Social Sciences Research Centre
Joint Secretaries' Report 2023
(DRAFT, 14 December 2023)

- Since its formation in 1965 the Social Sciences Research Centre (SSRC) has provided a forum for interdisciplinary research between economists, geographers, political scientists, psychologists, and sociologists at the University of Galway. Central to the SSRC's identity has been the support it has provided to a broad and inclusive approach to interdisciplinary social science research.

- The SSRC (currently with 79 members) continues to host three strands of research: Equality and Diversity; Smart and Liveable Cities and Towns; and Changing Rural Communities. While these three strands of research provide the SSRC's current research focus, they are by no means exhaustive of the research interests of SSRC members. Proposals for new strands of research activity are always most welcome. And the SSRC has always warmly welcomed members with research interests that fall outside its main strands of research activity at any given point in time.

- Within the Equality and Diversity strand of research, Dr Su-Ming Khoo ran a 'Creative Human Rights Practice' module for the Graduate School for Social Research, GSSR Specialization in Bridging Academic and NGO at the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw in April. In May 2023, Dr Khoo completed the IRC Coalesce project on higher education quality and equity in Ireland and South Africa IRC-COALESCE 2019-2022. In June 2023, the Sociological Association of Ireland's Race and Ethnicity Study Group, coordinated by Dr Khoo, Ebun Joseph and Lucy Michael presented two packed Study Group sessions comprising 10 research papers on the themes of race and ethnicity from the margin and the centre. Dr Khoo also presented the plenary lecture for the Environmental Sociology Study group: '*From Environmental Sociology to a Vital Sociology*'. In July 2023, a consortium led by Dr Hanna-Kaisa Hoppania won internal ENLIGHT internationalisation funding of €75,000, Dr Khoo's work package will consist of an ERC Synergy proposal to be submitted in late 2024. Dr Khoo attended the Rome workshop on Decolonial Feminism of the COST CA19129 consortium on Decolonizing Development: Research, Teaching and Practice in September 2023, but officially exited COST group on October 8, observing BDS in the context of Israel's collective punishment of Gaza, and will complete ongoing actions as an individual. Dr Khoo presented at inauguration of the Ghana hub of the African Critical Higher Education Studies Network ACUS on 12 October 2023. In November 2023 Dr Khoo spoke at University of Galway's launch of the EDI Annual Report 2022/23 and Race Equality Framework and Action Plan 2023-2027. On December 11, Dr Khoo hosted the launch of Higher Education for Good, edited by Laura Czerniewicz and Catherine Cronin. On December 15 2023, the first stage of a SFI Research Centres pre-proposal bid for an Energy Decarbonization Centre will be

submitted by a University of Galway team, Prof Fahy, Dr Khoo, Ger Mullaly (UCC), and Orla Kelly (UCD) propose to lead on the theme of Just Transitions.

- Prof Kevin Leyden and Dr Mike Hynes continue to be active in advancing a programme of research related to 'Smart and Liveable Cities and Towns' strand of research. Related to the sustainability strand of research, Dr Mike Hynes is an integral member of a new International network of researchers from Ireland, France, Spain, The UK, Finland, Italy, and Canada – under the title of GovERN – which seeks to advance collaborative research on social challenges and emancipatory opportunities when governing rural and peri-urban Nature-based-Solutions. The group met for a two-day workshop in Bordeaux, France in October to develop and progress writing and grant applications. With his colleague Prof Frances Fahy (Geography), Dr Hynes is a Co-Principle Investigator on the CAMPAIGNers Project 'Citizens Acting on Mitigation Pathways through Active Implementation of a Goal-setting Network'. This research project - a 36-month H2020 project worth €5 million - aims to make low-carbon lifestyles a major part of the solution to climate change by identifying lifestyle transformation potential, and associated barriers and enablers across 5 continents and 16 major cities with over 20 million residents and will finish in April 2024. Dr Hynes had a book review of Rogers Brubaker's (2023) *Hyperconnectivity and Its Discontents* for Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews; chaired a panel at the Sociological Association of Ireland (SAI) Conference at UCD - *Session 2.5: Panel 2: The Unfolding Socio-material Legacy that is Climate Change* – chaired a roundtable at the Political Science & Sociology Research Festival 2023 titled: *Identities, Cultural Evolution, and Economic Transitions in Hybrid Space*; was part of a successful team to apply for €20,000 of grant aid under The Sustainable Development Goals Challenge (College of Science and Engineering at the University of Galway Strategic Research SDG Fund 2022-2023); and has a co-authored paper under review with Global Sustainability titled: *Eco-Apps for Change? Evaluating the usefulness of mobile apps to promote and support sustainable lifestyle changes*. He also led a student-centred research project on Cycling in Galway and expects to publish these findings in early 2024.

- Within the 'Changing Rural Communities' strand of research Dr Tony Varley has with Dr Tomás Finn (History) spent much of 2023 completing the co-editing of a book ('Inside Rural Ireland: Power and Change since Independence') that has now been submitted to University College Dublin Press. Much of the actual editing of this book was completed in the SSRC's research space (Room 203, St. Declan's, No. 6 Distillery Road). The book, which consists of contributions from historians as well as social scientists, contains chapters written or co-written by a number of SSRC members. Prof Anne Byrne and Dr Tanya Watson have contributed a chapter titled 'Women and Patriarchal Power in Rural Ireland', Dr Tomás Finn a chapter titled 'Power and the Politics of Persuasion: Comparing Muintir na Tíre's and Tuairim's Relationships with Church and State in Post-War Ireland, Dr Mícheál Ó Fathartaigh and Dr Anne Cassidy a chapter titled 'Challenging Patriarchal Power? Women Advisors as Change Agents in

Twentieth-Century Irish Agriculture', and Dr Tony Varley a chapter titled 'Cultivating Vocational Solidarity: The Class and Gender Politics of Organising Irish Agriculture'.

- In view of the partial overlap in research themes and personnel, some discussion has recently commenced to explore the possibility of the SSRC and the Governance and Sustainable Development Cluster in the School of Political Science and Sociology partnering together somewhat more formally, and for certain purposes, under the rubric of Sustainable Development. It is intended to continue with these discussions, and to finalise them, early in 2024.

- Following considerable discussion relating to the preservation of the SSRC's research space in St Declan's (No. 6 Distillery Road) in November 2022, the SSRC agreed to give up Room 202 to facilitate the creation of what has become an inter-faith prayer room to St. Declan's. Following on from this decision the James Hardiman Library agreed In December last year to accept for their archives the SSRC's files and papers (dating from 1965) that had been stored in the room we lost (Room 202) for many years. Subsequently these SSRC files and papers were assembled and boxed in St Declan's and were transferred to the Archives and Special Collections department of the James Hardiman Library in January 2023.

- During 2023 the four desks available in the SSRC's research space (Room 203 in St. Declan's, Distillery Road) have been used regularly by, Dr Rachel McArdle, Dr Tony Varley, Dr Tomás Finn, Dr Gerard Moran. Dr Mícheál Ó Fathartaigh, Dr Áine Macken-Walsh, and Dr Anita Naughton

- The SSRC webpage, designed and maintained by Dr Mike Hynes and launched in 2016, has continued to be developed and to attract considerable attention in 2023. Since January 2023, **16,057 'unique'** or different visitors have visited the webpage and over **156,813 pages** were examined. In all, the webpage has attracted **318,180 'hits' in** the current year. Dr Hynes also maintains the SSRC's active Twitter/X account which currently has **1,282 followers**.

Dr Mike Hynes and Dr Tony Varley (joint secretaries, SSRC)
14 December 2023