Preface and acknowledgements

Today mass emigration has returned to Ireland. However, in the mid 2000s of all OECD countries apart from Canada (and tiny Luxembourg), Ireland had the highest proportion of its population born abroad. What actually drove these figures was mass immigration *from Europe*, above all from Poland and other new member states (NMS) of the EU.

In this new situation, Irish discussion of migration remained curiously traditional: it focused on questions of ethnicity, integration and citizenship. These were issues which had pre-occupied Europe since the classic period of post-World War Two immigration. However, unlike the *Gastarbeiter* of that distant past, the Poles arriving in Ireland after 2004 were fully entitled to work since they were European citizens; cheap air travel enabled them to travel back to Poland easily; above all, it was unclear whether they intended to remain in Ireland.

Using data sets such as the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), researchers at the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) had already begun what was to become an impressive corpus of papers on the labour market participation of migrants. Although crucial for any understanding of contemporary Irish immigration, this research could say little about the actual experience and aspirations of the migrants themselves. Other Irish researchers had begun more qualitative studies of immigration, but these tended to focus on issues of identity and culture. There seemed to be very little concern with the work that the mass of migrants were doing and what they themselves actually wanted.

I was sensitised to such lacunae by our work in the Employment Research Centre (ERC) on the Irish software industry. We had discovered that this industry, an icon of the Celtic Tiger Irish economic boom, now not only depended on the *importation* of skilled workers, it also depended on frequent business air travel by its Irish professionals and managers. There was therefore a lot more to migration than conventional discussions of immigration allowed. Indeed the boundary between migration and ‘mobility’ was often blurred.

In 2006, such considerations prompted my proposal for a study of the careers and aspirations of Polish migrants working in Ireland. This would have two key components. Developing the methodology of an earlier ERC study of

women workers in the service sector, a ‘Qualitative Panel Study’ (QPS) would use repeated interviews over several years with a comparatively small number of migrants. It would trace the careers of migrants and how these related to their – possibly changing – expectations of Ireland. Secondly, a series of workplace studies would identify the ‘employment strategies’ of employers and managers and thus see how migrants were deployed within Irish workplaces. Migrants’ work would therefore be studied from both sides of the employment relationship. Finally, this fieldwork would be contextualised by monitoring of labour market statistics.

In spring 2007, the ‘Migrant Careers and Aspirations’ project became one of the six projects of the Trinity Immigration Initiative (TII). This research programme in Trinity College Dublin had brought together colleagues from sociology, social policy and education; it generated studies that ranged from English-language acquisition in Irish schools to migrants’ experience of the justice system. The programme funded a large cohort of doctoral students working across the six projects. The TII liaised with both migrant organisations and state institutions, it held public lectures and research seminars and it culminated with an international conference on ‘New Migrations, New Challenges’ in summer 2010 (<http://www.tcd.ie/immigration>).

In summer 2007, the Migrant Careers and Aspirations project team was formed under my direction with Elaine Moriarty as research fellow and Justyna Salamońska as doctoral research assistant. In due course, the project team grew to five: Alicja Bobek soon joined as a second research assistant and in 2008 Torben Krings became the second research fellow. The QPS was directed by Elaine and the interview guides were developed by the entire team. The Polish language interviews, transcriptions and translations were by Alicja and Justyna; Torben interviewed employers and managers; Elaine and Torben also carried out interviews with experts and representatives of relevant organisations.

Much of the ERC’s earlier work had been in projects funded by the European Union’s Framework research programmes. The EU insists that such projects have plans for ‘dissemination’ and ‘user involvement’. While academics often resent it, these programmes have stimulated researchers to connect their work to the wider society without becoming the appendage of a lobby group or the expression of a predefined ideological stance. Building on this experience, the Migrant Careers project had a small informal advisory group with participation from government bodies, migrant organisations, trade unions and employers’ organisations. During the lifetime of the project, we also issued four newsletters to communicate our findings to the media, policy-makers, activists and the research community. We held two research symposia with migration scholars from Ireland, the UK and Poland, but we ended the project with a policy conference which brought these colleagues together with our policy stakeholders.

All our publications have used the interview data sets collected by the team, but they are also the result of a team writing effort. One person however was always responsible for the final draft and we designated him or her as the ‘first author’. Nowhere has this been more important than in the writing of the book.

Myself, Elaine and Torben began work on an initial draft as early as 2010, and we had completed chapter drafts by autumn 2011. Torben then took responsibility for turning these drafts into the final manuscript. Separately from this collective effort, both Justyna and Alicja used their interviews from the QPS as well as other material for their doctoral theses, which they successfully defended during academic year 2011/12.

TII was made possible through a generous philanthropic donation from AIB Bank. All the team gratefully acknowledge this valuable funding: the views expressed in this and other publications are of course entirely our own. We further thank David Went (then Chairman of Trinity Foundation) for his valuable input and support in the lead up to the launch of the TII. The TII itself would have been impossible without the vision, determination and commitment of Ronit Lentin who was the academic instigator of the entire programme. Within the TII, the other principal investigators provided critical support and encouragement: David Little, Eoin O'Sullivan, Peter Mühlau, Robbie Gilligan and Ronit herself. Trinity's Institute for International Integration Studies (IIIS) provided accommodation and administrative support for the TII. We therefore thank successive directors of the IIIS, Philip Lane and Alan Matthews. Leslie McCartney, the TII research officer, provided invaluable administrative support for the project and kept our finances in order; she was ably helped by Colette Kelleher of the IIIS. Links with our various stakeholders were facilitated by the TII public liaison officer, Gerry Danaher.

We received many helpful suggestions from members of our advisory group, in particular Brian McCormick, Conor Hand, David Joyce, Kazik Anhalt, Siobhan O'Donoghue and Tony Donohoe; we were helped by members of the Polish community in Dublin, in particular Barnaba Dorda and Anna Paś, as well as staff of the Polish embassy. All of us learnt much from other researchers working in the area. There are too many to be named individually, but we would like to especially thank Adrian Favell, Alan Barrett, Anne White, Breda Gray, Catherine Casey, Emilio Reyneri, Ettore Recchi, Izabela Grabowska-Lusińska, John Eade, Jon Kvist, Maeve Holohan, Marek Kupiszewski, Marek Okólski, Martin Ruhs, Michael Doherty, Philip J. O'Connell and Sharon Bolton. We would also like to thank the staff at Manchester University Press for their forbearance and support.

Qualitative social research like this depends on interviews with a large number of people. We would especially like to thank for their time the managers and employers whom we interviewed for the workplace studies, members of Polish organisations in Dublin and representatives of other institutions. Above all, our QPS methodology demanded from each of our panel members fully six interviews spread over two years. They cannot of course be named, but our research would have been impossible without them. We hope this book will be for them a testimony to their work and life in Ireland.

James Wickham
Dublin, 18 July 2012