

Tata Pume, Episode 10

Ciarán Oglesby: Hello and welcome to Tata Pume Episode 10, Identity Today in Europe. This is the final episode in the series and today Siobhan O Hanlon spoke to the project academic Esther Murphy about the entire project.

EM: so, I suppose common threads throughout all the programmes for the last ten weeks have been where intercultural dialogue takes place, the spaces where intercultural dialogue takes or doesn't take place really. We have various experts working on the topic and this is a theme that has recurred from the onset, when on the second programme we were fortunate enough to speak with our minister for integration, although he wasn't that comfortable with the term intercultural dialogue –he actually thought that was a bit of a jargon- while he wanted us to talk about a conversation among people from different countries and he emphasised the need to create spaces where this can take place.

Now, other people also mentioned this. For instance, the director of the now defunct Integrating Ireland also highlighted the need for the space for conversations to take place. Now, I think it would be interesting to kind of explore what they meant by this and throughout, actually in the six programme we had conversation with Fidele and he also encouraged the creation of space for this dialogue for people.

Now, when we talk about space, what are we talking about? When we are talking about in the workplace, in sports -since this organisation SARI Sports Against Racism in Ireland, and we have somebody talking in the show about that as well. We're talking about space in a museum, for instance, or an art gallery, where people get to experience another culture through visual art; or through music, on the other side, we talk about two or more people involved, perhaps going to a concert to hear music you have never heard before.

At the very outset, the very first show was describing our own identity and one of the things that I mentioned at the time was I essentially can't go to the end. Quite simply that is overlapping possibilities of space to make a negotiation process of your own identity, so be reassured. I spoke about the allegiances you may have to your family, to your social community, if you are part of a social club, etc. And I suppose the interesting thing is to explore how do non-Irish migrants... all of the terms we've been using within an European context –we are talking here within the EU, mostly- who are people who are unfamiliar to Ireland, moving here for whatever motivation –something else we talk about, the various motivations that have pushed all people, push them out of their own country and attracted them to come and live in Ireland, how do they negotiate movement into these spaces, into the workplace from the basis of making an application to get a job to dialogue seems a very far place from making friendships. Settling into a new culture can be very difficult, and perhaps the idea of getting involved in the community takes sometime at first, people are just settling..., and of course, it is different for everyone, because as I just said, depending on the motivation as why they are there: have they been pushed for economic reasons out of their own country, what are the factors that contribute to their move to Ireland; did they come with the language? Language has been a huge thing during this project, and one of the driving forces in initiating this project Intercultural Dialogue European Radio Campaign

SOH: Stereotypes was another big one, Esther, as well...

EM: That's right. Stereotypes, it depends of how we think of them. I mean, we heard the word stereotype and it can always nearly pick-up a nearly negative thing, and sometimes there are positive stereotypes too that we Irish people ourselves may feel comfortable being regarded as a welcoming, outgoing, friendly bunch of people and when that is challenged, perhaps in the environment of emigration we do not feel that comfortable with that. Words like to describe Irish as being more shy or being concerned with being politically correct maybe a challenge to get to know people and having this intercultural dialogue, having this conversation with other people, because it is a fear of the unknown and putting a foot our of place in the conversation may make feel someone unwelcome. Stereotypes, yes, can be a springboard for discussion, you know? Stereotype really is just a generalisation and we would generalise, it is within human nature to categorise. I mean, even if we were going to think of that, even the language of it, has been said -and it has been mentioned, language to be the driving force of these project- a very well known sociolinguist, Noam Chomsky said that our human brain contains a limited set of rule for organising language, and I suppose, in turn, there was an assumption that all language have common structural basis, so what we mean is actually a set of rules that can be called universal language. So, if we were to think of that with regards to stereotypes, and another linguist, very prolific at the moment, is Steven Pinker, who refers to a mental ease, it is about spaces again, our mental spaces, how we map our language. Stereotypes do not necessarily have to be a bad thing, it can be a starting point, to the start of conversation. You meet someone from another country, you know a little small bit about that country, and the starting point is to find out more, in you invest the time in it, if you create the space to have the discussion, you may have a curiosity about, let's say, for instance, Spanish foods, but you do not know that Spain is divided into several regions, and that person only does not speak Spanish, it is not their first language, they are for a northern region and they speak Basque, and that bring that whole tradition of being bi-lingual and it is through conversation, and through getting to know, you may only have that small piece of information, and of course, when we talk about a dialogue, there is two people, and there is the responsibility on the other interlocutor to take responsibility and to say, ok, this person has shown a curiosity to learn about my culture, they may not know that actually, I speak Basque as the first language, in this example, so I take the time to explain a little bit as well. So the responsibility is on both parties.

SOH: Definitely, it is an exchange, you know. Another thing we focused on the series of Tata Pume was food, how food can assist intercultural dialogue. Now, I found this a really interesting topic, because I suppose at first I was a little bit like let's see how it goes. You think of a country, you think of what is automatically associated with a food, I say spaghetti Bolognese, Italy, exactly. So can you tell our listeners, and enlighten us a bit more on what we learn on food?

EM: I remember there was an interview with one of our oldest Italian restaurants, Nico's in town and there was a lovely chat with Emilio. And how he adjusted to Irish society and also I suppose how he got to become more adventurous with his own menu as Irish taste began to change and food is a wonderful way to get to know people, sitting around, sharing a meal together and having the time and the space, you know, the restaurant space, or get invited into somebody's home, you know, that is an absolutely sign that you are fitting in, you know.

SOH: How do you feel about people that still have the barriers, within food? There are some people that would not expand their horizons as such.

EM: Yes, I suppose so. You ever think of not too far away a Scottish dish like haggis, or something, we may feel disgusted by it. Or the French having their frogs' legs, you know. It sounds first like something not too appealing if you have not tried it, but maybe, if you try, well, you still may not like it, but at least you tried it. It's the idea really that one man's delight can be someone else's horrors. Like back in the twenties or something like that there was a very famous culinary expert who said 'you tel me what you eat and I tell you what you are'. So, how you are defined by your foods, your drink, all that kind of things, and how, we can look at how Irish diet has changed so much, because of increased immigration, because of movement of people being via tourism into Ireland or out; we get to meet people from different places an we swap menus, and expand our taste.

SOH: So, Esther, what do you expect people may have gain and learn from these series of Tata Pume?

EM: Ah wow! There are so many things that have been covered during the ten weeks. But, I suppose, they have learned something different about people from other places, and also sort of an openness to find out and to in both senses to create a space to get to know people who are living in Ireland from different cultures, because we can so much benefit, you know, being in the workplace through our skills, migrant knowledge workforce, playing sports with different people, try a different concept, try something new. Curiosity is what I most like, now that we have only scratched the surface, and finding out in this programme, I suppose, that that's continuing through a really exchange of people, sparking a bit of curiosity and go out and find out about someone in their community on a different culture.

SOH: So, 2008, the year of Intercultural Dialogue long may continue for many years...

EM: Absolutely, I have not doubt.

SOH: Esther Murphy, thank you.

EM: Thanks very much. It has been an honour and a pleasure to work in this project. I throughout enjoyed it. Thank you.

MUSIC

CO: Today I am speaking with Emmanuel Missor, an environmental pastor, from Ghana, who has been living in Ireland for the last two months. He is also involved with Forest Friends Ireland. 10m 41s

EM: Thank you very much.

CO: How are you today?

EM: I am doing very well, I am feeling good.

CO: Are you adjusting to the Irish weather?

EM: Yes, yes, I am gradually adjusting to it.

CO: Emmanuel, could you explain to us what an environmental pastor is?

EM: Right, good. It's good you've asked me this question, you know. The raising issues of environmental problems are now calling the attention of every individual and nation, Deforestation, for example, which is a major cause of climate change; it has raise awareness and concern by both, politicians and scientists alike. I am an environmental pastor, and I use music, poetry, drama..., different methods to carry the message of conservation of this planet that god has handled over to us. This is why children and the public I have interacting with call me an environmental pastor, because I always talk about the environment, it is really in my heart.

CO: That is an absolutely wonderful concept, congratulations.

EM: Thank you very much

CO: And what has been the reception being of the people you have been speaking to about this subject?

EM: they really appreciated. I use different styles, and I also have different methods of meeting different target groups, and normally I have done these studies and realise that when you are meeting elderly people, one has to preach speaking. If I am meeting Christians, I based it on the Bible; if I am meeting Muslims I try to be a little bit flexible; if I meet a traditional man, I try to use old culture and traditional systems; if I meet youth, the like singing and rapping, so I start rapping. I am able to capture the majority of my audience, so they really appreciate the idea very much.

CO: You would be a good politician.

EM: Yes.

CO: And could you tell us, before we move on to the main questions, could you give us background information about Forest Friends Ireland also?

EM: Thank you very much. Forest friends Ireland is a young organisation we have an interest in conservation for peace, security and progress, so, I think it is definitely in the language of this. What we are trying to do is to get people involved in all around the globe, to become friends of the forest, so we all can be able to join hands and fight against global deforestation and climate change, which is hectic now. So, Forest Friends is a young organisation. It was formed by John Haughton, who is hosting a programme here, he is the chairman of the organisation, and we are progressing, we are really want to widen our tentacles, and one of the areas we talk is we want to form Forest Friends Chapters and Forest Friends clubs in all colleges and universities around the world, and establish chapters around the whole countries around the world, as far as we can reach. So, our work is to fight against deforestation, climate change, to raise a new generation for unity, peace and love, bring all cultures and traditions together so we can become one body, yes, so that is our real focus.

CO: That is a very noble cause and very timely. Now, first of all, I have to ask you about your background. You are from Ghana and have you ever heard of Ireland before you came here?

EM: Yeah, I did not know much about Ireland, but there is one song by a popular Ghanaian musician. He had been singing about Guinness, and we came to see, 'hey, this man, has he ever gone to Ireland?' Because Ireland is the capital of Guinness. So, I only know a bit about Ireland by the Guinness. But I am also working at the tourist centre in Ghana, and I already receive tourists from all parts of the globe. And I think I ever met an Irish person. John Houghton was the second person I met from Ireland and it is through him that he invited me here. I have been invited as an educational and development project worker for Forest Friends Ireland at present. That is what brought me here. I am not under sponsorship by the organisation, and we carry out the projects at the Ballyfermot Community from the Forest Friend Club that was inaugurated just yesterday. It was fantastic.

CO: Now, would you tell us as a Ghanaian man, what would your view of European Identity be? Do you to have any stereotypes? What kind of stereotypes would you have of European people before you came to Europe?

EM: Yes. In Ghana, you know, we have different cultures. You know, we are a peaceful country, and we welcome people from all around the world. In Ghana, everyone can just enter in without interference, but I really appreciate different cultures and different traditions, we receive people from all neighbouring countries. So Ghana is so rising as a multicultural state, because all the neighbouring countries enter Ghana freely. But when a Ghanaian tries to enter into another country is not as free as we give and offer. Ghana has been called a country of peace, the people are sociable, are so tolerant, and I worked at the tourist centre, so the tourists that come from different parts of the world will see in fact they love Ghana because it is peaceful. Once you walk into Ghana, you are free.

CO: So, it is a very intercultural country.

EM: Yes, it is. Very intercultural.

CO: So, have you ever been in anywhere else in Europe except for Ireland?

EM: This is my first time to be in Europe and, specifically in Ireland.

CO: And was it a huge cultural shock to you?

EM: Slightly, slightly, because already I worked at the tourist centre, it is an eco-tourist destination for the last century. So I've met tourists from different parts of the world. So I met students from the university of Canada, Germany, university of Sweden... Some have an interest in the country and I gave them lectures on the tropical forest functions and ecosystem management. So I've already had good interaction with different cultural systems before I came to Ireland even though I had never stay in Ireland before.

CO: Pretty interesting indeed, and have you been in any of the museums or any of the cultural institutions here?

EM: In Ireland?

CO: Did you have a chance? I know you have been here for only a very short time.

EM: Actually no, but I hope you take me there one day.

CO: OK. Definitely.

EM: I have kept quite involved with this administration programme, but I hope that after Christmas I have more time than before.

CO: And Emmanuel, in your short time here in Dublin. Do you think that there is a healthy degree of intercultural dialogue taking place in Ireland?

EM: I can see it is good, but not to the optimum, because for my little observation, I can see that Ireland was very busy making money so, in the house where I was sent to, most of them are African, but with little interaction with the environment... You see, every morning when I am outside, everybody is busy, going to a different place so, we do not really have time to meet with a good interaction unfortunately.

CO: Well, that is a new phenomenon in Ireland, because you know the arrival of money only happened ten years ago, and we were a lot slower pace, we have more time for people, so, we gave up a lot, you know.

EM: The Lord Major, at the African Voice December 8th, he raises an interesting point, and I really appreciate it very much. He was saying that Irish women didn't have time for their fellows African when they arrived, but the economic downturn has created a new pace, for them to really build it up. Formally, Irish women would have been busy and would not have time and African women were culturally shocked, something just bad, when African woman like to chat very vitally, the African woman will think that is good, it is a social thing to have a chat, but Irish would see it as something very and very bad. It is a cultural shock, yes. But as time goes they did not have time to learn to interact with them, and some of this culture is coming down, but now it really coming down, now they have very good interaction between different cultural systems, yes.

CO: As you said yourself, yes, please God, now we have the economic downturn, the good side will be that there will be a lot more time for intercultural dialogue, that is what we need, it is essential to progress as an all inclusive society. Emmanuel, what do you think are the biggest challenges which impede intercultural dialogue?

EM: You Know, one of them is the difference between the rich and the poor, it is a major problem that I want to explain. Once people has made it big, they don't look at the down trotted. It is only a few people, it is natural, to a certain point, to look down on those below, but if we belong to humble ourselves –I am a Christian, so normally I look at this stuff from the biblical matter- god sees we should see ourselves as equals, we should live in love and unity, so, when you reach a point you should look down and really have a good feeling for the others. I believe that no matter the level we have reached as a economy, as an individual, as a community, as a society, as a nation or as an organisation we should always come down and see those below us and we also should come full of love and that would actually reinforce our unity, our strength and our culture, coming together to appreciate and to live in happiness,

because the security of one is always attached to the other. If you have a lot and your fellow is crying I do not see the happiness and enjoyment on it. That is the most important point. And second is strictness in immigration. Really, before I came to Ireland I had it very tough, it is only that John Houghton is a strong man in the environmental front and they got to know the urgency and authenticity of why I was coming here before I was given the definitive approval for my visa. So, immigration is a very important thing, today, to be flexible, allow people to travel across different countries, to interact and learn new environments and come to learn new cultural systems.

CO: let's hope this situation improves.

EM: Yes, thank you.

CO: And finally, one more question, do you have a proposal or an idea of how all the different classes, cultures, and all diverse people from society in Ireland would get a chance to be in dialogue with one another?

EM: All right. It could be through a multicultural newspaper, if you can implement a weekly multicultural newspaper where we could welcome opinions and views from different cultural systems in Ireland every week. So, if you have Africans they'll bring their views; Irish will bring their views; Netherlands, they bring their news. Different cultures in Ireland that are already here, they bring up their views in this common, single paper. I believe that this way everybody will begin to learn about everything. And this paper will work very well. It would be highlight distributed because everybody has at least somebody saying something about their own country in it and so, this would really help us to learn from what is happening in different, different, different places. I believe that if we are able to implement a multicultural newspaper, weekly multicultural newspaper in Ireland, it would be fantastic.

CO: I think you are up to something there. Emmanuel Missor, thank you very much for your input there in the interview.

EM- Yes, but I just wanted just before i take off the seat, encourage everybody to become a member of Forest Friends and you'll be welcome. We will do a lot in common. We will live in peace, in unity and in love. Thank you very much for that.

MUSIC

CO: And welcome back to Tata Pume, episode 10 Identity in Europe. Today, I am speaking with Deo Ndakengerwa, who is involved with the Irish Refugee Council here in Ireland. Welcome Deo

DN: Thank you

CO: Deo, could you give the listeners an inside into your own personal background?

DN: I work for the Irish Refugee Council as a policy and campaign officer. Myself, I came here to Ireland at least ten years ago fleeing prosecution originally from Rwanda.

CO: Could you explain to our listeners the work you have been doing with the Irish Refugee Council?

DN: The work of the Irish Refugee Council has shifted up again for the last two years. We are involved on four fronts: one is awareness of asylum seekers leaving conditions in the provision of the government policy which consist on accommodating asylum seekers in a common hostel were they are given food and shelter and they are paid €19.10 a week. Another area we work is that of separated children who arrive d in Ireland without any legal guardian, who mostly are under HSE care; also, we assist in the legal asylum process, on the entire process from day one till individual asylum seekers get refugee status or some kind of protection. The fourth area involved is to raise some kind of awareness on issues related to Asylum seekers here, including the intercultural year. The intercultural Year also poses issues around teh different cultures brought in by the different people and how this can be treated in the short term.

CO: And can you explain to us the system they have in effect there? They segregate the groups of people into ethnic minorities, isn't it.

DN: The direct provision system which is again about segregation and isolation of asylum seekers who are mostly accommodated in the outskirts of cities, and sometime in very inaccessible rural remote areas, indeed that hose not help with the meeting of cultures, it doesn't help integration because of they are often alone, they are coming from different countries, but they are not Irish, they are foreigners of course in this country. So they don't have really opportunity to open up., kind of get to know how Irish people lived, and the Irish people doesn't know who they are, and what is the culture they are coming from.

The second difficulty is dealing with the right to work, even to take part in education. This hampers also their integration in that it makes that exchange between home country cultures and the newcomers cultures impossible. As you know yourself the fact that people do not have any money, people only paid €19.10, so they just physically stay around in the remote areas accommodation centre and if they can even just afford to pay a coup of three to meet some Irish people and to start some dialogue, to talk, because I guess that is the way dialogue starts when people meet up.

CO: Could you tell us. Before you arrive to Ireland yourself Deo, what were your stereotypes about Ireland?

DN: As you known we all kind of wherever we are, we all have some assumptions, prejudices and stereotypes about people

CO: Yes, of course

DN: So what really I heard because of Ireland has been a country which has been sending Irish missionaries abroad, so one thing that I thought is that everyone here went to Christian or a Catholic churches every Sunday, so myself, I got it it is not that, therefore I went to the church in Fairview the area I was living and the church was half-emptied, so, no that is not correct. It does not mean that Irish do not go to that church every day. Another thing everybody knows and you take a note of it, it's that every Irish person somehow has the kind of big skills in the IT/computer technology, because the fact that you are the country where every individual from every, even the dead will be playing with a laptop but unfortunately that is not what I have seen. So, everyone has some kind of stereotypes, which mine

where just positive, but also some may have heard of Irish people because of the Guinness, which also we have in Rwanda, and the Guinness we have in Rwanda is really stronger than the one you have here, it is 7.7 percent of alcohol, so it is very strong and it makes people drunk, so we just assume that Irish people would be drunk all the time is this is what they would drink.

CO: Very interesting indeed. Everyone mentions the Guinness. And listen, since you have been here, do you think there is a healthy degree of intercultural dialogue here in Ireland?

DN: I would say that for a few individuals yes, it has. Like myself, I've been able to achieve some level of integration by having a job, being able to interact with different people at different levels, yes, individually, but I would say that generally speaking, that's not the case. There is not such a conduct generally, some kind of public policy or directives in the projects which they would have to bring the newcomers together with the local people. So, you'll see, whatever was happening it still happening at individual level. I was very happy that somehow, with this year of intercultural dialogue, there have been some policies, some directives, some strategies which have been adopted by different public bodies, including HSE like the National Health Intercultural Strategy. So I hope it was just the beginning and that those strategies are implemented this will surely bring on a conduct directed to interculturalism and I think interculturalism would be surely something that would be somehow made to exist in the society. But at the moment, I should say, compare to other European countries, this is only the beginning.

CO: Yes, of course, it is a relatively new phenomenon to Ireland, really, isn't it?

DN: Yes, it is a very new but I guess it is addressing at the beginning just how you would avoid to have problems in the future, but yes I guess this would be the right time, the right opportunity to involve newcomers in what I would say again most strategies you would see are written by only I would say a monotony. I say monotony because ideas are coming from policy makers, who are mostly Irish people, and the level of consultation, especially bringing the newcomers; at the present the groups are not on the table for discussions, and that led them on to feelings on being excluded and what it has been published is not really the ideal presentation of their own ideas or the way they see things would work. So, I would really encourage on this intercultural dialogue that there is really so kind of real presentation, real individuals, real experiences on the table that might had some individuals like tokens just to make up the numbers.

CO: Very very important point there and finally, why in your opinion, sometimes will intercultural dialogue breakdown?

DN: it sure breaks down again because it isn't really pursued in a good way. Everyone needs to be included here, and most groups we have here they are here to stay. They are not tourists, they are here to stay for many years. So, most of them would have experienced somehow problems when accessing services in the sense that they want to participate, to express their view to the society, and they would be delighted to have a programme, something that would lift them. And how do you would uplift them, if you do not give them an opportunity to come out and talk. And again, I would say that dialogue, which

would welcome ideas from different angles, people from different areas, in the broad issues surely this is how you start a discussion, sure this is how you make multiculturalism or interculturalism a reality.

CO: Deo Ndakengerwa, thank you very much for your time.

DN: You are welcome.