

**Gray, Breda (2018)'Mobility, Connectivity and Non-Resident Citizenship: Migrant Social Media Campaigns in the Irish Marriage Equality Referendum', *Sociology***

**Abstract**

The proliferation of migrant social media campaigns calling for a 'Yes' vote in the Irish Marriage Equality referendum (May 2015) raises new questions about the conventions of political participation and non-resident citizenship rights. Via a discourse analysis of these campaigns, this article shows how the algorithmic agency of social media combines with the political agency and affective identifications of campaigners to shape the terms of non-resident citizen claims for enfranchisement and sexual citizenship rights. The article argues that despite their novel political tactics, the central campaign discourses of (im)mobility (leaving/staying-put), connectivity (active engagement), and ongoing stake in an inclusive homeland are underpinned by conventional democratic criteria for enfranchisement. The article addresses how these discourses intersect with state and business regimes of mobility and connectivity to produce a particular ordering of citizenship. It also points to those emergent practices and norms of political participation generally, and of non-resident citizenship in particular, that are foregrounded by these campaigns.

**Article**

Ireland is one of the only countries in the developed world not to allow its citizens abroad a postal vote, but many recent emigrants didn't let that stop them from casting a ballot in the same-sex marriage referendum. Between Thursday and Saturday, 110,000 #HomeToVote tweets were posted on the social media site as hundreds if not thousands of emigrants flocked back from all over the world to have their say. In doing so, they showed Ireland and the world that they not only cared about rights for same-sex couples, but also their personal right to have a say in the country they left behind, in many cases temporarily. There is a strong case worth making now for extending the vote to migrants... (*The Irish Times* 2015: 15).

Just a week after the Marriage Equality referendum, the above *Irish Times* editorial links the political participation of non-resident citizens via social media with a call for their

enfranchisement. Although now an international norm with over 80 percent of countries facilitating non-resident citizen enfranchisement (Collyer 2014:65), voting rights in Irish national elections extend to only 18 months following departure and migrants must return to cast their ballot. Earlier emigrant campaigns for voting rights were reactivated during the post-Celtic Tiger outflow (net-outmigration between 2009-2016) by the 'Votes for Irish Citizens Abroad' (Vica) campaign in Britain and VotingRights.ie (a global coalition of campaign groups). Despite these campaigns and the European Commission's criticism of Ireland in 2014 for 'disenfranchising' non-resident citizens, progress is slow with enfranchisement getting a mention in the government's 2015 diaspora policy, and no date set for the proposed referendum on extending the franchise to non-resident citizens in presidential elections.

Meanwhile the proliferation of social networking sites is transforming political participation by creating a synchronous multi-media 'communication environment' (Lorenzana 2016: 2190). Through these sites migrants relate 'socially and emotionally to both their home and destination countries', but also 'assert themselves and their rights' (Lim et al. 2016: 2147/2150). Some argue that technologically-mediated connectivity and social media are producing participatory cultures and cosmopolitan inclusivity among both migrants and non-migrants (Nedelcu 2012: 1344-5; Marlow et al. 2016). However, digital connectivity does not work in undifferentiated ways and links between cosmopolitanisation, mobility and connectivity cannot be assumed.

To counter celebratory approaches to mobility, Glick Schiller and Salazar posit the term 'regimes of mobility' in order to forge connections between the facilitated mobilities and connectivities of privileged white, middle-class migrants and the stigmatised or foreclosed 'migration and interconnection of the poor, powerless and exploited' (2013: 188). Differentiations between groups are (re)produced through intersecting mobility regimes including: classed, racialised and gendered state migration and labour market policies and the normalisation of mobility as a livelihood strategy or career portfolio imperative in the globalised economy. Those 'regimes of mobility' that structure unequal migration flows and identity hierarchies also shape connectivities, which are amplified by social media. Indeed, social media campaigns and the 'hashtag publics' they produce are never simply 'mute neutral and external backdrops of identity formation, but distinct expressive cultures filled with ideologies, hierarchies and politics' (Leurs 2012: 22 in Titley 2014:41).

As the first digital emigrant generation, post-Celtic Tiger emigrants mobilised social media to forge connections between stayers and leavers and to engage in political campaigning for citizenship rights. This article investigates how emigrant social media campaigns leading up to and during the Marriage Equality referendum in May 2015 frame migrant-homeland relations through citizenship recognition claims. Two citizenship and enfranchisement social media campaigns -We're Not Leaving (WNS) and We're Coming Back (WCB) are briefly discussed by way of contextualising the proliferation of emigrant-based campaigns for marriage equality. The argument proceeds in five stages. A brief background to post-Celtic Tiger emigration is followed by a section describing the study and methodological approach adopted. The third section presents selected print media accounts of social media campaigns for emigrant and sexual citizenship rights. The final section examines the ways in which contemporary regimes of mobility and connectivity are reproduced or subverted in these social media based non-resident and sexual citizenship rights claims.

### **Background**

The 'Celtic Tiger' years of economic boom (mid-1990s to 2007) saw the dominant pattern of emigration shift to inward movement. However, in the year to April 2009, just after the economic crash, emigration overtook immigration again for the first time in 14 years. Public debate focused mainly on the emigration of Irish citizens even though approximately 50 percent of those leaving were not Irish. Despite the repeated linking of emigration and rising unemployment, most of those leaving were either at work, or a student prior to departing, with fewer than 1 in 7 being unemployed and more than half holding a third level degree or above (CSO 2016).

Although previous outflows were made up primarily of younger migrants (18-30), the huge drop in employment during the economic crash meant that many in the 30-45 age cohort left family in Ireland to gain an income abroad (IAU 2017). Anglophone destinations dominated, with the UK remaining most popular, followed by Australia, the US, New Zealand and Canada (Glynn et al. 2013). However, a significant proportion of recent migrants went to the Middle East and Asia. Out of a total resident population of 4.793 million in 2017, the Department of Foreign Affairs estimates a non-resident citizenship of 3.601million globally (IAU 2017).<sup>1</sup> This large number of non-resident citizens contributes to anxieties about enfranchisement.

Recent studies suggest that post-Celtic Tiger emigration is lived through discourses and practices of global mobility and connectivity. For example, upskilling abroad has become a normal sequence in post-industrial economic development narratives that re-code emigration, for the high-skilled at least, as a necessary career route (Moriarty et al. 2015). As for many 1980s' emigrants, those moving to England frame their migration in terms of choice, opportunity and mobility, thus distancing themselves from the term 'emigrant' which is associated with previous generations of working-class migrants (Gray 2004; Ryan 2015). This self presentation mirrors that of young, post-recession Italian migrants who define their migration in terms of self-fulfillment, experimentation and up-skilling abroad (Ricucci 2017).

With over 70 percent of recent emigrants using Skype and telephone calls to regularly maintain contact with family and friends, and over 90 percent using Facebook and other social network sites (Glynn et al. 2013), ubiquitous connectivity further normalises global mobility. Mobility and connectivity combine to facilitate labour flexibility globally and are fostered by Irish media and state initiatives. For example, the *The Irish Times* web-based 'Generation Emigration' project, initiated in 2011, established an 'on-line forum by and for Irish citizens living overseas'. This site features user-led blogs, issue-led debates, opinion surveys and a photographic archive (Generation Emigration 2016; Gray 2013). As emigration fell off in 2016, the focus turned towards those remaining abroad and the 'Irish Times Abroad' project was launched to act as 'a new home for *Irish-connected* people around the world', alongside the Generation Emigration site (*The Irish Times* 2016; emphasis added).

Mobility and connectivity are also central to the Irish state's first official diaspora policy in 2015 which describes recent emigrants as

the *most connected* to Ireland, as modern communication technology ensures that they can remain in touch with family and friends and keep up to date with Irish news and media... A challenge for Government is to harness these new ways of communicating, in particular, for better two-way communication with recent emigrants (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFA&T) 2015: 11/14; emphasis added).

Foucault uses the term 'governmentality' to mean the 'government of men' (sic) as opposed to territorial sovereignty, and the term biopower to refer to power that fosters

the life of the population, which he sees as the object and target of modern government (2007: 148). Government works therefore by channeling, regulating and ordering specific population forces, such as migration. State diaspora engagement policies can be understood through this lens as attempting to capture the benefits of globalisation and mobility by sustaining a loyal and connected membership (Gray 2012). For example, the connected migrant is constructed as a potential state ally, politically, culturally, digitally and economically in a 2015 speech to the Seanad (Senate) by the Minister for Diaspora Affairs:

People *want to feel connected* and they want the Government to play an active role in achieving this. The communication technology advances in the last ten years have given us the tools...I have met with some of the tech and social media companies including Microsoft, Google, LinkedIn and Twitter to discuss how they can support us to better connect with our people overseas...We will increase our social media presence ... allowing our Irish abroad to interact with us in a direct and immediate way (Deenihan 2015a; emphasis added).

Following signs of economic upturn in 2014, the Minister launched a campaign to encourage emigrant return: 'We want to start a national *conversation with our diaspora* about *coming home to work*... we will be using social media – building on the #hometowork hashtag – to drive this conversation' (Deenihan 2015b; emphasis added). As projects of connectivity, these initiatives constitute the non-resident citizenry as imbued with motility - the potential to move (leave and return) and to cohabit (through connectivity) at a distance. When ideas such as mobility and connectivity become installed as norms, their taken-for-granted status removes the politics of their formation and mobilisation from scrutiny. I am interested therefore in how these tropes are reproduced and/or challenged in bottom-up emigrant (and non-migrant) social media citizenship rights campaigns and the implications for norms of political participation. Before addressing these questions, I turn to the methodological questions and approaches that inform the argument.

### **Researching Social Media Campaigns: Methodological Considerations**

Social media provide key networking infrastructures for campaign groups because they are decentralised, yet coordinated, have an informal horizontal structure, facilitate creative and innovative imaging possibilities, and enable the participation of

geographically dispersed actors. When the Marriage Equality referendum was announced in 2014, non-resident citizens launched multiple social media campaigns for a 'Yes' vote, which received considerable attention in the print and broadcast media in Ireland. What can these campaigns and two other campaigns relating to migration and citizenship tell us about how citizenship claims are framed in contexts of high out-migration and about changing norms of political participation?

While I initially intended to analyse social media content, this approach proved impractical and inappropriate for three reasons. First, insofar as digital information is seen as 'an extension of a person' (Burnap et al 2015: 96-7), ethical considerations arise regarding the status of Facebook and Twitter posts as published texts or the confidential data of human subjects (Bonilla and Rosa 2015). Second, the methods and modes of analysis required to observe and inductively interpret socially significant evidence from social media platforms, including their recursive processes of sharing, tagging, linking and vectors of interaction, demand levels of technical expertise and computational resources that were not available to me (Burnap et al 2015).

Third, because my research question relates to how social media campaigns construct the emigrant - sending society relationship and frame political participation, a focus on the campaigns as communicated to a national audience via traditional media sources seemed both appropriate and practical. Therefore, I adopted a hybrid methodological approach informed by Jozon Lorenzana's notion of 'mediated recognition', which describes how both new and traditional media enable the affirmation of migrant participation (2016: 2189). By addressing how social media campaigns and campaigners' voices are translated and represented by press media, I was able to examine processes of 'issuefication' (Rogers 2012) in relation to both the political participation of non-resident citizens and sexual citizenship claims.

I chose to analyse *The Irish Times* broadsheet newspaper (print and on-line) which carried extensive coverage of the campaigns. Moreover, one of its columnists acted as strategic advisor to the Ireland-based 'Yes Equality' campaign. From a corpus of 128 items (ranging in word count from 138 (letters) to over 4,000 words) collected via a search for the campaign titles and 'Yes Equality', a data set of 46 was further reduced to 34 articles engaging closely with the campaigns. About one-third of these were written by activists themselves and the others include extended quotes from campaign activists.

These articles date from November 2013, when the first 'We're Not Leaving' event took place, to May 2015, when the 'Marriage Equality' referendum was held and were published by *The Irish Times* newspaper, or its online 'Generation Emigration' forum.

The analysis examines taken-for-granted meanings of emigration, citizenship and political participation by showing how these are represented, questioned, classified and regulated (Bacchi 2012). What counts as 'the truth' of non-resident or equal sexual citizenship is a product of discourse and power. Discourses, for Foucault are not 'things' but 'practices': emigration and sexual citizenship do not exist as 'object[s] for thought until [they are] produced through practices...practices as "places" where "rules imposed and reasons given" meet and interconnect' (Bacchi 2012: 3). A discursive practice establishes 'an interactive relation between otherwise heterogeneous material elements (institutions, techniques, social groups, perceptual organizations, relations between various discourses)' (Foucault 1972: 72). My focus is on the discursive practices surrounding (e)migration and sexual citizenship as these circulate and are repeated in social media campaigns thus constituting subject-positions such as those of emigrant and non-emigrant, or un-marked citizen and marked citizen.

For the purposes of this analysis, government is understood as 'a practice that fixes the definition and respective positions of the governed and governors facing each other and in relation to each other', rather than imposed by those who govern (Foucault 2008: 2). The definition of respective positions is shaped by specific conditions of possibility and relations of force. What evidence is there, for example, of how the positions of governed and governors in the Marriage Equality referendum campaign are shaped by decades of LGBT activism (O'Carroll 2016), the economic recession, active state diaspora engagement and the increased political participatory affordances of social networking platforms? The transactional relations of government also involve discussions, conflicts, concessions and agreements which establish a 'division between what is to be done and what is not to be done in the practice of governing' (Foucault 2008: 12). These transactional relations also shape subject formation and how individuals conduct themselves (Cadman 2010).

When some citizens 'think and act differently' and seek to modify the rules, they are engaged in 'governmental counter conducts' and intervene in the 'game', or transactions 'through which the truth (of the governed subject) is produced' (Cadman

2010 : 550). The social media campaigns analysed here highlight those regimes of truth through which they become known as (non)emigrants and/or marked citizens and acted upon as such (Cadman 2010:550). But even as they are critical of state policy by claiming rights and inclusivity, they can also re-legitimate state policy and are vulnerable to recuperation in governmental rationalities (Foucault, 2008: 187). As such, discourse, for the purposes of this study, is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is ongoing struggle (Foucault 1981: 52-3).

Each article was systematically coded with reference to how both sexual citizenship through marriage equality claims and emigrant rights to enfranchisement are rendered problematic and why (Bacchi 2012). When those codes recurring across all 34 articles were identified, it emerged that the terms of the struggle are set by three recurring discourses of (im)mobility (relationships to leaving/staying-put), connectivity (on-going participation and involvement in Ireland), and a long-term stake in an inclusive 'home'(land). I ask how these discourses reproduce and constrain the meanings of emigration, citizenship and belonging or evoke disruptive or dissenting positions. In doing so, I analyse the intersections, confluences and tensions within social media campaign discourses and the kinds of (non)emigrant citizen-subjects that they (re)produce (Cadman 2010). The following section identifies the discursive struggles articulated by (e)migrant social media activists in *The Irish Times* re-presentations of these campaigns.

### **Reconfiguring the contours of citizenship through social media campaigns**

The 'We're Not Leaving' (WNL) and 'We're Coming Back' (WCB) campaigns emerged in 2013 and prepared the ground for the proliferation of emigrant campaigns in the 2015 Marriage Equality referendum. Consisting of 'students, precarious workers, the young unemployed and combinations of all three', the WNL campaign asserted: 'We're angry and we're not leaving'. This campaign arose out of the Trade Union movement and adopted an intersectional politics as noted by founding member, Moira Murphy (2013):

*... it is not just a campaign against forced emigration. We chose that phrase because it is defiant. We're here to stay, so things need to be fixed...all the problems that are driving so many out – precarious work, internship culture, third-level grant cuts and fee hikes, mental health, housing and youth*

*unemployment... They [the government] see young people as easy targets, and emigration as a safety valve.*

Another founder member, Shane Fitzgerald, characterised the campaign as *'a call out to young people who have had enough of forced emigration, no work, unpaid work, miserable work ... to take that step into getting organised and fighting back'* (in Holland 2013). Highlighting the ways in which young citizens become recognisable only as emigrants or potential emigrants, WNL refused *'a logic that requires and encourages mobile citizens'* (Nash and Gorman-Murray 2014: 767), by making staying political.

Campaign activist and trade unionist, Laura McKenna, asserted: *'...We are not leaving and we're demanding our future'* (in Holland 2013). Another activist, Áine Mannion, states: *'We refuse to accept the government's use of emigration as a means of avoiding social and economic issues'* (Mannion 2014). By asserting instead their *'abject presence'* – as both (under)unemployed and non-emigrants, campaigners publicly name *'the part that has no part; yet, we are here, we exist – and we're not going anywhere'* (De Genova 2010: 110/109). In solidarity with emigrants, the WNL campaign also called for emigrant enfranchisement: *'Because they [emigrants] have no voting rights ... it is difficult for them to stay politically connected to the country where they would prefer to be living but can't...'* (Murphy 2013).

The *'We're Coming Back'* (WCB) campaign was launched in 2013 by a small group of emigrants as a single issue campaign seeking political representation for Irish citizens abroad (O'Neill in Gavin 2014). Over Christmas 2013, they mobilised emigrants to post photographs of themselves and friends raising a toast via #ToastForaVote. Founding member, Conor O'Neill notes that although the WNL campaign took *'stances on a huge number of issues ... we [WCB] lobby for voting rights for Irish emigrants, and that's it'* (in Gavin 2014):

*Many of those abroad wish to return - they should not simply be forgotten in the interim...Current policies regularly attempt to "harness" the diaspora ... An outlook emphasising their economic value but overlooking their citizenship and the rights that come with it.*

Campaign activities saw themselves as refusing *'the government's invitation to ... leave without a fuss'* (O'Neill in Gavin 2014). One founding member, David Burns, pointed to the *'regressive idea of citizenship ...[as] something that needs to be defended from invaders and people who've jumped ship ... [This is] why we put a progressive idea of citizenship at the heart of We're Coming Back'* (in Gavin 2014). With the announcement of a referendum on same sex marriage in 2014, WCB identified an opportunity to further its campaign goals (Burns and O'Neill 2014).

Twitter and Facebook's algorithmic structures were optimised by emigrant campaigns for a 'Yes' vote in the Marriage Equality referendum through the mobilisation of numerous sub-campaigns and hashtags including: 'AbroadforYes', 'IrishYesEqualityAustralia', 'IrishinCanadaforYesEquality', which spawned further campaigns such as #VoteWithUs, #UseYourVote, #BeMyYes, #SendLoveHome and #HomeToVote. The #VoteWithUs campaign initiated in Ireland, held video days at home and abroad to *'create a platform for people to tell their personal stories'* about how marriage equality would affect their lives (Jennings 2015). It was

*a plea to home not to forget about its emigrants, and for those who still live there to value and use their vote ... to create an Ireland they can happily come home to, within which they can marry someone they love and be recognised in the eyes of Ireland's constitution* (Jennings 2015).

Inviting those in Ireland to vote on behalf of those who couldn't vote, the #BeMyYes campaign included photographs of themselves with the hashtag, thousands of messages and hundreds of videos. One campaign organiser, travelled from Vancouver to vote as it was *'an important chance to change our society...It's more than just about marriage; it is an opportunity to open our arms to the LGBT community. My partner and I want to be seen as equal in our home country'* (Brock in Kenny 2015c; Markham in Kenny 2015c).

This position is echoed by Quentin Fottrell (2015) who emphasises the paradoxes of digital proximity:

*There is the illusion of closeness: we can watch the referendum debates on RTE Player and become immersed in the sometimes toxic Twitter wars. We can FaceTime or email our friends and family, urging them to register and to make*

*their vote count. But as the referendum grew closer, I became concerned about the result, and felt increasingly powerless...*

Prompted by a similar event in front of Sydney Opera House, Fottrell (2015) organised a photo rally in front of Manhattan's Freedom Tower: *'We knew social media was critical to raise awareness... We don't have a vote, but we do have a voice ... we held up letters spelling "Make Us Proud, Make History #VoteYesForEquality"'*. Similarly, the #UseYourVote campaign invited Irish abroad to tweet photos of themselves in front of recognisable landmarks carrying campaign flags.

Carla Spelman (2015) describes the 'Send Love Home' video-based campaign as encouraging voters to see how

*a negative result in the referendum might affect the international status and reputation of our country ...Not only has Stephen Fry sharing the video emphasised massively the international perspective we hope potential no-voters will adopt before making their decision final, it has also meant that the video has reached a much more ... diverse audience.*

Here Spelman emphasises the 'interdiscursive capacity' (Bonilla and Rosa 2015) and persuasive influence of Twitter hashtag, text and video links to create a digitised public space.

London-based '#VotewithUs' campaigner, Joey Kavanagh, set up the #GetTheBoat2Vote to enable *'Irish people living abroad who are ineligible to vote to feel they are contributing...'* (in Kenny 2015a). Emigrant voters were invited to tag social media photographs to demonstrate *'the efforts Irish abroad are making to play their part in the referendum in terms of motivating those at home to get out and vote'* (Kenny 2015c). Discussing her decision to travel from the UK to vote, Jensen Byrne states:

*... as a member of the LGBTQ community ...I feel anxious and disenfranchised as I do what I can to encourage those at home to register, to speak to their families and to do what I cannot do and cast their vote... Many of us only intend to stay overseas for a short time, and plan to return to Ireland eventually having served our time in necessary exile. For now, we can only follow the debates online, feeling voiceless but hoping those still at home will use their vote and create a country we will be proud to return to (Byrne and Byrne 2015).*

The #HomeToVote campaign created a 'public time' by tweeting about unfolding events such as boarding a plane and arrival in Ireland; sharing photographs and messages along the way (Bonillo and Rosa 2015). This campaign and others were remobilised (albeit by both sides) during the referendum on abortion in May 2018.

On 22 May 2015, 62 percent of voters, with a turnout of 61 percent, voted to provide for same-sex marriage in the Irish Constitution. Although only a tiny minority of voters were emigrant citizens, this group was widely acknowledged in media and political commentary. The Taoiseach [prime minister], Enda Kenny thanked those who had 'travelled from wherever to wherever, to put a single mark on a paper' (in Hilliard 2015). He continued: 'We are a generous, compassionate, bold and joyful people who say yes to inclusion, yes to generosity, yes to love, yes to gay marriage' (in McDonald 2015). Like many of the campaigners, the Taoiseach identifies the post-referendum status of the Irish nation as inclusive and 'gay-friendly', thus locating it along a sexually progressive continuum that potentially measures other states in relation to their '(sexual) modernity' (Puar 2013: 336-7).<sup>3</sup>

The Ireland-based 'Yes Equality' campaign organisers acknowledged the 'viral effect' of these campaigns which 'touched people partly because of the pain of Irish emigration and its unhappy recurrence in recent years but also because it said something about ... the emotional investment that so many had in the outcome' (Healy et al. 2016: 158). Via emigrant return and the 'Yes' result, the pain of both emigration and homophobia was salved to some extent through a celebratory narrative of a mobile and connected Irish citizenry and 'gay-friendly' nation. Yet the question of non-resident voting rights remained unaddressed.

Burns, O'Neill and Kavanagh (2015), #GetTheBoat2Vote and WCB campaigners, reflect on the post-referendum celebrations at Dublin castle:

*In the days preceding the vote, social media was ablaze with stories of emigrants returning from Sydney, New York, London, and further afield. Dublin Airport was thronged, and reporters gathered to greet ferry loads of hopeful expats. That so many travelled so far is testament to our citizens' desire to remain connected – that they had to do so in the first place demonstrates how outdated and exclusive our democracy can be.*

The mediated eventness of this referendum as staged through the active engagement of non-resident citizens, simultaneously legitimated calls for enfranchisement and challenged territorialised political assumptions surrounding citizenship and participation. The combination of on-line campaigns and off-line activities accentuate the interactive rather than either/or logic of on- and off-line political participation. This point is noted by Noel Whelan, *Irish Times* columnist and advisor to the 'Yes Equality' campaign:

Online effort, once seen as a distraction from mainstream political activity, became a recruitment and deployment tool for offline activism and ultimately a driver of mobilisation to the polls. Social media also generated and documented the poignant phenomenon that was #HomeToVote, an international odyssey that saw thousands of Ireland's recent emigrants return home to cast their ballot...Most felt happy that our small country ... could do something so positive for so many at home or abroad (Whelan 2015:3).

Celebrations of mobility and connectivity as motifs of a modern cosmopolitan Ireland combine with the continued poignancy of emigration and the passion of LGBTQ activists to imbue these campaigns with the potential to reshape the conventions of non-resident political participation.

### **Discussion**

It would be wrong to suggest that these campaigns influenced the result of the referendum which had the support of all the major political parties. Instead, I examine how they discursively establish particular orderings and codings of citizenship, belonging and political participation. I argue that the campaigns point to how 'regimes of mobility' intersect with what I'm calling 'regimes of connectivity' to (re)configure the relationship between resident and non-resident citizenship and notions of national belonging. As noted earlier, the Irish state's regime of mobility fosters 'upskilling' abroad as a normalised step in early career or worklife, particularly during economic downturns, and promotes the return of Irish citizens during periods of economic growth. This state regime is cross-cut by a capitalist regime of mobility that channels and promotes flexible movement at both ends of the global labour market. As a result, Ireland is linked to particular migrant destination countries through classed, gendered, ethnicised and racialised migration flows and global labour niches. Some of these flows and

destinations were speedily formed into a global network via the efficient connectivity of the #HomeToVote campaign which created a particular political domain.

All of the campaigns articulate ongoing connections with Irish society and a desire for a future life in Ireland based on equal citizenship. As such, they respond to the two main objections to external voting rights based on democratic theory: first, that non-resident citizen voters should have ‘some ongoing involvement’ via participation in public debate, and second, that they should have ‘some future stake in the polity’ (Bauböck 2003: 713). The WNL campaign insisted on resident and non-resident citizen political participation in order to shape productive futures in Ireland and constructed their emigrant peers as co-participants in this project. Similarly, the WCB campaign called for a ‘progressive’ idea of citizenship that extends voting rights to non-resident citizens based on the expanded modes of participation now available. While campaigners for marriage equality emphasised the participatory channels afforded via social media as evidence of on-going engagement, they also noted the ‘illusion of closeness’ created during the referendum campaign which accentuated the ‘increasingly powerless’ feeling of non-resident citizenship status (Fottrell 2015).

Although on-going participation features strongly in legitimating calls for enfranchisement, it is the second criterion of a future stake in the polity that is most often invoked. The WNL campaign demanded ‘our future’ in Ireland (McKenna in Holland 2013); the WCB campaign insisted that ‘many of those abroad wish to return’; #VoteWithUs asked voters to create ‘an Ireland they can happily return to’ (Jennings 2015); and #HomeToVote couched their efforts in terms of creating ‘a country we can all be proud to return to’.

The marriage equality campaigns construct ‘the boundaries of “home” as an incontestably desirable site, reinforcing the idea of home as familiarity, comfort and seamless belonging’; a place that by passing this referendum could undo the displacement of migration (Fortier 2001: 420). Acknowledging that the intimacy of Irish society has to date contributed to the surveillance and exclusion of LGBT citizens, the *Irish Times* columnist, Fintan O’Toole (2015) argues that:

Once LGBT people did begin to come out, they became known. Irish people like what they know. They like the idea of “home”...the wonderful spectacle of people coming back to vote, embodied for all of us that sense of home as place

where the heart is — the strong, beating heart of human connection (O'Toole 2015).

But this is the 'strong, beating heart' of a particular 'human connection'; specific kin-based human connections that are coded Irish, white and middle class.<sup>4</sup> The terms of homely belonging are framed by a desire for inclusion in what Jasbir Puar calls heterosexual nationalist formations (2007: 4), thus potentially closing down the 'unmapable messiness' of queer desire (Rohrer 2009; see also Neary 2016). It is important to recognise the significance of the rights achieved and to acknowledge those campaign moments that hold the potential to rupture 'the regulatory mechanisms of the heterosexual matrix so that something new is created' (O'Toole 2018). However, appeals to homely belonging based on affiliation with Irish communal identity foreclose the intersectional and interconnected politics of citizenship and rights. Noting that 'the language and logics of the same-sex marriage referendum' align with a state regime of mobility that constructs, regulates and manages different groups, from the diaspora and tourists to refugees and asylum seekers, Eithne Luibhéid (2018) describes this process as 'pinkwashing'.

Appeals to democratic participation via social media can also switch into an economic register and become overlaid by corporate and digitally-mediated regimes of mobility and connectivity. For example, the campaigns knowingly used novelty and multiple hashtags to optimise Twitter algorithms so that between 5pm on the day before and 5pm on the referendum day, 72,000 tweets using the #HomeToVote hashtag were posted (Kenny 2015b) reaching 110,000 over the three days up to the referendum (*The Irish Times* 2015: 15). In turn, Twitter capitalised on the value of #HomeToVote relational communications (linking, tagging and information circulation) by posting the hashtag on its San Francisco HQ 'wall of honour'.

The MD of Twitter Ireland publicly supported 'a Yes vote because of our company's commitment to inclusion and the strong business case for marriage equality.' (O'Mahony 2015; see also Sullivan 2015).<sup>5</sup> The business rationale is articulated more broadly by 'Send Love Home' activist, Carla Spelman's concerns for Ireland's international reputation which are echoed by the state's investment agency chief executive: 'from an Ireland Inc. perspective ... a Yes vote would send out a very positive message. It would be good for business' (in Beesley 2015). These interventions cast

business and social networking as progressive forces and connect the recognition of sexual equality and full personhood with economic productivity (Rao 2015:41).

Through intersecting discourses of *(im)mobility* based on the politics of leaving and staying-put, *connectivity* based on on-going political, social and personal engagement, and *stake in a progressive and inclusive homeland* based on potential return, these campaigns can be read as reproducing state and capitalist regimes of mobility and connectivity. By appealing to conventional democratic enfranchisement criteria, mobilities and connections are differentiated, codified and channelled in ways that recognise some connections while effecting disconnection from the rights claims of differently positioned groups. As such, celebrations of the inclusive referendum result and non-resident citizenship participation potentially naturalise state and business mobility and connectivity regimes and foreclose the politicisation of how these regimes differentiate between diverse mobile groups and reproduce 'gendered, sexual, racial, economic, and geopolitical inequalities' (Luibhéid 2018). Nonetheless, it is also true to say that these campaigns have shifted questions of non-resident citizenship rights and political participation onto new ground.

## **Conclusion**

The Irish state remains out of line with most EU states by not providing emigrant enfranchisement arrangements. This may be related to concerns about the size of the non-resident citizen population, perceptions that such a measure would not receive popular support and the tenacity of territorially-bound conceptions of the citizenry. Yet, as mobility and connectivity become norms in the individual(ised) life strategies of Irish citizens, and the state seeks integration in the global economy by harnessing existing emigrant connections and generating new global networks, how might mechanisms for political participation respond to these conditions?

The campaigns discussed above set the grounds for debate on this matter in a number of ways. First, the WNL campaign drew attention to and rendered political the discursive construction of recognisable young citizens as potential emigrants (mobile citizens) during recession. This short-lived campaign also highlighted the political potential of coalitional and transversal politics by forging links between those mobilities that are systematically disconnected by state and business regimes of mobility and connectivity. Second, the WCB campaign calls for a 'progressive idea of citizenship' that

recognises mobile non-resident citizens as interested and connected through enfranchisement rather than as ‘people who’ve jumped ship’ (Burns in Gavin 2014). WCB continues to challenge the state’s codifying of connectivity as a social media conversation with non-resident citizens by insisting that enfranchisement is the only politically meaningful connection. Third, the marriage equality campaigns enacted citizenship through mobility and connectivity to demonstrate an ongoing stake in the polity. Beyond the claiming of equal sexual citizenship, these campaigns affectively and aesthetically reconfigured existing practices and spaces of political participation. They expanded the form and tone of political engagement and assertively transnationalised participation.

Migration gives rise to overlapping memberships in political communities and multiple affiliations (Bauböck 2003: 702-3). When migrants deploy the affordances of social media platforms, the potential for transformations in political institutions and conceptions of membership are foregrounded. This is because social media campaigns challenge conventions of political participation as they unfold outside specific territorial boundaries, along migration routes, globalised labour market niches, geopolitical relations, corporate branding practices and social media algorithm paths. Moreover, social media platforms blur the boundaries of personal and public/political, resident and non-resident citizen claims, information/mis-information, as well as established socio-political categories of belonging. The campaigns discussed here demonstrate that enfranchisement and participation via social media are not either/or matters. Indeed, the ‘issuefication’ of emigrant political participation by the remobilisation of the WCB, #HomeToVote and others in the 2018 abortion referendum has produced a publicly recognised collective vocabulary which, through reuse, keeps the issue of non-resident citizenship voting rights politically alive.<sup>6</sup> Although all of the campaigns reassert the conventions of democratic citizenship participation through their calls for enfranchisement, they also performatively expand the form, means and tone of political participation.

Mobility and connectivity have always been central to human life but intersect at this moment of global political economy and culture via the synchronous connectivity and real-time presence enabled by social networking platforms. However, this is a mediated transnational public sphere in which political deliberation, far from being separate from the state and the market, becomes entangled with the market and

business in particular. For example, social media platform owners have a vested business interest in sharing users' information and deploy algorithms to amplify certain ideas and mould network formation, including how individuals interact 'with whom, when, and how' (Skeggs and Yuill 2016: 391). The information and relational networks co-created through the above campaigns are harvested by these platforms, aggregated and turned into product (Schou and Farkas 2016). Moreover, as evidence mounts regarding the deployment of data analytics, psychographic profiling and algorithmic channelling in shaping voting behaviour, urgent questions arise about the norms and conventions of contemporary (trans)national democratic politics. For these reasons, vigilance is called for in response to the celebratory linking of mobility and homeland-diaspora connectivity as evidence of cosmopolitan inclusivity.

As the first Irish poll in which 'social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have been as influential ... as traditional media' (McGee 2015) enabling unprecedented political participation by non-resident citizens, the Marriage Equality referendum raises important questions about how the terms of citizenship, participation and enfranchisement are being renegotiated. The campaigns discussed above highlight the ongoing significance of territorially-based governmental power insofar as they appeal to conventional democratic conventions of enfranchisement within a territorial polity and couch their rights claims via national discourses of (im)mobility, on-going connection and participation, and future stake a 'homely' and inclusive Irish polity. Although critical of state policy relating to non-resident and sexual citizenship rights and inclusivity, they can also re-legitimize state policy and are vulnerable to recuperation in governmental rationalities (Foucault, 2008: 187). For example, even as they contest state invocations of mobility and connectivity, campaign practices of mobility and connectivity and indeed citizenship are also shaped both by the Irish national order of things which lends specific governmental meanings to mobility and connectivity narratives (Dzenovska 2013:205) and the contemporary economisation of discourses, practices and values of democracy (Brown 2015). While our synchronous multi-media 'communication environment' (Lorenzana 2016: 2190) holds much potential for homeland-migrant relations and the assertion of migrant rights, we also need to attend to how such an environment can normalise the movements and connectivities of some to produce a hierarchal order of national

citizenship and to how the data profiles and network links produced can be harvested for unanticipated ends.

### Notes

1. This figure includes birth on the island of Ireland, Foreign Births Registration (FBR) and entitlement via Irish parenthood.
2. The 'Yes' campaign, led by 'Yes Equality' and 'Belong To Yes', was supported by a broad coalition of civil society actors.
3. To read the result in uniformly progressive terms is to overlook the 38 percent 'No' vote and the active 'Vote No' campaign. Yet, it is important to note that No campaigners dissociated themselves from the church due to its weak legitimacy which left it few institutional opportunity structures to influence the debate (Knill and Preidel 2015). See also Brown et al's (2018) analysis of a 'Vote No' poster's recuperation of 'common sense' heterosexuality as essentially Irish.
4. During the 2004 Citizenship referendum campaign, for example, there was an intense media and political focus on the pregnant bodies of black women asylum seekers and the electorate voted to remove birth-right citizenship to children born to non-Irish citizen parents.
5. Signatories to the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) *Business for Yes Equality* campaign included Twitter, Google, Microsoft, Facebook, eBay, PayPal and 150 Ireland-based international and local companies. The Business and Employers' Confederation (IBEC) also supported marriage equality as 'good for business' (O'Mahony 2015)
6. WCB, #HomeToVote, #BeMyYes, #GetTheBoatToVote, and AbroadforYes were reanimated during the 2018 abortion referendum on the Yes side and #HomeToVoteNo on the No side. Hayman and Lothian (2007) use the term 'folksonomy' to refer to how such hashtag reuse produces a new collective vocabulary.

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