

From: **Miss Claire Dorrity,**
Lecturer in Social Policy
School of Applied Social Studies
University College Cork, Ireland
e-mail: c.dorrity@ucc.ie

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Title: **Questioning the Governance of Asylum Policy in**
Ireland: Human Security and the Role of Migrant NGOs

Abstract

Drawing on a human security approach, this paper highlights the way the administration and governance of asylum policy in Ireland has failed to prioritise well-being through a dehumanising and oppressive approach, which neglects to emphasise the dignity, respect and inclusion of asylum seekers. It has done this through imposing state sanctioned policies of exclusion and a focus on punitive rather than protective measures in the accommodation and reception of those seeking refuge and safety in Ireland. This has presented a politically challenging environment for migrant non-governmental organisations (NGOs), who often find their organisations co-opted into state practices through systems of compliance and restrictive funding mechanisms, which compromises their scope for advocacy and political mobilisation. Using the Scottish and Portuguese models of integration as examples of good practice, this paper highlights how a more human-centred approach can act as a means to break down barriers to inclusion and integration and create alliances between state and non-state actors. In drawing attention to such models, the paper highlights some of the missed opportunities in the practices of Irish migrant NGOs, through an underlying premise of state political processes of control. While acknowledging significant factors relating to power differentials and the disconnect that can often exist between state institutions and migrant NGOs, the paper raises questions that elucidate the need to promote more participative and collective strategies of engagement, which, can in turn, enhance the capacity of migrant NGOs to act as drivers of change.

Key words: Asylum policy; integration; human security; participation; migrant non-governmental organisations (NGOs); political mobilization.

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Introduction:

Over the last two decades, human rights and human security have emerged as core components of UN security and protection mechanisms. This is keenly observed in the development of targeted strategies dealing with human development, migration, integration and resettlement (United Nations Development Programme (1994); United Nations General Assembly (2012); United Nations Development Programme (2013)). This approach takes its starting point in seeking to promote rights-based approaches and rights-respecting policies, as central frameworks in the reception and integration of displaced persons. A human security approach views migration and displacement through an understanding of security, as inextricably linked with social, political, civil and cultural rights (United Nations Development Programme, 1994). Within this framework, the emphasis is placed on both respecting and protecting human rights (Elliot, 2015). This takes into account the root causes of insecurities, along with advancing people-centered solutions, through incorporating a broad range of actors, including local communities, international organizations, civil society actors and the state (United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, 2009).

The concept of human security draws on a broad range of circumstances, including education, health, personal autonomy and the distribution of resources, all of which, impact on a persons' capabilities and their range of life choices and opportunities (International Institute of Social Studies, 2018). Building skills and capacity to deal with insecurity and exploring the risks and pressures to which peoples' lives are subject to within global systems is considered significant (Gasper, 2014). This involves promoting personal autonomy and the capacity to participate in community life (Thomas, 2000). Human security, thus, is about achieving human dignity. Within this framework, integration becomes the basis for greater participation. This, in turn, is viewed as, not only enhancing the life of refugees, but

enriching democracy itself through the participation of all citizens within a state (Huddleston, Bilgili, Joki and Vankova, 2015).

Receiving Countries as Actors of Human Security and Integration?

While human security approaches are central to UN strategies relating to displacement and resettlement, such approaches have, however, continued to remain under-represented in the responses of most EU member states in the administration asylum policy. Preferred approaches have been tied up with state securitization practices, which have focused on the restriction of mobility and more punitive forms of containment, witnessed in the increasing use of detention centers within the EU (Aida, Asylum Information Database, 2017). This is vigorously observed in the routine procedures, securitization practices and endless control mechanisms that refugees are subjected to while awaiting decisions on their asylum claims (Jastram and Achiron, 2001, Conlon and Gill, 2013). Themistocleous (2012) argues that such narrow perspectives of security, not only negates human rights, but has specific implications for the way asylum seekers are treated within national borders.

Portugal, Sweden, and Scotland have been the exception in providing comprehensive approaches, which focus on strong human security values that emphasize the dignity and welfare of asylum seekers, as central to successful immigration and integration policies. In 2014, the Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) identified Portugal as ranking as one of highest of 38 developed countries in their investment in equal opportunities for newcomers with respect to labour market, health, education, participation, permanent residence, family reunification and anti-discrimination practices (Sunderland, 2016; Huddleston, Bilgili, Joki and Vankova, 2015). Scotland has also taken a lead in placing the inclusion and integration of asylum seekers at the heart of its integration policy, recognizing culture, personal

fulfillment and wellbeing as key factors influencing successful integration (The Scottish Government, 2018). Scotland's progressive approach has secured it as top amongst European countries polled in 2016 on public confidence in refugees and their successful integration into new communities (European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2018). Both the Scottish and Portuguese models of integration recognize the value of embedding human security into their integration practices and provide person-centered supports for asylum seekers from immediate arrival in the host country. MIPEX (2015) highlights the benefits of such approaches in the development of robust receptive conditions, while also providing the best conditions for social solidarity and community cohesion (Huddleston, Bilgili, Joki and Vankova, 2015).

In contrast to Portuguese and Scottish models, Ireland has opted for a much more restrictive and punitive approach to administering asylum policy. This is reflected in the fact that Ireland only rates 19th out of the 38 countries surveyed by MIPEX (Huddleston, Bilgili, Joki and Vankova, 2015). While Ireland recently launched its Migrant Integration Strategy (2016) with the aim of improving integration, its immigration and integration policy towards asylum seekers continues to remain restrictive. Contrary to human security approaches, what is witnessed in Irish asylum policy formation is the privileging of technocratic over more collaborative and participative approaches, coupled with state sanctioned policies of exclusion.

Ireland's approach to its asylum policy has been defined by an unwillingness of the Irish state to widen the parameters of protection to incorporate a strong human rights framework. These rights were adopted by the UN General Assembly 2012 and recognize the right to freedom and dignity, strengthening the protection and empowerment of vulnerable peoples, and give

consideration to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights (United Nations General Assembly, 2012). In contrast, Ireland's asylum policy response has signaled a more state centric approach, marked by democratic deficits and systematic restrictions, which have demonstrated a lack of recognition of the multiple complexities experienced by those seeking protection.

Overview of Ireland's Protection System: The Policy Context

In 2017, the Minister of State, David Staunton, at the Department of Justice and Equality with special responsibility for Equality, Immigration, and Integration, launched the *Migrant Integration Strategy – "A Blueprint for the Future" (2016-2022)*. This strategy specifically focuses on supporting and encouraging migrants to register to vote and to become active and participate in local and national politics. It also places a strong focus on ensuring migrants are facilitated to live a full and active role in Irish society with integration and participation highlighted as a core principles in bringing state and non-state institutions together. The strategy is also cited as a crucial step towards political participation (Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, 2018). The document makes reference to asylum seekers as a group requiring state support and strongly advocates for more participative structures with migrant NGOs.

The strategy states: "Its primary objective is to ensure that barriers to full participation in Irish society by migrants or their Irish-born children are identified and addressed" (Department of Justice and Equality, 2016: 8). It also highlights the importance of migrants and their representative organisations in contributing to policy development. The strategy highlights a strong link between integration policy and wider state social inclusion measures, strategies and initiatives (Department of Justice and Equality, 2016). It makes explicit the

role of migrant organisations in advancing the integration of migrant groups, along with emphasizing partnership approaches as a way of enhancing integration.

This initiative marks as an important move towards recognizing the significance of engagement between migrant NGOs and state institutions. Its emphasis on developing integration policy tools through participatory mechanisms and the promotion of migrant integration also offer opportunities for embedding new forms of governance and good practice relating to migrant integration. However, given the way asylum seekers are positioned within a policy context, it is also important to question to what extent policies pursued by state institutions can complement or contradict effective integration. In Ireland, asylum seekers have continued to be denied the right to work and have very social rights, despite previously featuring in programmes for government, including Ireland's National Anti-Poverty Strategy 1997 (NAPS) and the National Action Plan Against Racism 2005-2008 (NPAR). Within both of these programmes, asylum seekers were identified as a specifically vulnerable group, experiencing exclusion and societal marginalisation. However, despite these targeted interventions, asylum seekers have consistently fared badly, with policy frameworks much more focused on the integration of migrants with the right to work (Cullen, 2009). What has been particularly problematic is that while the state is seen as promoting participative structures through its integration strategies, it continues to pursue punitive policy in the area of asylum. Some migrant-led initiatives (initiatives directly involving migrants, refugees and asylum seekers) have sought to advance the needs of asylum seekers and attempted to create a space for asylum seekers to partake in activities initiated by state funded migrant bodies. However, asylum seekers have existed on the periphery of such processes and have never been involved in setting agendas or been directly involved in leading activities within such organisations (Lentin, 2012). Typical of this approach, is that

policies on integration have been pursued through mainstream initiatives and broad anti-discriminatory mechanisms that have placed little emphasis on specific factors relating to violence and persecution and the trauma along with the social exclusion that asylum seekers often experience (Morea, 2012).

Previous approaches by the state have also failed to incorporate participative and consultative measures with asylum seekers, resulting in policy lacking the targeted supports, representative structures and the participatory mechanisms required to address asylum issues. In contrast, policies pursued by state institutions have kept participative decision-making off the political agenda. On a comparative level, both the Portuguese and Scottish models of integration place a special focus on promoting an integration policy for asylum seekers, which values both the role of state and non-state actors and emphasizes the importance of the participation of asylum seekers within this process. Furthermore, these models specifically involve local-level initiatives and view migrant-led groups as key to shaping new forms of governance and political practices (Cruz Beja Orrico Horta and Gonçalves de Oliveira, 2014). In contrast to Ireland's restrictive integration measures for asylum seekers, promoting new spaces for the participation of migrant communities has been central to integration policymaking in both Portugal and Scotland (Cruz Beja Orrico Horta and Gonçalves de Oliveira, 2014; The Scottish Government, 2016).

The Legislative Framework in Ireland

In Ireland, the legislative framework in the domain of asylum is relatively new (Quinn, 2009). It was only in 1996 that Ireland put into law the status of asylum claims as set out in the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended). It took a further four years before this was properly enacted. The Refugee Act 1996 came into law in 2000 and allowed for the establishment of

the Refugee Applications Commissioner, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal and the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA). The 1996 Act has been amended by several subsequent pieces of legislation (Ibid.). These include the Immigration Act 1999, the Illegal Immigrants (Trafficking) Act 2000, the Immigration Act of 2003, the Immigration Act of 2004 and the International Protection Act 2015. The main purpose of the Refugee Act and subsequent amended Acts is to give statutory effect to the state's obligations as signatory to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 New York Protocol (European and Migration Network Ireland, 2015). Section 5 of the Act provides for the prohibition of refoulement. Section 8 provides for applications for asylum, and Section 9 provides that applicants for asylum shall be given leave to enter and remain in the State (Ibid.).

There are three main bodies with responsibility for asylum policy and related asylum issues in Ireland. These are:

- 1) The Department of Justice and Equality (DJE), previously the Department of Justice and Equality and Law Reform (DJELR)
- 2) The Gárda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB)
- 3) The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS)

The DJE is the lead department for immigration and citizenship related issues. The DJE is charged with being the main body responsible for asylum applications, leave to remain and security and protection issues. It locates itself as a department involved in the promotion of a “fair” and “just” society that is “both tolerant and caring” (Department of Justice and Equality, 2018). In its mandate it states:

We are committed to initiating and supporting programmes that develop a more caring and tolerant society, where equality of opportunity is promoted and advanced.

(Department of Justice and Equality, 2018)

In 2001 the GNIB was established and holds the responsibility for border securitization, the control and registration of non-Irish citizens, the administration of deportation orders and the carrying out of deportations, along with the implementation of anti-trafficking measures (Ní Shé, Lodge, and Adshead, 2007). In 2005, INIS was established providing a one-stop-shop for asylum, immigration, citizenship and visa services. Housed within INIS, is the International Protection Office (IPO), which is responsible for examining and processing applications for international protection (both refugee status and subsidiary protection) (Department of Justice and Equality, 2018). An asylum claim is determined by the International Protection Office (IPO) at first instance, (previously decided under the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC)). A negative asylum determination can then be appealed through the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT), previously the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT).

Ireland is also part of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and in part bound by the EU Asylum Procedure Directive. This directive establishes common standards of safeguards and guarantees access to a fair and efficient asylum procedure (European Commission, 2015). However, due in part to the Irish opt-out facility, which allows Ireland to opt out of a number of directives, EU legislation has only had a limited effect on Irish immigration policy (Quinn, 2009). A recast directive on reception conditions and returns was applied by the EU in December 2011, binding all EU member states. However, Ireland along with the UK and Denmark opted out of this directive, which related most specifically to reception conditions. A further (recast) Asylum Procedures Directive was passed in 2013. The main objective of this Directive was to “further develop the standards for procedures in Member States for granting and withdrawing international protection with a view to establishing a common asylum procedure in the Union” (European Union Council, 2013: 2).

Ireland, did not sign up to the recast directive. As a result, Ireland has had an opt-out of any EU proposals regarding immigration, asylum and civil law. It has opted out of the family reunification regulation, the reception conditions regulation, the recast regulation on reception conditions and the returns directive (2013) (European Migration Network, 2015). As such, Ireland has retained domestic control in the above areas and remained firmly outside of Common European Asylum System (CEAS) on many asylum issues.

Despite pressure from the EU Commission, no official reason has ever been given for Ireland's non-participation, but the right to work obligation has been one that has been particularly problematic in Ireland (Higgins, 2004). This directive has recently been challenged, through a case taken against the state by a Burmese asylum applicant. On 9th Feb 2018, the Supreme Court declared that Ireland's ban on the right to work for asylum seekers was unconstitutional. From 9th February 2018, asylum seekers are entitled to apply for a work permit as part of the interim measures that have been introduced by the Irish Government, while it is preparing to opt-in to the EU (recast) Reception Conditions Directive (Doras Luimni, 2018). The application of the directive will bring Ireland in line with EU minimum standards of provision relating to reception conditions, requiring Ireland to introduce new measures on the right to access employment. The prohibition on employment for asylum seekers in Ireland has been accompanied by other restrictions i.e. a prohibition on access to the social welfare system, with the exception of a weekly payment of €21.60, a denial of the right to third level education, denial of access to social housing and a denial of access to the child benefit system (Thornton, 2018, O'Brien, 2014, Lentin, 2012, Fanning, 2007).

Direct Provision and Dispersal Scheme

In 2000 the ‘Direct Provision and Dispersal’ scheme was officially established, by way of the state’s system of housing asylum seekers. The Direct Provision system is presided over by the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA). It requires asylum seekers to live in designated accommodation centers while awaiting a decision on their asylum claim (Stapleton, 2012). It requires people to sign in two to three times a day, eat at designated mealtimes, is security operated and requires visitors to sign in when visiting the centers (O Brien, 2014). Problems consistently highlighted by both migrant NGOs and academics relate to the protracted lengths of stay within these centers, the denial of rights and freedoms, social and economic exclusion and lack of dignity and respect (Stapleton, 2014, Irish Refugee Council, 2012, Fanning, 2007). In 2015, the average length of time spent in these centers was thirty eight months. In 2016 the average length of stay was thirty two months. Many asylum seekers have been in the system over five years (Pollak, 2018).

Government institutions in Ireland insist that despite not providing access to citizenship rights, the state does provide adequately for asylum seeker needs through its system of ‘Direct Provision and Dispersal’, but this claim has been contested by both migrant NGOs and academic commentators (Lentin, 2012; Titley 2012; Arnold 2012). Problematic issues relate directly to a failure to embed specific human security measures in addressing the social marginalization, financial exclusion, extreme poverty, overcrowding and the paucity of living standards, all of which are exacerbated by the exclusionary nature of the direct provision system (Nasc, 2007; FLAC, 2010: Arnold, 2012, Titley, 2012). In 2009, the Free Legal Aid Centre (FLAC) published its document *One Size Does Not Fit All*, highlighting the ambiguous nature of immigration policy and the lack of integration measures proposed for asylum seekers. It notes:

While it is acknowledged that the State has to operate some sort of immigration policy, this should not be carried out to the detriment of those who are most in need of the State's protection (FLAC, 2009:135)

The FLAC report also highlights specific issues relating to health, wellbeing and social isolation, all directly associated with the system of Direct Provision. The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland (2017) has identified asylum seekers as ten times more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress compared with the indigenous population. They attribute this to trauma associated with the process of migration but also highlight the hostile environment in which asylum seekers live, as a further contributory factor to poor mental health. The asylum system has also been criticised for its piecemeal character and continued tightening of controls placed on asylum seekers (Kinlen, 2013; Conlon, Waters and Berg, 2012). In essence, the system of Direct Provision culminates in a lack of integration opportunities, enforced dependency, and poor physical and mental health (Stapleton, 2012, Loyal, 2008, Fanning 2007).

Pointing to the exclusionary nature of state policies, Considine and Dukelow (2009: 419) argue that "asylum seekers are at the bottom of the hierarchy when it comes to how migrants are categorised in relation to social rights and social policy". The failure to prioritize protection is reflected in Ireland's low number of acceptance rates and increased levels of deportations, along with the continued marginalisation of asylum seekers from political processes of participation (Cusack 2016). Conlon, Waters and Berg (2012) argue that rather than embracing human security and embedding adequate protection measures, state institutions operate from a perspective that views asylum applications as overwhelmingly lacking credibility.

Such deficits in state practices signal a systematic failure, defined by the absence of human security, human rights and political representation. Furthermore, it also reveals a broader constellation of power relations, heavily influenced by technocratic decision-making and processes of exclusion. Within such practices, asylum seekers are objectified through political rationalities and bureaucracy, and as a result fare badly despite international coalitions, the role of international and local NGOs, and rights to humanitarian protection.

This restrictive policy landscape has presented challenges for migrant NGOs advocating for human rights based approaches to protection. Along with implementing restrictive policies, the state imposes a restrictive funding environment, which has frequently compromised the way migrant NGOs can politically mobilise, most keenly observed in structures of compliance associated with state funding conditions (Cullen, 2009). Such adverse circumstances have reduced the potential for increasing democratic legitimacy and expanding participation, while also inhibiting more durable and sustainable solutions (Lentin, 2012; Cullen 2009).

The Role Migrant NGOs in the Integration of Asylum Seekers in Ireland

The significance of migrant NGOs has been increasingly cited in European policy documents and directives, highlighting migrant NGOs as important partners in the area of raising public awareness, knowledge sharing and the promotion of human security and inclusion (European Migration Network). Their expertise is increasingly recognized as being supportive in both preparing and implementing state policies and considered specifically important in addressing the challenges associated with migrant integration (Valutis, 2013).

In Ireland, the development of the migrant sector has taken place at a surprisingly rapid scale (Spencer, 2006). The sector is made up of more than 400 migrant organisations of varied size and capacity (Lentin and Morea, 2012). Most of these organisations were established from 2001 onwards, coinciding with a growing need to respond to diversity in Ireland. The activities of migrant organisations are varied and incorporate a number of roles including lobbying, activism, advocacy, outreach work, training and support, service provision, promoting integration, community development, legal representation, participation in policy debates, and providing platforms for under-represented groups (Lentin and Morea, 2012). Organisations are focused on gaining credibility through the provision of expertise on issues affecting migrants in Ireland (Lentin, 2012). As part of their work, migrant NGOs seek allies within state institutions, with the aim of bringing on board public officials who are sympathetic to the issues addressed by their organisations (Cullen, 2009).

Migrant NGOs play an indispensable role in meeting the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in areas often neglected by state institutions (Lentin and Morea, 2012; Cullen 2009; Kerwin, 2009, Spencer 2006). A large number of the organisations, which have emerged, are small voluntary migrant-led organisations, operating on limited financial resources. Most of these organisations receive little or no state funding. Even though they are small, they provide important supports for migrants in the community and illustrate how migrants in Ireland are actively participating as active agents in their own integration (Morea, 2012). The Irish Refugee Council (IRC) has been one of the main organisations politically representing asylum seekers and has been in operation since 1992. As an organisation, they advocate for a fair and transparent system of protection and emphasise human rights as paramount in the reception and integration of those seeking asylum. However, they have

remained on the periphery of political discussions and negotiations relating to asylum seekers and associated policy development (Lentin, 2012; Feldman, 2005).

Despite the role of advocacy being prioritized, ensuring visibility and lobbying for policy change on asylum issues, has been challenging for migrant NGOs (Cullen, 2009). This can be attributed in part to state exclusionary practices, particularly in the area of funding. However, Lentin (2012) points to areas where opportunities have been missed by migrant NGOs, most specifically in securing participation in political processes. While a restrictive funding environment has posed difficulties for migrant NGOs, Lentin notes how there has been a pattern in Ireland, where activism from the bottom up has often been side-lined through state engineered practices that erode sites for grassroots political activities. This has limited the degree to which collaboration is encouraged. Acknowledging that migrant NGOs have to operate on a number of different levels, Lentin (2012) argues that if managed more effectively, migrant NGOs can also provide a rich context for critical evaluation of the role of the state. Creating such spaces also presents a potential for critical dialogue, which can effectively address important human security issues for asylum seekers and open up spaces for participation. Lentin (2012), however, points to a critical disjuncture in the practices of migrant NGOs that has diminished the potential for more influence. This relates to an absence of collective organisation across the sector and a lack of recognition of the legitimacy of partnership frameworks (Lentin, 2012; Feldman, 2005).

Lentin and Morea (2012) argue that the lack of space for resistance in the practices of migrant NGOs has diminished spaces for pressuring the state, which in turn, contributes to the further marginalization of asylum seekers. De Tona and Morea (2012) make similar observations and point particularly to leadership issues and co-option practices as key factors affecting a

more all-inclusive approach to asylum issues. This, in turn, eliminates spaces for collaborative decision-making. Lentin and Morea (2012) argue that state funded migrant organisations, at large, have bought into state structured ‘intergrationalist’ discourses that eradicate resistance and democratic legitimacy. This has allowed for state institutions to strategically locate migrant NGOs as service providers but has constrained their role as activists and advocates. Harvey (2014) refers to this as a type of ‘services paradigm’, which has increasingly been imposed across community and voluntary organisations in Ireland, affecting advocacy, agency, activism and participation. This has also facilitated structural conditions, which have hindered opportunities for more integrated solutions between state institutions and migrant NGOs.

Strategically locating migrant NGOs outside the parameters of negotiation on asylum issues represents an embodiment of state centric dominance. In doing so, the state retains control over key policy activities, while simultaneously seeking collaboration on service delivery initiatives. Lentin and Morea (2012) note the risks of such an approach and argue the need to pay attention to the objectives that are being established by such a restricted approach to partnerships. This requires examining the broader context in which these partnerships operate. This includes evaluating the way migrant NGOs organize on political issues, how they strategically plan around political mobilization and the way they manage their alliance building techniques. These are important factors that impact on the potential of migrant NGOs to influence policy. Moreover, this requires reflection on whose interests are being met through state centric approaches.

Cappiali (2017) notes that while it is often commonly recognized that migrant organisations can wield immense communicative power in representing important rights-based issues, how

they enact that power raises further questions relating to the extent to which structures are truly participative and how seriously the state recognizes their value. She emphasizes the need to question the trajectories of participation and the capacity of migrant NGOs to utilize engagement strategies in fulfilling their representative roles. The observations of De Tona and Lentin (2012) and De Tona and and Morea (2012), on the role of migrant NGOs in Ireland, are important in this regard. De Tona and Morea (2012) point to the importance of looking, not only at the type of political/civic activity and agency displayed by formal and more established migrant organisations, but also emphasize the need to look at the important roles played by less established organisations and advocacy groups in their representation of asylum seekers. These organisations, which are generally not funded by the state, can often provide greater capacity for political mobilization and activism. De Tona and Morea highlight how a lack of unity and inclusivity across all relevant migrant NGOs in Ireland, has given way to a failure to deliberate effectively, but has also impacted on important factors such as networking, the promotion of rights and the implementation of more robust policy to address protection issues.

Consistent with the issues raised above, Morea (2012) highlights the value of including less established migrant-led organisations in participative structures. Most specifically, she argues that smaller migrant-led organisations can provide valuable insights into protection issues (Morea, 2012). As such, these organisations should not be viewed as separate from the work of more established migrant NGOs, but rather viewed as core to providing a deeper understanding on key human security issues affecting asylum seekers. Furthermore, De Tona and Lentin (2012) argue that because more established organisations are often compromised in their political mobilization, they are not necessarily the most effective in politically representing asylum issues. In this way, smaller more personal networks can often

provide better platforms for mobilizing support around key rights-based issues. In failing to deliberate and network with smaller organisations, Lentin (2012) argues that opportunities for more closely exploring human rights are under-utilized.

De Tona and Lentin (2012) contend that formal state funded migrant organisations are more likely to use a 'political opportunity' structure when engaging with political institutions. This approach suggests that the accessibility that migrant organisations will have to the political arena is dependent on the civic and political climate at that time and this, in turn, determines the type of influence migrant NGOs will have. If human security approaches are not part of the political climate, it is unlikely that migrant NGOs will be successful in embedding them in political structures. De Tona and Lentin (2012) suggest a more useful approach is one that situates the praxis of organisations in a much wider field of interactions. This should encompass engagement with the political economy, the representation of asylum issues in the media, networking with pro-immigrant groups, promoting human security values, and engaging extensively on issues relating to control, autonomy, self-representation, participation, and migrant participation (Ibid.). In this way, the scope for political mobilization and deliberation is far greater because migrant NGOs are united, asylum seekers are more visible, and support is person-centered. This in turn, creates more opportunities to influence policy and exert influence through widening access to political participation. It also allows a connecting of migrant NGOs with state processes and pressures state institutions to take action. This can optimize the state's reliance on the sector, creating the scope for both complimentary and adversarial partnerships to prevail simultaneously (Kadlec and Friedman, 2007).

Central to this process, are features clearly evident in the Scottish and Portuguese models of integration. In particular, recognition is given to the importance of solidarity in building participative structures. The Scottish and Portuguese models highlight the way strong collaborative approaches have a direct impact on state engagement processes. Embedding robust features of participation at community, regional and national levels are prioritized in these models. Lentin and Morea's (2012) observations predict that when inclusive integration policy is practiced, it can have specific implications for policy changing goals and illuminate an orientation towards collective decision-making. The increasing presence of collaboration and cooperation in the Scottish and Portuguese models illustrate the value of collective efforts in fostering inclusive and sustainable integration policies and strategic frameworks that recognize human security as paramount to successful integration.

Examining the Value of Participative Structures: Portuguese and Scottish Models of Integration

Evidence from Scottish and Portuguese models of integration highlight how solidarity and unity across the migrant sector can have transformative effects on a system of integration. Underpinning this approach is an acknowledgement of the precise links between all actors, the importance of human security and the value of participation. These models are rooted in the recognition of the many complex factors affecting a person's life when seeking asylum. They recognise the impact that exclusion has on health, education, housing, employment and wellbeing. Central to these approaches is deeply entrenched collaboration among all representative parties and a starting point that emphasizes strong values of solidarity, human dignity and social justice (The Scottish Government, 2018; The Portuguese Refugee Council, 2018). Within these models, important lessons have been learnt from the roles played by civil society actors, public administrators, state institutions and asylum seekers, working

together in the policy making process. Both models have endorsed a proactive political narrative, securing asylum seeker visibility and voice. This type of inclusion has prioritised human security and the way it is managed both socially and politically (Palmer and Zapata-Barrero, 2017).

The Portuguese Model

Portugal's reception system was founded in 1991 and has been one of the few countries to adopt a National Action Plan for Integration. The institution responsible for the implementation of the National Action Plan liaises regularly with researches and academics in the field of migration while also promoting dialogue with policy makers (WHO, 2014). In 1995 Portugal established its High Commission for Immigrant and Ethnic Minorities (Alto Comissário para a Imigração e Minorias Étnicas – ACIME) with a primary aim of promoting the integration of migrants and the co-ordination of the participation of the different bodies representing the interests of migrants, including migrant organisations local municipalities, various government bodies and other civil society organisations. ACIME acts as a political mediator between the government and the immigrant associations (Cruz Beja Orrico Horta and Gonçalves de Oliveira, 2014; Sardinha, 2007). In 1998, ACIME established a semi-autonomous representative body under the auspices of the Consultative Council for Immigrant Issues (Conselho Consultivo para os Assuntos da Imigração – COCAI). This is made up of representatives of immigrant associations, representatives of institutions that work with immigrants, labour union representatives, business association representatives, church representatives, and members of various regional and national government bodies (Ibid). The emphasis is on the participation of migrants through their representative organisations, creating space for them to become “social and institutional partners in delineating integration policies” (Sardinha, 2007:14). The Portuguese system is exemplary in

this regard, prioritising knowledge sharing and promoting policy debate and shared decision making.

Coinciding with participatory approaches, human security measures are central to its core principles. This specifically addresses issues relating to health, security, housing, racism, education, employment and integration (Juzwiak, 2014). Unique to Portugal, is an explicit focus on acceptance and integration rather than control and expulsion (WHO, 2014). Extensive integration measures include non-discrimination, access to jobs and training, language supports, access to public education, social support, access to health, access to family reunification, and freedom of movement within Portugal (Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR), 2018). Most importantly, it places an emphasis on countering the negative effects of ‘fear mongering’ which includes a wide dissemination of facts pertaining to successful refugee policy, particularly highlighting the importance of immigrants to Portuguese society (Palmer and Zapata-Barrero, 2017).

Clearly evident in the Portuguese model is the effective way that representative parties work together. This includes migrant NGOs, regional bodies, government bodies, academics and researchers, and state institutions, all feeding into the policy formation and implementation process. Active collaboration underpins the success of this approach.

The Scottish Model

Similar to Portugal, Scotland pursues an all-encompassing view of integration, evident in the provision of extensive supports in legal services, health, education and most notably, integration. In particular, it focuses on human dignity, human potential and human rights. It extends supports to asylum seekers, taking into consideration the multiple layers of exclusion

experienced by those who have been displaced. Coinciding with this, the Scottish model places a strong emphasis on participatory frameworks to allow voice for asylum seekers, even while navigating their way in the system.

Scottish integration policy promotes on-going consultation and deliberations with asylum seekers, their representative bodies and local communities with the aim of prioritising social cohesion strategies. Scotland's progressive approach to refugee integration promotes accessible and supportive services, prioritising housing, healthcare education and employment. Promoting a human centred approach is viewed as a more compassionate response that allows those seeking protection to fulfil their potential in the host society. In this way, the resettlement model takes into account a range of initiatives to help promote awareness and access to rights. In including the participation of asylum seekers in the policy process, the lived experience of asylum seekers proves invaluable in identifying issues and actions which can support integration (The Scottish Government, 2016).

Core to its inclusionary aspects, is the active participation of asylum seekers in the shaping and delivery of the integration strategy. The development stages of the strategy brought together the expertise of many partners across public services, local authorities, community sector organisations, private sector representatives and community groups, all working collectively to achieve positive outcomes for asylum seekers and refugees (Scottish Government, 2016). Similar, to the Portuguese model, participation is viewed as key to legitimising reformist strategies and providing institutionalised platforms for dialogue and interaction.

Potentially Workable Solutions for Ireland

In evaluating both the Portuguese and Scottish models, potentially workable solutions for Ireland can be identified. In 2013, the Irish Refugee Council (IRC) (2013) pointed specifically to the Portuguese model as one that Ireland can learn from. Citing Portugal as a country with similar political structures to Ireland, the IRC pointed to how the Portuguese model of integration can provide avenues for new thinking in relation to how Ireland might better respond to the reception and integration of asylum seekers. Similarly, Nasc, the Irish Immigrant Support Centre (2018) highlights the need for Ireland to draw on models such as the Portuguese and Scottish models of integration as a way of developing more person-centered and compassionate responses to those seeking protection (Nasc, 2018).

What is clear in a comparative context is that Portugal and Scotland have introduced different avenues for representation than Ireland, ones that move away from top-down technocratic approaches to more bottom-up democratic and interest-based approaches, where migrant NGOs and asylum seekers have a much more entrenched say in decision-making processes. The differentiation of institutional and participatory frameworks between Ireland and Portugal and Scotland highlights where Ireland currently lacks leadership. It also highlights the benefits in establishing consultative bodies that can promote and liaise between all parties. In both Portugal and Scotland consultative bodies have played a major role in developing participatory frameworks.

In seeking to promote better consultative mechanisms in Ireland, both the Portuguese and Scottish models offer important opportunities for new ways of thinking about asylum policy. While state centric approaches may currently be entrenched in Ireland, this does not mean there are not possibilities for change. Both Portugal and Scotland have encountered

challenges in implementing inclusive strategies. What has been core to the success has been an openness to change. The 2016 Migrant Integration Strategy and its emphasis on the participation of migrant NGOs, offers real scope for change in the Irish context. This however, will require a willingness by the state to ensure this is acted upon. Pressure from migrant NGOs will prove significant in this regard.

Other factors may also signal opportunities for change. More recently, media representation has been more sympathetic to the experiences of asylum seekers, in particular in highlighting the injustices of the Direct Provision system and its impact on asylum seekers. There has also been extensive coverage relating to promoting the ‘right to work’ for asylum seekers. This offers an opportunity for migrant NGOs to network more closely with media representatives. Engaging closely with asylum seekers will also prove significant. What is made explicit in both the Portuguese and Scottish models is the view that asylum seekers are a crucial part of the policy process. To date, Irish policy formation has failed to view asylum seekers as authoritative subjects in their own agency (Morea, 2012). The evidence from the Scottish and Portuguese models indicate that asylum seekers are not just passive actors who are unable to participate politically, but are vital actors in this process. What is important in the Irish context, is the recognition that asylum seekers do mobilise, they do have rights, they know their rights, and are willing to stand up to be recognized as important interlocutors (Morea, 2012). This is evident in the many grass-roots activities that initiated by migrant-led organisations. This offers important opportunities for more solidarity across the migrant NGO sector.

Conclusion: Where can Ireland go from Here?

The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) concludes that inclusive integration policies are much more likely to improve social cohesion and create positive conditions for promoting diversity and interculturality (Huddleston, Bilgili, Joki and Vankova, 2015). The evidence presented in this paper highlights, that where standards of good practice are present, there is real scope for transformation. However, this can only be effective if solidarity is fostered. There is potential for migrant NGOs to exert more influence, but only through more joined up thinking, that in turn can challenge state practices.

In a policy context, the lack of targeted policies and the limitations of the policy framework in Ireland will further marginalise asylum seekers unless there is recognition that decision-making cannot be confined to centrally located state institutions. This will mean expanding decision-making out into local communities and non-state actors. The arguments that have been raised by Lentin and Morea (2012) have urged an exploration of how and under what conditions inclusive integration can be met. This can only be demonstrated through ‘integration from below up’ (Lentin, 2012) and a strong shift towards migrant activism, recognising the value of asylum seeker voices in this process.

State practices and the policy landscape will require change in order to bring about more deep rooted understandings of human security. A more coherent approach cannot involve punitive measures or containing people for protracted periods of time. Politically representing asylum seekers needs to be focused on better ways of conceptualising important asylum issues and then challenging them. This will require the willingness of state institutions to acknowledge that technocratic decision-making does not work.

Creating a much stronger and more unified approach among all representative organisations will create spaces to deepen deliberative mechanisms that can pressure for change. Without such an approach, tensions will deepen, leading to further injustices and rights violations. Through joined up thinking across migrant NGOs and community based organisations there is scope for better working relationships. Migrant NGOs in Ireland need to engage in strategies that can actively target all of its allies. This will require long term vision, cross sectoral diplomacy and above all a new and different approach to immigration and security in Ireland.

What is made explicit in both Scottish and Portuguese models is how policies combined with community-based activities can address the gaps in the management of integration. Drawing on these models, will strengthen mechanisms that protect and empower not only migrants but also the host society. This can allow both groups the space to live free from fear, want and live in dignity (Mostafavi, 2016). Bringing Ireland in line with countries, like Portugal or Scotland, will require progressive ways of thinking about integration avenues. This will involve a multi-pronged coordinated approach that addresses the interplay of factors that have given way to state sanctioned policies of exclusion. It will require prevention-orientated pathways, a reactivation of grassroots activism and the need for migrant NGOs to maximize their strategic capabilities.

The emphasis placed on migrant NGO participation, made explicit in Ireland's Migrant Integration Strategy (2016) needs to be prioritised. The promotion of collaborative mechanisms needs embedding. This will involve using confrontational rather than co-option measures when necessary. This will provide better chances to develop and to gain entrance to the political decision-making process (Sardinha, 2007). Feldman (2005), in her study of

migrant NGOs argued for the creation of a national umbrella organisation with the goal of uniting resources and collective negotiation in Ireland. Consistent with this approach, is the need for structural power to be de-centralised and reliance on non-state migrant groups to bolster and shape the goal setting process. To do so, migrant organisations will need to make better use of their resources. This will also require more dominant migrant NGOs to question how political mobilisation can be achieved outside of their organisations. This will require better strategies and making deeper connections with civil society, self-organising migrant groups, and media networks. The willingness of migrant NGOs and migrant led organisations to collectively organise offers an opportunity to maximise influence through prioritising participatory mechanisms. Insofar as both more established migrant NGOs and smaller migrant-led NGOs share the same appetite for justice for asylum seekers, there is little reason to anticipate that this could not be achieved. These realities cannot be overlooked in the quest to bring human security to the forefront of approaches to reception and integration in Ireland.

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