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Discourse at the Edge: Enterprise Discourse in Ireland.

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ABSTRACT

Ireland is an economy, society and culture at the edge. It is at the edge of Europe and at the edge of both USA/UK and more mainland European or EU variants of capitalism. More recently it has been at the edge of economic crisis. Yet enterprise discourse is still central in Ireland. Enterprise discourse in Ireland is influenced by global and European Union (EU) developments. However, Irish enterprise discourse is not merely a 'local adoption'. For example, high Irish economic growth rates during the 'Celtic Tiger' period have coincided with the development of the EU's enterprise policy, thus giving the impression that Ireland can serve as a model. Following the recent economic crisis, Ireland's response of slashing public expenditure has been held up for others to emulate. Thus an examination of enterprise discourse in Ireland is of concern to more than residents of Ireland.

INTRODUCTION

It is useful to explore what is meant by 'enterprise discourse' and how it is related to similar concepts at the outset. Enterprise discourse can be tightly thought of as a way of talking about organizations as best run as fast-growing owner-managed firms or more loosely conceived as the way of similar issues where the entrepreneur[1] and enterprise play a central role (Burrows, 1991a; Cohen and Musson, 2000; Fairclough, 1991). Enterprise or entrepreneurship discourse is not confined simply to talk about small business but has, as Jones and Spicer (2005: 179) rather dramatically put it, "entrepreneurship has bled out of its heartland … and has stained nearly every aspect of public life". This 'staining' has been so thorough, according to some, that "the character

[1] Ireland can claim some responsibility in the genesis of enterprise discourse as it was in the the early 1730s, the French-Irish economist and businessman Richard Cantillon introduced of the modern use of the word 'entrepreneur' in his famous *Essai sur la Nature du Commerce en Général* (Cantillon, 1959 [1755]: 167). For Cantillon, the entrepreneur handled the uncertainty created by buying at a known price to sell at an unknown price. Cantillon's stress on economic *function*, rather than the social status, was novel: 'Social standing was practically irrelevant to Cantillon's notion of entrepreneurship' (Hébert and Link, 2006: 18). This contribution, which asserts that background or social class is irrelevant, is clearly an attractive feature of enterprise discourse.

of the entrepreneur can no longer be represented as just one among a plurality of ethical personalities, but must be seen as assuming an ontological priority" (du Gay, 1996: 157). Analysing enterprise discourse takes enterprise as a phenomenon in itself, whether that phenomenon be considered a culture, an ideology, a policy or a discourse (Armstrong, 2005). Whereas these approaches can be quite different from – and even at times quite hostile to (see for example, Armstrong's (2001) polemic against discursive approaches) – each other, culture, ideology, policy and discourse (CIPD) studies of enterprise do overlap and inform each other more tightly than other aspects of the study of enterprise.

The CIPD literature on enterprise largely developed in response to political changes, especially in the UK where the stress on enterprise in the policy of Margaret Thatcher was adopted by the administrations that followed her. By the early 1990s, volumes of collected works of those taking a critical approach to enterprise culture were published (Burrows, 1991b; Hargreaves, Heap and Ross, 1992; Heelas & Morris, 1992; Keat and Abercrombie, 1991). These volumes used notions of culture (Morris, 1991; Ritchie, 1991) and discourse (Fairclough, 1991; Selden, 1991) to examine enterprise. Carr (1998) examines enterprise as a cultural policy and Armstrong (2005) prefers to talk of 'entrepreneurialism'. Whereas the CIPD approach has been associated with a left-wing political perspective, this is not necessarily the case, as the works of Lavoie and Chamlee-Wright (2000) and McCloskey (2006) demonstrate.

Those who have studied the phenomenon of enterprise as a discourse also overlap with those viewing other, or at least differently named, economic phenomena using a discourse analytical lens. Beck (2000) characterization of globalism shares many of characteristics of enterprise discourse. Others studying a more neutrally described object of 'European Union Discourses on Un/employment' come, using critical analysis, to reveal similar insights concerning the difficulty of "putting something on the political agenda at the same time depoliticizing it.... ....The answer is: through globalization rhetoric and the *magic formula of competitiveness*" (italics in original) (Weiss and Wodak (2000:202). Authors such as Potter and Telzey (2005) use the term neoliberalism to describe the broader new capitalism discourse of which competitiveness, globalism and enterprise discourse are perhaps a part.

In many ways Ireland and its enterprise discourse is on the edge, and not just geographically. On the one hand Ireland is on the edge of the USA /UK model. It is English-speaking, has a common law tradition, an Anglo-American banking model, low corporate tax rates and strong cultural and economic ties with both the USA and the UK. On the other hand, Ireland is also on the edge of mainland Europe: its membership of the Euro, its social Partnership model of labour relations until 2009, its early adoption of European Labour rights, generally pro-European, enthusiastic receiver of EU funds and its historic cultural and economic ties to the continent. Ireland is also on the edge economically, even more than many in this economic crisis as Ireland is one of the PIGS (Totaro, 2010) or GIPSY club (Gros, 2010).

Ireland's edginess makes it interesting to ask how enterprise discourse has developed in Ireland to use it ask what is the relationship between enterprise discourse at the edge and the centre (s)?

The next section of this paper looks at the history of Irish enterprise discourse and its contexts. Ireland is an 'in-between taker' of both EU and USA/UK enterprise discourse but perhaps best studied as an adoption of USA/UK version in an Irish and EU

context, so the following section looks at the nature of European Union enterprise. Several particular features of Irish enterprise discourse are then described, after which is a section looking at how Ireland and its enterprise discourse has impacted on a wider world. The paper finishes with a conclusion section.

HISTORY OF IRISH ENTERPRISE DISCOURSE AND ITS CONTEXTS

Irish public policy discourse concerning enterprise, since political independence in 1921, can be divided into four phases. The phases, as defined and described here, are just one possible construction among many. Yet they do not differ greatly from standard understandings of the stages of Ireland's economic development (e.g., Haughton, 2008; Leddin and Walsh, 2003); but here ,these stages are constructed in a way that illustrates important developments for enterprise discourse in Ireland.

National Enterprise (1921-1929)

In the 'National Enterprise' phase from 1922 to 1931, the newly independent government generally adopted a very liberal attitude to economic development and this discourse was a dominant one albeit in a very nationalistic era. The Irish revolution was not to be like the Russian. Though engaging in some protection of indigenous industry, the new state concentrated, in the main, on providing an environment suitable for a largely agricultural economy with significant exports to the UK. This meant fiscal conservativism and a generally *laissez-faire* attitude. The one exception to this was in the area of what were called 'state enterprises'. In the parliamentary debates of the time, one representative, Deputy Magennis, supported a government plan for a state electricity enterprise with the following words:

> Deputy Thrift asks can we be absolutely certain that it will be a commercial success. I ask myself, is that the test that is applied by a great nation going to war? Countries have taken the great risk of declaring war without knowing that they were going to win; they had courage in themselves, in their own capacity and their own resources, and they counted upon winning through. This policy of caution that is recommended to us is very good in small commercial enterprises, but as the experts have warned us, this is not to be viewed as merely a commercial enterprise. (PDDE, Vol.10, Cols. 2008-2009, 3-April-1925)

The clear expression that the state could and should be a greater risk-taker, rather than a 'merely small commercial enterprise', is in clear contrast to later views of enterprise. Furthermore, it is clear that the model of a small enterprise is not seen as the ideal model for all organisational activity in the way it is within more recent enterprise culture.

Nationalizing Enterprise (1930-1958)

From 1930, there was a change in government policy and national enterprise discourse, with a striving towards economic self-sufficiency, partly reflecting an international rise in protectionism resorted to as a result of the start of the Great Depression. High tariffs and import bans were in place and all while all enterprises were not to be state-owned the

dream seem to be that they would nationalized in the sense of being Irish owned and run. This economic policy was to some extent necessitated by a nationalist political policy that was trying to overcome restrictions to Irish political independence flowing from the 1921 settlement with the UK: the resulting trade dispute (more romantically termed the 'economic war') would have forced a move towards national economic self-sufficiency. However, it is also important to recognise that this period reflects a harking back to the policy of historic *Sinn Féin,* which originally had a very significant economic element to its policy. Indeed, the rugged independent self-sufficiency of the phrase *Sinn Féin* (an Irish Gaelic expression translated as ourselves or 'ourselves alone') chimes with modern enterprise culture's self-reliance, though with a less individualistic tone. As well as its protectionist theme, this phase of Irish economic policy also involved the increased development of the state enterprise sector that had begun earlier, showing again a collectivist flavour to the enterprise culture in the Ireland of that time.

International Enterprise (1958-1972)

The third phase can probably be traced to the aftermath of World War II, though 1958 is commonly identified as the date when Irish economic policy turned outwards. From 1958, protectionist measures were dismantled, a stress was put on the need for exports to lead growth and encouragement of multinational enterprises replaced the policy of creating state enterprises. The Industrial Development Authority (IDA) focused its efforts, and had much success, in attracting multinational investment into Ireland. By 1973, Ireland had joined the EEC and has since become one of the most open economies in the world (Dreher, 2006: 1094). The major success of the period, and indeed much of Ireland's subsequent was in importing enterprise so that far from the Nationalized enterprise dreamed of an earlier era Ireland's enterprise was dominated by foreign-owned enterprise.

Globalizing and indigenizing Irish Enterprise (1973-2010)

The fourth phase of development of enterprise discourse in Ireland brings us from 1973 up to 2010. It incorporates diverse conditions of tentative and short-lived recovery from the oil crisis (1973-1976), a state spending-driven boom (1977-1979), a period of deep depression and state foreign indebtedness (1980-1986), a period of recovery and spectacular economic growth to where Ireland was referred to as the Celtic Tiger (1987-2008), followed from 2008 by a period of downturn. Despite the diversity of this fourth phase, there is a unity in it that consists of an increasing complementation of the internationalisation policy with an encouragement of what was initially referred to as 'indigenous industry' (Telesis, 1982) and then increasingly 'enterprise'.

The shift towards encouraging indigenous, rather than just multinational, firms can be traced back to 1973 (O'Farrell, 1986: 13) with the initial policy stress on creating linkages between the multinational firms and indigenous enterprises. A report published by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) (Telesis, 1982) indicated the policy of greater support for 'indigenous' industry was a consensus one. While the Telesis Report did not explicitly emphasise the term enterprise, Carr (1998) traces to it the origins of a key component (selectivity) of Ireland's enterprise culture policy. Despite strategic thinking moving in the direction of more support for indigenous

industry, policy implementation was still open, at least up to the early 1990s, to the charge of neglecting small firms and Irish entrepreneurs. In the late 1980s, the IDA (the principal state agency of the time), in the polite words of an official report, 'created an institutional gap regarding support for micro-enterprise' (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2004: 9) by closing down their Small Industry Programme, their only instrument aimed at small enterprises. It is hard to imagine Margaret Thatchter's UK government of the time allowing such an 'institutional gap'.

An even more explicit move than the landmark Telesis Report (1982) to enterprise culture was apparent in the equally significant Culliton Report (1992: 52) which stated that 'the contribution of productive enterprise to our social and economic objectives should be an issue of primary importance at all educational levels to de-emphasis the bias towards the liberal arts and the professions.' The term 'enterprise' became even more entrenched when, in 1993, a key government department changed its title from 'Industry and Commerce' to 'Enterprise and Employment'. The context of this move is worth remarking on as it reflects some of the particularities of the way the term 'enterprise' was deployed in Ireland. The change in the title was made under a Labour party (a party aligned with the European Socialist Group in the EU parliament) minister. Furthermore, this move was seen, partly, as a left-wing attempt to undermine the dominant and conservative Department of Finance. Thus, whereas enterprise discourse has been seen as a project of right-wing Thatcherism, which has been adopted by a collaborating New Labour in the UK, in Ireland, its appropriation by Labour can be viewed as less of a break from traditional left policy. In 1994, following a major shake up of the government agencies helping business, the agency aimed at indigenous industry was named *Forbairt* (an Irish Gaelic word meaning 'development' or 'progress', distinct from the Gaelic *fiontar* that is much closer to 'enterprise'). Perhaps the choice of the word *Forbairt* might have represented a less than whole-hearted adoption of the private enterprise culture at the time. *Forbairt* was subsequently renamed Enterprise Ireland in 1998 under the Progressive Democrat (aligned with the liberals in the European parliament, though generally perceived as Ireland's free-market party) minister, Mary Harney. Of note, too, is the fact that the state agency dealing with foreign investors has retained its well-recognised abbreviation IDA in its new title 'IDA Ireland', although the 'A' now stood for 'agency' rather than the more imperious 'authority' (for further discussion see Donnelly, forthcoming). Here the word 'enterprise' was thus directed at indigenous, rather than multinational, business. Under the same right-leaning minister, Mary Harney, the Department of Enterprise and Employment was retitled in 1997 as the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The insertion of the word 'trade' reflected the stamp of a new minister in a new administration, but also a concern not to neglect the international aspects of business by concentrating too much on the more indigenous-oriented word 'enterprise'.

That enterprise discourse is now firmly established in Irish policy as evidenced by the titles of the following major reports on what used to be termed 'industrial policy':

- *Shaping Our Future - A Strategy for Enterprise in Ireland in the 21st Century* (Forfás, 1996)
- *Enterprise 2010: A New Strategy for the Promotion of Enterprise in Ireland in the 21st Century*' (Forfás, 2000)

- *Towards an Entrepreneurial Society: Ireland's Response to the Green Paper 'Entrepreneurship in Europe'* (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2003)

Though a 2004 report (Enterprise Strategy Group, 2004) did not manage to get the terms 'enterprise' or 'entrepreneurial' into its title, its pages are replete with the language of enterprise (that there are 10 occurrences of the word 'enterprise' itself in the 404 word letter submitting the report to the Minister is indicative, compared to one use of 'economic' and no occurrences of the word 'planning').

'Planning' lost its dominance in the early 1970s and the rise of enterprise discourse in public debate can be seen in Lee's (1989) highly influential history bestseller. This text marks the embrace in Irish policy discourse of the importance of enterprise and is worth quoting at some length:

> Telesis and the IDA fundamentally agreed that native businessmen of the necessary quality simply were not, for whatever reason, available. Sixty years after independence, fifty years after blanket protection, twenty years after the Committee of Industrial Organisation, fifteen years after the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement, eight years after entering the EEC, a native entrepreneurial cadre of the requisite quality had failed to emerge. (Lee, 1989: 535-536)

Kirby, Gibbons and Cronin(2002: 13) point to

> … the emergence of informational capitalism and Ireland's semi-peripheral integration into it bring to the fore a cultural discourse prioritising individualism, entrepreneurship, mobility, flexibility, innovation, competitiveness both as personal attributes to be cultivated by the individual (and which educational institutions are expected to play a central role in facilitating) and as dominant social values. These displace earlier discourses prioritising national development, national identity, family, self-sacrifice, self-sufficiency and nationalism.

As we have seen, there was a nationalistic flavour to the term 'enterprise' historically in Ireland and, more recently, enterprise has been used as a synonym for indigenous, as opposed to multinational, businesses, though the enterprise sector has also served as a term to cover both indigenous and foreign-owned firms. Enterprise culture in Ireland has not been without its critics. In particular, there has long been a feeling that the Irish version of enterprise culture might be more associated with protectionism and rent-seeking than with an imagined more vigorous and creative international version of enterprise (e.g., O'Hearn, 2001).

EUROPEAN UNION ENTERPRISE DISCOURSE

Since at least 1973, when Ireland became a member of the European Economic Community (EEC), European policy has had a major impact on Irish public discourse, particularly issues concerned with enterprise. Striking examples of this can be seen in the National Development Plan: 1994-1999, and the National Development Plan: 2000-2006. Here was a strategic investment in Ireland that was massive – the plans involved spending of nearly €80bn (Leddin and Walsh, 2003: 91). The EU funded these plans,

with structural funds injecting an average of about 1.7 per cent of GDP each year in the 1989-1999 period and the percentage getting smaller after that, both due to high growth in Ireland and to reducing transfers (Hegarty, 2003: 2). Perhaps, even more importantly, the EU's involvement was associated with an increase in the strategic planning competence of the Irish public sector (Hegarty, 2003: 13). The European Commission (EC) laid the criteria for the development of the plans and the Irish, with their long experience of dealing with distant bureaucracies, became *aficionados* of the European planning process.

The significant influence of the EU on Irish policy discourse makes it worthwhile to make some observations on EU discourse in this area. Perhaps, because of the diversity of national industrial and enterprise policies across the EU, the EU has historically had an industrial policy that has stressed the removal of barriers to competition, rather than a more interventionist approach (Andresso and Jacobson, 2005: 479). At this level, EU policy can be seen as a promoter of the free-market enterprise culture. However, European social policy and labour rights (e.g., European Worker Director rules) have acted to create 'social market' limits to the 1980s Anglo-American model. Furthermore, while lacking the political or legal competence to be *dirigiste*, the EU has provided, through reports, policy statements, inter-state study exchanges and debates, a large source of discourse on these matters. To a great extent, this kind of debate reflects the theoretical views on strategy and planning discussed above. However, the use of enterprise in EU strategy and planning has a specificity in EU discourse that is worth further discussion.

The use of the word 'enterprise' in official portfolios of the EC is indicative of the rise of enterprise discourse within the EU. It can be traced as far back as 1994, when an 'Enterprise policy, small business and distributive trades' (EC, 1994: 9) portfolio was introduced. At that time, this portfolio was just one of four areas of responsibility of one of the ordinary commissioners. The enterprise word then disappeared from portfolio titles of the 1995-1999 Santer Commission(EC, 1995), but returned with greater prominence in the Prodi Commission (1999-2004), with an entire commissioner dedicated solely to 'Enterprise and Information Society' (EC, 2004a). The first Barroso Commission (2004-2009) elevated enterprise to the portfolio of 'Enterprise and Industry', which was held by no ordinary commissioner, but by Günter Verheugen, a Commission Vice-President with an expanded Directorate-General (Beesley, 2004). The vice-presidential status of the Enterprise and Industry portfolio has been maintained in the new Barroso Commission, with Vice-President Antonio Tajani of Italy taking the 'Industry and Entreprenurship', expected to be in office until 2014 (EC, 2010). Clearly, the word 'enterprise' has been receiving greater prominence in the EU.

EU enterprise policy is more than bland, inoffensive words of enthusiasm. The words, at least, are decisive, as can be seen in statements such as the following:

> A healthy 'churning' rate of company creation and destruction improves efficient resource allocation in an economy by increasing competitive pressure. To release entrepreneurial potential, the European Union must take serious steps to make Europe more attractive for business activity. It is also clear that Europeans must change their attitudes towards entrepreneurship. (EC, 2004b: 15)

Whether the costs of such 'healthy churning' have been fully weighed is not so clear, but what the EC is clear on is that 'Europeans must change their attitudes': European enterprise policy is about culture and individual psychology (Aligica and State, 2005: 250). Indeed, the EC's Enterprise and Industry Directorate General (ECEI-DG) has even ventured into the classroom with its best practice advice on '[h]elping to create an entrepreneurial culture' (ECEI-DG, 2004: 1). The Brussels' bureaucracy, in stepping up its efforts 'to increase the appreciation of entrepreneurs in society', takes quite a socially oriented responsible approach so as to 'promote greater awareness of a career as an entrepreneur, foster entrepreneurial mindsets including the promotion of *responsible* entrepreneurship practices' (EC, 2005a: 5, emphasis added).

The EC has declared that '[t]he guiding principle for authorities must therefore be to 'think small first' – regulations that are appropriate for smaller companies will generally also be appropriate for larger ones' (EC, 2004b: 15). In all of this, policy of the Council of the European Union (CEU), as agreed in the Lisbon agenda, is being followed: 'The competitiveness and dynamism of businesses are directly dependent on a regulatory climate conducive to investment, innovation, and entrepreneurship' (CEU, 2000: paragraph 14). While some have felt that EU policy on entrepreneurship 'continues to be somewhat shrouded in a veil of ambiguity' (Aligica and State, 2005: 250), from the foregoing discussion, we can see that the promotion of 'enterprise culture' of the kind written about by Keat (1991), Carr (1998) and Gray (1998) has been adopted by the EU.

While recognising that EU enterprise culture has been essentially part of the same phenomenon phenomena exemplified in the UK since the government of Prime Minister Thatcher, some peculiarities of the EU discourse are worth noting. The term 'competitiveness' very frequently occurs in EU documents (e.g., EC, 2005b). To Anglophone ears, this sounds very much in line with the enterprise culture of the UK, evoking the cut and thrust of competitive market rivalry between firms. However, a close inspection of measures of competitiveness (e.g., EC, 2005b: Table 5-30) reveals that EU competitiveness refers more to what might be termed 'international comparative efficiency'. Thus, in EU terms, 'competitiveness' has no particularly entrepreneurial flavour and could be equally at home in a 'planned economy' as an 'enterprise discourse'.

Another issue in EU enterprise policy is a concern to stress the growth of particular sectors, which clearly is more statist than a pure 'let the market decide' approach characteristic of what has been described as transparent neo-liberal discourse (Phelan, 2007). Within the EU institutions, there appears to be some confusion as to which sectors might be favoured. Writing in a more enthusiastic time for information technology, the CEU seemed to favour a strengthening of the services sector noting, for example, that '[c]ontent industries create added value by exploiting and networking European cultural diversity' (CEU, 2000: paragraph 9). On the other hand, the Enterprise Directorate General has come to a more traditional stress on manufacturing:

> The Enterprise DG has therefore developed a new Industrial Policy (adopted by the Commission in December 2002), which will focus on the improvement of the framework-conditions for developing entrepreneurial activities.…
>
> … Industry is at the core of our policy concerns. Despite the rise of the service sector, industry continues to play a central role as an engine of

> growth. Continued growth of productivity in the manufacturing sector has been at the root of the sustained increase in wealth, and has led to a growing demand for services. (EC, 2004b: 9)

EU enterprise policy is more statist, too, in trying to integrate enterprise discourse into a broader church of ideologues than in the UK. For example, the Lisbon statement argued that social welfare systems were an asset in the entrepreneurial process of economic adjustment:

> The Union possesses a generally well-educated workforce as well as social protection systems able to provide, beyond their intrinsic value, the stable framework required for managing the structural changes involved in moving towards a knowledge-based society (CEU, 2000: paragraph 3).

Furthermore, the EC promises that it 'will strengthen its support for activities to reduce the burden of risk intrinsically linked to entrepreneurship' (EC, 2005a: 5). Such unnatural interferences with the market economy are a far cry from the ideological antipathy to the 'dependency culture' of the welfare state, characteristic of British Conservatives in the 1980s or of Reaganomics in the USA at around the same time.

At times, EU enterprise policy seems to be more open to supporting small business enterprises, even if they are not destined for fast growth:

> SMEs are very different in nature: some seek rapid growth and bigger markets; others are only active in local or regional markets. As this diversity has to be reflected in policy-making, the new approach embraces initiatives and actions to unlock the full potential of all types of enterprises ranging from start-ups and high growth 'gazelles' to traditional enterprises, including craft sector, micro-enterprises, social economy enterprises and family SMEs. (EC, 2005a: 4)

Such public policy support for non-'gazelle' firms is rather different for what it might be in more purely Anglophone discourse, where firms can be derided for lack of growth, as can be seen in Lewis and Llewellyn's (2004:7) discussion of 'trundlers'. The justification for such support for non-gazelle firms in EU policy is partly based on

> a comprehensive view of SMEs' role in society that highlights their importance as an important factor of economic and social cohesion at local and regional level. Moreover, most SMEs are committed to corporate social responsibility, which allows them to improve their performance and competitiveness while having a positive impact on the local community and the environment. (EC, 2005a: 4)

This new EU view of the socially responsible entrepreneur contrasts, perhaps, with a more opportunistic view of the entrepreneur that might have been prevalent in state bureaucracies up to this point.

Despite the differences between the EU's version and other versions of enterprise discourse, the discourse itself serves to homogenise policy objectives. Indeed, some have argued that the peculiar tensions and incoherencies of EU enterprise policy powerfully achieve this homogenisation of EU and other enterprise policy objectives:

> To sum up, the comparison with the USA offers a functional device for identifying various policy areas to be targeted. Lacking a unique or coherent vision or policy model, this simple approach is a workable substitute. Its limits are set by a certain intrinsic lack of imagination and by the reactive nature of the policy design implied. However, this catch-up, 'follow-the leader' type of approach has a strong motivational element. (Aligica and State, 2005: 253)

Whether competition and comparison with USA and other enterprise policies will lead to a race to the bottom or a greater sophistication is unclear.

This race to greater sophistication or to the bottom will apparently be aided by a particular feature that Aligica and State (2005: 257) identify in EU enterprise discourse as strategic feauture that is :

> …more peculiar (and might even be considered innovative) as it consists of a combination of national-level experiments, broadly coordinated by an indicative targeting system, under the monitoring of a clearing-house system for information and relevant analysis with a view to disseminating best practice.

A difficulty with this exchange of best practice has been pointed out by Leibovitz (2003:720) that "…an overriding concern with a perceived need to harmonize, simplify and streamline regulation in support of enterprise" is some what in tension with "… Europe's strength in terms of innovation capacity is predicated on its rich national and local diversity, which is often very hard to replicate.".

FEATURES OF IRISH ENTERPRISE DISCOURSE

A key feature of Irish enterprise discourse has between the dichotomy of whether Irish business, and society, is closer to the USA/UK or to the EU. This dichotomy has been critiqued as a false one (Allen, 2003) but even if that critique is correct the dichotomy is a key feature of the discourse. In an influential speech the then Deputy Prime Minister, right-leaning Mary Harney set the debate in terms of being closer to Boston or Berlin (Harney, 2000). Her clever selection of these cities to represent the dichotomy was very favourable to her viewpoint which might have just as easily have been represented as choice between Britain or Brussels.

Social partnership is another key part of the way the economy is discussed and so has an important impact on Irish enterprise discourse. The partnership or corporatist model of governance has a long history in Ireland; it dates back to the influence of the Roman Catholic pontiff's encyclical promoting the approach in the 1930s (for a discussion see Lee, 1989: Chapter 4) and the composition of the upper house of parliament in the 1937 constitution. However, the shift to this social-partnership model could be more concretely traced back to 1973 with the establishment of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC). This social partnership assumes a certain amount of strategy, if not strategic planning. NESC was to provide a forum where policy matters could be discussed and investigated under the direction of different sectoral interests which were to become known as the social partners. The social partners consist of government, trade unionists, employers organisations, voluntary organisations and farmers' representatives. The various NESC reports provided a kind of intellectual

consensus through which partners might agree to policy measures. The first partnership deal containing a commitment to fixed wage increases, the Programme for National Recovery, was negotiated in 1987 and lasted until it was replaced with a similar deal in 1991. The partnership approach not only negotiates wage increases centrally but also addresses non-pay issues such as taxation levels and measures to help the disadvantaged. Partnership has been criticised as too corporatist, inflexible to market changes, undermining of both trade-union independence and parliamentary control of economic policy. Phelan (2007:36) has argued that partnership has been a key part of a 'euphemized Irish neoliberal discourse' that has presented ideological positions as part of a broadly agreed consensus. Social partnership has been seen as part of Ireland's recent economic success. In 2009 it became clear that government did not see partnership as part of Ireland's recovery and the social partnership talks collapsed. However, much of the machinery of social partnership remains in place so partnership's influence has not disappeared.

In the Irish use of the enterprise discourse there is a nationalist and post-colonial feel. There is, as was discussed above a labelling of Irish-owned industry as 'enterprise' (as opposed to foreign direct investment enterprises are referred to as 'industry') and 'indigenous' (a term reserved in Canada, Australia and New Zealand for the entrepreneurship of minority communities). There are also still elements of more collectivist and nationalistic economics discourses available from the past. That such discursive resources remained relevant is evidenced by a recent controversy in the pages of a national newspaper. The controversy started with an attack on the lack of 'real' enterprise in Ireland:

> Then, stylising the position slightly, just as social and cultural norms were becoming somewhat more welcoming to the emergence of an entrepreneurial class, it transpired that the prevailing model of enterprise was one of cunning and stroke-play. The more diligent employers and producers were seen as plodders. The heroes were those who pulled strokes, i.e., made money for little effort or risk, usually on the basis of cronyism and inside information. Risk-taking was for the race-track, not for business. Profit was not the return on risk but rather the pay-off for being in the know. (Casey, 2006)

A reply to Casey in the same newspaper by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment bristles with nationalistic feeling and pride (notice the four occurrences of the word 'Irish') common in this era of rapid Irish economic growth:

> The 223 entrepreneurs behind the 75 new businesses come from a variety of backgrounds. Nearly 45 per cent of them were Irish entrepreneurs leaving existing Irish businesses to start new businesses. Iona Technologies, which emerged from Trinity College Dublin as a maker of compatible software for a diverse range of different computers, is the best example of this, spawning almost 30 other independent businesses over the years. That is Irish business, spawning new Irish businesses. (Martin, 2006)

Another key feature of Irish enterprise discourse concerns Ireland's experience of both taking on high state debts in the 1979-1981 period and its attempts to recover from this in the 1981-1986 period and more successfully from 1987-2000. I find it useful to

call this feature of Irish enterprise discourse the myth of Expansionary Fiscal Contraction (EFC). EFC claims that a decrease in government expenditure will induce such an increase in private spending that despite the reduction in government spending overall the economy will expand (Giavazzi & Pagano,1990). This theoretical possible effect comes from the idea that a reduction in government expenditure will up the expectations of rational private spenders, for government expenditure *per se* is assumed to be bad for future growth that reduction in this evil will up permanent income and so current spending. This effect will be strengthened by any 'crowding out' effect by profligate government expenditure of prudent private borrowing. If the expenditure cuts allow a government to try tax rate reductions there might even be a Laffer curve effect to add to this virtuous circle. For the 1987-1990 Irish case this was put most sharply as the claim that "Fiscal retrenchment led not to recession but to recovery. The poor did not suffer. Rather their numbers were reduced" (McAleese, 1990:29). Despite robust critique of the existence in practice of the EFC effect (e.g. Hogan, 2004) it seems to have a rhetorical effect in Ireland. This probably due on the one hand due to the failure of the 1978-1981 Irish government spending plan and the misery of the 1981-1986 period during which the debt crisis was dealt with through a rising of taxes and relatively mild spending cutbacks. The impressive growth of the 1987-2000 period coincided with a lowering of taxes and that tax lowering initially was also a key part of Social Partnership. Having faith then in the miracle of EFC keeps one safe from what some have called the 'spectre of the bad old days' (Phelan, 2007:38).

Now that 'spectre of the bad old days' is very near in the form of the global economic crisis, and its presence may have the immediate of strengthening faith in Irish enterprise discourse. Yet the extent to which the crisis and the current Irish government responses has undermined that discourse is noteworthy. Like elsewhere, many heroes of the enterprise culture have been brought down and the rescue of the market by the state has been flagrant. The extent of that rescuing has been unusually large in Ireland where the state

> "…has already committed itself to spend €70 billion (€40 billion on the National Asset Management Agency – Nama – and €30 billion on recapitalising banks), or half of the national income. That is 10 times per head of population the amount the US spent to rescue itself from its worst banking crisis…" (Kelly, 2010)

IRELAND AND WIDER ENTERPRISE DISCOURSE

Having examined feature of Irish enterprise discourse that arose from the interaction of Ireland's own development and influences from outside it is appropriate to look now at how Ireland's experience has fed back into the enterprise discourse of the wider world.

The *Economist's* coverage of the celtic tiger period of the Irish economy clearly illustrates some of the impact of Ireland's experience on wider enterprise discourse. Ireland's economic success is claimed as a victory for globalism and shows that peripheral status provides no excuses from conventional economics' wisdom:

> Two things Ireland does show beyond a doubt. First, small countries on the fringe of rich trading areas can prosper mightily. The curse of the periphery is a myth. Second, 'globalisation', taken at the flood, is the fastest course to wealth. What is most striking about Ireland's new

> economy is how tightly it is linked to Europe and the world. If any country lends substance to the cliché that the global economy is an opportunity not a threat, it is Ireland (*Economist*, 1997a).

This neo-liberal view is made, not unexpectedly in the *Cato* journal, in a more explicit and detailed way "With the size of government in the economy reduced, the macroeconomic environment stabilized, and the free trade policies that had existed for decades, Ireland's economy began growing…" (Powell, 2003:435-436). This neo-liberal is tempered by one of the *Economist*'s key quotations "In almost every respect, the thrust of Irish policy has been exactly opposite to that of Tory-governed Britain." *Economist* (1997b) quoting former Christian Democrat Irish Prime Minister Garrett FitzGerald .

Ireland's more recent troubles and its neo-liberal policy reaction also provide a lesson from which other PIGS, and perhaps even other states, could learn. The *Financial Times* Brussels Bureau chief writes that "Greece ought to borrow a leaf from recession-savaged Ireland" Barber (2010). A prominent British economist and business commentator writing for the *Telegraph* even thinks the Irish solution could work for the UK economy

> The UK's tough new fiscal measures have been greeted with howls of protest by numerous economists who should know better. Less government spending will make things worse, they say, not better. Yet Ireland shows that if you knuckle down, take the medicine and reassure your creditors, then recovery can be relatively swift. (Halligan, 2010).

For others, Ireland's economic recent failure is not due to enterprise culture but to its corruption by the Irish character and European policies. Writing for the UK's Mail Synon (2009) comforts UK readers with the thought that "There IS a country worse off than us [UK]... how Ireland was destroyed by obscene greed and the euro". The exceptional nature of the Irish character is held to explain the failure of its enterprise. Synon (2009) evidences this failure of character with a quote from an email sent to her from "an Irishman in despair over what has happened to his country": "This [Ireland] is a sick, diseased, wretched and immoral corner of Europe. Self government for the Irish is merely an excuse to thieve, to lie, to indulge in corruption, to destroy everything that is precious and beautiful." Synon is in touch with Irish enterprise discourse – her notes on the Irish character reflect the discussion on Irish enterprise discussed noted above – and she contributes regularly to a number of Irish newspapers. The ill-effect of European policies on Irish is also noted elsewhere where it is even argued that Ireland did not benefit from EU funds but rather that the "presence of EU funds retards growth" in a number of ways (Powell, 2003:443).

Krugman (2009) also views Ireland's condition as an example of how bad it can get:'"What," asked my interlocutor, "is the worst-case outlook for the world economy?' It wasn't until the next day that I came up with the right answer: America could turn Irish" . Unlike Synon, he however does not see Ireland as an exceptional case: "How did Ireland get into its current bind? By being just like us [the USA], only more so" Krugman (2009). In another *New York Times* piece, entitled 'An Irish Mirror' Krugman (2010) gets more specific: "But the most striking similarity between Ireland and America was 'regulatory imprudence'… …What really mattered was free-market fundamentalism." .

In the contrast between Krugman (2009; 2010) and Synon (2009) we can see again that Boston versus Berlin debate discussed above in the Irish context. As with the good times, when pro-Europeans and those who favour a more American model both used the Celtic Tiger as a model, so it is with the Celtic crash.

CONCLUSIONS

The particular features of enterprise discourse as it operates in Ireland shows how in addition to carrying key features common to enterprise discourse generally, the discourse adopts to a particular context. Such national adoptions, at least in the case of Ireland feed back into a general international discourse about the economy. Indeed it seems like peripheries are important ideological battlegrounds at least between a more European versus USA/UK versions of capitalism.

Fairclough (2009: 309) refers to the 'rescaling' involved in globalization meaning 'changing relations in processes, relationships, practices, and so forth between local, national, and international (including 'global') scales'. A different kind of rescaling can be noticed in the way Irish and wider enterprise discourse interacts. For example, in the discussion of Halligan (2010) we see a generalisation of what might be good (fiscal austerity) for a small open economy like Ireland to large less open economies like the United Kingdom. Yet Expansionary Fiscal Contraction may be more successful where aggregate demand is not domestically determined. Likewise every state can not gain competitive advantage from having the lowest corporation taxes. Leibovitz (2003) also points to a problem of scaling and levels of governance – the attempt to homogenise approaches may undermine the very diversity which may create enterprises. Another danger in the homogenising nature of EU policy may be to drive EU enterprise discourse to the lowest common denominator of the USA/UK approach. This is a process in which Ireland could very well provide a model.

The appeal to the cultural peculiarities of Ireland in the light of the current crisis exhibited by the Synon (2009) piece is also part of the internal debate within Ireland as Casey (2006) illustrated. The PIGS and GIPSY acronyms for troubled Euro-member countries show that the any failure of the enterprise medicine can be constructed as the patient's fault.

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