Irish State Diaspora Engagement—
“The Network State” and “Netizens”*

The status of Irish sovereignty is perhaps more in question now than at any other time since the foundation of the state following the recent financial crisis and subsequent European Union/European Central Bank/International Monetary Fund “bail out” and austerity program. This crisis and its aftermath reveal the extent to which sovereignty is increasingly conceived in terms of state effectiveness in harnessing the flows of global capitalism.¹ For example, since the 2008 downturn, the Irish state has actively engaged global Irish business leaders in aiding economic recovery from their positions of influence abroad. In 2009 the state moved to formalize relationships with influential members of the diaspora by establishing the Global Irish Forum (GIEF)² and the Global Irish Network (GIN).³ These two flagship diaspora-engagement initiatives are aimed at harnessing those flows within the diaspora that might help integrate Ireland more effectively in the global economy. In this article, I argue that through these initiatives, some state functions are globally networked,

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¹. The term “state” is used here not in the sense of a unitary actor but to mean an ensemble of institutions, rationalities, and practices of power (that can be contradictory and conflicting) that acts both on the individual and the population as a whole.

². The first GIEF was held in Farmleigh House, Dublin, on 18–19 Sept. 2009 and the second meeting of the Forum took place at Dublin Castle on 7–8 Oct. 2011.

³. The GIN was announced by the minister for Foreign Affairs at the first GIEF and was officially launched in 2010. It is a multinodal global network of those identified as influential Irish and those interested in Ireland who are living abroad.
creating a new form of networked membership. Sovereignty, in this context, works less as an effect of the will of the territorially bound people and more through the network state’s ability to achieve and maintain global competitiveness and economic growth.

It is true of course that state institutional arrangements pertaining to expatriates and diasporas have a long history, and Alan Gamlen argues that such “emigration state” systems are inherent in the nation state form itself. But while some forms of institutionalized state-diaspora relations are regular features of nation states, I argue that we are witnessing a neoinstitutionalization of state-diaspora relations. Indeed, diaspora engagement is increasingly promoted as a means of achieving neoliberal economic development and global competitiveness by world institutions such as the World Bank and the International Organization for Migration. Neoliberal economic development is understood here as involving a shift toward the regulation and organization of the state through market forces and a view of governance as primarily concerned with protecting the “entrepreneurial and competitive behaviour of economic-rational individuals.” The effect of this market-oriented governance is that sovereign borders are breached and buttressed “both to extend and to constrain the


5. Diaspora involvement in Irish politics predates the establishment of the state as in the case of political and underground organizations in the United States that provided financial help and actively lobbied the American government on behalf of anticolonial nationalist projects. For example, Irish-American funding helped support Daniel O’Connell’s Catholic emancipation campaign, Charles Stewart Parnell’s Home Rule campaign, Michael Davitt’s agrarian movement, and Eamon DeValera’s Irish Bond drive to help fund the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1921–22 (Conor O’Clery, The Greening of the White House [Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1996]). Moreover, since its establishment, the Irish state has formally engaged the diaspora through its consular functions and under international legislative requirements to protect its citizens abroad. The diaspora has also been engaged via state bodies such as those now known as Tourism Ireland, Culture Ireland, and IDA Ireland. In the 1990s the strategic engagement of the diaspora, particularly elements within the Irish-American diaspora, was instrumental in creating the conditions to advance the Peace Process in Northern Ireland (Feargal Cochrane, The End of Irish America? Globalisation and the Irish Diaspora [Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010]; O’Clery).

regulatory ambit of states, both to valorize the local and to cast it intoorce fields well beyond itself.”

Anticolonial Irish nationalists aspired to achieve an independent
state with exclusive political authority within its boundaries based
on the “will” of the people. However, the Irish state now shares “this
authority with networks of international agencies and institutions,
including bodies such as the European Union (EU), the World Trade
Organization (WTO), and transnational business corporations” as
well as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Gaynor notes that
“while the Irish state, as a strongly capitalist state, has long negoti-
ated its authority with domestic capitalist interests, this authority is
now far more widely dispersed.” As such, state sovereignty and le-
gitimacy requires the negotiation of effective state relationships with
other institutions and actors globally while simultaneously protecting
the interests and security of citizens within its borders.

In this article, I draw loosely on Manuel Castells’s concept of “the
network state” and Cynthia Weber’s notion of “netizens” to argue
that the GIEF and GIN provide an embryonic infrastructure for state
networking in “the space of flows” to promote economic growth in
Ireland. Although initiatives from within the diaspora are also im-
portant here, my focus in this article is specifically on state networking
initiatives that engage sections of the diaspora in the project of eco-
nomic governance. In the section that follows I introduce the concepts
of citizenship, “network state”/“netizen” and diaspora as mobilized in
this article. The conditions that led to the establishment of the GIEF
and GIN are then discussed, followed by an account of how the Irish

7. John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, Ethnicity, Inc. (Chicago: University of
Chicago Press, 2009), 47.
8. Niamh Gaynor, “In-Active Citizenship and the Depoliticization of Commu-
10. Martin Carnoy and Manuel Castells, “Globalization, the Knowledge Society,
and the Network State: Poulantzas at the Millennium,” Global Networks 1, no. 1
of Communication 5 (2011): 773–87; and Manuel Castells, Communication Power (Ox-
state networks specific sections/members of the diaspora. The focus shifts in the next section to “the network state” and “netizens” as emergent formations of governance before turning in a further section to a discussion of how the Irish state mobilizes “netizens” via the apparently contradictory tropes of ancestry and affinity. The article concludes by reflecting on the new questions posed by the neoinstitutionalization of state-diaspora engagement as shaped and reshaped in the ongoing project of harnessing global capitalist flows.

**Citizenship, Network State/Netizen, and Diaspora**

Citizenship is conventionally understood in terms of “legal membership in a political community that confers rights, obligations, and belonging in relation to this political community.”\(^1\) It tends to be conceived as a universal and unitary status whereby all citizens are deemed equal. But as the content, forms, meanings, and types of citizenship proliferate, the whole question of citizenship itself becomes “unsettled and unsettling.”\(^2\) For example, Engin Isin identifies a “new intensity of struggles over citizenship associated with global movements and flows of capital, labour and people.”\(^3\) He and Greg Nielsen see these struggles as generating “new affinities, identifications, loyalties and hostilities across borders,” as well as “new scales of identification and claims-making.”\(^4\) Similarly, Peter Nyers notes that debates over the making and unmaking of citizenship have become considerably more complex with the emergence of dual and multiple citizenships in response to global mobilities.\(^5\) It is also the case that some citizens are treated as “more equal than others” insofar as more or less rights and obligations apply to them, frequently based on maintaining racial, classed, sexual, and/or gendered privilege.

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2. Ibid.,” 125.
These social practices of citizenship are reflected in recent theoretical debates that conceive citizenship less in terms of status or substance and more in relation to how subjects constitute themselves or are constituted as “those to whom the right to have rights is due.”\(^{18}\) As such, the focus is on those contexts and encounters that “instantiate ways of being that are political.”\(^{19}\) Certain acts are seen as creating a sense of the possible and of “a citizenship that is ‘yet to come,’” that is, those acts of claims making (and acts of state recognition) that “implicitly ask questions about future responsibilities between states and members.”\(^{20}\)

The aim in this article is to move beyond liberal assumptions around state/citizen relations linked to legal status in order to identify emergent formations of state and membership as shaped by forces of globalization. By focusing on the performative dimensions of citizenship that involve contested processes of recognition and claims making, the aim is to locate Irish state diaspora engagement initiatives in wider sociological debates about changing formations of state and membership.

As territorially bound space is reconfigured by or collides with the space of flows, modern liberal citizenship, understood as territorially bound and unitary, is less fit for purpose. Indeed, Weber argues that contemporary Western citizens are located in dual spaces of place and flows. As such, she suggests that these citizens can be described as netizens—insofar as they exercise “rights in relation to the networked state through state/society networks.”\(^{21}\) Although the term is popularly understood to refer to participants in online communities, netizen is used more broadly in this article to suggest a form of membership arising from links to networks (both physical and virtual) at a time when the electronic circulation of information, capital, finance, and images is gaining political and economic significance in “the space of flows.”\(^{22}\)

In their project of cultivating diaspora-based netizens, sending states are in competition with multiple identities and allegiances circulating globally. As such, they have to find ways of developing a stronger pull on globally networked individuals than

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19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 4.
22. Ibid.
competing sources of loyalty and identity. In this way, Weber argues that contemporary practices of citizenship combine with networks to produce the political/social identity of “netizenship.”

Castells argues that networks throughout history have been “the most adaptable and flexible organizational forms,” but until the advent of new digital networking technologies, they could not coordinate or accomplish projects “beyond a certain size or complexity.” As such, he differentiates contemporary networks from networks in the past by their “capacity to decentralize performance along a network of autonomous components, while still being able to coordinate all this decentralized activity.” Networks are understood here as “a set of interconnected nodes, the distance between social positions being shorter where such positions constitute nodes within a network as opposed to lying outside that particular network.”

The network state is understood by Castells as an emergent practice of power sharing in which governmental institutions at local, regional, national, and global levels network as a means of engaging the challenges of globalization. This conception of the network state is developed in this article to include state networking of influential global economic actors. As the role of flexible networks expands, Castells sees power as “no longer concentrated in institutions (the state), organizations (capitalist firms), or symbolic controllers (corporate media, churches). It is diffused in global networks of wealth, power, information and images, which circulate and transmute in a system of variable geometry and dematerialized geography. Yet, power does not disappear. Power still rules society, it still shapes and dominates us.”

However, the embedding of power within global networks modifies the workings and outcomes of power and culture such that some nodes become more important than others, thus changing relationships between nodes. Moreover, the in-built flexibility of networks enables speedy responses to global market trends.

Finally, my use of the term diaspora in this article does not imply a static or clearly bounded group but rather a “category of practice,” or a performative entity, that is, the result of the projects of states, multi-generational diasporic groups, émigrés, and religious organizations.29 It is made up of “extra-territorial groups that, through processes of interacting with their origin state [and multilocated diaspora politics], are in various stages of coalescence or dissipation.”30 Interest in the developmental potential of diasporas was legitimated in the 2000s by a “new enthusiasm around migrants as development agents.”31 One effect is that in some respects diasporas can become artifacts of the economic development agendas of global institutions—World Bank, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations (UN), and state diaspora engagement initiatives.

**AN EMERGENT IRISH STATE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ENGAGING THE DIASPORA**

During the 1990s President Mary Robinson promoted the diaspora as an important constituency of the Irish nation with a legitimate claim to state recognition. She also mobilized the diaspora as an example of Irish religious and cultural tolerance with pedagogical potential for the promotion of peace in Northern Ireland.32 Moreover, key Irish-American figures were mobilized during the 1990s to enlist the support of United States governments in helping bring about a resolution to the Northern Ireland conflict.33 These political, cultural, and symbolic shifts with regard to diaspora recognition and engagement created the conditions for a neo-institutionalization of state-diaspora relations in the 2000s.

In line with undertakings by the state under the Belfast or Good Friday Agreement (1998), Article 2 of the Constitution of Ireland was amended following a referendum in 1998 to assert that “the

30. Ibid., 842.
33. Cochrane, *The End of Irish America?*
Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage” (emphasis added). The article was also amended to recognize “the entitlement and birthright of every person born in the island of Ireland . . . to be part of the Irish Nation” (emphasis added). However, the provision for birthright citizenship was rolled back in the Irish Citizenship and Nationality Act (2004) following the Citizenship Referendum (2004) in which a government proposal to restrict citizenship based on birth in Ireland was overwhelmingly passed. This legislation grants birthright citizenship only to children with one parent who has been legally resident in the state for three of the previous four years.\(^{34}\) The combined effect of this legislation and the constitutional identification of a “special affinity” with those of Irish ancestry abroad, render ancestry a central badge of Irish belonging. Moreover, the symbolic inclusion of the diaspora in the Constitution through ancestry legitimates the institutionalization of the state’s relationship to the diaspora, including the establishment of the Task Force on Policy Regarding Emigrants (2001)\(^ {35}\) and the Irish Abroad Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs in 2004. Through these initiatives, the diaspora (relabeled “The Irish Abroad”) was recognized as a legitimate constituency of the state and was mapped via statistical data, research, and policy recommendations.\(^ {36}\)

With the establishment of the Irish Abroad Unit a new diaspora-wide Emigrant Support Program (ESP) was launched building on the more modest DÍON project, which had been established in 1984 to fund welfare services for marginalized Irish in Britain. The ESP significantly increased funding for welfare, cultural, and sporting activi-

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\(^{35}\) See *Task Force on Policy Regarding Emigrants Report* (Dublin: Department of Foreign Affairs, 2002).

\(^{36}\) See, for example, Bronwen Walter, Breda Gray, Linda Almeida Dowling, and Sarah Morgan, *A Study of the Existing Sources of Information and Analysis about Irish Emigrants and Irish Communities Abroad* (Dublin: Department of Foreign Affairs, 2002). The Irish Catholic Church and Irish diaspora organizations were also instrumental in shaping these initiatives (see, for example, Brian Harvey, *Emigration and Services for Irish Emigrants: Towards A New Strategic Plan* [Dublin: Irish Episcopal Commission for Emigrants, 1999]).
ties across the diaspora. Between 2005 and 2010 over €60 million was allocated to Irish welfare, culture, and heritage organizations abroad under this program. As the recipient of €8 million of the €12 million allocated in 2010, marginalized members of the diaspora in Britain represent the main recipients of this form of state support. As such, the ESP establishes a claims-making relationship between specific sections of the diaspora and the state and diaspora constituencies are differentiated depending on the governmental project in hand.

The funding of welfare services to sections of the diaspora is legitimated by what is seen as a debt owed to those who were forced to leave and whose remittances sustained Ireland in less prosperous times.37 However, funding for culture and heritage projects abroad is justified in terms of a need to foster “a greater sense of identity and belonging within Irish communities and strengthen their links with Ireland.”38 Although the ESP has suffered some cuts due to the fiscal crisis, funding continues at a level of around €12 million per annum. Since 2008, however, it has moved backstage somewhat with the launch of a new strand of diaspora engagement focused specifically on promoting economic recovery. Although different rationales for diaspora engagement underpin the ESP and new initiatives under the economic strand, a move toward integrating them is evident in the 2012 Emigrant Support Program objectives, which include the funding of “projects and initiatives . . . which support the outcomes of the Global Irish Economic Forum.”39

The Global Irish Economic Forum, Global Irish Network

The inaugural meeting of the Global Irish Economic Forum (GIEF) took place at Farmleigh House, Dublin, in 2009 and brought together 112 of “the most influential members of the global Irish community with a record of high achievement in business and culture, as well as a number of individuals with a strong business connection to

39. Ibid.
Launching the initiative, the minister for Foreign Affairs suggested that the government needed to rethink its relationship with the diaspora following its successful partnership on the Peace Process in Northern Ireland. He stated that the global Irish constitute “one of the most powerful and far-reaching resources at our disposal and . . . we have identified some of the most successful individuals from that global community.” As such, the Forum was convened with two central objectives: “to explore how the Irish at home and abroad, and those with a strong interest in Ireland, could work together and contribute to our overall efforts at economic recovery; and to examine ways in which Ireland and its global community could develop a more strategic relationship with each other, particularly in the economic sector.”

These objectives are in line with state economic policy as articulated in a series of government reports, including the *Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2006–2013*, *Building Ireland’s Smart Economy* (2008), and the *Report of the Innovation Taskforce* (2010), all of which identify the fostering of global economic networks as the engine of economic recovery. For example, the *Report of the Innovation Taskforce* (2010) recommended that state agencies and education institutions should jointly market and brand Ireland “as a leading innovation location and destination of choice” for overseas investors: an “International Innovation Development hub.” The objectives of the GIEF are also intended to complement foreign policy as articulated in the *Ireland-United States Strategic Review*, which noted that:

40. Micheál Martin, “Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs on the publication of the One Year On Report on the Global Irish Economic Forum,” 13 Oct. 2009. Countries represented included the United States (44 attendees), Britain, Europe, Argentina, Australia, Canada, China, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, and the UAE.


“The current economic downturn represents a timely stimulus to look again at our overseas communities, particularly in the US, and to see how this valuable resource can be elevated to a new and even more dynamic level.”

Initiatives arising from the Forum were “not formally endorsed by Government” but were identified by the Department of Foreign Affairs as “reflecting the opinions and suggestions advocated by those who participated at Farmleigh. Some of the proposals were of a nature that they could be more effectively progressed by the private sector.”

Thus the Forum was to work less as a site of state policy-making, than as a strategic collaborative network for identifying diverse state and private-sector-led projects for Irish economic recovery. Although the convener of the forum, the state is just one actor in this flexible and reconfigurable global network, but as a member engages with and responds to the recommendations of cosmopolitan economic elites in the diaspora. For example, the Silicon Valley–based Irish Technology Leadership Group (ITLG), which gained Irish state support for a new Irish Innovation Center to support Irish technology companies in the valley, also helped shape higher educational initiatives in Ireland to support the smart economy.

Reflecting on the significance of the Global Irish Economic Forum, the Department of Foreign Affairs “One Year On” progress report noted that it “not only had a transformative impact on Ireland’s relationship with leading members of the Diaspora but also increased recognition of the advantages inherent in a mutually beneficial relationship between Ireland and the global Irish . . . in particular in providing a competitive edge in certain key markets.”


Dáil question about the GIEF in June 2011, the tánaiste and the minister for the aptly retitled Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Eamon Gilmore, noted that “the broad economic policies that were advocated by many participants were reflected significantly in Budget 2010” and that the “follow-up process” had assisted in other work underway across government including the implementation of the Building Ireland’s Smart Economy strategy and the recommendations of the Innovation Task Force.48

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the inaugural GIEF was the Global Irish Network (GIN). Members of this network would act “as partners with Government in spreading key economic messages abroad, advising on specific initiatives and assisting Irish business development overseas.”49 At the launch of the GIN in London in February 2010, the minister noted that “300 people, based in the four corners of the world but all with a strong connection to Ireland” had accepted his invitation to participate in this network. Membership was made up of those identified as having “a record of high achievement in international business or [who] have assisted in the promotion of Ireland abroad through their prominence in the cultural or sporting worlds.”50 As a government initiative the aim is “to harness their expertise and experiences . . . [and] work together to deepen our engagement with Irish communities worldwide and to spread the message that Ireland is absolutely open for business, and remains an attractive place for international investment, business people and tourists alike.”51 Crucially, the Global Irish Network was to, “for the first time, integrate the most influential Irish connected individuals into one global group.”52 In a later speech, the minister legitimated the state-network relationship by emphasizing a “widespread acceptance that a small country like ours must maximize the potential of all

52. Ibid.
sources of “soft power,” of which our Diaspora is a prime example.” Regional meetings of GIN were hosted in key markets for Irish exports, including London, Paris, New York, Abu Dhabi, and Shanghai during 2010.

A second GIEF was held on 7–8 October 2011 at Dublin Castle. The taoiseach, in his opening address, celebrated the contribution of approximately 270 attendees as “emissaries, with outstanding reputation and generosity, bringing Ireland’s message of regeneration and resurgence to and from no fewer than 37 countries.” In his address, the tanaiste commented on the willingness of the global Irish “to serve the interests of our country” and suggested that “in doing so they are role models for a new generation of leaders, both at home and among the Diaspora. They show that service is an important part of what it means to be Irish.” He went on to define “diaspora engagement” not as “an aspirational or unquantifiable concept” but “a powerful relationship-building—an arm of our industrial, economic and diplomatic policy—that delivers innovative and practical initiatives.”

Progress since the first GIEF in 2009 was announced by the tanaiste and included: the establishment of the GIN; the Farmleigh Fellowship program designed to equip Irish graduates “with the business, cultural and communication skills necessary to succeed in Asia within 15 years”; the launch of the “WorldIrish.com—an online community for Irish people and those who think Irish”; the appointment


56. The tanaiste is also minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.


58. Gilmore, “Tánaiste’s Opening Address.”
of actor Gabriel Byrne as Cultural Ambassador for Ireland; the launch of the Certificate of Irish Heritage; and “an expansion of the range and geographic location of Irish business networks abroad.” These initiatives involved a combination of state-led, private-sector-led, and state-private sector partnership arrangements.

The topics addressed by the second GIEF were decided by the government and reflected “the priorities identified in the new Programme for Government, and the challenges facing us on the path to recovery.” The agenda for the two-day forum was designed around specific key objectives, including the development of “a structured engagement between the Government and leading business figures from our Diaspora, and from among our friends abroad”; rebuilding Ireland’s “international reputation”; and establishing “a register of international advocates” in the following six sectors: Foreign Direct Investment, the financial services sector, the promotion of culture abroad, tourism, assisting Irish exporting Irish companies, and Ireland’s international reputation. In calling for specific action-oriented ideas to be generated, the tánaiste also invited participants “to consider how to engage the next generation of the Diaspora.”

The work groups were facilitated by the University College Dublin Michael Smurfit School of Business, and the relevant ministers, ministers of state and the heads of government departments and state agencies, were present in most groups. The following five overarching themes emerged from the groups: reenvisioning Ireland; reestablishing our reputation; reengagement; reenergizing Ireland; and reforming Ireland.

The theme of reenvisioning Ireland drew on the Taoiseach’s idea of building an Ireland that by 2016 will be the best small country in the world to do business in. Ireland can be a world leader in a number of sectors including food export, green

59. Gabriel Byrne played a central role in the “Imagine Ireland” festival (2010–11)—a year of Irish arts in America sponsored by Culture Ireland. He has recently announced his intention to resign as cultural ambassador for Ireland halfway into the expected three-year period owing to work pressures.

60. Gilmore, “Tánaiste’s Opening Address.”

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

economy, entrepreneurship, innovation and culture. Entrepreneurship and innovation should be encouraged, and entrepreneurs recognised as “heroes.” Our advantage as a world leader in the culture should be further expanded.64

The reengagement theme focused on “the importance of a ‘structured mobilisation’ of the diaspora” through activities such as “mentoring, offering placements and internships, developing an investment vehicle through which the diaspora could provide seed funding for Irish business, and in communicating positive messages.”65 A long list of recommended initiatives related to these themes emerged from the group deliberations. However, former United States President Clinton’s announcement in his address to the forum of his intention to host an investment summit for Ireland in New York in February 2012 caught the headlines. When this summit took place, it included the chief executive of Bank of America Brian Moynihan, former treasury secretary Robert Rubin, and former chief executive of Citigroup Wilbur Ross (the private equity investor who helped re-capitalize Bank of Ireland), chairman of Allen and Company Don Keough, and founder of “Riverdance” John McColgan.66 Just after the investment summit, President Clinton briefed about one hundred members of the Global Irish Network and noted that “one of the hi-tech guys talked about how great Ireland is for hi-tech,” and another said: “It’s not just a great base for Europe. It’s also a great place for jumping into Africa.”67

64. Ibid., 6.
65. Ibid.
67. Lara Marlowe, “Clinton Gives Top Investors His Folksy Hard Sell,” Irish Times (Fri., 10 Feb. 2012), http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/world/2012/0210/1224311577128.html?via=rel. Another high-profile initiative emerging from the second GIEF was the launch by the minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport of “The Gathering,” a yearlong tourist event in 2013 that is seen as having the potential to bring over 300,000 extra visitors to Ireland.
Local chapters of the GIN were more formally established following the second GIEF with a high level being set up to oversee the effective working of the network. Since the second GIEF, monthly briefing reports have been sent to GIN members by the taoiseach and tánaiste (based on input from this working group) to inform their networking activities on behalf of Ireland. Networks operate through shared protocols and, at present, the state can be seen as the lead protocol programmer. However, the relative power of different nodes in different contexts and at different points in the life of the network will affect which nodes define the network protocol.68

The establishment of an Advisory and Implementation Group, co-chaired by the taoiseach and the tánaiste and including key officials from relevant government departments and members of the GIN from each of the main geographic areas was also announced at the second GIEF.69 This group is to meet twice a year to implement those initiatives deemed appropriate and to coordinate the overall work program of the GIN. Its work will be supported by the Irish Abroad Unit of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in cooperation with relevant other departments, and nongovernment representatives will work closely with ambassadors in keeping the wider network membership informed of developments.

**The Network State and Irish Netizens**

Rhetoric, myth, and discourse to varying extents both shape and serve to legitimate state diaspora engagement through the GIEF and GIN. However, when it comes to the specifics of legal status, the relationship between the Irish state, the forum, and network members cannot be understood in terms of the liberal social contract and associated versions of citizenship. Instead, this relationship can be seen as an emergent formation of governance involving pragmatic engagement between state and key diaspora-based actors in their mutual interests. Although not all-defining of the state or netizen members, this engagement forms an aspect of the activities of both and has material effects in relation to state policy development and the creation of new lines of access to governance.

69. Gilmore, “Tánaiste’s Opening Address.”
In establishing the GIEF and GIN, the state can be seen as networking itself with globally influential nodes of the diaspora and as constituting the diaspora in specific ways in doing so. The network acts as a mechanism through which the state is restructuring to ensure institutionalized relationships to global flows. As such, state power is reworked through the proliferation and management of networks, giving rise to what Castells calls “the network state.” This emerging network state shares authority along network nodes of different sizes linked by asymmetrical relationships, with the state maintaining a coordinating function at this early stage.

State diaspora engagement can be seen in terms of an “extra-territorially extended state” that has “the power to disburse resources outside its territory” by creating “new forms and degrees of membership.” But this state extension of recognition is not necessarily taken up by targeted members of the diaspora who can voluntarily engage or not. In contrast with resident citizens and immigrants living within the territorial jurisdiction where the state retains its monopoly on violence, emigrants and the diaspora are not subject to the power of the sending state in the same way. Indeed, the power relationship between the state and diaspora members is inverted with members of the diaspora being able to choose whether and how they engage with the (sending) state. “High net-worth” members of the diaspora do not have to support state attempts to access network capital because they “can take their business elsewhere and vote with their feet.” Therefore, in the relationship between the networked state and its networked members, the leviathan becomes the supplicant.

Members of the GIEF and GIN are called upon to express a loose form of belonging to the national territorial state and to transform

70. Castells, Communication Power.
73. Fitzgerald, Citizenship a la Carte, 4.
74. See Fitzgerald, Citizenship a la Carte.
this belonging into allegiance for the state. This is accomplished by becoming “immersed” in state/economy/society networks. “Netizens are expected to be carriers of citizenship/netizenship in the same way that codes or bytes of data are carriers of information in an electronic information network.” By networking to aid Irish economic recovery the expectation is that members of the Global Irish Network will help increase tourist visits, business networks, and inward investment. As such, network members can be seen as immersing in networks for Ireland. In return, they are promised recognition as part of the Irish nation and privileged access to sections of the Irish government wherever they live. Precisely because they are located in the dual spaces of place and flows, these diaspora members can be described as “netizens” who exercise rights and obligations in relation to the networked sending state but also the state in which they reside through state/economy/society networks.

GIN members are imagined as autonomous entrepreneurial individuals of contemporary global capitalism, which makes them valuable members, but it is also why the state cannot rely on them to act as netizens: “What states must do is find ways to channel the desire of networked individuals for information into a desire for privileged access to state/society networks, thereby cultivating both belonging and allegiance.”

Because states are competing with the myriad alternative attachments and allegiances open to globally networked individuals, Weber argues that netizenship has to be “packaged as the most efficient, effective, and stylish way for networked individuals to experience their citizenship.” Membership of GIN is “packaged” as a marker of global Irish leadership, service, and identity and as ensuring privileged access to political, economic, and cultural actors and goods. For example, the report of the second GIEF notes that “a consistent comment from participants was the appreciation of the high level of

76. Ibid.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid., 137.
80. Ibid.
81. Gilmore, “Tánaiste’s Opening Address.”
participation by Ministers over the two days and their willingness to engage with participants and the ideas being proposed." However, an ongoing concern for the state is how to promote and sustain a "thick" ethnic identification amongst globally dispersed cosmopolitan members and potential members.

In a study of diaspora investment in homelands, Nielsen and Riddle observed that in addition to financial returns, factors such as emotional connection, a sense of duty, the strength of diaspora organizations and the potential for social returns motivated such investment. Similarly, studies on "investment by non-resident Indians indicate that 'emotional ties with India' ranks as the single highest motivating factor spurring these diasporic capital flows." Indeed, emotional connections and feelings of obligation toward country of origin can "motivate diaspora members to invest despite unfavourable economic conditions."

Reflecting on the size, diversity, and diffuseness of the Irish diaspora, the Ireland Fund Review of diaspora strategies suggests that “successfully engaging the diaspora is . . . a long-term ‘hearts and minds’ business that requires perseverance and patience.” It also identified “an emotional and cultural connection” as the glue that sustains connection with the home country. Yet, it is this emotional connection between Ireland and the Irish-American diaspora in particular that is currently in question. For example, the recent Ireland-U.S. Relations Review noted that with the end of the Northern Ireland conflict, and links between Irish America and Ireland changing, sentimental links to Ireland were on the wane. In response, the review recommends that the state actively cultivate appropriate dispositions and affective relationships to Ireland, primarily via appeals to ancestry and affinity.

82. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, The Report, 12.
85. Aikins et al., A Comparative Review of International Diaspora Strategies, 37.
86. Ibid., 4.
87. Ibid., 21.
Diaspora Netizens through Ancestry and Affinity

In this section I consider some of the ways in which Irish ancestry and affinity operate in the project of state diaspora engagement. In doing so, I examine the seemingly paradoxical invocation of Irish identity both as shared essence based on ancestry and as a resource in self-fashioning on the basis of affinity and choice. The recent launch by the Irish government of the “Certificate of Irish Heritage” is an example of how identity constituted as shared essence through ancestry is mobilized. The development of this certificate was announced by the Department of Foreign Affairs at the inaugural Global Irish Economic Forum and was initially recommended in the Ireland–United States Strategic Review. This review recommended that the certificate should entitle holders to some privileges; for example, it might “ensure more expeditious passage while at the same time conferring some additional recognition to the connection that many such individuals have with Ireland.” The certificate was officially announced in June 2010 and is issued by a third-party agency acting under license from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. In answer to a Dáil question on this topic in April 2011, the tánaiste suggested that this certificate would give official recognition to the many people worldwide who are conscious of their Irish heritage and feel a strong affinity for Ireland. It will not, however, confer any citizenship or other legal rights or entitlements to the successful applicants. Those applying for Certificates of Irish Heritage will be required to submit comprehensive details of their Irish ancestral connections and relevant documents and certificates to show their connection with Ireland.

The first Irish government-issued Certificate of Irish Heritage was presented by the tánaiste in September 2011 to Bridget Hunter on behalf of her son Joseph Gerard Hunter, a firefighter who was killed in the World Trade Center on 9/11. The certificate refers to his County

89. Ibid., 15.
Galway heritage. Another certificate was presented by the consul general in Sydney to eighty-six-year-old Jim Edwards at a ceremony at the Irish Famine Memorial at Hyde Park Barracks in December 2011. Mr. Edwards’s great-great-grandmother, Hannah Rafferty, was born in County Roscommon and was an orphan girl sent to Australia following the Great Famine. The ersatz nature of these certificates is perhaps most evident in the presentation of a certificate by the taoiseach and tánaiste to former United States President Clinton, who claims Irish heritage and has called Ireland his second home. Although these examples are of certificates presented by the state, certificates can also be applied for by any member of the diaspora who can prove an ancestral connection with Ireland. They are available in Irish, English, and Spanish and cost about €40.

The rationale for these certificates relies on a definition of culture, identity, and relatedness “as the product of inheritance.” As

93. This presentation took place at the second GIEF at Dublin Castle in October 2011.
such, they simplify dispersed and hybridized relationalities and reproduce racialized notions of belonging on local, national, and global scales. Such appeals to ethnic particularity and ancestry as the basis for membership can be promoted in chauvinistic ways. For example, economist, writer, and broadcaster David McWilliams, who claims credit for mobilizing the state to convene the GIEF, draws on this logic to promote the case of two young Argentinean women of Irish descent who wanted to claim Irish citizenship through their great-grandparents.

They wanted to come home. Sheila and Eileen have Irish blood on both sides going back to their eight great-grandparents. . . . English is their first language. They were taught by Irish nuns and priests. Their parents still speak with Midlands accents. They are part of a 500,000-strong Irish Argentinean population. . . . Yet these sisters were refused entry visas. We refused entry to two young women, educated, sophisticated, willing to work, with invaluable ties to Latin America, fluent in the second-most-widespread language in the world and, most crucially, committed emotionally to Ireland. If brain power is soft power, then surely this refusal makes no sense.

Blood connections, language, accent, and generational transfer of cultural similarity and emotional commitment are mobilized by McWilliams alongside a resource argument for expanding membership to anyone who can prove evidence of membership by ancestry. These women’s claims to membership are supported by McWilliams because they are seen as racially and culturally proximate, while in another piece he refers to how the presence of foreigners resident in Ireland render the place unfamiliar and unfriendly: “There are foreigners everywhere and our neighbours’ jobs are moving to the East. For sale signs are staying up longer, house prices are falling, yet the cost of living is rising. There are ten foreign children in your child’s class. . . . No-one says hello anymore. The place is different, it’s unravelling and we feel like outsiders.”

The contradiction between his calls to harness the diaspora as a

95. See Nash, Of Irish Descent.
globalized resource for a small open economy and his desire for a unified cultural and political identity linked to the territorialized nation state seem to elude McWilliams. The space of Ireland is conceived as a territorially bound place that should include members based only on ethnic ancestry and conflicts with conceptions of the same space as one that he believes should harness the “soft power” of the space of flows.

The issuing of Certificates of Irish Heritage as incentives for identification enables a global connection to be forged through ancestry while emptying this official recognition of any substantive rights. This mode of recognition reinforces blood and ancestry as markers of belonging in line with the constitutional assertion of the Irish state’s affinity with those of Irish ancestry abroad. Although not specifically directed at members of the GIEF or GIN, the certificate is one of the outcomes of the inaugural GIEF. It helps push the controversial question of emigrant/diaspora enfranchisement further down the agenda and panders to the “sense of exile from ‘authentic’ being that mark[s] the global ‘identity economy.’” Moreover, by making an authenticated form of recognition available as a global consumer product, this state initiative has created a new site in which Irish “culture and commodification constitute each other.”

Although diaspora membership is defined primarily through ancestry, the inaugural GIEF also called on the Irish state to “place greater value on, and build new connections with affinity Diaspora (foreign nationals who have lived in Ireland, but now returned to their countries of origin).” In a similar vein, Minister Martin emphasized the broad and inclusive approach being taken to defining Ireland’s global community: “The Irish diaspora is not limited to Irish citizens living abroad or to those who have activated citizenship. Instead, it encompasses all those who believe they are of Irish descent and feel a sense of affinity with this country.” This more mobile, hybridized, and multilocalational relationship to Ireland suggests an

98. Comaroff and Comaroff, Ethnicity, Inc., 140.
99. Ibid., 140.
“Irish-mindedness,” or an affinity-based membership.¹⁰² Boyle and Kitchen suggest that any state strategy should “include the development of an affinity Diaspora (the so-called ‘New Irish’ who would be encouraged to continue to play for ‘Team Ireland’ if they return to their home country or migrate to another country from Ireland).”¹⁰³

The Ireland Funds review of diaspora strategies, while mobilizing the primordial metaphor of the “tribe,” also adopts a utilitarian approach to including those with affinity to Ireland.

Given the staggering number of people around the world who are Irish, of Irish descent, Irish affiliation, or simply “friends of Ireland,” it makes sense that any definition of Irish diaspora or a subsequent diaspora strategy must ensure that each facet of the diaspora feels connected and engaged. There is no “one size fits all” policy, rather a plethora of tailored, highly researched and strongly executed policies must be introduced to ensure that each diverse segment of the diaspora recognizes the fundamental role and potential it possesses in shaping Ireland’s future—economically, culturally and socially.¹⁰⁴

A similar appeal to cultivating affinities with Ireland is made in the U.S.-Ireland Relations Review, which recommended the introduction of Certificates of Irish Heritage:

Consideration could also be given to establishing a fast track naturalisation regime for those . . . not eligible for citizenship by virtue of descent, [who] have demonstrated a particular affinity with Ireland having spent time in Ireland as students, with the time, or a portion of the time spent in Ireland as a student, exceptionally counting towards residency in Ireland requirements of the naturalisation process.¹⁰⁵

Although the notion of an affinity diaspora is often an “add on,” as above where it “could also be given” consideration, there is a suggestion that diaspora members need to be enticed to become netizens by making membership of the global Irish community stand out as

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a potentially rewarding site of attachment and engagement. It is not about being captured by Irish identity or Ireland, but rather about creating the conditions to freely choose Ireland and Irish culture as a focus of attachment. If such a “repackaging” of membership were successful, then those without ancestry might want to become members, thus boosting the value of Irish membership.\textsuperscript{106}

Noting the “cultural basis that induces networking and trust-based transactions in the new business world,” Castells argues that culture and ethnicity are increasingly removed from specific historical contexts in becoming grounds for the “reconstruction of meaning in a world of flows and networks.”\textsuperscript{107} Yet, although ethnic identity can have the effect of anchoring meaning in the space of flows, it is also clear that the GIEF, GIN, and Certificate of Irish Heritage reduce Irish identity to a utility function and commodity. Indeed, the two registers of ancestry and affinity (nature and choice) work together within the market logic of contemporary neoliberal capitalism whereby culture is reduced to property, innovation, and economic relationships, while at the same time suggesting the impossibility of reducing cultural identity to utilitarian ends. The joining of these registers confuses “the deployment of ethnicity as a tactical claim to entitlement, and as a means of mobilization for instrumental ends, with the substantive content of ethnic consciousness.”\textsuperscript{108} In this “triangulation of culture, identity and the market,” Comaroff and Comaroff argue that the conjuncture of ancestry and affinity, “of choice and essence is just where it begins. Ethnicity, Inc. is where it ends.”\textsuperscript{109} The incorporation of ethnicity through the joining of blood and choice is underpinned by the simultaneous naturalization and commodification of cultural identity, which promises to “unlock new forms of self-realization, sentiment, entitlement, enrichment.”\textsuperscript{110} As such, the GIEF and GIN can be seen as caught up in neoliberal agendas that spawn “entrepreneurial (singular) and ethno-prerneurial (collective) subject[s] in a globalized economy of difference and desire.”\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{106.} Weber, “Designing Safe Citizens.”
\textsuperscript{107.} Castells, \textit{The Information Age}, 56, 63.
\textsuperscript{108.} Comaroff and Comaroff, \textit{Ethnicity, Inc.}, 44.
\textsuperscript{109.} Ibid., 20, 40.
\textsuperscript{110.} Ibid., 139.
\textsuperscript{111.} Ibid., 141.
CONCLUSION—FOSTERING FEELING FOR NETIZEN MEMBERSHIP

Consistently ranked as one of the most globalized economies in the world since the late 1990s, the Irish economy is impacted strongly by global economic forces.\textsuperscript{112} In this article, I have argued that one response to globalizing forces is the development by the state of new institutional arrangements, including the Global Irish Economic Forum and the Global Irish Network. I point to some of the ways in which these arrangements involve the sharing of some state functions with globally connected members of the diaspora. While the GIEF and GIN are primarily utilitarian and pragmatic techniques of neoliberal governance through the global, in order to be effective, they require the creation of appropriate global Irish subjects who will commit to the agenda of embedding Ireland in the global economy. By globalizing tropes of ancestry and affinity, Irish state diaspora-engagement initiatives simultaneously shape felt communities of belonging and create new entrepreneurial and ethno-preneurial subjects. Such affective communities can then be mobilized in driving mutual economic, political, and cultural aspirations and commitments. Membership is conceived here, not as “belonging-in-space,” but in terms of multiple attachments, as the “rise of ethno-commerce” means that domains of existence such as ethnicity are marketized and charged attachments to “chosen” lifestyles and identities are actively cultivated. The neo-institutionalization of state-diaspora relations in Ireland, as evident in the establishment of the GIEF and GIN, relocates politics and economics in the domain of culture, while at the same time locating culture in the domains of the political and economic. Thus, Irish culture (as ancestry and affinity; blood and choice) becomes “the taken-for-granted domain of collective action” in the global space of flows and in the drive to produce neoliberal capitalist entrepreneurial subjects.\textsuperscript{113}

As the state strikes a sovereignty bargain in relation to a diaspora defined through the joining of ancestry and affinity, its borders are displayed as a “softer shell,” emphasizing the benefits of the networks


\textsuperscript{113} Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.*, 150.
that cross them.\textsuperscript{114} Yet the state borders continue to operate as a “hard shell” and symbol of social closure in relation to the status of citizenship as revealed by Ireland’s immigration policies, withdrawal of birthright citizenship, and repeated emphasis on ancestry. It is important, therefore, that in considering state diaspora-engagement strategies, the dynamics that these strategies produce relating to the workings of the state itself, state borders, membership, and political community are examined. For as “ethnic commerce” globalizes, it also “sharpen[s] the lines of division between enrichment and exclusion . . . [and] everywhere underwrites new divisions and inequities.”\textsuperscript{115}

Matters of affiliation, allegiance, membership, and belonging have become important state projects as states simultaneously negotiate the “space of place” the “space of flows.” But these projects are marked by contradictions between traditional hierarchical national state institutions and the “open-ended and multi-edged” nature of networks.\textsuperscript{116} To ensure that diaspora engagement enables national economic development, states are caught in contradictions and paradoxes in relation to diverse constituencies of diaspora and the interests of resident citizen members. However, these contradictions are produced for the most part by conflicting state policies around economic growth, global competitiveness, migration management, and persistent assumptions of territorially bounded membership and ancestry as essential markers of belonging. Yet as states are increasingly networked and encourage networked forms of membership, new divisions arise in the intersections between spaces of flows and place, giving rise to new questions about “the mechanisms by which resources are transferred across state borders”\textsuperscript{117} and the kinds of membership they allow and disallow.


\textsuperscript{115} Comaroff and Comaroff, \textit{Ethnicity, Inc.}, 143.

\textsuperscript{116} Castells, \textit{Communication Power}, 19.