireland and, importantly, has a track-record of incorporating views from across the diaspora through its “Irish Abroad” section. It also enables the diaspora to remain up to date on major political and bureaucratic developments in Ireland that could lead to their return. The \textit{Irish Times} provides an avenue for both exploring how diasporic attitudes are articulated within Ireland, as well as how the diaspora is imagined by the Irish themselves. The \textit{Irish Independent} is a centre-right newspaper that is owned by the largest media conglomerate in the Republic of Ireland. The “undocumented Irish” have historically occupied prominent positions in the letters to the editor sections of both papers. They are either depicted by members of the public as violating the sovereignty of a foreign state, similarly to how undocumented migrants in Ireland are depicted, or used as a means to articulate support for the “regularisation” of undocumented peoples in Ireland.

The \textit{Irish Voice} is one of the two largest Irish American newspapers, the other being the more conservative \textit{Irish Echo}. It is distinguished from the latter in that it was founded by Irish

\textsuperscript{43} Lentin, 439.
emigrants in the 1980s as a part of the Irish immigration reform movement to “legalize” the first generation of “undocumented Irish,” who fled economic recession in Ireland, and has a targeted audience of Irish emigrants. It has become a mouthpiece for pro-immigration reform voices. This includes both Irish emigrants and the “undocumented Irish.” As many of its authors are also Irish emigrants, the *Irish Voice* provides an emigrant understanding of diasporic identity and the relationship between Irish America and the Republic of Ireland, while addressing the cultural and national borders between homeland and diaspora. The letters to the editor also expose a diversity of voices within the Irish American diaspora. The popular belief amongst the Irish in Ireland and recent emigrants is that Irish America is becoming more conservative, while the Republic of Ireland is becoming more liberal; however, Irish American letters to the editor, as well as the cultural pieces of some Irish-born journalists, find common ground with articles and letters to the editor in Irish newspapers. Both project a diasporic insecurity over immigration and Irishness and include conversations about the “undocumented Irish.” In other words, these newspapers articulate a transnational Irish unease towards defining the place of diaspora in the Irish nation and its relation to traumatic memories of emigration.

The Irish diaspora is not a monolith. It includes multiple generations, emigrants, “native-born” Irish Americans, and undocumented migrants - all of whom are encompassed by one word. It is important for scholarship to address the contrast between the use of this term by the state as a justification for expanding its borders, and how its use by grassroots Irish to define the boundaries of the nation. As made evident by the voices of Irish citizens and politicians, this tension between state and grassroots Irish directly connects to the insecurity of defining who is excluded and policed by the Irish asylum system.

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44 Duffy, 84, 211.
There is a triadic nexus of communities used by the Republic of Ireland to deterritorialise itself into a “diaspora nation.” The Irish state extends its national boundaries by encouraging generations of Irish Americans to “return” to their “homeland;” it polices the borders of the nation by incarcerating and denationalising asylum seekers; and it transforms the “undocumented Irish” into foreign beacons that legitimise its presence abroad. These three distinct communities are used by the Irish state not just to transcend the territorial boundaries of the state. They also attempt to condition the psyche of Irish citizens, those who aspire to become citizens, and convince diasporic kin to embrace a co-national responsibility. Together, these bodies are used by the state to build a transnational Irish state – a diaspora nation. They serve as means to gauge the ability of Irish diaspora and asylum policies to forge a modern understanding of Irishness, as defined by the Republic of Ireland.

Chapters Breakdown

This project begins by exploring how the Republic of Ireland expands its national borders through its diaspora policy. Chapter 1 will analyse how the Irish state attempts to repurpose diasporic bodies into valuable resources for the development of a strong neoliberal Irish state. This will be explored through a discussion of how Global Irish attempts to condition Irish Americans into embracing the Republic of Ireland as a homeland that should be “returned” to. The Republic of Ireland aims to use culture as a tool to reconfigure diasporic understandings of “Irishness” into an identity centred around a connection to a modern Ireland. This transforms the next generation of the American diaspora – approximately six times the size of the Republic of Ireland.

45 This references to Roger Brubaker’s Triadic Nexus of Nationalisms from his Nationalism Reframed Nationhood and the National Question in New Europe, which refers to the position of national minorities in post-First World War Europe, as shifting borders left many living within new states and who are now being connected to “external national homelands.” Rogers Brubaker, Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4-5.
Ireland – into a valuable resource of skill and capital. To measure the success of such an endeavour, this chapter will also explore how Irish America understands this diasporic engagement. Lastly, it will discuss how the Republic of Ireland’s diaspora policy supports the “undocumented Irish,” without providing them with an Ireland to return to. This transforms their bodies into symbolic beacons that justify the state’s presence abroad. The “undocumented Irish” are being used by Ireland to overshadow the economic aims of their diaspora policy, while blurring the lines between “homeland” and diaspora.

Whereas the first chapter discusses how Ireland’s national borders expand through its diaspora policy, Chapter 2 discusses how Ireland’s asylum policy restricts membership into the Irish national community via the incarceration of asylum seekers. It will first analyse Ireland’s tradition of incarceration, which has evolved into a tool for maintaining a successful neoliberal model of Irishness, before explaining how the Direct Provision system forces asylum seekers into a parallel society that attempts to rob their bodies of the agency to preserve their own cultural identities and to integrate into Irish society. Migrant bodies become deskilled in a system that renders them deportable. By deskilling and not allowing asylum seekers to integrate, the system justifies the beliefs of those questioning the ability or willingness of racialised migrants to adapt to Irish society and encourages the deterrence of undocumented migration. Lastly, this chapter will explore how the incarceration of asylum seekers in Direct Provision facilities, which are overwhelmingly dispersed in underserviced rural communities, redefines communal borders within Ireland. The same rural Irish communities that did not benefit from the economic boom of the Celtic Tiger and have disproportionately suffered the emigration of “lost generations” are forced to re-engage with the traumas of exile. Migrant bodies are transformed into a proxy battle between rural and urban Ireland, and between liberal and conservative Ireland.
Chapter 3 will explore which bodies are allowed to “return” to or stay in Ireland. Despite the Irish state’s public lobbying for the “return” of recent emigrants and members of the diaspora, there is a subconscious feeling of abandonment within the Irish public in Ireland towards “returnees.” This manifests in many letters to the editor that champion the perseverance of those who did not emigrate despite generations of economic difficulty, and a sadness for families and communities in Ireland that have been torn apart by emigration. A notable example of this discomfort is the significant resistance of many Irish towards granting emigrants and members of the diaspora who have Irish citizenship, but are living abroad, the right to vote in any type of Irish election. The same language used to describe a “flood” of “illegal immigrants” “swamping” social services is used to depict foreign votes as potentially overpowering local Irish voices.46 This logic is similarly applied to the “undocumented Irish,” who are increasingly racialised by both Irish America and the Republic of Ireland as “unskilled” “illegal immigrants” who cannot contribute to either community. Lastly, the chapter will explore how “undocumented Irish” bodies are used by the Irish state, and by both supporters and opponents of the campaign to “regularise” the approximately 17,000 - 26,000 undocumented migrants living in Ireland.47

Chapter 1: Reconfiguring Diasporic Bodies and Identities

Both the Irish diaspora and emigrants are essential to Global Irish. The first term refers to Irish communities established in states outside of Ireland, whereas the latter predominantly refers to more recent generations of Irish who left Ireland.\(^{48}\) Both are entrenched in the title of Ireland’s diaspora policy—Global Irish—which blurs the line between state and nation by including both categories of Irish bodies in a “Global Irish” community of over 70 million. Each community is different. They are shaped by unique memories and experiences, informed by factors such as immigration status and generational separation from Ireland. How can Global Irish address these diverse Irish bodies and how does their inclusion benefit the Irish state? Chapter 1 argues that Ireland’s diaspora policy attempts to deterritorialise Ireland by categorising diasporic and emigrant bodies into resources and boundary-markers of the state. This will be demonstrated through, 1) a review of the background to Global Irish; 2) an analysis of Irish American Irishness and how Global Irish attempts to condition its younger generations away from memories of an ancient Ireland towards an identity that connects to modern Ireland; 3) an explanation of how “undocumented Irish” bodies are used to define the borders of the Irish state.

The foremost concern of the Republic of Ireland’s diaspora policy is the welfare of its vulnerable emigrant citizens, most notably the “undocumented Irish.” Global Irish cites itself as a response to the 2014 federally funded research of Liam Kennedy, Madeline Lyes and Liam Russell, which demanded that the “vulnerable” be included in Ireland’s definition of “diaspora.”\(^{49}\) In other words, Ireland’s diaspora policy cannot solely view affluent diasporic communities as “soulless consumers” of Irish culture.\(^{50}\) Global Irish aims to simultaneously

\(^{48}\) This distinction will be analysed in detail in Chapter 3.
\(^{49}\) Kennedy et al., 103.; Global Irish, Global Irish: Ireland’s Diaspora Policy.
\(^{50}\) Boyle and Kavanagh, 70; Cahir O’Doherty, “Irish Diaspora Must Work Both Ways,” Irish Voice (New York, NY), June 12, 2013.
establish and maintain connections with established diasporic communities and care for vulnerable Irish abroad.\textsuperscript{51} Irish Americans are perceived by the Irish state to embody the neoliberal success that it would like to emulate. Ireland has not hidden the economic importance of such a connection. Regardless of its attempts to posture itself as developing a holistic relationship, the Republic of Ireland’s appeal to the economically successful is notably at odds with its supposed prioritisation of vulnerable Irish emigrant citizens. Ireland is ultimately attempting to formalise its relationship with an “imagined community that can be difficult to define or measure.”\textsuperscript{52} How can the unmeasurable be used to expand a state’s borders?

\textbf{Introducing Global Irish}

In the aftermath of the post-Celtic Tiger economic recession and emigration, the Republic of Ireland turned to its diaspora to help rebuild the state. Not only did the Fine Gael-led government see a need to appeal to those who had recently left, it saw an opportunity to attract “kin” who may never have stepped foot on Irish soil. This decision was influenced by the success of \textit{The Gathering}, a tourist initiative that appealed to members of the diaspora to “return” to their homeland. Despite the accusation that, “most people [in Ireland] don’t give a shit about the diaspora except to shake them down for a few quid,” the Irish government quickly realised that the diasporic affinity for Ireland is a harvestable resource.\textsuperscript{53}

Despite this economic realisation by Irish politicians, \textit{Global Irish} attempts to articulate the development of a care agenda by claiming to prioritise vulnerable members of the Irish diaspora, while producing connections with generations of Irish Americans. The Republic of


\textsuperscript{52} Global Irish dictates that “a diaspora policy will not create or define the diaspora. What it can do is contribute to the activation and mobilization of the Irish overseas, and further a sense that they are part of a community.” Kennedy et al., 103; Global Irish, \textit{Global Irish: Ireland’s Diaspora Policy}.

\textsuperscript{53} O’Leary and Negra, 133.
Ireland assigns both “undocumented Irish” and Irish American bodies new purposes. Although they are distinct, *Global Irish* asserts that both are representatives of the Irish state, as Ireland recognises that they are most Americans’ first encounter with Ireland.\(^{54}\) This is emblematic of the state’s goal of blurring the line between nation and state.

*Global Irish* provides a Jacksonian understanding of diaspora. The Irish flag does not just follow citizens abroad; rather, it attaches itself to members of the diaspora. The latter are eligible to become Irish citizens if one of their grandparents was born in Ireland. This policy is pejoratively referred to by many Irish in Ireland as the “granny rule.”\(^ {55}\) In 2020, approximately 31.4 million Americans claimed Irish heritage.\(^ {56}\) As millions of these people are likely to have either a grandparent or parent born in Ireland, they would thus qualify for Irish citizenship. This would allow for the boundaries of the Irish state to expand via citizenship. *Global Irish* attempts to entrench these bodies into new networks that centre around a connection to a modern Republic of Ireland instead to the nostalgic memories that Irish American Irishness descends from.

In order to alter Ireland’s role in Irish American identities, *Global Irish* must acknowledge that diasporic bodies have a different understanding of “Irishness.” In 2014, the year prior to the release of *Global Irish*, the Irish Embassy in Washington released a five-year review of American – Irish relations, *Ireland and America: Challenges and Opportunities in a New Context*. It notes that future outreach to Irish America must acknowledge an “evolution of diasporic perspectives.” *Ireland and America* also challenges Ireland to modernise Irish American understandings of “Irishness,” which stem from inherited memories of Ireland. This

\(^{54}\) In fact, the “undocumented Irish” are many Irish American’s first direct encounter with Ireland. Government of Ireland, *Global Ireland: Ireland’s Global Footprint to 2025*.

\(^{55}\) Please refer to Chapter 3 for an in-depth discussion of Irish anxiety towards the Irish state granting citizenship to members of the diaspora.

need is attributed to the lack of legal immigration from the Republic of Ireland to the United States; as a result, “authentic” memories of Ireland are not being replenished, leading to the development of an identity more attached to diasporic success than devotion to a homeland.\footnote{Embassy of Ireland, Washington D.C., Ireland and America: Challenges and Opportunities in a New Context – A Five Year Review, Spring 2014 (Dublin: DFA); Kennedy et al., 51-52.}

**Memories of Ireland and Irish American Identity**

Memory is linked to feelings of experience by the recaller and is used by institutions to form communal boundaries. Later generations may lay claim to the “memories” of previous generations, regardless of whether they have personally experienced them or not. Narratives that were created to serve as salves for historic traumas produce diverging truths and, in the case of the “Global Irish,” contrasting understandings of what it means to be Irish. A notable example is the diverging understandings of emigration in both Irish America and Ireland. Whereas the former increasingly remembers it as an act of survival, the latter associates it with feelings of abandonment.\footnote{James P. Byrne, “Cultural Memory, Identity, and Irish-American Nostalgia,” In Memory Ireland: Diaspora and Memory Practices, Volume 2, ed. Oona Frawley (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2012), 55; Irish Independent, “Emotional Michael D recalls emigrant ancestors,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), October 23, 2017. The Irish public’s insecurity towards emigration as an act of abandonment will be discussed in Chapter 3.} For Irish Americans, reconfigured memories of Ireland were used as salves for traumas and were invoked to justify their immigrant community’s place in a new society. Between 1845 and 1855, 1.8 million Irish fled starvation and disease in Great Famine Ireland by immigrating to the United States. They simultaneously had to adapt to life in a predominately Protestant Anglo-Saxon state that viewed Irish Catholics with suspicion. Irish American identity emerged from an attempt to reshape traumatic Irish memories into an acceptably distinct identity that was loyal to the American state, willing to participate in its republican system, and distinguished itself from other racialised communities like Africans Americans.\footnote{Kenny, 48.}
The action of forgetting is essential to the process of remembering. To overcome the traumas of the Great Famine, Irish immigrants sought to disassociate themselves from their own experiences. Over the course of generations, Irish Americans nostalgically reimagined Ireland as an unbowed resistor of British imperialism. This attached them to one of the foundational memories of the American state.\(^{60}\) James P. Byrne states that they created an identity that extends “beyond memory.” He writes that Irish Americans “effectively abandoned a critical engagement with their past and sought, instead, to establish nostalgia as the hagioscope to cultural memory and the key to socially acceptable Irish-American identity.”\(^{61}\) Irish America created a memory of Ireland that allowed them to overcome the guilt of abandonment and exile, as well as alienation from the predominantly Anglo-Saxon Americans, and which became the accepted truth for later generations.

Spurgeon Thompson writes that Irish Americans embraced kitsch-based symbolism that allowed them to create communal memories. The production of material culture encouraged Irish Americans to produce connections to their histories by projecting memories back from an object or symbol.\(^{62}\) Thompson introduces the idea that these processes were essential to producing an immediate distance between the survivors of the Great Famine and their new lives in the United States. Symbols, such as the shillelagh and the shamrock, connected Irish Americans to their homeland, while disassociating them from any mention of the famine. They produced a “new nostalgia” that transcended generations by producing feelings of familiarity. This, however, centres on the idea that Irish memories are not factual.\(^{63}\) By removing themselves from

\(^{60}\) Byrne 51, 56.
\(^{61}\) Ibid., 50.
\(^{63}\) Ibid, 79.
traumatic memories Thompson accuses kitsches of producing “historical starvation” and an embrace of “caricatures” that have nullified a true connection to Ireland. Noticeably absent from the critiques of Byrne and Thompson, is that these connections, as embodied by memory, are experienced as real by many Irish Americans and form the boundaries of their communities. This is in line with Irish critiques of the authenticity of diasporic Irishness. Thompson worries that “memory” is replacing “reality;” whereas, Byrne rationalises that the former was simply a tool of survival for an immigrant community. Ultimately, Irish Americans nostalgically reimagined Ireland as an Eden of individualist agriculture, which allowed them to fit the American republican ethos that valorised individual success.

Flowing from Byrne’s idea that Irish America constructed an identity that extends “beyond memory” is the reality that Irish Americans appeal to a postmemory. The memories of traumas, which cannot be directly experienced by later generations, provide resources from which communities construct boundaries and identities. By distancing memory from authenticity, Byrne and Thompson eschew the importance of diasporic experiences of Irishness, diminish the resources and techniques used to form it, and fail to respect diasporic agency in experiencing and defining the purpose of communal memories. They also fail to acknowledge and connect Irish America’s negation of trauma to similar processes in Ireland used to overcome the stigma of being a site of emigration. The attitudes of these Irish scholars mirror the growing anti-diasporic anxiety in Ireland that defines authentic Irishness as contrasting with hyphenated identities created by members of the diaspora to integrate into other states. In doing so, they

64 Ibid, 86.
65 Ibid, 51.
66 Duffy, 31.
participate in the territorialising of “Irishness” by neglecting the importance of hyphenating and hybridising for the survival of the Irish in America.67

Memory is malleable. As a result, its narratives unveil a richness of power dynamics in its transmission. The theory of postmemory was created by Holocaust scholar Miriam Hirsch to explore the “relationship that the “generation after” bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before - to experiences they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right.

Postmemory’s connection to the past is actually mediated, not by recall, but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation.”68 Whereas postmemory acknowledges the agency that the generations after have in defining communal identities and the impact of memory transmission in identity formation, Byrne and Thompson portray Irish American attempts at disseminating memory as “embarrassing” and “misremembered.” 69

Irish American boundaries of community were formed through the dissemination of communal memories that evolved over the course of generations. This produced a nuanced identity that simultaneously embraced the permanence of emigration, while distancing itself from any narratives of weakness and guilt. These concepts served as essential pillars of an identity that could assimilate into American culture. Collectively, however, they ensured that the Irish

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67 This will be discussed further in Chapter 3. Hybridising refers to the creation of an identity that simultaneously integrates into the hegemonic culture, while maintaining a socially acceptable uniqueness that connects to another culture. In the case of diasporic communities, this refers to the act of integrating into a new state, while maintaining traditions and connections to the land of emigration, or the cultural “homeland.” Irish Times, November 20, 2019.; Ryan, 217.
69 Thompson, 87; Byrne, 55.
American memory of Ireland remained trapped in an outdated pre-famine version of an Ireland that no longer exists.\textsuperscript{70}

Irish America’s relationship with Ireland is continuously being negotiated. Stephanie Raines writes that "Irish Americans’ relationship to Ireland therefore becomes one dominated by the concept of a home nation which is not only elsewhere, but which is not directly and personally remembered. It is this moment at which Ireland becomes, for the majority of the world's population who identify themselves as Irish, a home understood through consumption of narrativized images - principally those of film and tourism - rather than firsthand memory or experience." This hunger for a connection is often dismissed by many Irish in Ireland as “plastic paddyism.” Irish American attempts to invoke nostalgic symbols, like the shamrock, that instil pride in both their Irish and American heritages are commonly satirically characterised as kitsch in Ireland. \textsuperscript{71} If \textit{Global Irish} aims to condition future generations of Irish Americans into embracing a modern Ireland as a place to “return” to, it must acknowledge Irish American postememory of Ireland, while simultaneously addressing the presence of grassroots anti-diasporic anxiety within the Irish state towards diasporic kin.\textsuperscript{72}

The task of breaking through Irish America’s nostalgic reimagination of its “homeland” is made even more difficult by the absence of significant legal immigration from the Republic of Ireland to the United States. Ireland has already realised the importance of such a task. Prior to the release of \textit{Global Irish} in 2015, the Irish embassy in Washington wrote in its five-year review


\textsuperscript{71} The accusation of “plastic paddyism” stems from a belief that stereotypical assertions of Irishness by Irish Americans occur as a choice, whereas Irish people believe that they do not have to demonstrate or project their Irishness to know they are Irish. Duffy, 170-171; Stephanie Rains, “Ireland’s diaspora strategy: diaspora for development?,” in \textit{The Irish in Us}, ed. Diane Negra, Catherine M. Eagan, Sean Griffin, Natasha Casey, and Maria Pramaggiore (Cameron, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), 140-141.

\textsuperscript{72} Please refer to Chapter 3 for an in-depth analysis of the grassroots anti-diasporic anxiety within the Republic of Ireland.
that it is imperative to address what it understood as Irish America’s generational shift away from Ireland.73 The lack of legal immigration since the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which effectively put an end to legal Irish immigration, has prevented Irish American memories of Ireland from being replenished by Irish-born immigrants. As a result, there are few memories of modern Ireland circulating through Irish America.74 This is repeatedly referred to by Irish emigrant journalists in the Irish Voice. Whereas the Great Famine is portrayed as a cataclysmic event that produced the foundations of Irish America, 1965 is defined as a calamity that could be responsible for the death of Irish America.75

It is necessary to understand how the history of modern Irish immigration to the United States has shaped Irish America’s attitude towards Irish immigrants, tensions between the two communities, and the environment that Global Irish needs to adapt to. The Immigration and Nationality Act produced the first generation of “undocumented Irish.” Despite the absence of legal immigration since, strong transnational networks of communication continued to exist between Ireland and Irish America. Tens of thousands of Irish arrived in the United States on 90-day tourist visas during the Irish economic recession of the 1980s. Unlike previous generations of Irish immigrants, this new wave of migrants was disproportionately skilled and educated in comparison to the Irish public. This produced fear of a brain drain within the Republic of Ireland.76 Within Irish America, Irish immigration reform organizations, such as the Irish Immigration Reform Movement, were formed to lobby for these undocumented migrants.

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73 Embassy of Ireland, Washington DC., Ireland and America: Challenges and Opportunities in a New Context – A Five Year Review.
74 O’Dowd is one of the foremost organisers and supporters for Irish immigration reform in the United States. Kennedy, 23.
76 Duffy, 5, 211.
These Irish American organizations lobbied Congress that the “undocumented Irish” were more deserving of citizenship than the predominantly Latino “illegal immigrants.” They included the former within their own individualist neoliberal mythos that celebrates historic Irish contributions to America; whereas the latter were popularly attached to ideas of criminality. These discussions became increasingly racialised as Irish Americans sought to demonstrate that the “undocumented Irish” had been unjustifiably excluded from the *Immigration Reform and Control Act* (IRCA) of 1986 that regularised 2.8 million [predominantly Latino] undocumented immigrants in exchange for increased border security. This successful lobbying campaign culminated in a disproportionately high number of diversity visas being reserved for the Irish.\(^{77}\)

In response to Irish American concerns, the Morrison and Donnelly visas were created as part of a wave of green card lotteries for “those who were adversely affected” by the IRCA. 8,600 Irish were “legalized” each year between 1987-1995; 79 per cent of whom arrived via diversity visas. This generation of former “undocumented Irish” became the “new Irish.”\(^{78}\)

This generation of educated and skilled Irish migrants provides an opportunity to explore the Irish perception of Irish American understandings of Irishness. In interviews by Jennifer Nugent Duffy, the “new Irish,” articulate a disconnect between Irish America and modern Ireland. One word is commonly used – “plastic.”\(^{79}\) Although not maliciously employed, it denotes a sense of inauthenticity, as understood by these Irish migrants, and is commonly attributed to the conservatism of their Irish American kin. The former’s lack of participation in the latter’s institutions is emblematic of the diasporic chasm that exists between the self-perceived liberal Irish and their conservative diasporic kin.\(^{80}\)

\(^{77}\) Lobo and Salvo, 26; Duffy, 210.

\(^{78}\) Duffy, 212, 265.

\(^{79}\) Ibid, 170-171.

\(^{80}\) Duffy, 170-175.
Prominent institutions, like the American Order of Hibernians (AOH), prioritise the preservation of Irish American culture, and its connection to an imagined Ireland, instead of maintaining connections with Irish institutions in Ireland. These Irish American organizations are deeply involved in the maintenance of communal postmemory. A notable example of this is the AOH’s opposition to the inclusion of Black voices within Irish exhibitions in New York’s Tenement Museum, due to fears that this diminishes the importance of Irish American struggles and contributions. The articles that championed these Hibernophile voices notably did not mention that Irish American identity was largely defined by differentiating itself from Black American bodies. Events such as these are repeatedly alluded to by members of the Irish media and in letters to the editor, that aim to differentiate Ireland from Irish America.

Diasporic organizations, such as the AOH, embody a conservative Irishness that is viewed by many Irish as a foil against which modern Irishness could be defined. In contrast, older Irish Americans, including many who emigrated from Ireland prior to 1965, increasingly view modern Ireland as being out of touch with “authentic” Irishness. Their diasporic Irish culture has historically been centred around the Catholic church as a means of showing respectability, piety and a deservingness of being American. The Irish discomfort with the authenticity of Irish American Irishness is driven by a growing sense of anxiety towards the diaspora. Its sheer size alone symbolizes the traumas of emigration, and larger feelings of abandonment by “those left behind” and their descendants. Irish scholarship often depicts how the diaspora has relied on nostalgically reimagined memories of Ireland to facilitate assimilation.

81 Kennedy and McNulty, 50.
84 Duffy, 160-164.
into the United States, and how this has distanced them from the development of Irishness in modern Ireland. This territorialises Irishness into being defined by developments within the territorial boundaries of the state.

It is important to note that younger generations of Irish immigrants and Irish Americans are not joining the ranks of organisations like the AOH. This contributes to fears that younger Irish Americans are losing their connection to Ireland due to marked decline in legal immigrants who would “replenish” Irish America’s memories of the Irish homeland.\(^85\) The Irish government has responded with a sense of urgency to maintain a connection between Ireland and a diasporic community that is drifting away. Unlike before, however, its diaspora policy has an opportunity to directly facilitate a relationship between the Irish state and younger generations of the diaspora.

As demonstrated by the works of Liam Kennedy, who has engaged with Irish American youth in both Chicago and New York, younger generations of Irish Americans are growing increasingly jaded with the conservative and religious beliefs of Irish American institutions. His surveys and interviews with hundreds of Irish Americans, across generations, show that Ireland is increasingly being imagined as a more liberal place than the United States. Many participants state that their connection to Ireland would be strengthened if the state could articulate itself as representing progressive values. Ultimately, there is a connection between progressivism and their willingness to develop Irish identities centred around a modern Irish state.\(^86\)

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\(^{85}\) This is also referred to as “late-generation ethnicity.” Kennedy, 51-52.

\(^{86}\) It should be noted that these scholarly works are predominantly centred in the tri-state area (New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut) of the United States, which is more liberal than the rest of the country. Irish American neighbourhoods, however, have a reputation as being Republican outliers within a sea of Democrat voters, especially in the boroughs of New York City. Ibid., 48-49, 53, 62.
Influential Irish Americans, especially the Irish-born Niall O’Dowd, have called for aggressive diasporic engagement by the Republic of Ireland towards Irish American youth. Articles in the Irish Voice, where Irish emigrant journalists simultaneously identity themselves as both Irish and Irish American, call for the implementation of a diaspora policy that aims to strengthen Irish America’s connection to Ireland, while respecting the authenticity of its culture, and without simply commodifying diasporic bodies into a resource for the growth of the state.\textsuperscript{87} It is unlikely that Global Irish will be able to sway older conservative Irish American to embrace a transnational Irishness that prioritises contributing to a modern Ireland. Younger generations of Irish Americans, who are increasingly imagining modern Ireland as a progressive model of Irishness, however, provide an opportunity for the state to expand its borders abroad by including them into a “Global Irish,” with Ireland at its heart.

\textbf{Culture as a Facilitator of Economic Development and Generational Connections}

\textit{Global Irish} invokes culture as a tool for facilitating economic and generational connections with Irish America. This approach is part of a larger program of transforming the Irish state into the heart of the Irish diaspora by reconstructing itself into a facilitator of networks. By mediating ties between diasporic organizations that traditionally compete for funding, creating connections between Irish non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and business communities, and transforming itself into a source of funding via the Emigrant Support Program (ESP), the Republic of Ireland is attempting to condition diasporic bodies into becoming members of a deterritorialised Irish state.\textsuperscript{88} This also allows it to offshore its


\textsuperscript{88} Global Irish, \textit{Global Irish: Ireland’s Diaspora Policy}.  
responsibilities of caring for the welfare of its vulnerable emigrant citizens – which is supposed to be at the “heart” of *Global Irish* – to others.

The creation of such networks is facilitated by the engine of the Irish diaspora policy – the ESP. Funding provided by this program is depicted as a tangible measurement of the Irish state’s support for its diaspora. Since 2004, when the ESP was founded, the Irish state has provided over 200 million euros in grants to over 530 organizations across 36 countries. In 2021 alone, it contributed €13.095 million; however, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, has yet to provide a full breakdown of funding since 2018. As of 2018, 65 per cent of the €11.6 million ESP budget has been allocated towards the welfare of vulnerable members of the diaspora; in addition, 26 per cent has been dedicated to organisations in the United States. This includes €1.11 million earmarked for organisations that prioritise Irish emigrants and immigration reform in the United States. The Irish state makes a point of emphasising that 70 per cent of funding has gone towards the welfare of vulnerable citizens abroad between 2004 and 2018. Despite the majority of funds for the United States being designated for welfare-related organizations, the major portion of each edition of Ireland’s diaspora policy is dedicated towards the creation of cultural and economic networks that will strengthen ties between the diaspora and Irish state over the course of generations.

Culture provides an avenue for producing generational connections. According to surveys conducted by Kennedy, younger Irish Americans feel an attachment to Irishness via emotions and values, rather than institutions. This does not mean that their Irish identities are weakening;

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91 Ibid.
rather, they are engaging with a multitude of identities. “Irishness” may not be the dominant signifier. 92 Young Irish Americans increasingly romanticise Irish culture in Ireland as an opportunity to foil the neoliberal ideals that are attached to Irish America; this generational change presents an opportunity for the Irish state to use culture as a tool for attracting Irish American youth to Ireland. This progressive romanticisation contrasts the nostalgic reimagination of Ireland that is traditionally dismissed by grassroots Irish. The state must seize the opportunity to foster a transnational Irishness that both includes diasporic youth and is acceptable to Irish in Ireland.

The Irish state’s willingness to invest in such a relationship, however, should be taken with a grain of salt. Ireland is attempting to use invented tradition and culture to transform its diaspora into consumers of an Irish culture centred around a modern Irish state. 93 Through federal institutions like Culture Ireland, the Republic of Ireland uses the arts to connect to both recent emigrants and younger Irish Americans. For example, the Irish Arts Centre in New York City, which has received millions of euros in funding, features Irish artistic acts to promote a modern depiction of Ireland. The principal aim of such projects is to demonstrate that the Irish state is not just an ancient homeland that should be relegated to “memory.” Rather, it is a modern homeland for them to “return” to and develop. 94 Culture becomes a biopolitical tool that aims to governmentalise diasporic bodies into becoming an extension of the Irish state.

Irish-born Irish American voices have repeatedly pushed for the creation of an Irish diaspora policy that sincerely engages with Irish America. According to Niall O’Dowd and

92 Kennedy, 55,56,62.
93 Boyle and Kavanagh, 65.
Debbie McGoldrick, two of the founders of the *Irish Voice*, it is paramount that the state embraces its responsibility to the generations of emigrants who were forced to leave through no fault of their own. This includes the “undocumented Irish,” descendants of Great Famine emigrants, and any generation of Irish who fled economic strife in Ireland. O’Dowd and McGoldrick do not shy away from the possibility of Irish America becoming a resource for the development of the Irish state; however, they advocate that this should be a consequence rather than a primary goal.⁹⁵

Irish-born emigrants who consider themselves Irish American, have grown frustrated with what they perceive as a blatant prioritization of economic development over the cultivation of holistic cultural connections. Journalists in the *Irish Voice* accuse the Republic of Ireland with making little effort to understand Irish America as Irish Americans do.⁹⁶ Cahir O’Doherty scathingly rebuked Ireland’s diaspora policy by accusing the Irish state and its citizens of forcing members of the diaspora into an “enforced exile” by ignoring their voices. He wrote that, "The Irish don't think about you after you leave because there's an implicit criticism in your absence that they prefer to avoid. But cutting the chord that connects your experience abroad to the old homeland is the most short-sighted thing they ever do."⁹⁷ This emigrant perspective challenges both the sincerity of Ireland’s diaspora engagement and evokes the simultaneous existence of grassroots Irish anxiety towards the diaspora. Figures like O’Doherty, O’Dowd, and McGoldrick aspire for sincere cultural engagement with younger generations of Irish America by the Irish state. Their disappointment with the Irish state, however, is made evident by their continued

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focus on its use of economic language. There is a growing suspicion of the Irish state and how it trivialises diasporic connections as opposed to the distinctions between diaspora and “homeland” in its attempt to entrench the former into a “Global Irish” Irishness.

This frustration is specifically associated with projects that commercialise the diasporic connection. Ireland notably attempted to sell €40 “Certificates of Irish Heritage” to members of the diaspora, which was panned by both Irish and Irish Americans as an attempt to commodify Irishness. Whereas the Irish feared that this would allow people to purchase Irishness, Irish Americans criticised this practice as a patronising attempt to commodify Irish America into a “cash cow.” This policy was eventually halted in 2015, as only 3000 certificates were ever purchased.

In 2018, the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, reversed course on a promise to implement the Fréamhacha program, which was supposed to fund cultural trips for diasporic youth to Ireland. In response to considerable pressure from Irish-born Irish Americans, the first edition of Global Irish promised to implement such a project. This would have allowed Irish American youth to develop connections to Ireland and ensure that Irishness remained pertinent to their identities by engaging with a modern Ireland. The cancellation of the program was announced in the second edition of Global Irish, citing higher than expected expenses incurred during the pilot project in 2016. Instead, the document stated that it would shift funding to existing diasporic institutions like summer camps. This managerial pursuit of efficiency is perceived by many

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99 Eamon Delaney, “The diaspora is a rich resource, not just a cash cow,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), August 21, 2015.
100 This includes pressure exerted at Irish Civic Forums, which were created by the Irish state in an effort to gain diasporic expertise to help it recover from the collapse of the Celtic Tiger. Global Irish, Global Irish: Ireland’s Diaspora Policy; Kennedy, 4; Editorial, “Focus on the Diaspora Youth,” Irish Voice (New York, NY), January 27, 2016.
101 Global Irish, Review of Implementation of Global Irish – Ireland’s Diaspora Policy
Irish-born Irish Americans as an offshoring of diasporic duty by the homeland. It fuels concerns that Ireland is attempting to condition diasporic bodies into becoming co-nationals without providing them with benefits. Increasingly, Irish-born Irish Americans resent that their membership in the Irish nation does not provide them with a voice in Ireland; they disappointedly note that the state views their membership in a transnational community as an opportunity to expand its influence, without providing its diasporic members with a democratic say in the state-building process.

By reconfiguring diasporic bodies into “co-nationals,” Ireland is attempting to include their bodies into a transnational Irish community. The Irish nation is commonly associated with monolithically white memories of Ireland. In doing so, the Irish ignore the historic presence of marginalised communities, such as Travellers and Jews, whose experiences do not fit into this reimagination of Ireland. This alludes to the perception that the arrival of racialised migrants and “others” with distinct experiences and cultures threatens the “official” memory of the nation. They have been depicted as threatening Irish coffers and culture; contrastingly, Global Irish depicts younger members of the diaspora as worthy investments that will adapt to Ireland.

Global Irish states that Irish diaspora’s diversity mirrors the Irish state. At present, roughly 1/8 of people living in the Republic of Ireland were born outside of the state.

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103 This grassroots tension with the Irish state’s attempt to reterritorialize itself through bodies will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

104 Ryan, 208.


edition of Ireland’s diaspora policy clearly outlines an engagement with members of the diaspora who are “mixed-race,” members of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as Irish born within and outside the territorial boundaries of the Irish state. Support for diversity within the diaspora includes funding organisations, such as the African American Irish Diaspora Network and the Lavender and Green Coalition, and events, such as pride parades, around the world. This outreach could be an attempt by the Irish government to appeal to the progressive understandings of Ireland held by many younger members of the diaspora. It may also be an acknowledgement that members of the diaspora are engaging with multiple identities, and that Irish American youth increasingly perceive themselves as operating in multiple networks, more so than in territorial or communal borders. How does this inclusive approach to Irish diasporic engagement fit into the effort to recondition diasporic bodies?

So far, diaspora has been referenced in terms of “heritage.” As defined by Global Ireland: Ireland’s Diaspora Strategy 2020-2025 – the third edition of Ireland’s diaspora policy, this refers to the millions of people over the world who are of Irish descent. This document, along with the two earlier editions of Ireland’s diaspora policy, incorporates two other important categories into its definition of diaspora – “reverse” and “affinity.” The former refers to a “diaspora of people who have lived, studied or worked in Ireland before returning to their home countries.” This connects to previous editions of Global Irish, which sought to develop an alumni network to recruit for skilled workers who have lived and studied in Ireland. Furthermore, successive Irish governments have stated that Irish universities should prioritise

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111 Ibid.
attracting international students to boost Ireland’s recruitment of foreign talent.\textsuperscript{112} The “affinity diaspora” consists of those “who hold a deep appreciation for our people, places and culture.” Through cultural outreach, this community can also be conditioned into supporting the Irish state through tourism, employment, or by investing capital.\textsuperscript{113} Neither of these two “diasporas” are mentioned in Article 2 of the Irish Constitution, which defines who is an Irish citizen, and yet the Irish state has found a place for them within their “inclusive” definition.

How does this fit into the logic of the diaspora nation? Ultimately, the Irish state celebrates interculturalism, while policing immigration and citizenship. It becomes the sole arbiter of whether certain bodies are worthy of Irish citizenship. At the same time that the Irish state racialises entire communities into “others,” in accordance with the 27\textsuperscript{th} amendment of the Irish Constitution, which ended birthright citizenship, it can also determine whom it wants to include. If these bodies fit the neoliberal standard of respectability demanded by the modern Irish state, they can be included, or “return,” regardless of their identity. Through its engagement with successful members of the “heritage,” “affinity,” and “reverse” diasporas, Ireland has reconfigured its definition of diaspora to allow the state to become the arbiter of Irishness.

The bulk of the three editions of Ireland’s diaspora policy is allocated towards the “heritage” diaspora and recent emigrants, and why both should return. None were more grandiose than the former Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton.\textsuperscript{114} In her own words, “The cranes are on the skyline again, the jobs are emerging again. A generation stands ready to come home to a Republic of equality, of opportunity, of hopes and dreams and

\textsuperscript{112} It aims to develop a student body that is at least 15 per cent foreign-born. As of December 2020, international students represent 14 per cent of the student body. Department of the Taoiseach, \textit{Global Ireland Progress Report: July 2019-December 2020,} March 2021 (Dublin: Department of the Taoiseach, 2021).

\textsuperscript{113} Government of Ireland, \textit{Global Ireland: Ireland’s Global Footprint to 2025.}

\textsuperscript{114} Tánaiste is the Gaelic title of the Deputy Prime Minister. Department of the Taoiseach, \textit{Global Ireland Progress Report: July 2019-December 2020,} March 2021 (Dublin: Department of the Taoiseach, 2021).
possibilities.” With an economic nudge, Irish emigrants and members of the diaspora will embrace their duty as members of the Irish nation. This ties back to Ireland’s goal to position itself as the heart of the Irish diaspora.

*Global Irish* also acknowledges that it may not be immediately able to convince the “Global Irish” to return. Rather, it will have to condition bodies and attitudes via participation in state-supported institutions. Johan Devlin Trew refers to such practices as an act of “global gerrymandering.” This refers to how states use the bodies of their diasporas to reconfigure their own boundaries by means, such as the creation of economic networks. Notable examples include Ireland’s creation of the Global Irish Forum and the Irish Economic Forum, which are both funded by the ESP. Whereas the former focuses on developing the connections between Ireland and its diaspora, the latter prioritises the incorporation of diasporic skills, knowledge, and capital to foster the economic development of Ireland. These forums create feelings of democratic engagement within the Irish diaspora towards the Irish state. The Republic of Ireland is not attempting to transform its American diaspora into a market; rather, it is seeking to condition the latter into becoming an essential resource for the development of the state. These Irish-led organizations allow the state to deterritorialise itself by reconfiguring its boundaries into networks used to tie members of the diaspora to the Irish state.

Following the emigration of 240,000 Irish between 2008-2013, the Irish government cannot afford not to attract foreign skilled talent. Forty-seven per cent of this cohort was already employed and over sixty per cent had at least a post-secondary education, well above the Irish

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116 Trew, 35.
national average. They represent an addition to the large number of skilled Irish economic expatriates already in the United States. Although members of the Irish government, such as former President Michael Higgins, have challenged the perception that emigration is a form of brain drain, they re-articulate emigration as an opportunity to acquire useful skills and experiences for the development of the Irish state. The fear of the permanence of emigration is challenged by the deterritorialisation of the Irish state through emigrant and diasporic bodies.

The idea of “return,” however, is essential to Ireland’s diaspora policy. *Global Irish* does not just embrace the economic language of employment; rather, it aims to attract skilled young members of the diaspora and recent emigrants by loosening the red-tape that makes it difficult to open up bank accounts, acquire driver’s licenses and motor insurance, purchase homes, and access schools and childcare. It is clear that the state is trying to attract successful members of the “Global Irish” by re-developing the same social security net that it had cut during the Celtic Tiger. This, however, places “returning” bodies into conversation with the emigrants who fled pre-recession Ireland.

**“Undocumented Irish,” Irish Emigrant Bodies, and the Borders of the Irish State**

Whereas the “New Irish” escaped an economic recession, the “undocumented Irish” fled a supposed economic miracle. The latter’s emigration from Ireland, which was triggered by the rise of the Celtic Tiger in 1995, began as public support for immigration in the United States plummeted, following the Republican wave that swept through Congress in 1994. Therefore, the Irish were inadvertently affected and received no more special access to visas after the expiration

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118 Additionally, 495,700 emigrants left the Republic of Ireland between 2011-2016; of whom, 247,200 were Irish nationals. Global Irish, *Global Irish: Ireland’s Diaspora Policy*; Glynn et al., 1.; Trew, 21.
of the Morrison visas in 1994. The passage of the *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act* in 1996 and the *Patriot Act* in the aftermath of 9/11 also made it both significantly more difficult to legally immigrate and much more dangerous to remain undocumented in the United States.\(^\text{121}\) There are still possibly tens of thousands of these undocumented Irish migrants in the United States, who must weigh their fears of deportation from the United States against being economically and socially marginalised for “abandoning” Ireland; more precisely - is there an Ireland for them to return to?\(^\text{122}\)

The differences between the “undocumented Irish” who arrived before and after 1995 are not just temporal. Rather, the former are remembered as skilled and educated migrants fleeing a recession. The latter are considered unskilled and uneducated migrants fleeing a successful economy. This perception does not take into account that the Celtic Tiger’s economic boom was exclusive to urban hubs like Dublin and did not provide enough jobs for Ireland’s young and growing population.\(^\text{123}\) Due to their status as undocumented migrants, which most attained by overstaying their 90-day tourist visas in the United States, the “undocumented Irish” have very limited employment opportunities. This has restricted them primarily to Irish American-owned cash-in-hand businesses and prevents them from accumulating the valuable experience and skills sought after by the Irish State.

Their plight is contrasted by state-sponsored support for legal skilled emigration in the form of J-1 and E-3 Visas. The former are visas for foreign university students and recent graduate students in the United States, and the latter refers to guaranteeing Irish in “specialty

\(^\text{121}\) Duffy, 168, 215-217.
\(^\text{123}\) Duffy, 92.; Ní Chiosáin, 13.
occupations” access to any of the unused 10,500 E-3 visas reserved for Australians according to the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement. The unused E-3 visas, however, are depicted by both Irish and Irish Americans as a necessary tool for preserving what they view as an Irish right to immigrate to the United States. Both communities consider this right to be essential for maintaining the connection between them. The Irish government originally stated that it would push to include the “undocumented Irish” in any E-3 deal. The toxicity of the subject of immigration reform in the United States, however, has led to an immediate shift by the successive Enda Kenny, Leo Varadkar, and Micheál Martin-led governments towards prioritising the mobility rights of skilled Irish workers in the United States. The speed at which the Irish government dropped the “undocumented Irish” in visa negotiations demonstrates how Global Irish enforces a hierarchisation of bodies. This is despite the policies’ supposed emphasis on the welfare of vulnerable citizens abroad. Ultimately, the deterritorialisation of the Irish state does not just connect its borders to the bodies of the nation, it simultaneously allows the state to define which bodies are to be included in the nation, and which ones are worthy of the rights inherent in being a member of the nation.

Global Irish declares that Ireland has a diasporic duty to care for the welfare of its vulnerable citizens abroad and is adamant that the millions of euros in annual spending on their

welfare represents a tangible measurement of the state’s support. In addition to the previously mentioned 1.11 million euros earmarked for Irish immigration-related organizations in the United States. In 2016, Enda Kenny also appointed a Senator in the Seanad for the “Irish abroad”, and a representative to Congress for the “undocumented Irish.” The former, Billy Lawless, was the chairman of the Chicago Celts for Immigration Reform and the vice-president of the Illinois Coalition for Immigration and Refugee Reform; the latter, John Deasy, was a TD in the Dáil Éireann. These two positions were created to spearhead an effort to simultaneously “legalise” the “undocumented Irish” and lobby for access to skilled worker visas. To the chagrin of Irish-born Irish Americans, neither position has been replaced by the current Martin Administration. This perceived shirking of state responsibility has not prevented the government from championing the support that it does provide.

*Global Irish* does not attempt to replicate the Irish welfare state abroad; rather, it aims to provide resources and foster connections among established organisations in the diaspora in an attempt to address their competition for funding. These organizations, which are predominantly run by Irish emigrants, prioritise immigration services, such as applications for green cards, access to lawyers and healthcare, as well as lobbying on behalf of the “undocumented Irish.” There are limits to this approach. *Global Irish* recognises that any effort to address the status of the “undocumented Irish” is contingent on Congressional approval, which is highly unlikely. This reality, combined with a lack of explicit policy dedicated

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130 This reliance on diasporic organizations mirrors *Global Irish*’s outsourcing of cultural outreach programs. Kennedy and McNulty, 30-37; Global Irish, *Global Irish: Ireland’s Diaspora Policy*.
131 *Global Irish*, *Global Irish: Ireland’s Diaspora Policy*. 
towards securing their return to Ireland, relegates the “undocumented Irish” to a state of limbo between Ireland and the United States.

In addition to neglecting to produce a social safety net for vulnerable citizens abroad, *Global Irish* does not reference the “undocumented Irish” when discussing the return of emigrants. Each edition of Ireland’s diaspora policy prioritises creating conditions for attracting skilled Irish emigrants and members of the diaspora. The “undocumented Irish” are denied the same consideration. Despite being Irish citizens, they would not satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition, as they have not lived in Ireland for decades prior to their potential return.132 These unconsidered variables mean that this vulnerable cohort could be entitled to even fewer social services if they return to Ireland.133 Responsibility for such a possibility would be foisted NGOs like *Crosscare*, which aid returning emigrants with their reintegration into Irish society.134 It seems as if *Global Irish* aims to keep the “undocumented Irish” satisfied “just enough” not to return, while using their bodies to entrench Ireland’s presence in Irish America.

The “undocumented Irish” also recognise that the Ireland they left would not be the one that they would return to. After having invested decades in establishing lives in America, the lack of access to the Irish social safety net and the increased competition for employment from “illegal immigrants” has led many to accept that they would have a lower standard of living in Ireland than they do as undocumented migrants in the United States. It would be preferable to remain in a state of deportability rather than return “home.”135 The fear is not just limited to

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132 The Habitual Residence Commission determines which social benefits are available to Irish citizens based on how long they have recently lived in Ireland. No exceptions are made for the “undocumented Irish.” Glynn et al., 20.
135 Deportability is not the act of deportation; rather, it is the practice of threatening migrants with the act. Duffy, 93, 177.; Ronit Lentin and Elena Moreo, "Migrant Deportability: Israel and Ireland as Case Studies," *Ethnic and Racial*
access to services; it also includes anxiety about whether Irish society is willing to understand their experiences and welcome them back as more than just a “return of the repressed” that “abandoned” Ireland during a period of economic success. The welfare component of *Global Irish*, ultimately, takes on a symbolic importance despite its price tag. It overshadows the transnational cultural-economic networks, which receive substantial coverage in its three editions; “undocumented Irish” bodies are “offshored” to Irish American organizations, who unknowingly engage in the re-bordering of the Irish state by caring for their kin.

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136 O’Leary and Negra, 130-131.
Chapter 2: Policing the Boundaries of the Irish Nation via Incarceration

Whereas the previous chapter discussed a Jacksonian extension of state borders through the reconfiguration of diasporic bodies, this chapter will explore how the Irish state attempts to use migrant bodies to exclude racialised “others” from the Irish national community. It is essential to consider how the Republic of Ireland’s asylum system attempts to deter asylum seekers by forcing migrant bodies into a state of deportability, as well as analyse how the same system attempts to pit Irish citizens against migrants, and against each other to define what it means to live in a modern Ireland. This chapter challenges that the Irish asylum system endeavours to police membership into the national community via the incarceration of asylum seekers in Direct Provision facilities. It argues that the Republic of Ireland’s asylum system attempts to use incarceration as a tool for restricting membership into the Irish nation and policing belonging in the Irish state. This will be demonstrated by 1) arguing that Direct Provision is the latest edition of the Irish tradition of institutionalisation; 2) analysing how the Irish asylum system forces asylum seekers into a parallel society that segregates them from Irish society and denies them the right to integrate; 3) explaining how Ireland’s asylum policies reconfigure the cultural borders within the territorial boundaries of the Irish state.

Legacy of Institutionalisation

The report published by the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation in 2021 was not about a distant trauma, as the final church-run facility, after which the commission is named, only closed in 1998. This is an experience that generations of Irish are forced to live with. Established following the discovery in 2015 of 800 bodies of babies and children at a former Mother and Baby Home facility in Tuam, the commission, and its report, have been heavily criticised by survivors. They accused the state-funded investigation of neglecting and
misrepresenting the testimonies of survivors, as the report dismissed their claims of rampant forced adoptions and many accused the report’s authors of whitewashing their traumas. To many, this was a waste of time; to others, it continued a tradition of state-sponsored attempts to hide institutionalisation in plain sight. This example of “containment and secrecy” is not understood to be an isolated incident. Rather, politicians, members of the media, and Irish citizens connect it to other state-sponsored institutions that have policed and continue to sanction Irish boundaries of communities, such as the previously mentioned Magdalene Laundries, and the present-day Direct Provision system.

Critiques preceded the report and ensuing apology from Taoiseach Micheál Martin. Former Independents for Change TD Joan Collins has harangued successive Fine Gael and Fianna Fail governments for failing to act. In 2014, she denounced that, “It seems to be the case that despite abject apologies and expressions of shame about the inhumane treatment and incarceration in the industrial schools, the mental institutions, the Magdalen laundries, the mother and baby homes and the health service in regard to symphysiotomy, where the State outsourced its responsibilities to religious institutions and then forgot about them, we now have a repeat of the situation in direct provision centres for asylum seekers. The difference is that they have been outsourced to for-profit private companies.” State-sponsored institutionalization is articulated as a norm in Irish history. The issue, however, remains, whether the public is willing to connect traumas inflicted on “kin” by the Irish state to suffering inflicted on those whom the state has articulated as “other?”

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138 Murphy, 9.
Similarly to its previous iterations of institutionalization, the Irish state articulates Direct Provision as being for the greater good of both its inhabitants [asylum seekers] and Irish citizens. Politicians have repeatedly stated that the overcrowded facilities allow the state to simultaneously provide housing for asylum seekers and preserve the integrity of Irish citizenship. The former Taoiseach Leo Varadkar invoked a zero-sum depiction that “the alternative to Direct Provision is what happens in France and Germany and Greece and Italy which is camps and containers.”\textsuperscript{140} This political establishment recognises the unpopularity of the maligned Direct Provision system and attempts to project an image of Irish generosity by continuously foiling itself with the aggressive actions of its neighbours; however, the Republic of Ireland’s acceptance rate of asylum seekers is below the European Union average.\textsuperscript{141} Varadkar has tried to shield Ireland from negative international attention by arguing that the system is “not inhumane,” just “imperfect.” Additionally, he cites Direct Provision as the only institution keeping asylum seekers from homelessness. This needlessly produces a correlation in the public psyche between undocumented migrants and the state’s housing crisis.\textsuperscript{142}

Whereas the historical iterations of incarceration were operated by the church, Direct Provision is predominantly offshored to private companies by the Irish state. Previous generations of incarceration supposedly existed out of sight from the Irish public. They,

\textsuperscript{140} Cormac McQuinn, “Varadkar defends Direct Provision as he insists alternative is 'much worse',” \textit{Irish Independent} (Dublin, ROI), October 2, 2019.

\textsuperscript{141} A notable example of this is in the Annex of Ireland’s integration strategy, which compares its efforts to Sweden and France, rather than analyse its asylum system on its own merits. In addition, the UNHCR has criticized the Republic of Ireland’s asylum policies by stating that it received fewer than 300 asylum requests per month in the lead-up to COVID-19 border closures. Department of Justice and Equality, \textit{The Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020}, 2019 (Dublin: Department of Justice and Equality, 2019); Lorraine Courtney, “Direct Provision adds to migrants’ misery - and there's no political will to change that,” \textit{Irish Independent} (Dublin, ROI), October 7, 2019.

\textsuperscript{142} The Republic of Ireland did not consider the lack of housing to be a crisis until 2016. Kevin Doyle, “Racists trying to spread and exploit fear of asylum seekers, says Varadkar,” \textit{Irish Voice} (Dublin, ROI), November 7, 2019; Larissa Nolan, “We have returned to a system of renter and rentier - the deserving and undeserving,” \textit{Irish Independent} (Dublin, ROI), May 26, 2021.
however, required public collusion.\footnote{Lentin, 24; Enda O’Neill, “Crippling delays are the biggest crisis facing asylum seekers,” \textit{Irish Independent} (Dublin, ROI), April 27, 2018; Lorraine Courtney, “Direct Provision adds to migrants’ misery - and there's no political will to change that,” \textit{Irish Independent} (Dublin, ROI), October 7, 2019.} Attention has been given to grassroots resistance to the construction of direct provision facilities in rural Ireland; nonetheless, analysis of this opposition cannot ignore the existence of wider support within the same constituencies for deterring undocumented migration to Ireland. Are they against the system or their vicinity to it?

According to Ronit Lentin, Ireland has a tradition of denationalisation via incarceration. The latter has been consistently used as a tool for policing boundaries of community and constructing understandings of Irish respectability, and who is excluded from it. Enforcement of Ireland’s incarceration system was historically entrusted to the Catholic church. With public acceptance, coercion, and collusion, by the mid-1990s one in every hundred Irish citizens had been incarcerated in either a mental hospital, Magdalene laundry, Mother and Baby Home, or industrial school. From the Mother and Baby Homes alone, 9000 bodies were discovered, and one out of every nine babies born in these facilities died.\footnote{Lentin, 24; Nicola Andersson, “Early warnings in searingly painful report show this catastrophe didn’t need to endure: The vulnerable suffered unnecessarily before getting answers, writes Nicola Anderson,” \textit{Irish Independent} (Dublin, ROI), January 12, 2021.} The power of such institutions normalised the existence of Direct Provision as a tool for policing the borders of the Irish nation and state within the popular psyche. This has unfortunately culminated in the deaths of 88 asylum seekers as of June 1, 2021.\footnote{Sean Murray, “New data shows 88 people have died in direct provision since it was established,” \textit{The Irish Examiner} (Cork, ROI), January 2, 2022. \url{https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-40785318.html#:~:text=Subscribe-,New%20data%20shows%2088%20people%20have%20died,have%20died%20in%20the%20facilities.}

The Direct Provision system was created in 2000 in response to a rise in asylum applications to the Republic of Ireland. Interestingly, the increased focus on the immigration of racialised “others” in the Republic of Ireland occurred as the state experienced the second lowest
number of asylum requests per capita in the E.U., and the second-lowest overall acceptance rate of migrants. Direct Provision was originally envisioned as a temporary measure to house migrants for a short period of time, as asylum verdicts were anticipated to be processed within six months. The current average processing time at the International Protection Office is 17.6 months; an improvement from the average wait of 44 month in 2014. This is still well beyond what Direct Provision was designed to handle. The failure of the system to rapidly process applications contributes to the over-crowding in these facilities. The Irish state and media, however, blames the delays on the asylum seekers, themselves, for appealing deportation orders. This right to appeal is portrayed as a drain on state resources. The Irish state uses time to both demoralise asylum seekers and condition the Irish public against them. Time has become incorporated into a practice of deportability.

Prior to the inception of Direct Provision, 90 per cent of asylum seekers were housed in Dublin, where all asylum cases are processed. The current asylum system, however, spreads asylum seekers across forty-two facilities in predominantly rural and underserviced communities. This practice of dispersal is repeatedly lauded by politicians as successfully preventing “ghettoization” in cities. It, however, should be understood as an attempt to disperse

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147 DCEDIY, A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service; Allison Bray, “Asylum-seekers will get keys to their own home,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), February 26, 2021.
149 Ní Chiosáin, 2.
migrants to the fringes of Irish society, continuing a tradition that carried over from previous iterations of incarceration in Ireland.\textsuperscript{150} Asylum seekers are confined to these centres until their cases are heard. Leaving these facilities without participation in state practices of oversight has resulted in asylum cases being pulled from consideration. The fact that asylum seekers are not imprisoned in a traditional sense has allowed elected officials to dispute accusations of incarceration. Should migrants be able to afford their own accommodations, they are not required to stay in Direct Provision; however, Ireland is going through a housing crisis, which makes finding affordable or social housing incredibly difficult.\textsuperscript{151} This has allowed politicians like the former minister of Justice and Equality, David Stanton, to state that Ireland is providing migrant housing while trying to maintain the integrity of its asylum system. He notably challenged critics of Direct Provision by stating that it “is not about detention, disregarding human rights or treating people in the protection process differently from people in the wider community. Since this system has been established in 2000, some 60,000 people have been provided with full-board accommodation and full access to the state’s medical and education services.”\textsuperscript{152} This depiction of Direct Provision portrays an array of social services. Additionally, the proximity of these facilities to underserviced rural communities produces an imagined reality that the service of asylum seekers comes at the expense of Irish; simultaneously, this produces a false equivalency between the system and Ireland’s housing crisis.

It also fails to note the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions that migrants are forced to live in. How is this possible, considering the Irish government has spent over 1.6 billion euros on

\textsuperscript{150} Murphy, 9;
Direct Provision? Most of this funding has been directed towards “accommodation and offshored to the private sector, thus absolving the government from its responsibilities and keeping asylum seekers “out of sight and out of mind” of the Irish public. In addition, the Irish government created a system of state-sponsored poverty for asylum seekers by barring them from employment as recently as 2018 and providing paltry weekly allowances of 38.80 euros for adults and 29.80 euros for children. This occurs as owners of the for-profit Direct Provision facilities generated record profits.\(^{153}\) The system of deterrence attempts to demoralise asylum seekers into emigrating by preventing them from accumulating savings, forcing them to rely on the state for subsistence, and only recently allowing some the right to work. Enforced dependence on the Irish state produces a correlation between asylum seekers and abusers of the welfare system and indirectly connects to Varadkar’s election rhetoric that “welfare cheats cheat us all.”\(^{154}\)

The enforced reliance on the Irish state conditions many asylum seekers into believing that they may not have the skills needed to thrive in Ireland. The internalising of otherness is emblematic of how Direct Provision is a place where migrants condition their own sense of Irishness. This is driven by their interactions with Irish bureaucracy as well as public perception. Zoe O’Reilly invoked Foucault’s idea of a microphysics of power, where the power of the state, as embodied by its architectures of exclusion, extends into the bodies of those it is oppressing. In doing so it forces asylum seekers to engage with experiences of liminality. They begin to

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\(^{153}\) The state-provided allowance has only increased twice since the inception of Direct Provision, and has not increased to counter COVID-19-related inflation. Seaon Lyons’ pre-tax profits from Direct Provision soared 88 per cent in 2019 from previous year. Murphy, 4.

imagine themselves similarly to how they are perceived by the state, and how the state conditions the Irish public to view them.\textsuperscript{155}

Direct Provision, ultimately, enforces a system of “designed invisibility via a triad of factors. This includes privatization, dispersal, and active silencing. The first refers to the offshoring of state responsibility to private companies; the second refers to the dispersal of migrant bodies out of sight from the majority of Irish; and the third refers to the incarceration of migrant bodies into a parallel society.\textsuperscript{156} This mirrors previous iterations of incarceration in Ireland. The Irish state has secularised its rebordering of Irish society away from policing kinship, into defining and excluding foreignness.

**Direct Provision: A Parallel Society**

Despite living within the borders of the Irish state, the inhabitants of Direct Provision, by its very definition, exist outside of Irish society. This relegation to the ideological and social borders of Irish society dooms them into a state of limbo; they are forced into a parallel society “on the outskirts of Irish society, and places of marginalization.”\textsuperscript{157} Generations of asylum seekers cite how Ireland’s asylum system limits their right to accommodation, employment, and the ability to develop or disseminate their own culture to their next generation. Direct Provision is an “open prison.”\textsuperscript{158}

Ireland’s asylum system uses accommodation as a tool for controlling asylum seekers. By forcing them to live in direct provision while they await their applications or launch challenges to their deportations, the Irish state restricts these undocumented migrants into overcrowded and

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\textsuperscript{156} Murphy, 9.


\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 6.
unsanitary housing conditions. As of May 2020, only twenty per cent of asylum seekers in direct provision have access to own door accommodation, with an additional 1700 of the 7700 inhabitants of the system being forced to share rooms with non-family members.\textsuperscript{159} The living conditions in these overcrowded facilities has been exacerbated by the rise of COVID-19. In the Cahersiveen Direct Provision facility, which experienced a significant COVID-19 outbreak, 100 residents were forced to share 56 bedrooms. Without being tested for COVID-19, 105 asylum seekers were moved to the facility over the course of a week. This did not just place the inhabitants of the facilities in danger. It also fuelled local fears that associated the facility and its inhabitants with disease, leading to children being labelled as “Covid People” in school, and migrants being barred from markets by locals.\textsuperscript{160} This exemplifies how negative portrayals of racialised migrants are driven by the failures of the Irish state.

The pandemic has only exposed the inhumanity of Direct Provision as the facilities have come to be viewed as breeding grounds of disease. This both places the lives of migrants in danger and associates them with disease.\textsuperscript{161} Although over 2,0000 inhabitants of Direct Provision facilities have received positive verdicts in their applications, they are unable to afford housing due to their inability to acquire savings, and the incompetence of the Irish state in regard to


\textsuperscript{160} Ellen Coyne, “‘People were asking if the asylum seekers had been tested, but we are as likely to infect them,’” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), March 21, 2020; Breda Heffernan, “‘We are just sitting ducks waiting to die,’ says direct provision resident: VIRUS CONCERNS,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), August 10,2 2020.

\textsuperscript{161} Eamonn Sweeney, “‘We'll know who to blame when there's no All-Ireland: Our incompetent political elite have given middle finger to those they claim to represent,’” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), August 24, 2020.
building public housing. Migrants cannot escape the dangerously disease-ridden Direct Provision facilities that have been over capacity since 2018.

The lack of legal employment opportunities also restricts asylum seekers to a parallel society. The Irish state only granted them the right to work in 2018. Prior to the implementation of the *White Paper to End Direct Provision*, which will be discussed in Chapter 3, eligible asylum seekers, who lived in Direct Provision for 9 months, were required to “… pay a fee of between €500 and €1,000 for a six-month or 12-month work permit, must find a job with a starting salary of at least €30,000, and are precluded from applying for jobs in more than 60 areas, including hospitality, construction and healthcare.” This has severely excluded asylum seekers from seeking work for which they may be qualified. Opportunities are further inhibited by the location of direct provision facilities in rural communities with minimal public transportation options.

The limited opportunities have led many to take themselves out of direct provision and the asylum process to work in the “shadow economy” in order to provide for their families. Most undocumented migrants in the Republic of Ireland live outside of Direct Provision; slightly over 8,000 of the possible 17,000-26,000 living in these facilities. Importantly, the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland reports that 75 per cent of undocumented migrants have lived in Ireland for at

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least five years; of whom, 93 per cent are employed, 75 per cent receive less than minimum wage, and 50 per cent work for more than 40 hours a week. Migrant agency foils the attempts by the Irish state to create a system of “enforced idleness;” however, one cannot ignore that migrants are unable to benefit from the social safety benefits connected to employment, as well as the fact that they live in fear of deportation, regardless of whether they live in Direct Provision, or as undocumented migrants outside.

The work restrictions and living conditions are part of a larger plan to prevent migrants from envisioning themselves and their families as being able to thrive in Ireland. By remaining in direct provision, asylum seekers are victim to state-sponsored poverty and de-skilling. This includes denying them access to quality education. Although asylum seekers can access public education, the lack of access to privacy, quality WIFI, and computers, which have become essential during COVID, has detrimentally affected migrant children learning. It is difficult to imagine that facilities like the one in Mount Trenchard, which has been described by inspectors as “not fit for animals,” as being any place for a child to develop. The Irish Ombudsman for Children, Dr. Niall Muldoon, chastised the Irish state for forcing children into “institutionalised living that is detrimental to their development and wellbeing.

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166 One third of undocumented migrants are employed as carers and are essential to the Republic of Ireland’s ability to combat the COVID crisis. The majority of food factory workers are undocumented, forced to work under unsanitary conditions that have led to the spread of COVID. Anti-migrant hawks have often drawn correlations between Direct Provision and food processing facilities. Billy Keane, “Mary came here to provide for those she loves back home - it's only right we recognise she exists,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), December 19, 2020; Senan Molony, “17,000 to get full residency rights,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), April 24, 2021; Kim Bielenberg, “How should we welcome 100,000 Ukrainian refugees?,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), March 12, 2022.

167 Sorcha Pollack, “Once my visa had expired the fear started’: The childminder from the Philippines is one of the 17,000-20,000 undocumented people in this country and now campaigns with the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland for regularisation,” Irish Times (Dublin, ROI), April 22, 2020; Government of Ireland, Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Person in the International Protection Process, September 2020 (Dublin: Government of Ireland, 2020).

The Irish state had previously banned undocumented migrants from accessing post-secondary education. Instead, they are faced with a prohibitive cost barrier that is directly connected to their immigration status. Irish students, including citizens of E.U. member states and Switzerland, are eligible for free post-secondary education in Ireland. Non-E.U. citizens and Irish residing outside of the customs union must pay the full tuition of €8,000 a year, which is well beyond the means of asylum seekers who subsist on paltry allowances, minimum wages, or cash-in-hand employment at best.\(^{169}\) Academic development is meant to be unattainable. Those able to gain Sanctuary Scholarships from institutions like University College of Dublin, Dublin City University, University of Limerick, and other participating universities, are also restricted by the rural and underserviced locations of Direct Provision facilities.\(^{170}\) The physical distance of their facilities and the lack of access to infrastructure, such as public transportation and adequate broadband, prevent asylum seekers from developing skills that are deemed valuable by modern Ireland, and rob generations of undocumented migrants from opportunities to integrate. This leaves undocumented migrants who have been accepted into university feeling “de-motivated,” or “like Mexicans in America,” living in a state of limbo.\(^{171}\) Migrant youth are conditioned into a state of malaise that is used to justify their eventual deportations.

Direct provision aims to rob asylum seekers of their agency. This is not limited to denying migrants the ability to integrate; in addition, it attempts to deprive migrants of the

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\(^{171}\) Patrick Freyne, “UNKNOWN, UNEQUAL, UNDONE: 5,000 undocumented young people are growing up Irish but live in fear of deportation - the group Young Paperless and Powerful is trying to raise awareness of their plight,” *Irish Times* (Dublin, ROI), July 15, 2017.
opportunity to disseminate their culture to future generations. The opportunity to cook for oneself and the role that food plays in culture is repeatedly invoked by migrant rights activists and those who have lived, or still live, in Direct Provision. Throughout Direct Provision facilities, especially in for-profit institutions, there is an absence of self-cook facilities. This forces asylum seekers to rely on the state for subsistence. Those who have access to these facilities are often restricted by their paltry allowances or the lack of access to ingredients in rural Ireland.172 How can parents afford to cook the food of their cultures for their families, while barely being able to afford basic amenities such as underwear and tampons?173 The inability to provide for oneself or for one’s family by working and imparting one’s culture is emblematic of the state’s attempt to foster feelings of liminality among migrants. They are trapped in a borderland between the Republic of Ireland and a “homeland,” without being allowed to use culture as a salve for their traumas.

Migrant voices connect the Irish state’s attempt to deprive them of the right to disseminate culture to their children and the unhealthy conditions experienced in Direct Provision. One of the mothers interviewed by Angèle Smith refers to how the absence of culture or “home” in Direct Provision negatively impacts her son. She states “His stomach aches and he feels terrible… But what can I expect, if I cannot feed him with the food that he needed to make him well? He doesn’t like the food that he is given here; it is not good food for him. He needs his own kind of food, he needs Nigerian food but he can’t get that here.” Smith goes on to note that this is just as much a reference to the mother herself, as it is to her son, as she is being robbed of

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172 Katy McGuiness, ““Sometimes I don’t really understand that I am sleeping in my own bedroom in my own bed”,” *Irish Independent* (Dublin, ROI), February 20, 2021.
the opportunity to participate in an important part of motherhood. This quote additionally connects the inhumanity of the disease-ridden accommodations to a systemic attempt to rob migrants of the agency to produce roots and is a “fundamental loss of their right to live like a family.”

The state-sponsored attempts to produce a malaise amongst asylum seekers both not only segregate them from Irish society, but “de-skills,” and “de-motivates” them into believing that they are not qualified to be a part of it. By living within the borderlands of the Irish asylum system, asylum seekers are relegated to membership in a parallel society. This simultaneously entrenches the idea amongst Irish citizens that asylum seekers and undocumented migrants cannot fulfil the Irish neoliberal standard of respectability demanded by the Irish state. Ultimately, the segregation of the latter from the former fuels belief in their illegality, which trickles down to the asylum seekers themselves. Direct Provision and the migrant bodies living within become tools to condition imagined borders of Irishness. As a result, many successful asylum applicants internalise a message that they can never be Irish.

This exemplifies how the Irish state conditions asylum seekers into being justifiably deported. As late as June 15, 2020, over 80 per cent of asylum seekers cases have been stuck in backlog, which COVID-19 has certainty contributed to. This ensures long stays in inhumane facilities, which prevent asylum seekers from acculturating to Irish society and developing skills.

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174 Smith, 174.
175 Rita Kelly, “Ireland - a magical land where parents are forced to beg a charity for nappies,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), January 1, 2018.
176 Patrick Freyne, “UNKNOWN, UNEQUAL, UNDONE: 5,000 undocumented young people are growing up Irish but live in fear of deportation - the group Young Paperless and Powerful is trying to raise awareness of their plight,” Irish Times (Dublin, ROI), July 15, 2017.
177 Zoe O’Reilly’s idea of Ontological Liminality refers to how migrants express how "fear, insecurity, invisibility and a highly controlled existence are lived and internalized." O’Reilly, 823.
178 Sorcha Pollack, “I don’t know if I’ll ever feel Irish, I will always be slightly ‘other’: Part three of a five-part series about people who arrived in Ireland 15-20 years ago,” Irish Times (Dublin, ROI), September 26, 2016.
that would enable them to thrive in Ireland.\textsuperscript{179} Pamela Uba’s experience is emblematic. Although she was eventually able to earn a degree in chemistry from Trinity College, she was forced to live in Direct Provision for ten years. She states first-hand that the system treats its inhabitants like “livestock.”\textsuperscript{180} Such an environment is hardly conducive to producing a sense of belonging.

The European Anti-Poverty Network released a damning report that lambasted the Republic of Ireland for the consequences of long stays in Direct Provision. It stated that “This system directly creates poverty and social exclusion as well as isolation and widespread depression and mental illness. The explicit exclusion of asylum seekers from integration policies stores up social problems for the future. Many people who receive refugee status or leave to remain in Ireland have been de-skilled and have become socially isolated, wasting a potential resource of new skills, ideas and energies which could be available to the Irish economy and society.”\textsuperscript{181} Successful asylum applicants are used to justify the suspicions of locals that asylum seekers are interchangeable with “bogus refugees” who cannot support themselves. The correlations between asylum seekers and Varadkar’s “welfare cheats” ignore migrant voices expressing their abandonment by the state after their accepted asylum verdict.\textsuperscript{182} The failure or designed inefficiencies of the Irish asylum system has conditioned the Irish public into a zero-sum attitude against racialised migrants. It becomes difficult for the popular psyche to comprehend how or why foreign “others” should be supported by the state, when generations of Irish have been forced to emigrate due to state neglect. This ignores that the state’s supposed support is a system of incarceration.

\textsuperscript{180} Ciara O’Loughlin, “Frontline worker and former direct provision resident Pamela is first black Miss Ireland,” \textit{Irish Independent} (Dublin, ROI), September 7, 2021.
\textsuperscript{182} Burroughs and O’Reilly, 64
Similarly to incarcerated prisoners, asylum seekers are fingerprinted and photographed, before their information is sent into a database used by immigration authorities across Europe. This is done to ensure that asylum seekers apply for asylum in their country of first entry.\textsuperscript{183} From that point onwards, migrants live in a system of “unbounded panoptic observation.” Their privacy is stripped by the continued monitoring of CCTV and often mandatory recording of presence within centres.\textsuperscript{184} Similarly to how long processing times are used as a tool to demoralise asylum seekers, time is used to condition residents of Direct Provision at a most basic level. They are often forced to eat at certain times. Failure to fulfil such orders, which include taking food back to rooms, or arriving at the mess hall at later times, is punished. A notable example is Bingani Nkosi - a university student, who was unable to attend both his classes and designated mealtimes, and, thus, forced to skip meals.\textsuperscript{185} This state-sanctioned denial of development simultaneously exemplifies how the Irish state manipulates resources in Direct Provision to destroy communal bonds. Numerous facilities engage in practices that reward asylum seekers for collaborating with the state and private contractors, most notably, being an informer; benefits include flexible eating times, extra food, and own-door accommodations. The Irish state attempts to create a hierarchal order within this exclusionary parallel society. The threat of deportation and the uprooting of families at a moment’s notice forces asylum seekers to live in fear both of deportation from Ireland and forced relocation within the Direct Provision system. Maintaining internal order within Direct Provision is used to enforce the Irish state’s power of population control.\textsuperscript{186} By cultivating a carceral system that cultivates a sense of

\textsuperscript{183} Hewson, 6.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{185} Irish Independent, “‘In Direct Provision I missed meals if they clashed with classes’: MY STORY,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), August 17, 2016.
\textsuperscript{186} Hewson, 9-13.
perpetual visibility, the Republic of Ireland attempts to condition asylum seekers into the “docile bodies” needed by the state to define itself and its boundaries.

There is, however, another side to a parallel society. The Irish asylum system, as embodied by Direct Provision, enforces Irish borders by forcing migrants into a structure that is supposed to condition them into states of liminality and deportability. This attempt to push asylum seekers to the margins of Irish society, however, has resulted in the creation of a “trans-institutional” community. Asylum seekers have developed their own knowledge and kinship networks within the Irish borderlands. As migrants are moved between facilities and are repeatedly forced to uproot their lives by the Irish state, they build links between facilities. This allows for migrant knowledge to spread throughout this parallel society and for asylum seekers to demonstrate agency. Examples of this include references to the dispersal of reputations for each facility, like Tannadice, which is commonly referred to as “Guantanamo,” across these networks. This leaked to the public and was used by migrant rights groups and their liberal allies to rally against Direct Provision. Asylum seekers have repurposed the punishment of forced relocation to produce strategies for resisting the Irish asylum system. Similarly to how members of the diaspora operate through networks of identity, asylum seekers operate through networks of solidarity, which have allowed them to oppose the Irish state through direct action protest like hunger strikes.

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187 Ibid., 12.
189 Tom Brady and Eoghan McConnell, “Justice officials to meet asylum protesters,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), September 13, 2014.
How the Irish Asylum System Reconfigures the Borders of Irish Society

The dispersal of asylum seekers across rural Ireland is emblematic of a tradition of pushing unwanted bodies to the margins of Irish society. Over sixty per cent of Irish people live in urban centres, which also serve as hubs of internal migration. Coincidentally, a disproportionate number of Irish emigrants come from rural Ireland, with at least 25 per cent of all rural families knowing at least one family member who has emigrated since 2008. The communities that have been most affected by the traumas of emigration are forced to disproportionally engage with the “return of the repressed.”

Many rural Irish understand the placement of asylum seekers and Direct Provision facilities in rural Ireland as being emblematic of urban disdain for rural underserviced communities, which believe they are laden with a new burden by the Irish state. To justify the inception of Direct Provision in the early 2000s, the Republic of Ireland claimed that it was protecting the integrity of Irish citizenship and social safety net from “waves” of “bogus asylum seekers.” The public was conditioned to viewing migrant “others” with suspicion and disdain. Thus, the very communities that had been victimised by undocumented Irish emigration during the Celtic Tiger were pre-conditioned into understanding the arrival of asylum seekers within a zero-sum competition for resources. Sympathy for migrants has, interestingly, dropped as Irish citizens have been “forced” to emigrate from rural and underserviced communities.

These underserviced rural communities have not received adequate investment in terms of roads, public transit, accessible healthcare, policing, or rural broadband. The Irish state is

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192 Marie O’Halloran, “Political interns speak up for immigrants in Ireland: Crosscare project puts immigrants to work in politics for six months,” Irish Times (Dublin, ROI), July 28, 2014.
failing to produce a rural Ireland for emigrants and members of the diaspora to return to. This misstep has been criticised as setting up *Global Irish* for disaster. Rural TDs from across the political spectrum, including Sinn Fein TD Aengus Ó Snodaigh, have chastised the inability of the state to invest in rural Ireland. In 2015, he dismissively referred to efforts by the Irish state to create an airport in western Galway for tourists to the Knock Shrine as “a continuation of a previous policy, namely, bánú na tíre or emigration. It only wants airlines to serve the west in order that people can return as tourists rather than live here.” Locals perceive the state as only investing in a picturesque touristic creation of diasporic imagination, rather than a place where Irish people actually live.

Direct Provision, thus, is imagined as state investment comes at the expense of rural Ireland; however, it is not a form of social housing. It is an oppressive system designed to deter migrants from immigrating to Ireland and to encourage those within the system to willingly leave or accept deportation. An important component of this strategy is the inaccessibility of these facilities to the public. It requires significant engagement with the Irish bureaucracy for an Irish citizen to enter. Luke Gibbons writes that “while strangers can become neighbours by virtue of spatial proximity, it does not follow that they are thereby part of a community imagined through time.” If anything, Irish proximity to asylum seekers and the direct provision facilities, which can take the form of hotels that have secretly negotiated agreements with the federal government, produces an understanding that these “others” are being serviced at the expense of locals. The “warehousing” of asylum seekers for long periods of time does not normalise their presence or

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193 *Dáil Debates. Dáil Éireann, 27 May 2015, 880 (Aengus Ó Snodaigh, TD) (ROI)*

194 *Dáil Debates. Dáil Éireann, 21 April 2021, 1005 (Cathal Crowe, TD) (ROI)*

produce public sympathy. Rather, it encourages their perception as “intruders.” This is fuelled by the repeated justifications by Irish governments that Direct Provisions saves asylum seekers from homelessness, which encourages the public to correlate the two issues.\footnote{Martina Devlin, “As dangerous elements size up our electorate on the back of a far-right agenda, we must be ready to challenge their odious ‘no room at the inn’ prejudices,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), November 23, 2019.}

Support for this connection is emboldened by the fact that Irish state has spent over €1.6 billion on Direct Provision as of April of 2021. The conservative rural Independent TD Michael Collins contextualised this amount by stating that “at an average building cost of, say, €150,000 for a social house, the €1.6 billion would have built 10,666 houses in the same time," and was followed by his fellow rural conservative independent TD, Mattie McGrath, who referred to the entire system as a “gravy train.”\footnote{Dáil Debates. Dáil Éireann, 22 April 2021, 1006 (Michael Collins, TD) (ROI) https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2021-04-22/; Dáil Debates. Dáil Éireann, 22 April 2021, 1006 (Mattie McGrath, TD) (ROI) https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2021-04-22/.} Neither of them referred to the horrendous conditions experienced by asylum seekers. Rather, they lambasted the willingness of the state to spend federal funds on foreigners, rather than on rural Irish. Dubliner Sinn Fein TD, Eoin Ó Broin, takes a different approach by noting that it would save the Irish state ten thousand euros per family of two adults and two children if they were placed on job seekers' allowances and provided with home seeker payments rather than being left in Direct Provision. David Stanton responded by stating that this would be impossible due to the housing crisis and the possibility of increased job competition.\footnote{Mari O’Halloran, “Call for action on undocumented here,” Irish Times (Dublin, ROI), March 31, 2017.} Efficiency and respect for migrant care is disregarded by the state to produce a system of segregation and expulsion.

Rural suspicions of Direct Provision are fanned by the secrecy in which the facilities are created. The Irish state has consistently failed to uphold the promise made in its Migrant Integration Strategy to consult with local communities before deciding on the locations of
facilities. Successive governments have cited this practice as being essential to preventing outside influence on the negotiation process between the state and the landlord of the facility. This secrecy, which often includes the minimal warning to locals about the number of arriving asylum seekers, projects a message that these migrants are a burden being forced onto already underserviced communities. This suspicion has been reinforced by decades of fearmongering from the Irish political establishment, which has repeatedly invoked the language of “common-sense citizenship.” A notable example of grassroots resistance to state secrecy occurred in Lisdoonvarna in 2018. Ninety-three per cent of its 300 residents voted against the state’s plan to settle 115 asylum seekers in the town; although, locals stated they would accept fewer. It is difficult to imagine how the minimal warning of such a population transfer, combined with the number of asylum seekers in proportion to the size of the town, and conditioned suspicions would not produce popular resistance. In addition, it evokes the idea that the benefits used by migrants come at the expense of locals who would be “overrun” by a “wave” of unwanted “others.” It is easy to point to the race-baiting of politicians like Noel Grealish, who infamously accused asylum seekers of “sponging” off the system and destroying fabrics of community, as he protested a Direct Provision centre in Oughterard. These blatant xenophobic views, however, are built on decades of conditioning by the Irish state, which continues to invoke crisis racism to justify its actions.

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201 Crisis racism refers to Etienne Balibar’s idea of racial states using migrants and marginalized communities as scapegoats for pre-existing problems. Lentin, 435.; Irish Independent, “Lisdoonvarna says 'no' to plan for 115 asylum seekers to move into town,” *Irish Independent* (Dublin, ROI), March 3, 2018; Cormac McQuinn, “Grealish silent as 'sponge' storm grows: Pressure on Grealish to withdraw claim Africans 'sponge off the system','” *Irish Independent* (Dublin, ROI), September 14, 2019.
The Irish asylum system, as embodied by Direct Provision, appears to be a systemically designed failure to assume responsibility by the Irish state. Instead, it engages in practices of “atomisation.” This refers to the process by which states break apart bonds of community, pitting identities against each other with the state monopolising all avenues of power and loyalty via the imposition of institutions.\footnote{Jan T. Gross, \textit{Polish Society Under German Occupation: The Generalgouvernement, 1939-1944}, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press), 29.} It is a strategy for preserving homogeneity via exclusion. The Irish state is conditioning “local” Irish against “foreign” racialised migrants, or asylum seekers. This strategy of “divide and conquer” is fuelled by the previously mentioned practice of dispersal. Simultaneously placing Direct Provision facilities in underserviced rural communities has polarised rural Ireland, with many communities interpreting the presence of asylum seekers as an obstacle to their receiving badly needed resources. The failure of the state to address the country’s housing crisis is an example of how state incompetence has fuelled tensions. This, along with rising rates of homelessness, has conditioned the Irish public into believing that they cannot care for their own. If true, how would they be able to “house” asylum seekers?\footnote{Sorcha Pollack, “IN STAUNCH DEFENCE OF ‘THE RIGHT TO HAVE RIGHTS’,” \textit{Irish Times} (Dublin, ROI), July 13, 2019, Rosie Southgate, \textit{We can't pit the needs of the homeless against asylum seekers: Letters &Editorial Comment},” \textit{Irish Independent} (Dublin, ROI), December 19, 2017.} Such comparisons are noteworthy for their omission of any reference to the conditions of Direct Provision facilities. It, however, speaks to the larger insecurity about emigration of “kin,” which is foiled against the “settlement” of “others.” This contrast is used to justify the Irish state’s support for strong borders and policies of exclusion.

The dispersal of asylum seekers, combined with the lack of local consultation, withholding of information, and local prejudices, creates a “lethal cocktail” of fear and anxiety.\footnote{Ni Chiosáin, 12.} This has resulted in numerous protests against Direct Provision facilities throughout
rural Ireland. In 2019, 1,500 people marched outside of Oughterard to protest the establishment of a facility. This was criticised by almost every member of the Dáil, though TD Michael Collins retorted that "Irish people who are ‘hungry in the street’ should be prioritised over immigrants." Paradoxically, rural protest and radicalism allowed for members of the political establishment like Richard Bruton, who had keenly defended government inaction on Direct Provision, to present themselves as defenders of immigrants and diversity against a sea of rural xenophobia. These critiques from political elites continued following arson attacks on Direct Provision centres in Rooskey, and the fire-bombing of Sinn Fein TD Martin Kenny’s car following his support for housing asylum seekers in Ballinamore.

Urban liberal Irish commonly accuse rural communities of racist hypocrisy, citing that the latter complains about asylum seekers and overpopulation as they simultaneously call for return migration. Rural protests of Direct Provision facilities are commonly cited as protests against racialised migrants, and, thus, inherently racist. Despite many conservatives invoking the inhumanity of direct provision, the horrendous conditions are often used as a vehicle for protesting the existence of facilities in their own communities rather than the Irish asylum system. Many of the same rural voices who have vociferously challenged the institution of Direct Provision have simultaneously criticised the asylum system as rewarding “illegal immigration.” Such reactions are conditioned by a generation of depicting undocumented migrants as neither representing neoliberal respectability, nor having skills to contribute to Irish

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205 Lorna Siggins and Hugh O’Connell, “Picket held at hotel site earmarked for asylum seekers,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), September 16, 2019.
206 Gabriella Monogham, “In the swim: Asylum seekers’ watery welcome,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), September 21, 2019; Cormac McQuinn, TD Kenny tells of 'sheer panic' as his family woke to find car in 'ball of flame'," Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), October 30, 2019.
society, nor a willingness to be a part of it. Lucky Khambule, one of the founders of the Movement of Asylum Seekers of Ireland, challenged these protesters by questioning, “[h]ow come there are people now who see this an inhumane system when they have been quiet? None of these groups have contacted us before.”208 In other words, why have these people waited twenty years to protest Direct Provision, and why are they only resisting facilities being placed in their own communities? The bodies of asylum seekers have been transformed into proxies for a wider battle and division over the definition of modern Ireland.

Migrant bodies are reconfigured by both the state and Irish citizens to articulate a vision of what modern Ireland should be. Eithne Luibhéid invoked the idea that states need asylum seekers to redraw racial and national boundaries.209 They provide an “other” for the state to define itself against; their bodies serve as the antithesis to Irishness. The Irish state has used the bodies of racialised migrants to condition Irish society by simultaneously depicting the former as a drain on state coffers while placing them in proximity to underserviced communities. This, consequently, produces an environment antagonistic towards asylum seekers and transforms rural Ireland into a tool of deportability. Appeals to “common-sense citizenship” are normalised and entrenched into mainstream society. Ireland does not require a far-right anti-immigrant party to champion these ideals, as they have already been internalised. The subtle presence of these ideals, which have been conditioned through decades of lobbying by the Irish state and media, have produced a banal nationalism.210 Thus, recent Irish governments have been able to articulate their opposition to far-right extremism without having to risk damaging the asylum system upheld by the state.

208 Allison Bray, Flanagan seeks end of 'siege' at hotel to house asylum seekers: Fear: 'Legitimate' concerns being manipulated by right-wing zealots,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), November 2, 2019.
210 Fanning, 17; Paul Williams, “Undocumented Workers,” Irish Times (Dublin, ROI), May 11, 2020.
Time is commonly referred to by asylum seekers living in Direct Provision as a tool used by the state to spur them into leaving Ireland.\textsuperscript{211} It, however, is also used by the state to condition public attitudes against asylum seekers. Despite its promises to invest in streamlining the processing of asylum applications, wait times remain over one-and-a-half years, and appeal cases average longer than nine months. This transforms Direct Provision centres into entrenched establishments of rural Irish communities. At the same time, the Irish government has increased its spending on Direct Provision on an annual basis.\textsuperscript{212} The growing presence of racialised migrants in small rural communities has allowed local conservative Independent politicians, like the Healey-Rae brothers, Michael Collins, Mattie McGrath and Denis Naughten, to state that asylum seekers could potentially culturally overwhelm rural communities.\textsuperscript{213} As xenophobic populism sweeps Europe, successive Fine Gael and Fianna Fail governments have championed the Irish state as a liberal bullwork against this tide. They openly chastise rural grassroots resistance, despite it being a consequence of the actions of the Irish state.

The bodies of asylum seekers become the vehicle through which the Irish state atomises Irish society by widening fissures between urban and rural Ireland. Rural Irish opposition towards Direct Provision and asylum seekers is influenced by the belief that rural underserviced communities are neglected by Dublin. In addition to serving as a reference to the Irish government, the capital is commonly depicted as a microcosm for urban Irish attitudes. Urban Ireland’s oppositions to grassroots rural violence against Direct Provision is understood as an

\textsuperscript{211} O’Reilly, 830.
\textsuperscript{213} Dáil Debates. Dáil Éireann, 17 June 2020, 994 (Danny Healy-Rae, TD) (ROI) \url{https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2020-06-17/}.
attempt to tar rural Ireland as xenophobic, and emblematic of wider attempts to dismiss the regions entirely.\(^{214}\)

The objectification of migrant bodies is not just limited to the state; asylum seekers are also invoked at the grassroots level to articulate distinct understandings of what it means to be Irish. Despite victories in the causes of gay marriage and access to abortion, urban-based liberal Irish reiterates a message that Ireland cannot rest on its laurels as it forces asylum seekers to live in “modern-day Magdalene Laundries.”\(^{215}\) Connections to previous iterations of Irish incarceration are a common theme in letters to the editor in both the *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent*; Irish politicians, such as former People Before Profit – Solidarity TD Ruth Coppinger, have also referenced concentration camps and the Holocaust during discussion about Direct Provision in the *Dáil Éireann*.\(^{216}\) Urban and liberal voices repeatedly criticise rural protestors for using the language of competition for resources and infrastructure to protest the presence of racialised migrants in their communities without actually referencing race. This melds with the criticism that they are simultaneously protesting overpopulation, while calling for the return of emigrants and their respective diasporas.\(^{217}\) Such a line of criticism attaches the nativist fear and anger that had been used to justify the attacks on Direct Provision facilities in

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\(^{214}\) Irish Independent, “‘We're being sold a pup and our good nature exploited’,” *Irish Independent* (Dublin, ROI), November 24, 2018.


\(^{216}\) *Dáil Debates*. Dáil Éireann, 31 January 2017, 936 (Ruth Coppinger, TD) (ROI) [https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2017-01-31/].

\(^{217}\) Rural communities and counties, such as Co. Donegal, and the Island of Arranmore have launched “coming home” campaigns to encourage their specific diasporic communities to “return.” They notably aim to appeal to young families. Kim Bielenberg and Kathy Donaghy, “So much for the city: how the urban exodus can revive rural Ireland,” *Irish Independent* (Dublin, ROI), October 9, 2021.
Moville and Rooskey in 2019 to the growing acceptance of the Great Replacement Theory and its associated white supremacist violence.\textsuperscript{218}

Rural conservatives have responded to liberal critiques with accusations of hypocrisy. They question how governments can chastise the past, including the role of the church in previous incarnations of incarceration, without dealing with what liberals refer to as “modern-day Magdalene Laundries.”\textsuperscript{219} How can politicians attack the church when they are participating in and legitimising the same type of murderous institution for which they are criticising the church? This carries over into a questioning of whether urban liberals and politicians would be willing to live with the consequences of their own beliefs. Would they be willing to have a Direct Provision facility in their own neighbourhoods? Rural Irish dismiss accusations of xenophobia by pointing to how middle-class Dubliners have invoked city planning laws to challenge the placement of Direct Provision facilities in their own neighbourhoods. Patricia Casey pointed out that that there are only two Direct Provision facilities in Dublin, and that Dubliners in Celbridge are not disparaged as “monsters” for litigating against the placement of facilities in their suburb.\textsuperscript{220} This fuels rural Irish ideas about how Dublin is able to abdicate the very responsibilities that it is asking the rest of Ireland to assume. Class and regionalism intersect into an indictment of how Dublin, where asylum cases are processed and which has superior access to social services, is requesting that the underserviced regions that have been victimised by emigration (within and outside of the country) bear the brunt of responsibility.

\textsuperscript{218} Kim Bielenberg, “‘I am afraid now. I believe it could happen here’,” \textit{Irish Independent} (Dublin, ROI), August 10, 2019.
\textsuperscript{219} Sarah MacDonald, “Politicians should repent for their abortion stance – Bishop,” \textit{Irish Independent} (Dublin, ROI), January 2, 2019.
\textsuperscript{220} Patricia Casey, “Asylum centre row hijacked by outsiders - but locals' concerns are legitimate,” \textit{Irish Independent} (Dublin, ROI), September 28, 2019; Ni Chiosáin, 14.
The urban-rural and liberal-conservative divides in Ireland is emblematic of the wider attempt by the Irish state to use asylum seekers as a vehicle to atomise Irish society. Although neither side professes blind loyalty to the government, both have resorted to using direct appeals to the state as the sole arbiter of power. The use of the courts by urban Irish and of direct action protest by rural Irish demonstrate a degree of comfort by both constituencies to directly engage with the state rather than build wider solidarities in the opposition to Ireland’s asylum system. The Irish state has used the bodies of asylum seekers to play constituencies against each other. Through their attempts to define a modern Ireland, both the rural and urban Irish have entrenched themselves in the official mechanisms of the state and legitimised its actions.

An attempt to define the Irish nation permeates this entire chapter. For both their supporters and opponents, asylum seekers serve as tools for defining the boundaries of the nation and determining who deserves to live within the territorial boundaries of the state. The public perception of these emigrants, however, is attached to Irish insecurity towards emigration. Irish identities have been shaped by the memories of millions of emigrations from Ireland to diasporic communities that dwarf the population of the Republic of Ireland. The Irish state, which has historically been associated with memories of emigration, however, has become a site of immigration. It is difficult for a national identity that has been shaped by traumas of emigration to reconcile with the reality that its state is engaged in the oppression of immigrants. The presence of asylum seekers in Ireland, however, has forced the Irish public to negotiate the boundaries between being Irish and “foreign.” This has broached a wider conversation of whether diasporic “kin” should be excluded from this debate.
Chapter 3: Who Deserves to Live in Ireland?

While discussing the importance of extending the franchise to the Irish diaspora, the former leader of Sinn Fein, Gerry Adams, powerfully proclaimed that "The nation is not the State. The nation is the nation. It is wider, bigger and arguably more important than any state. There is a unique historic opportunity to end this disenfranchisement of emigrants and to do something concrete about involving citizens in the North in the political life of this State…If the Government were serious about bringing our emigrants home, it would give them a stake in the country in the first instance by giving them a vote."221 His articulation of the franchise as a tangible connection linking the diaspora, emigrants, and the Irish state clearly conveys the basic right of Irish citizenship as a tool for producing a transnational sense of Irishness. This is often challenged at a grassroots level. A notable letter to the editor from the Irish Independent challenged Adams by stating that "[t]he State is not the nation. There are many Irish people in many other parts of the world - including on the island of Ireland - who do not live in this State."222 In other words, the franchise chooses representatives of the state, not the nation. This embodies the growing sense of anxiety expressed by Irish citizens towards the state’s attempts to deterritorialise the boundaries of the Irish state.

Chapter 3 will address grassroots Irish reactions to the Irish government’s use of diaspora and asylum policies to define kinship, and whether cultural affinity and ethnic connection entitles a person to Irish citizenship. This is not limited to debates about the possibility of extending the franchise to include members of the diaspora. Rather, this chapter focuses on how the fluidity of Irish identity produces public uncertainty regarding who is entitled to return to or remain in

222 Dermot Lacey, “Don't give diaspora a vote - they don't live with the consequences: Letters & Editorial Comment,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), March 16, 2017.
Ireland, and who should be considered Irish. Chapter 3 will demonstrate how the Irish state’s attempt to deterritorialise itself into a diaspora nation via its diaspora and asylum policies produces public angst about defining kinship and determining whether it entitles members of the diaspora to the full rights of citizenship. This will be proven through an analysis of the consequences of 1) the Irish state’s categorisation of diasporic bodies; 2) the 2004 citizenship referendum to end birthright citizenship on grassroots resistance to diaspora and emigrant voting in Ireland; 3) the use of undocumented Irish bodies to resist the Irish asylum system; 4) the *White Paper to End Direct Provision* and the most recent “regularisation scheme” in 2021.

**Categorising Diasporic Bodies**

Interchangeable terminology has traditionally been used in the Republic of Ireland as a tool to categorise migrants. This has allowed the state to justify denying resources, services, and rights to asylum seekers; in fact, Ronit Lentin has argued that the category of asylum seeker was only created to deny migrants the rights attached to being categorised as refugees. Successive Irish governments have repeatedly stated that the state alone can categorise migrants.\(^{223}\) When former Independent TD Maureen O’Sullivan argued for the regularisation of children in Direct Provision by stating that youth in these facilities refer to themselves as “ghosts,” former Deputy Prime Minister Frances Fitzgerald unsympathetically responded by stating that, “Once they are refugees, of course they can work. They are not ghosts. They can be part of ordinary society.”\(^{224}\) This focus on employment elicits fears that connect the regularisation of undocumented peoples to increased job competition and a larger struggle for resources between Irish and racialised migrants. These anxieties have been exacerbated by elected officials’ interchangeable use of

\(^{223}\) Lentin, 22.

terms like “undocumented” and “illegal,” as well as “bogus refugee” and “genuine asylum seeker.”

This terminological confusion also applies to Irish emigrant bodies. Within Irish political spaces, the “undocumented Irish” are interchangeably referred to by both this title, which was conceived by Irish Americans to distinguish them from racialised migrants, and as “illegal Irish.” Former Taoiseach Enda Kenny, and even Gerry Adams, have referred to these Irish citizens as both “undocumented” and “illegal.” Neither used the latter term maliciously. This, however, normalises a terminological confusion amongst the Irish public and mirrors the interchangeable use of language that continues to marginalise undocumented migrants in Ireland. This phrasing distances Irish citizens in Ireland from emigrants who do not fit their standards of Irishness. Additionally, it connects the Irish public’s perception of the “undocumented Irish” to how they perceive “illegal immigrants” in Ireland. The resulting perception of these undocumented emigrant citizens as foreign is demonstrated by the augmented diasporisation of their title.

Although not used by most Irish politicians, members of the media, or letters to the editor, terms like “undocumented Irish-Americans” and “illegal Irish-Americans” have grown increasingly popular. Former Labour Party leader Brendan Howlin sought to use the first term to place the “undocumented Irish” into conversation with asylum seekers in Ireland. This terminology, however, has become emblematic of a growing perception within the Republic of Ireland that the “undocumented Irish” are distinct from Irish citizens who did not emigrate. Incidentally, the phrasing has given birth to the idea that the “undocumented Irish” are an Irish

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American problem. This alludes to a wider insecurity within the Irish psyche related to emigration and its link to diasporic identities.

Both Irish newspapers and minutes from the Dáil Éireann hyphenate “Irish-American;” whereas Irish American newspapers do not. This hyphenation differentiates diasporic Irish from those who never emigrated and their descendants. President Michael Higgins repeatedly challenges this assertion by invoking his own family’s history of emigration; he states that hyphenated identities simultaneously provided a salve for diasporic communities to negate the traumatic memories of emigration and demonstrate a connection to Ireland. Most Irish journalists and respondents to their articles hyphenate “Irish-American” to delegitimise diasporic Irishness without considering how diasporic identities have been created to adapt to life as minorities in other states. As the “undocumented Irish” are increasingly perceived by Irish citizens as members of the diaspora, their Irishness is becoming questioned.

Within the Irish psyche, Irish American identity is seen to have devolved from authentic Irishness. As previously stated, this contrast is rooted in a historical economic disparity between Irish American emigrants and their descendants, and the Irish who were “left behind.” The Irish challenged this material imbalance by championing the authenticity of their identities. Irish Americans, however, are depicted as “misty-eyed” romantics whose ideas of Ireland are shaped by inherited nostalgia - not a modern understanding of the state. This romanticism was

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228 Mandy Johnston, “We're in a precarious position, so Enda's meeting with Donald will take chutzpah and courage,” Irish Independent (Dublin ROI), January 28, 2017.
229 As a result, this paper does not hyphenate “Irish American” unless referencing a direct quote.
231 This is a term commonly used by many TDs and in letters to the editor which evokes sadness when discussing historical emigration and diaspora. Mary E. Daly, “Diaspora's changing face: Returning emigrants should help us define what it means to be Irish in 21st century,” Irish Independent (Dublin ROI), March 3, 2017; Jacky Jones, “Emigration is a major health issue bit no one seems to care,” Irish Times (Dublin ROI), January 20, 2015.
232 Irish Independent, “I love my American relatives - but they shouldn't have a vote here,” Irish Independent (Dublin ROI), March 13, 2021.
initially used to define Irish Americans as radical nationalist supporters of the IRA and too liberal. As Ireland has become more liberal, however, Irish America has increasingly come to be portrayed as a community of radical Trump supporters.\textsuperscript{233} Irish Americans are increasingly juxtaposed with modern Irish identity. In an attempt to negate the traumas of emigration, the diaspora is popularly configured into an idea or location that consumes emigrants and reconfigures them into something inauthentically Irish.

Irish politicians have increasingly invoked the concept of “diaspora” to refer to any generation of emigrants. This interchangeable categorising refers to both established diasporic communities that have existed for generations, as well as recent emigrants. “Diaspora” is often invoked in Dáil Éireann debates about producing an Ireland for a possible “return diaspora.”\textsuperscript{234} Perhaps politicians are attempting to weaken the increasingly negative connotations associated with diasporic Irishness in Ireland. Unfortunately, both “diaspora” and “emigrant” have collectively become markers of distinction from authentic Irishness among Irish citizens, who have increasingly questioned whether blood should determine the right to citizenship in a modern Ireland.

**The 2004 Citizenship Referendum and Popular Resistance to Enfranchising the “Diaspora”**

The citizenship referendum of 2004 simultaneously policed the boundaries of the Irish nation while expanding its borders to include the Irish diaspora. Lobbied for by the two dominant parties of Irish politics – Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, the referendum ended birthright citizenship in the Republic of Ireland. Under the guise of an appeal to “common sense citizenship,” Fianna

\textsuperscript{233} Irish Independent, Votes for the diaspora: flying kites and paying lip service,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), March 18, 2017.

Fail, in particular, xenobically appealed to ideas of “anchor babies” and social services overwhelmed by “bogus asylum seekers.” Over 79 per cent of voters in favour of the referendum, resulting in the 27th amendment to the Irish constitution. This restricted citizenship to migrant children only if they had at least one parent who lived legally in Ireland for three of the previous four years, while entrenching the diasporic right to Irish citizenship. Any member of the Irish diaspora who had family in Ireland up to three generations prior remained eligible for Irish citizenship as per Article 2 of the Irish Constitution. This referendum marks the racialisation of the state via publicly approved legislation, as the blood-related Irish diaspora became prioritised over “non-Irish” residents of Ireland. The anti-migrant nativism that attached itself to the referendum did not produce a sense of kinship with diasporic kin. While racialised migrants were reconfigured into foreigners, the referendum unintentionally territorialised understandings of Irishness in a matter that originally was not meant to pertain to members of the diaspora.

The Irish state’s deterritorialisation of Irish citizenship produced a sense of discomfort amongst Irish citizens. Many scoff at the criteria for citizenship by derogatorily referring to this policy as the “granny rule.” Successive governments have presented diasporic citizenship as an opportunity to access a skilled generation of young, educated workers needed to develop the Irish state. Many Irish born citizens, however, question how these kin are any more deserving of citizenship than the racialised migrants who have been historically lobbied against by the state. Law Professor Ronan McRae notably published a column in the Irish Times that criticised

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236 Ibid., 434.
237 Ibid., 436.
the Irish Constitution’s defence of the “granny rule” as subjecting Irish citizens to the will of an
overseas diaspora that does not understand modern Ireland. He argues that the state’s attempt to
build transnational solidarities undermines Irish citizenship.239 Although diasporic citizenship
does not provide the franchise, the popularity of this argument continues to grow as debates
about a possible diaspora vote have become increasingly prevalent and divisive.

Irish citizens are currently eligible to vote for 18 months after they emigrate from
Ireland.240 The feelings of unease caused by the interchangeable use of “emigrant” and
“diaspora” have led many Irish to fear that they could be “swamped” by a sea of
unknowledgeable Irish Americans. The Irish diaspora is approximately 70-million people, of
whom, 31.4 million are Irish American. The Republic of Ireland’s population only surpassed five
million people in 2021. This was the first time it reached that figure in the 169 years since the
Great Famine.241 The lack of clarity about who would be eligible to vote evoked feelings of
anxiety throughout Ireland.

Members of the Irish political establishment, including the former Taoiseach, Leo
Varadkar, have only recently voiced their support for a referendum on diaspora voting, limited to
the office of President. In fact, the first edition of Global Irish questioned how useful such a vote
would be and raised concern about the costs of such an undertaking; meanwhile, Enda Kenny
repeatedly demanded that its proponents produce a concise definition of eligibility. Sinn Fein
contrasts these Fine Gael politicians by calling for all members of the diaspora to be able to vote

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239 Ronan McRae, Irish citizenship not merely a flag of convenience: Our open approach was not designed for a
deluge of diaspora applications,” Irish Times (Dublin, ROI), August 8, 2016.
240 Diarmaid Ferriter, “Government stuck in a time warp on votes for emigrants,” Irish Times (Dublin: ROI), May
30, 2015.
241 Liam Collins, “Our long history of emigration has eased as EU membership helps population reach five million:
Figure marks critical day after centuries of people having to leave Ireland,” Irish Independent (Dublin: ROI),
September 1, 2021.
at every level of government. Supporters of extending the franchise advocate that it would create a tangible connection between the diaspora and the Irish state. In the case of young, educated emigrants who left during the recession, the vote would allow them to have a voice in creating an Ireland that they would be willing to return to. By potentially being restricted to only voting for the President – a ceremonial role, many members of the diaspora have questioned whether the Irish state considers them as anything more than voiceless “cash cows.”

Opponents of the diaspora vote have responded by questioning why the Presidency should be “outsourced” to those who do not live in Ireland, and worry that this would be the gateway to extending the diaspora vote to every level of government. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney, retorted by citing statistics from other E.U. member states to argue that the government only expects a small per centage of “Irish living abroad” to “go through the trouble of voting.”

Thousands of emigrants challenged the criticism that they have turned their backs on Ireland by returning to vote in the 2015 and 2018 referendums to legalise same-sex marriage and abortion, respectively. These movements were collectively referred to as HomeToVote, as young emigrants flew back to Ireland to vote. This challenged the historic Irish insecurity of

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244 Some have sarcastically questioned why a member of the “undocumented Irish” would want to vote; however, they have largely been excluded from any debate on the franchise. Michael Gannon, John Kelly and John Rogers, “Vote for Irish emigrant,” Irish Times (Dublin, ROI), March 15, 2017; Cormac McQuinn, “‘Only small per centage of diaspora would vote’,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), January 2, 2019.
245 Ciara Kenny, “HOW #HOMETOVOTE COULD BACKFIRE: Thousands of emigrants may return to vote in the upcoming abortion referendum, but campaign organisers are warning about the dangers of illegal voting,” Irish
diasporic abandonment by demonstrating that emigrants remain up to date with events in Ireland and want to contribute to the state. In addition, the referendums showcased the positive impact that emigrants’ votes can have on Ireland, while disproving fears about a flood of conservative diasporic voters. The act of voting represents a tangible connection to Ireland, and the fact that eligible voters were forced to spend hundreds of dollars on travel to demonstrate that link has been perceived by many as undemocratic; especially, as the specific referendums might impact on whether they would consider returning to Ireland.\(^ {246} \)

Consecutive Irish governments have challenged the idea that emigration is permanent. Rather, they argue that it provides opportunities for citizens to develop skills before they can return to develop Ireland.\(^ {247} \) This does not prevent politicians from simultaneously celebrating the Irish have remained. The former minister of Transport, Tourism and Sport, Paschal Donohoe, stated that “the world does not owe Ireland a living. Thanks to the coming together of the sacrifices of the Irish people and the policies that have been implemented by our Government, we are in a position to ensure that our country is earning its way in the world.” This celebration of hardship has been adopted by the campaign against the diaspora vote. A steady stream of articles and letters to the editor ignores the existence of remittances from abroad, foreign direct investment and property ownership by stating that voters should have to live with the consequences of their vote, and that there should not be any representation without taxation.\(^ {248} \) Critics of this logic respond by accusing the state of using emigration as a safety valve to rid

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\(^ {247} \) Dona O’Conghalie, “Diaspora should get the vote here: Letters to the Editor,” *Irish Independent* (Dublin, ROI), February 25, 2015.


itself of the unemployed. The diaspora, however, is publicly imagined as a category that disqualifies Irish emigrants from laying claim to the experiences that entitle those “left behind” to the right to vote. This is emblematic of a wider tension between the Irish Constitution, which entrenches the place of diaspora within the Irish nation, and an existing anti-diasporic anxiety that excludes emigrants and their descendants.

The Use of “Undocumented Irish” Bodies to Challenge the Irish Asylum System

On Saint Patrick’s Day of 2015, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland erected a large green banner across a building in downtown Dublin with the message, “Happy St Patrick's Day to the undocumented in the USA from the undocumented in Ireland.”249 This was not directed at the “undocumented Irish”; rather, it was addressed to the Irish public and their elected officials. These protesters connected their own plight to the experiences of undocumented Irish citizens in the United States, who are lobbied for by the Irish state. Undocumented migrants in the Republic of Ireland, including asylum seekers living in Direct Provision facilities, questioned how the Irish government could rationalise supporting undocumented migrants in a foreign state, while domestically incarcerating undocumented migrants for supposedly undermining the territorial integrity of the Irish state. The former are Irish citizens; the latter are “foreigners.”

“Undocumented Irish” bodies have become avenues for supporters of undocumented migrants in Ireland to challenge the legitimacy of the Irish asylum system. This places Ireland’s diaspora policy into conversation with its asylum system. As a result, the “undocumented Irish” are reconfigured into a public symbol of Irish governmental hypocrisy.

A prominent example of this is found in the debate on birthright citizenship. In 2017, the Labour, Green, and Social Democratic parties began advocating legislation to overturn the 27th

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amendment of the Irish Constitution, which had ended birthright citizenship. Green TDs Eoin Ó Broin and Joe O’Brien, and Labour TD Aodhán Ó Riordáin publicly shamed Fianna Fail and Fine Gael for politically profiting from the “racist” referendum of 2004.\textsuperscript{250} Ironically, the two dominant parties of Irish politics have lobbied against Donald Trump’s efforts to end birthright citizenship in the United States. They asserted that this policy change would victimise “undocumented Irish” families, while the 27\textsuperscript{th} amendment protected Ireland from birth tourism.\textsuperscript{251} This line of diplomacy has been condemned as hypocritical. An increasingly popular argument has been pushed by politicians like Brendan Howlin, who argued that Ireland could build a convincing case for the regularisation of the “undocumented Irish” if it did the same for undocumented migrants in Ireland.\textsuperscript{252}

Eric Xue and Nonso Muojeke represent two prominent cases of Irish-born undocumented children being victimised by the 27\textsuperscript{th} Amendment. In 2018, they were threatened with deportation by the state; a grassroots campaign pressured the government to rescind the orders.\textsuperscript{253} Such cases baffled the Irish public. The 27\textsuperscript{th} amendment provides the state with the power to deport Irish-born children, who have only ever lived in Ireland, to states that they have never set foot in to ensure that their newborns automatically acquire citizenship and that they themselves do as well. This logic fuels anti-immigrant fearmongering of “anchor babies” overrunning hospital wards.\textsuperscript{251} Dáil Debates. Dáil Éireann, 17 June 2020, 994 (Eoin Ó Broin, TD) (ROI) https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2020-06-17/; Dáil Debates. Dáil Éireann, 17 June 2020, 994 (Joe O’Brien, TD) (ROI) https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2020-06-17/; Dáil Debates. Dáil Éireann, 17 June 2020, 994 (Aodhán Ó Riordáin, TD) (ROD) https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2020-06-17/.


\textsuperscript{253} It should be noted that Xue’s parents are still faced with deportation; however, the Department of Justice has stated that the order is not “imminent anymore.” Alan Desmond, “Migrants in fear of deportation are ripe for exploitation - policy needs to be fixed quickly,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), October 30, 2018; Dáil Debates. Dáil Éireann, 17 January 2019, 977 (Joe Brady, TD) (ROI) https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2019-01-17/.
foot in. The cases of Xue and Muojeke occurred even as the ruling Fine Gael government professed concern for American-born “undocumented Irish” children living in fear of deportation.\(^{254}\) The state’s contrasting treatment of undocumented Irish emigrant citizens and undocumented racialised migrants in Ireland reconfigured the former into symbols of the Irish state’s hypocrisy. Even Mary Lou McDonald, the current leader of Sinn Fein, who is unwaveringly supportive of both undocumented communities, began referring to the “undocumented Irish” as “illegal Irish” to demonstrate this brazenness of this double standard.\(^{255}\)

To this day, Ireland has refused to reinstate birthright citizenship. Charles Flanagan, the former Minister of Justice and Equality, stated that its re-implementation would make the state an outlier to the rest of the E.U., as it would become the only state to offer birthright citizenship. Additionally, the former Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality, David Stanton, argued that this would allow parents to use their children as tools for claiming international protection. Despite expressing sympathy for undocumented children, he, along with other Fine Gael ministers, including Flanagan, has stated that reimplementing birthright citizenship would go against the E.U.’s *European Pact on Immigration and Asylum* that allows regularisation only on a case-by-case basis.\(^{256}\) The Republic of Ireland has thus offshored its justification for safeguarding its territorial sovereignty to the E.U.

Successive Irish governments have also argued that reinstating birthright citizenship would diminish the integrity of Irish citizenship and democracy. Leftist politicians have cited that the state, as represented by the Fianna Fail-led and Fine Gael-supported government of


2004, conditioned the public into supporting the referendum. Members of both parties, however, have responded by stating that citizen agency should be respected. Current Justice Minister Helen McEntee has claimed that overturning the 27th Amendment would undemocratically undermine Irish democracy as over 79 per cent of voters had supported the referendum.\textsuperscript{257} Numerous letters to the editor have criticized the possibility of legislating against the 27th Amendment as a “back door” subverting of democracy on behalf of “failed asylum seekers.”\textsuperscript{258} This supposed attempt to preserve Irish democracy, however, has disenfranchised an entire generation of Irish-born people who understand themselves as being condemned to a life worth even less than those of the “undocumented Irish.” Instead of transnationally identifying with the latter, many understand themselves as being “like Mexicans in America.”\textsuperscript{259}

Many undocumented peoples in Ireland perceive Irish diaspora policy as drawing attention to the plight of the “undocumented Irish”; however, they also recognise that Irish asylum policies continue a tradition of keeping unwanted peoples “out of sight” from the Irish public.\textsuperscript{260} This ignores the absence of “undocumented Irish” agency in Global Irish. The support provided by the Irish state to these undocumented emigrants is a tool used to keep them abroad. As noted in Chapter 1, Global Irish transforms “undocumented Irish” bodies into markers used by the state to justify the extension of its political borders. Despite promises to improve coverage of the diaspora in Irish media, the diaspora policy has failed to boost Irish public perception of


\textsuperscript{258} Pádraig Lenihan, “Respect will of the people in citizenship vote: Letters,” \textit{Irish Independent} (Dublin, ROI), October 22, 2018.

\textsuperscript{259} Patrick Freyne, “UNKNOWN, UNEQUAL, UNDONE: 5,000 undocumented young people are growing up Irish but live in fear of deportation - the group Young Paperless and Powerful is trying to raise awareness of their plight,” \textit{Irish Times} (Dublin, ROI), July 15, 2017.

these undocumented citizens. This unintentionally fuelled public perception of the “undocumented Irish” as foreign contrasts to the popular perception of undocumented peoples living in Ireland.

Migrant rights organisations in Ireland have not argued that the Irish state’s support for the “undocumented Irish” comes at the expense of undocumented peoples in Ireland; however, these organizations’ allies have. Urban progressive independent TDs, as well as members of the Social Democratic Party and People Before Profit - Solidarity, have grown increasingly comfortable in using this connection to criticise Irish governments by adopting an additive approach that pits support for the “undocumented Irish” against the lack of protections for undocumented peoples in Ireland. It melds with criticism that questions why the “undocumented Irish” deserve “special treatment” from either the Republic of Ireland or the United States. This attitude, however, mirrors the zero-sum approach adopted by opponents of asylum seekers in Ireland.

Although the “undocumented Irish” are included in every edition of Global Irish, support for their regularisation is neither articulated as a priority, nor realistic. The policy, along with simplistic orations of support from government officials, has produced a veneer of support that should not be taken at face value. Irish citizens who support the regularisation of undocumented peoples in Ireland have repeatedly questioned how the Irish state can look abroad, while ignoring what is happening domestically. This portrayal of the “undocumented Irish” as a “foreign issue” mirrors how many Irish Americans also perceive them as “foreign” and “illegal.” The Irish

261 Global Irish, Global Irish: Ireland’s Diaspora Policy.
263 Please refer to Chapter 1.
depiction of the “undocumented Irish” territorialises the issue by excluding them from the imagined community articulated by Article 2 of the Irish Constitution. The act of defining who can “stay” in Ireland is connected to determining who can return. This continues the Irish zero-sum tradition of defining support for one community at the expense of others.

**The White Paper and Justice Plan 2021**

Despite Direct Provision being designed to operate outside of the gaze of Irish society, grassroots protests by both rural conservatives and urban liberals ensured that this system rose to the forefront of Irish consciousness. It descended into further infamy during the COVID-19 pandemic. The rising case numbers in facilities, as well as reports of horrendously unsanitary conditions and state neglect, confirmed what many Irish already knew—Direct Provision cannot house humans in a dignified manner.264 Rural conservatives imagined facilities as blights on their communities and as breeding grounds for disease. The pandemic also supported liberal suspicions that Direct Provision is a modern embodiment of the Irish tradition of institutionalising unwanted “others.” Interestingly, more than one-third of undocumented workers in the Republic of Ireland are employed as healthcare workers, many of whom, live in Direct Provision facilities. The people most vulnerable to COVID-19 in Ireland—asylum seekers living in Direct Provision—are disproportionately caring for those understood to be among the most vulnerable members of Irish society—the elderly.265 Their sacrifices even convinced vocal anti-immigrant TD Michael Collins to call for their regularisation in the Dáil Éireann. Despite


265 This includes working in elder care facilities, as well as private individual homes, as COVID-19 forced many undocumented care workers to remain at the homes of their patients, instead of being able to return to their “own” accommodations [after work]. Patrick Freyne, “C[OULD WE CARE LESS ABOUT CARERS?]: We fool ourselves that we can, through acts of will and wealth accumulation, avoid illness and ageing but at some point we all need care. Why is it so undervalued?,” *Irish Times* (Dublin, ROI), May 8, 2021; *Dáil Debates*. Dáil Éireann, 27 January 2021, 1003 (Michael Collins, TD) (ROI) [https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2021-01-27/](https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2021-01-27/).
disproportionately placing asylum seekers at risk, the pandemic provided many of these undocumented migrants with an opportunity to raise awareness about their contributions to the Irish state.

The movement to end Direct Provision was further strengthened by its connection to Black Lives Matter protests, in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd by American police officers in 2020. Many Irish connected the subjugation of black bodies in America to the state-sanctioned incarceration of racialised asylum seekers. Former Labour Party leader Alan Kelly equated Direct Provision to racism in America and specifically stated that it mirrors Derek Chauvin’s knee on George Floyd’s neck.266 Ultimately, the resistance to anti-black racism was able to produce transnational solidarities between grassroots Irish and American protesters.

2020 was a watershed year for Irish asylum politics. Following the General Election, the Green Party - the only major political party to call for the elimination of Direct Provision in its election platform, joined a coalition government led by Fianna Fail and Fine Gael on condition that they would abolish Direct Provision. This culminated in the release of A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service in 2021. The document promised an end to Direct Provision by 2024 and commits the government to the implementation of a state-run system that prioritises migrant care and integration, without detrimentally affecting the integrity of the asylum system.267

The new system is projected to support 3,500 asylum seekers annually, in two phases. The first phase, which will last four months, is expected to uncover the needs of asylum seekers,

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266 Martina Devlin, “Shameful direct provision conditions should keep our leaders off high horse on racism,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), June 6, 2020.

provide them with medical and psychological care, and decide whether their cases will be accepted or not. During that time, they must take intensive English courses, have access to own door or own room accommodations [depending on whether they are families or individuals], be able to apply for bank accounts and drivers’ licenses, have voices in choosing the food served at the facilities, have access to free menstrual products, while receiving the same monetary allowance currently provided in Direct Provision. Asylum seekers are expected to live in one of six state-run facilities that are estimated to house 330 asylum seekers at a time.268

The second phase will prioritise “fostering an independent life within the community.” Accepted asylum applicants, as well as those still awaiting their application decisions after four months, will be dispersed to own door accommodations across every county in Ireland. Families will be given “self-contained housing or apartments to provide privacy, agency and independence;” whereas “[s]ingle people will be housed in either own-door or own-room accommodation.” Each facility will also be situated within Irish communities to encourage “interconnectedness.” Those assessed as “vulnerable” during phase one will be supported by NGOs funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth. The remaining migrants will be supervised by resettlement workers directly affiliated with this department. After two months in phase two, asylum seekers will be eligible to work. In addition, the state will administer an income support “at a rate broadly similar to the Supplementary Welfare Allowance if they have not yet entered employment, or if their wages are below a threshold,” ensure access to child support payments, and provide residents with additional “entrepreneurial supports” if the application is successful. Any asylum seeker who has resided in

268 DCEDIY, A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service.
the system for three years will also be eligible for postsecondary supports like Irish citizens.\textsuperscript{269} This long wait time may be indicative of expectations that migrants will be forced to live in this system for exceedingly long periods of time.

Despite the \textit{White Paper}'s focus on creating a humane asylum system that prioritises the integration of successful applicants, it continues many of the Direct Provision system’s problematic practices, most notably that of dispersal. Phase Two will integrate applicants into communities across every county in Ireland; as a result, an undetermined number of migrants will likely settle in rural underserviced communities. The \textit{White Paper} does not mention whether migrants will have agency in choosing where to live, and Social Democrat TD Holly Cairns notes that the pursuit of individual accommodations may uproot families.\textsuperscript{270} Urban renewal projects will also be used to settle applicants and create a positive connection between immigrants and the development of communities. The \textit{White Paper}, however, does not adequately explain how it will address the anti-migrant biases that had been previously conditioned by the state. The document commits the Irish state to establishing inter-agency groups in every county for providing services to applicants and engaging locals in “a new consultation process.” It, however, does not address how the state will prevent the local unrest that previously targeted Direct Provision facilities. The \textit{White Paper} will supposedly provide locals with a “framework for notifying public authorities and community structures when deciding to build, acquire or lease Phase Two accommodation in a particular area,” but does not state whether locals will be granted a veto. Fewer than two pages of the entire document are dedicated to “community interconnectedness” and neither mentions the idea of negotiation.

\textsuperscript{269} Ibid.
Ultimately, the document’s vagueness should be attributed to the telling fact that the *White Paper* is not underpinned by any legislation.\(^{271}\)

The document does not specify how the state will collaborate with locals, but does emphasise that the state will be constrained by the availability of resources. It repeatedly asserts that migrant housing will not come at the expense of Irish citizens and that all the figures provided in the document are provisional estimates, including the yearly estimates of 3,500 asylum seekers.\(^{272}\) It is important to note that prior to COVID-19, the number of asylum applications was trending upwards, which begs the question of whether the Irish government is only planning for a best-case scenario, risking total failure if costs and the number of asylum applications surpass expectations.\(^{273}\)

Without providing details, the *White Paper* declares that the Irish asylum system will be reliant on drastic improvement in the processing times for asylum seekers. It also acknowledges that Ireland failed its previous objective of reducing processing times for “first instance decisions” down to nine months by 2020, and admits to the existence of a backlog of 4,000 “legacy cases.”\(^{274}\) Reminiscent of past excuses offered by the government, the *White Paper* attributes this backlog to the appeals of deportation orders by asylum seekers, and demands that they accept the rulings, or risk the enforcement of “judicial return.” The document devotes minimal space to negative verdicts. This contrasts with the fact that Ireland rejects more applications than it accepts.\(^{275}\) Despite tremendous potential for improving the conditions of asylum seekers, the *White Paper*’s vagueness is most concerning.

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\(^{271}\) DCEDIY, *A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service.*

\(^{272}\) The yearly estimate of 3,500 asylum applicants is based on the ten-year average between 2010-2019. Ibid.

\(^{273}\) Ibid.

\(^{274}\) Ibid.

\(^{275}\) Ibid. Coakley and MacEinri, 5-6.
The burden of care, however, could be significantly eased by the “regularisation scheme” announced by the Minister of Justice, Helen McEntee, on December 3, 2021. Since January 1, 2022, undocumented adults who have lived in Ireland for at least four years, and children who have lived in the state for at least three, will be eligible to apply for regularisation. The plan estimates that up to 17,000 migrants, including 3,000 children, could be eligible for regularisation, with an additional 2,800 asylum seekers who have lived in Direct Provision for at least two years. Eligible undocumented migrants will be allowed to submit expired documentation, as well as apply if it has been at least three years since they received a deportation order. Individual applicants must also pay a €550 processing fee or €700 for an entire family, who may be subjected to DNA testing. Residents of Direct Provision are exempt from payment of fees. These criteria have led to criticism on behalf of those who are excluded by the legislation. The scheme notably omits migrants who may have been considered to be legal at various points throughout their time in Ireland, but have only recently become undocumented, despite having lived in Ireland for the necessary number of years. McEntee has responded to these concerns by noting that this is not an “amnesty.” Rather, it is a “scheme.”

The specificity of the regularisation policy contrasts the use of interchangeable categorisations to define migrants. Whereas “amnesty” is used to refer to the regularisation of all undocumented peoples, “scheme” is used by members of the Irish political establishment to refer...
to a policy that is “once in a generation” and not all-inclusive.\(^{279}\) Irish policymakers have traditionally used interchangeable categorisation to restrict migrant rights. This should be put into conversation with McEntee’s justification for the regularisation scheme, as she claims that the policy creates a necessary example for how the “undocumented Irish” could be regularised – an argument that the political establishment had previously rejected.\(^{280}\)

Following the announcement of the regularisation scheme, Justice for Undocumented volunteer and undocumented migrant Irene Jagoba expressed that "We're just like the Irish in the US… We work for our families and for a better life."\(^{281}\) Unbeknownst to her, the “undocumented Irish” have gradually diminished in importance to the Irish public since 2014. They have been replaced in popular and political discussion by undocumented migrants in Ireland. Articles that traditionally humanised the “undocumented Irish” by focusing on their inability to return to Ireland for Christmas have been gradually replaced by stories of how undocumented migrants in Ireland are unable to return to their homelands. In a complete reversal, the “undocumented Irish” have begun to state that they share the same plight as the undocumented in Ireland; they, perhaps, have come to realise that regularised foreigners are considered more deserving of citizenship than undocumented emigrant kin.\(^{282}\)

The transnational connection between the “undocumented Irish” and undocumented migrants in the Republic of Ireland has entrenched the former into a state of limbo. Ultimately, it excludes them from the imagined boundaries of Irishness of both liberal Irish and conservative


\(^{280}\) Cormac McQuinn, “Minister to announce proposals to reduce legal action costs and updating of pub hours: Under Justice Plan 2021 new licensing laws will potentially allow longer opening hours,” *Irish Times* (Dublin, ROI), February 22, 2021.


Irish Americans. To the former, they embody the hypocritical and oppressive policies of the Irish state; to the latter, they represent a contradiction to Irish American neoliberal standards of respectability. *Global Irish* does not prioritise improving support for the “undocumented Irish” in either Irish America or Ireland. Rather, it aims to keep these undocumented emigrant citizens content enough abroad, while ensuring they remain symbolic anchors of the Irish state’s borders. This reconfiguration of undocumented Irish bodies into markers of an Irish frontier places them on the margins of the Irish nation. Like the asylum seekers in Ireland prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, they are to be kept out of sight, and out of mind for the Irish public.
Conclusion

This thesis argues that the Irish government is attempting to deterritorialise the Irish state through its diaspora and asylum policies by attaching the borders of the state to the bodies of the Irish nation. By doing so, the government affords itself the opportunity to reterritorialise the state into a diaspora nation of over 70 million people, while reconfiguring itself into the sole arbiter for deciding who is entitled to be a member of the nation. This top-down attempt at blurring the lines between state and nation culminated in a grassroots backlash that sought to restrict “authentic” Irishness to within the state’s territorial borders. The state aims to attach its borders to diasporic and emigrant bodies, including Irish Americans and the “undocumented Irish,” while deterring racialised asylum seekers in Ireland from envisioning themselves as Irish. Driven by an anxiety towards emigration that is entrenched within the Irish psyche, grassroots Irish are using the same communities to question why national connections, or blood, should make one more deserving of the right to live in Ireland than the other.

By providing agency to grassroots Irish voices, including “undocumented Irish,” Irish Americans, asylum seekers in the Republic of Ireland, and generations of emigrants, it becomes evident that the government’s attempt to reconfigure the borders of the state have unearthed grassroots tensions in defining the Irish nation. This stems from the role of Irish identity in attempting to overcome the traumas of emigration that began during the Great Famine. The Irish state’s policing of asylum seekers via Direct Provision has forced Irish citizens to re-engage with memories of emigration, which, in turn, connect to Ireland’s engagement with its diaspora. In addition, the geographic proximity of these racialised migrants to many rural Irish, has forced Irish citizens to re-engage with anxieties of abandonment that are tied to their understandings of both emigration and the resultant diasporic communities. This has caused Irish citizens to place
both migrant and diasporic bodies into conversation with each other to define the boundaries of the nation, which contrasts the Irish state’s use of diaspora and asylum policies to deterritorialise itself by blurring the line between state and nation.

It remains to be seen how the arrival of Ukrainian refugees will influence this debate. In cooperation with other members of the European Union, the Irish government has promised to take in 2 per cent of these migrants, while treating them as “temporary E.U. citizens.” This will entitle them to renew their residence annually for a maximum of three years, work and attend post-secondary institutions without any restrictions, and live outside of the Direct Provision system. The current government has cited estimates of settling between 40,000 and 200,000 refugees. Both media and politicians have avoided using confusing categorisations and raising fears of overwhelmed social services. Scholars should observe whether these refugees are incorporated into public debates that contrast existing Irish asylum and diaspora policies. The treatment of Ukrainian refugees has already been contrasted with the historical treatment of asylum seekers living in Direct Provision; it is inevitable that they will also be placed into conversation with the “undocumented Irish.” Unlike either of the above-mentioned undocumented communities in the Republic of Ireland and Irish America, these white refugees have not had their immigration status questioned by politicians, citizens, or migrants’ rights groups. Migrant and diasporic bodies are often invoked alongside each other in order to define

283 The European Union has also promised Ukrainian Refugees freedom of movement across all member states. Gabija Gataveckaite, “Hotels are ‘obvious option’ to house 20,000 refugees,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), March 2, 2022; Philip Ryan, “We need a better plan for this crisis than just relying on public generosity,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), March 23, 2022.

284 Perhaps, this comfort stems from the sizeable Polish community that settled in Ireland following Poland being admitted into the E.U. in 2004. Philip Ryan, “We need a better plan for this crisis than just relying on public generosity,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), March 23, 2022.

285 Whereas the “undocumented Irish” have been racialised by many Irish Americans and Irish in Ireland due to their proximity to racialized migrants like Latinos and Blacks, Ukrainian refugees in Ireland have not been racialised by comparisons to asylum seekers living in the Irish state. Kim Bielenberg, “How should we welcome 100,000 Ukrainian refugees?,” Irish Independent (Dublin, ROI), March 12, 2022.
the borders of the state and the boundaries of the nation. Thus, future scholarship should investigate how the universally accepted categorisation of these Ukrainian migrants as refugees impacts Irish understandings of the triadic nexus of communities that has been used by the state to deterritorialise itself.
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