

Urban Development, Language Contact and Sociolinguistic Transformations in Galway City

is thinking about

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The present paper describes a number of sociohistorical transformations of the city of Galway in the west of Ireland that bear linguistic importance. After giving a brief introduction into Galway as a geographical place, historical and recent changes in the city's evolution are discussed with a view to their socioeconomic, ethnic and linguistic characteristics for three major periods: Old Galway (1100–1600), Early Modern Galway (1600–1900), and Modern Galway (1900–2016). The paper discusses the presence of Norman French, English, Irish(-Gaelic) and recent immigrant languages in old and/or new Galway, while tracing the city's evolution as a multilingual and ethnically diverse urban centre.

1. The City of Galway

Galway is a university town and commercial centre located on the banks of River Corrib at the mid-western coast of the Republic of Ireland. With an urban population of 75,529 in 2011 (Central Statistics Office 2011), the city is Ireland's fourth largest urban agglomeration, only preceded by Baile Átha Cliath/Dublin, Corcaigh/Cork, and Luimneach/Limerick. However, the city, which is also called 'capital of the Province of Connacht', is the main urban centre of Ireland's West Region and has experienced periods of both overflowing in-migration from surrounding rural areas and stark emigration from the city to other countries around the world. It draws from a wide range of Irish and non-Irish people that have moved into the city since the late 1980s. This more recent period of intensive in-migration and immigration¹ was accelerated by the economic boom that

¹ The terms in-migration vs. immigration roughly refer to the distinction between incoming populations from within one region and/or country vs. incoming populations from outside a particular country, hence the distinction between in-migration from the west of Ireland into Galway vs. immigration to the city from the European continent and from around the world.

came to be known as the 'Celtic Tiger'². For Galway this meant the growth of medical technologies, light engineering industries and the expansion of service industries, all of which have resulted in an immense urban sprawl as well as in the growth of a mainly English-speaking population in Galway (Galway City Development Board 2009). Since people from all parts of Europe and the world started to become attracted to the city, languages non-native to Ireland started to become part of both the city's soundscape and its linguistic landscape, languages such as French, German, Spanish as well as Polish, Latvian, Hungarian and many other European, African and Asian languages. In an (urban) area which was traditionally English- and Irish-speaking, however, Irish-speaking people are now a minority. They have receded to the suburban and rural areas west of Galway and thus largely vanished from within the city boundaries. All the recent economic, social and socio-linguistic changes, however, are only one strand out of many transformations that the city has

² The Irish EU membership and resulting access to EU markets and EU structural funds as well as low corporate taxes attracted large multinational corporations and direct foreign investment to Ireland, fueling the growth of the Irish economy.

undergone since its foundation by the Anglo-Normans in 1169. Figure 1 below shows the current layout of the City of Galway, including its geographical location and its inner-city divisions.

2. Old Galway

When the Anglo-Normans conquered the fishing hamlet that was *Baile an tSrutháin* (anglicised ‘Ballinshruane’ or ‘Streamstown,’ translates as ‘the town of the stream’) in 1232 and drove all the native Irish to the wilds of Conamara/Connemara, they laid the groundwork for the circumvalled city that was to become Galway. Before the Anglo-Norman settlement the area had been inhabited by groups of people for over 3,000 years (O’Dowd 1985: 37). With the advent of Celtic tribes in Ireland sometime before 500 AD, these groups of people became Irish-speaking, making use of some form of Irish, today called Ogham, Archaic or Old Irish. These are all archaic varieties of Irish, an insular Celtic language of the Goidelic branch.

One of the few things that are known about the settlement of *Baile an tSrutháin* is that a castle called *Dún Bhun na Gaillimhe*

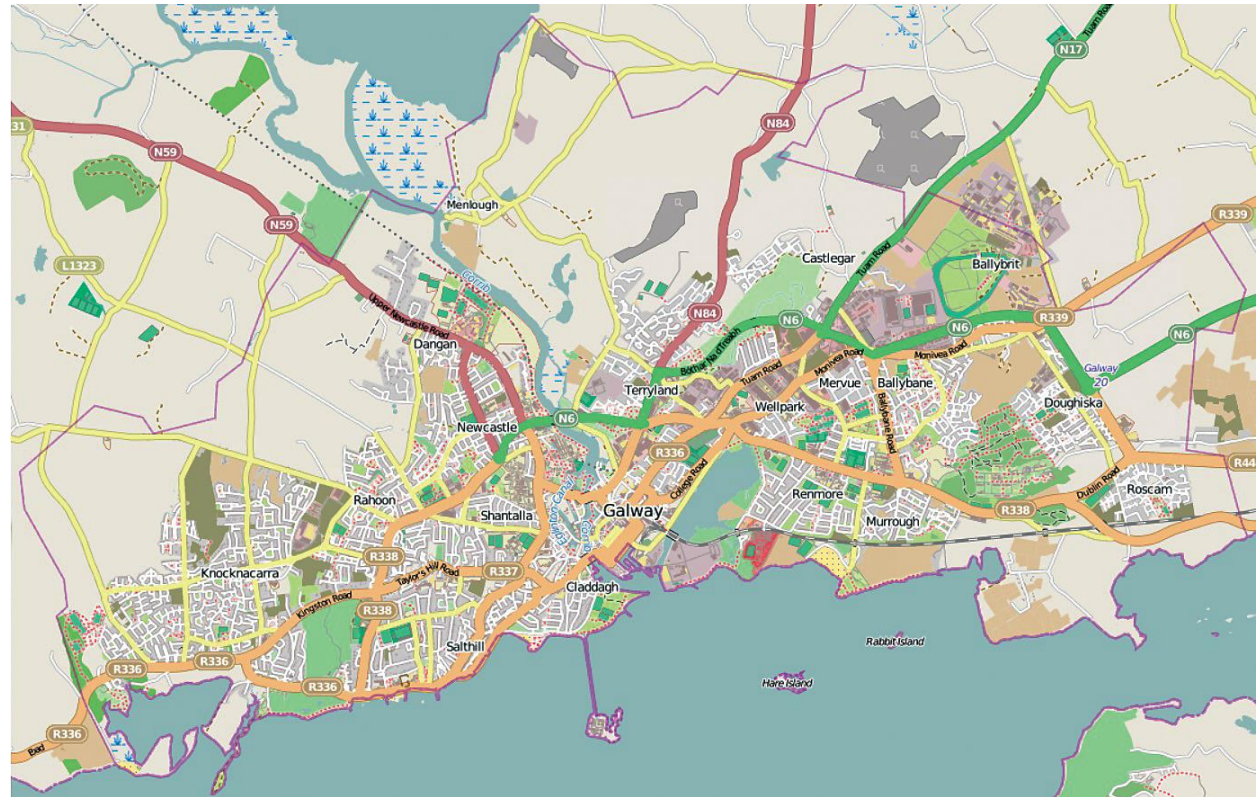


Figure 1 The City of Galway and its Neighbourhoods/Districts in 2016

(‘fortress at the mouth/end of the River Galway’) was built there in 1124 by Turlough O’Connor, the King of Connacht (Galway City Development Board 2009: 2; Murray 1993: 22). And even though this place “was probably little more than a stockade beside a collection of thatched wooden houses” (Murray 1993: 22), it shows the general

importance of *Bun na Gaillimhe* for the local Irish landowners, with the fortress occupying a geographical space that provided an abundance of necessities, nutritional and military alike, for the development of a sustainable settlement. The language spoken in this fishing hamlet then, i.e., around 1150, was some form of Late Middle or Early

Modern Irish.³ This changed with the advent of the Anglo-Normans and the conquest of *Bun na Gaillimhe* in 1232, which subsequently became Norman French speaking. The Anglo-Normans established a fortified castle and began to lay out the town around this initial settlement. O'Dowd (1985: 2) notes that “[b]y 1270, a great wall was started, encircling an area of approximately 25 acres and, within the next two centuries, the compact, easily defended town of Galway was established on the site.”

O’Sullivan (1942: 451) claims that there is ample documentary proof that Norman French “remained the language of law, literature, polite society, commerce, and civic government in those districts under the sway of the invaders for at least one hundred and fifty years after the conquest.” However, she also admits that “it is not until 1484 that we get any municipal records and these, except for a little Latin, are written entirely in English.” (O’Sullivan 1942: 450) The absence of evidence from the time before

1484 makes it difficult to state for how long after the invasion, in which domains, and with which degree of bi- or multilingualism Norman French was used in Galway. Nonetheless, bilingualism and/or multi-lingualism must have been widespread for two reasons: (1) The Anglo-Norman settlers were a group of people marked by great linguistic heterogeneity. Hickey (2007: 50) observes that this group did not only consist of military leaders, i.e., “the ruling landlords,” of Anglo-Norman descent but also of English speakers, Welsh speakers, and Flemish speakers occupying lower ranks. However, “the English had a greater status vis-à-vis the Welsh and Flemish” and “[t]he latter groups may have continued to use their native language for a time but without any influence on the remaining languages” (Hickey 2007: 48). (2) Galway emerged as an Anglo-Irish enclave “in the middle of an existing Gaelic tradition” (Mannion 2012: 139f). The town was – first French-speaking, then English-speaking – an island in a sea of Irish language and culture that left its inhabitants, the Anglo-Norman/Anglo-Irish settlers, in a permanent dilemma over centuries, “where to the Irish they were English and to the English they were Irish” (Mannion 2012: 140). The newly founded

town was surrounded by native Irish tribes and settlements that felt little hospitality for the invaders, with some of the native settlements such as the Claddagh village being as close as on the opposite banks of the River Corrib, i.e., only some hundred metres or so away. The Irish language thus remained “the speech of the colony’s immediate neighbours and of the original fishing village that was Galway” (O’Sullivan 1942: 452) and it seemed to have exerted a rather stark influence on the Anglo-Norman rulers, who started to adapt their own language and customs to the surrounding Irish from the early 14th century onwards. Particularly under William de Burgh, the 1st Lord of Connacht, who cut his ties with England “to conciliate the natives in [...] [his] favor; to effect which, they discontinued the use of the English language, threw off their English dress, and adopted both the language and the apparel of the Irish” (Hardiman 1820: 56). The Irish language and culture gained extensive ground in Galway. This process known as ‘Gaelicisation’ strongly promoted the change from Norman French to Irish-Gaelic amongst the ruling classes generally, resulting in a feeling of alienation for the remaining English-speaking Galwegians. O’Dowd (1985: 2) states that by the 14th

³ Mac Eoin (1993: 102) gives a periodisation of Middle Irish as “[t]he language of the period 900-1200” and of Modern Irish “[f]rom the 13th century to the present day, a period within which early Modern Irish, the language of 1200-1600, is often distinguished”.

century the descendants of the original Anglo-Norman conquerors had “spread throughout Connacht and were becoming ‘more Irish than the Irish themselves.’” He observes that “the very ‘Irishness’ of things surrounding the foreigners or ‘Gall’⁴ in the city, was becoming an anathema to the citizens.” As a consequence of both perceived alienation amongst the ‘Old English’ and continuing hostilities by the native Irish, murage charters were granted to Galway “to give the town every encouragement, and render it a place of permanent defence and security” (Hardiman 1820: 61). As the result

⁴ The Irish-Gaelic word *gall*, generally meaning ‘foreigner, stranger’, historically made reference to either a Northman/Dane, or to a Norman, Anglo-Norman, or Englishman. It is part of many toponyms in Ireland, such as Dún na nGall/Donegal (‘fortress of the strangers’), Áth Gall/Agall (‘place of (the) stranger’), or Baile Ghall/Gallstown (‘town of strangers’). Some historians claim that the name of Gallimh/Galway derives from *gall* as well, denoting yet another ‘settlement/place of strangers’. However, it has also been established that the name could derive from the river ‘Gaillimh/Galvia’, i.e., the river flowing from Lough Corrib through Galway into Galway Bay. Again, some historians claim that the river itself got its name from some folkloristic figure called ‘Gailleamh’, who accidentally drowned bathing in the stream. For a more elaborate discussion on the origins of the city’s name, see Hardiman (1820: 1-4), O’Sullivan (1942: 9-10), Hayward (1952: 23-24), and Spellissy (1999: 30).

of a number of Royal Charters, Galway’s status as an independent self-governing city, free to manage its own affairs, was confirmed in 1484 by a Charter of Richard III. Both the circumvallation and the extensive city rights made important provisions for the sustainable development of trade and prosperity, culture and a considerable group of wealthy merchant families in Galway, whose life styles were firmly oriented towards the old English homeland. This dichotomy between the Old English town and the native Irish hinterland was to become the main factor of the cultural, social, and linguistic development of Galway over many centuries. Mannion (2012: 139-140) summarises:

The creation of an Anglo Irish enclave in an Irish hinterland brought both a clash and a fusion of two cultures, where the settlers had to connive, manipulate and deceive in order to navigate their way through a maze of divided loyalties. The issue of language is also significant where at its birth Gaelic, French and English coalesced in the city and created the experience of misunderstandings, misinterpretations and finally lost meanings in the eventual translation to English.

Linguistic proof for the early stage in the development of English in Galway is pro-

vided by four Blake family papers written between 1430 and 1449. They are written in some “quaint but very clear” form of Middle English, “if anything, more flexible than that of many similar written documents of contemporary England” (O’Sullivan 1942: 452). From our point of view, they prove that English had become the language of the ruling classes in Galway as early as 1430, i.e., some two hundred years after the initial Anglo-Norman invasion. However, once again, the extent of bi- and/or multi-lingualism within the city limits cannot be established with certainty and neither can the duration of the transition phase between Norman French and English. The establishment of English as the language of the whole city, however, is “confirmed by the appearance thirty-five years later of the Corporation records without one word of French in their whole context” (O’Sullivan 1942: 452). Thus, Norman French must have failed to establish itself in a bi- or multilingual context in Galway. Irish, however, was the language of all those people outside the city walls – most notably of the Claddagh village to the west and of Menlo village to the northeast – and thus made it necessary for even the most xenophobic Galwegian to have at least a working knowledge of the language to

survive economically in the heart of the Irish country (O’Sullivan 1942: 453).

3. Early Modern Galway

Old Galway’s golden age of economic and cultural prosperity extended from the beginning of the 15th century to the middle of the 17th. Flourishing trade relations with other port cities in Europe and the Americas brought affluence to the town itself as well as to its hinterland. With the town’s population being on the rise, the native Irish villages of Claddagh and Menlo became increasingly important for the provision of the settlement with all sorts of trading goods, notably fish, wool and farming products. Accordingly, the relationship between the ‘Old English’ townsfolk and the surrounding ‘native’ Irish somewhat improved and led to an extensive contact of Irish and English language and culture in the various neighbourhoods of Galway (for a more detailed discussion of these neighbourhoods see Peters 2016). Mannion (2012: 51) states that it was during this thriving time that the town of Galway “grew to a city, built on the pattern as laid out by the Norman’s [sic] and with all the characteristics of a prosperous urban settlement”.

However, in the aftermath of the 1641 Irish rebellion as well as the religious wars of 1651 and 1691, many Galwegians were forced to leave the town, which consequently came to a standstill and slowly but steadily fell into disrepair. Despite the economic recession of the early 18th century, Galway experienced a stark growth of its population, which led to “overcrowded, slum conditions in the old houses” (Mannion 2012: 53) of the old town centre within the city walls by the mid-18th century. This development resulted in the establishment of new and, as Mannion (2012: 53) calls them, “more fashionable” settlements outside the city walls. Also, since the native Irish were not allowed within the city walls for purposes other than selling or buying goods on one of the city’s various markets, they started moving to one of the newly-established quarters as well. Hayward (1952: 74, original emphasis) generalises that “[o]utside the walls of every Anglo-Norman town, or adjacent to but apart from such a settlement if town walls were never built around it, you will invariably find an Irish *town* or *quarter*.” In the case of Galway, these quarters, or small towns if you will, provided a much more suitable ground for a contact between the ‘native’ Irish and those

Galwegians who had moved to one of the newly developing ‘fashionable’ quarters, i.e., these were also a more hospitable ground for Irish-English language contact.

Historically, i.e., from around 1250 until today, three different categories of linguistic communities in and around the city walls of Galway seem to have existed, depending on the degree to which English and Irish were used by the respective communities: (i) the town centre itself, i.e., the area within the city walls, in which English was the language of the household, the community and the municipality, and in which Irish was at most used for commercial intercourse with members of the surrounding Irish-speaking communities; (ii) the newly developing ‘fashionable’ quarters outside the city walls, all of which have now been incorporated into the city, e.g., Eyre Square and Bohermore at the East Gate, Woodquay and Newtownsmith at the North Gate, as well as Dominick Street at the West Gate. In these areas both primarily English-speaking settlers formerly from the town centre and mainly Irish-speaking settlers from the Gaelic hinterland resided, a situation most probably leading to language contact and widespread bilingualism; and (iii) the separate Irish Gaelic settlements to the south-west and north-

east of the city, i.e., Claddagh village on the west bank of River Corrib and Menlo village on the south shore of Lough Corrib, both of which were “substantial settlements with sizeable populations” (Mannion 2012: 57f).

Galway’s urban sprawl and the growth of its population over the centuries meant that the English-speaking citizens of Galway and the Irish-speaking communities outside the city walls grew ever closer together. The extent of linguistic influence they exerted on each other, however, is hard to reconstruct in detail since we lack accounts with a strong and profound linguistic focus. It is not until 1799 that we get very basic (and largely inaccurate) data on the distribution of the languages spoken in Ireland,⁵ and precise figures on the extent of Irish-English bilingualism in Galway (or any other Irish town) have only become available very recently. Still, from today’s perspective, it is safe to say that the Irish-language influence persisted for a long time. Ó Dochartaigh (1984: 70f) gives evidence from two stages

⁵ Prior to the 1851 Census, several sources try to provide data for the number of mono- and bilingual speakers of English and Irish in Ireland. These accounts, dated between 1799 and 1842, however, lack systematicity and are largely based on impressionistic or inaccurate estimations of the linguistic situation (cf. Hindley 1990: 13-22).

in the history of Galway that obviously saw Irish being in a rather strong position. He states that “the 1651 map shows that the Irish language had greatly influenced the place names within the town”⁶, with many landmarks in Galway bearing anglicised versions of Irish names. Commenting on the time around 1890, he states that “at that time the people of Galway were wearing one Irish and one foreign shoe, and they didn’t care which language was spoken, English or Irish; and many of them spoke the world’s best Irish, shopkeepers, lawyers, doctors and the whole working-class”⁷. At the same time the Irish language was also in constant decline, not only in Galway City itself but also within the adjacent communities, some of which had or still have *Gaeltacht* status.⁸

⁶ “*Léiriom léarscáil 1651 [...] go raibh an Ghaeilge tar éis dul i bhfeidhm go mór ar áitainmneacha an bhaile.*” (Ó Dochartaigh 1984: 70; translation A.P.)

⁷ “*San am úd bhí leathbhróg Ghealach agus leathbhróg Ghallda á gcaitheamh ag muintir na Gaillimhe, agus ba chuma leo cé acu teanga a labhróidís, Béarla nó Gaeilge; agus bhí an Ghaeilge ar fheabhas an domhain ag go leor acu, ag síopadóirí, ag lucht dlí, ag dochtúirí agus ag an lucht oibre ar fad.*” (Ó Dochartaigh 1984: 71; translation A.P.)

⁸ A *Gaeltacht* area is an (historical) area in which Irish is the predominant household and community language. *Gaeltachtaí* (pl.) are recognised by the Irish government and are catered to by means of

By the early 19th century Galway had begun to recover from the long decades of economic recession and social downturn. Following the complete demolition of the old town walls by 1800, building activity increased and the city started to expand into all directions and far beyond the medieval town walls. New quarters developed at all sides of the city, e.g., Dominick Street in the west, Newtownsmith in the north, Eyre Square in the east and Merchants Road in the south (for more details see Peters 2016). A number of public buildings and important infrastructural projects had been finished by the mid-19th century, such as the courthouse, the university, the infirmary, a number of churches, as well as the new harbour, the Dublin-Galway railway and the Eglinton Canal. These building activities showed the accelerating economic recovery based mostly on grain trade as well as the redevelopment of Galway “as a city and service centre for the hinterland and province” (Mannion 2012: 54).

In the second half of the 19th century, however, Galway was again struck by economic recession, social downturn, and a

additional funding as well as separate language policies.

humanitarian crisis that was unprecedented. The Famine years of 1845-50 resulted in mass starvation, mass emigration and a massive loss of population, with Galway losing some 40% of its inhabitants between 1820 and 1861 (cf. O'Dowd 2000: 17-22). These population losses together with the economic competition brought about by the newly constructed harbour and railway connection crippled the city's economy and brought public investment in the city's social and economic development almost to a complete standstill, reversing its status "from a provincial city to a provincial town" (Mannion 2012: 56). Until far into the first half of the 20th century, life in Galway was marked by further population losses due to emigration and by all kinds of social deprivation for large parts of the remaining inhabitants of the city. As was the case in many urban and rural areas in western Ireland, large shares of those emigrating came from the lower working classes, which happened to show higher proportions of Irish speakers. Thus, with the loss of these individuals, the Irish language lost ground disproportionately, not only in Galway, and the city became more and more monolingual English-speaking (cf. Hindley 1990: 13-22).

4. Modern Galway

Life in Galway in the first half of the 20th century was marked by the effects of the political changes of 1916 and by the newly-founded state's priorities in terms of social and economic development. Except for some tourism in Galway's seaside resort of Salthill and except for some visitors passing through on their way to Connemara, however, the city had little economic activity and most businesses were struggling to stay alive. Poverty and emigration remained the leitmotif for life in Galway during this time and continued to do so for another few decades. From the 1920s onwards, however, Galway's population started to slowly recover, not only in terms of mere numbers but also in terms of a general improvement of living conditions. Improvement, however, mostly meant radical changes in the city's layout, with whole neighbourhoods being resettled, demolished, rebuilt and repopulated, as for instance the old Claddagh fishing village during the 1930s. While new housing schemes such as for the Claddagh resulted in an improvement of living conditions in some areas of Galway in terms of sanitary conditions and social status, they

also effectively destroyed traditional areas of the city, including large parts of the working-class social networks that existed in them. While some of these were transplanted as a whole to other neighbourhoods of Galway, such as Bohermore in the eastern suburbs (cf. Peters 2012), most of the old networks slowly but steadily ceased to exist and with them also some fertile ground for the Irish language. By the 1930's, however, the majority of Galwegians had become English-speaking and the Irish language played a minor role for public life in the city, with Barna in the west and Menlo in the north being two possible exceptions (Hindley 1990: 93-104).

The second half of the 20th century and the early 21st century saw a complete change in the social and socioeconomic characteristics of Galway, both with a view to the city as a whole as well as within some of the neighbourhoods/districts themselves. The growth of the urban population in the 1970s and early 1980s accelerated the process of suburbanisation in Galway, with many new suburbs springing up on the lands behind and between the approach roads to create new housing areas. At the same time, the economic downturn taking place during these years as well as the resulting changes

in class structures (Breen & Whelan 1996: 8, 15-17) created the basis for social segregation in the city, a process which was accelerated by the economic prospering of the late-1980s to 2000s.

For the latter half of the 20th century, the middle class continued their drift from the city centre to the more affluent suburbs, such as Salthill, Knocknacarra, and Barna to the west, Menlo to the north, and Renmore and Terryland to the east (see Mannion 2012: 64). The traditional working-class areas of the 1950s, i.e., Bohermore, Shantalla, Newcastle and the Claddagh, however, were joined by new housing estates for the socially deprived in Ragoon and Westside to the west and in Mervue and Ballybane to the east. While the Claddagh started to develop into a more affluent suburb of Galway by the mid-1990s, Bohermore, Shantalla and Newcastle have largely retained their working-class character up to today. Further new housing estates in Mervue and Ballybane in the 1990s and 2000s were a response to the increasing in-migration from around the city and to immigration from abroad that resulted largely from “the new employment opportunities in the industrial, commercial, tourism and state sectors that the city offered” (Mannion 2012: 64). Social

segregation, however, started to extend into housing, “with separate working class areas established in Ragoon and Ballybane where low car ownership and little public transport resulted in social isolation” (Mannion 2012: 64).

Prior to the 1990s, ethnic diversity was a concept that largely did not apply to Ireland, let alone Galway City. As has been shown above, since about 1300, the population of the city had mainly consisted of a majority of White Irish – an ethnic group that is a historical mix of native Irish (Gaelic), Norse, Norman, English, Welsh, and Flemish people – as well as of a minority of Irish Travellers, a native Irish group of (historically) non-sedentary people who may or may not have been in Ireland prior to the advent of the Celtic tribes around 500 BC (Ní Shúinéar 1994: 70-72) and who may or may not be regarded as a diverse ethnic group.⁹ Until well into the second half of the 20th century, thus, Galway was a place of relative ethnic uniformity, with immigration from countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States playing a minor role as

⁹ For a discussion on the question of whether or not the term ‘ethnicity’ applies in relation to Irish Travellers, see, for instance, McLoughlin (1994) vs. Ní Shúinéar (1994), as well as Helleiner (2003).

opposed to emigration to these countries, which had a major impact on the development of the city for many centuries. The relative ethnic uniformity greatly changed between the early 1990s and 2007 when Galway – just like the rest of Ireland – underwent “rapid social change due to a booming economy fuelled by easy access to credit, and immigration” (Migge 2012: 312). In 2002, when the economic boom was in full blossom, there were 8,647 non-Irish nationals recorded for Galway County and City (Central Statistics Office 2002b), accounting for some 4% of the total population.¹⁰ In 2006, when the economic boom was reaching its peak, the number of non-Irish nationals residing permanently in Galway City alone was already at 13,288 (Central Statistics Office 2002b). In 2011, this number had further increased to 14,160 individuals, constituting nearly 20% of the city’s population (Central Statistics Office 2012b). The two largest migrant national groups come from the United Kingdom and Poland (Gilmartin & Mills 2008: 22),

¹⁰ Unfortunately, there are no separate figures for Galway City. Quite probably, however, the percentage of non-Irish nationals was higher within Galway City than in the more rural parts of Co. Galway.

followed by a number of EU-15 (e.g., Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Spain) and EU-25 countries (e.g., Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary), as well as by a variety of countries outside of Europe (e.g., India, China, Phillipines, Nigeria, Australia, Brazil). Large parts of immigrants in Ireland and Galway belong to younger age groups (age 25-44) and have been found to be in the majority better educated than Irish people from the same age groups, with some 38% of immigrants having a third-level qualification as opposed to some 28% of Irish nationals (MCRI 2008: 57). The immigrants, thus, constitute a young and mostly well-educated part of the population, a fact, however, that is not necessarily mirrored by their social reality in terms of housing and neighbourhood within Galway.

The working class district of Ballybane, for instance, shows high numbers of non-Irish nationals, who account for about 14% of the population and for the status of Ballybane as one of the main settlement areas for immigrants coming to Galway. Large parts of Galway's Polish community (some 4,000 people in 2011), for example, are based in this district (Central Statistics Office 2012b: 38), together with more than 500 Irish Travellers, who account for

another 5.3% of the district's population. Ballybane, thus, is an area that is ethnically and culturally quite diverse. However, out of all of Galway's districts it is also the most deprived, not only in terms of socioeconomic key figures but also in terms of its location within Galway, which, according to Mannion (2012: 144), is an example for "social [...] and geographical segregation with consequential high levels of environmental vandalism and social dysfunction". Quite literally, thus, it could be subsumed that immigrants in Galway have not arrived in the centre of society and are somewhat doomed to spend their lives in separate communities on the city's outskirts. However, the inner-city districts of Eyre Square and the Claddagh are equally ethnically diverse and yet they are areas in which socioeconomic deprivation is less incisive. These central districts, however, are hubs of a large transitory population that only stays for however long their business keeps them in Galway and/or of a population that is ethnically diverse and socioeconomically advantaged. The population of Ballybane, however, is both spatially and socially more or less immobile and thus mainly remains in the confines of their district's immediate neighbourhood.

Together with ethnic and social diversity, immigration in the 1990s and 2000s increased the linguistic diversity of Galway. Whereas Irish was the only minority language prior to the economic boom, it soon grew to be second to Polish and found itself amongst a variety of Romance, Slavonic, Germanic, Indo-European, African, Asian etc. languages that now were, at least to some extent, part of daily life in Galway. Although none of these is rooted in an urban community influential enough to make considerable changes to the overall linguistic composition of Galway City, languages such as Polish have a substantial speaker base and it remains to be seen to which extent this will influence the development of the status of Irish and/or the linguistic properties of Galway City English.

5. Implications

Galway City has been evolving for more than 800 years, but for most of this time, the city's evolution has taken place within the medieval town walls, i.e., within the Anglo-Norman core of the settlement. Until about 1500, life in the city was dominated by and dependent on the relationship with the Irish-speaking settlements of Claddagh and Menlo

outside the city walls, two considerably populated villages that provided food for the city, as well as the question of what being Galwegian entailed and how it could be maintained *vis-à-vis* the surrounding Irish language and culture.¹¹ In the 17th century more affluent Galwegians began to settle in more fashionable new quarters outside the city walls, such as Dominick Street, Woodquay, Bohermore and Merchants Road. Unlike in Dublin, however, where areas that evolved under similar circumstances in the 18th century have remained extremely affluent until today (Lonergan 2013: 98), these fashionable quarters have not succeeded in maintaining their social prestige due to a number of historical reasons, including the economic decay of the city in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries as well as the exodus due to mass emigration in the aftermath of the Great Famine. By the early 19th century, Galway was nothing more than a provincial town and most of its

population were socially disadvantaged. Many poorer Galwegians lived in slum-like conditions in decaying houses in the medieval inner-city and in adjoining neighbourhoods such as Claddagh, Woodquay and Bohermore. This led to intolerable sanitary conditions and ultimately to large-scale clearances by the early 20th century. Many – mostly poor – inhabitants of the old Claddagh, for instance, were resettled to Bohermore in the east and to Ragoon in the northwest, two areas that remain socially deprived today. Other areas, such as Menlo in the north as well as Knocknacarra and Barna in the west, grew to be neighbourhoods for wealthy Galwegians and continue to be so today. However, Ballybane and Mervue in the east, which were developed in the 1960s and 1970s to house those members of the middle class that began to drift away from the city centre, today are socially deprived areas of Galway, as the middle class continued its drift to more affluent neighbourhoods. These included Knocknacarra, Barna and Menlo, as well as those parts of the city centre which were subject to redevelopment during the economic boom of the 1990s and 2000s and, thus, provided prestigious housing in socially elevated neighbourhoods. Parts of Ballybane

and Mervue as well as more remote parts of Knocknacarra, however, continued to grow as commuter areas, as immigrant and/or young professional families were looking for parts of the city in which housing was still affordable.

This investigation has revealed that modern Galway City, despite its size, is an urban agglomeration showing clear patterns of social and linguistic stratification, with historically evolved distinctions between working-class and middle-class neighbourhoods on the one side, and between ethnically more diverse and ethnically more uniform districts on the other, two types of characteristic areas that sometimes, but not always, coincide. It has been shown that linguistic differences are very likely to have existed between these areas, at least historically, since the Irish language has exerted a long-persisting influence on districts such as Barna, Knocknacarra, Salthill, Claddagh, Menlo, and Bohermore whereas it had only a secondary function in the (medieval) town centre. While Norman French and other early immigrant languages have failed to establish themselves permanently in Galway, English has been the dominant language in all of Galway's neighbourhoods at least since the beginning

¹¹ Numerous bylaws enacted by Galway Corporation between 1486 and 1779 give evidence for the struggle of the 'Old English' Galwegians to draw a line between themselves and the 'native' Irish by, for example, forbidding the Irish language, Irish dresses and the 'native' Irish themselves within the confines of the town of Galway (see Hardiman 1820: 198-227).

of the 19th century, with Irish remaining a visible and audible component of daily life in the city. In an urban centre that is undergoing constant ethnic and linguistic diversification, other languages such as Polish, Latvian, German, French, etc. have emerged in the linguistic landscape. Their presence to some extent challenges the status of Irish as the traditional second language of the city, while inducing new linguistic contacts and further socio-linguistic transformations.

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