

Social Sciences Research Centre Joint Secretaries' Report 2018

Over a period of more than fifty years the Social Sciences Research Centre (SSRC) has provided a focus for interdisciplinary research between economists, geographers, political scientists, psychologists, and sociologists at NUI, Galway. 2018 has seen further significant progress recorded in the effort to revive the SSRC as a centre for interdisciplinary research inside and outside the university. The SSRC, which now has 78 members at present, is home to four distinguishable strands of research: Smart and Liveable Cities and Towns; Equality and Diversity; Market Traders in Contemporary Ireland; and Rural Communities and their Development.

A broad and inclusive approach, and encouraging interdisciplinary work, have always been at the heart of the SSRC's identity. While colleagues from Political Science and Sociology have been central to the move to revive the SSRC since 2015, the desire from the outset has been to see colleagues from across the social science disciplines centrally involved in the revived SSRC. It has further always been considered imperative that the membership of the new SSRC Board be drawn from across the different social science disciplines at NUI Galway.

Specific research projects, and a selection of recent publications, within each of the centre's three research strands can be found listed in the SSRC's webpage (<http://ssrc.ie>). The SSRC continues to be recognised as a dedicated research cluster within the Moore and Whitaker Institutes.

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 2018. Since January 2018, 6043 'unique' or different visitors have visited the webpage and over 95,000 pages were examined. In all, the webpage has attracted close to 160,000 'hits' in the current year. Dr Hynes also maintains the SSRC's active twitter account that currently has 1273 followers.

During the 2018-9 academic year the five desks available in the SSRC's rooms in St. Declan's, Distillery Road, are in full use. Among the visiting scholars to use the SSRC's facilities in St. Declan's during the 2017-8 academic year were Dr Bernadine Brady. Dr. Mícheál Ó Fathartaigh (who is researching the history of the agricultural advisory service in Ireland) and Dr Gerard Moran (who is working on ongoing projects relating to combating poverty in rural Ireland) are using the SSRC's rooms in St. Declan's.

Prof Kevin Leyden and Dr Mike Hynes continue to be active in advancing a programme of SSRC-based social science research - some of which is of special relevance to Galway's 'City of Culture 2020' project - to be carried out in the city in the near future. Recently the SSRC actively supported the 'Architects at the Edge' festival that was held on campus on 26 October 2018. Prof. Leyden and Dr. Hynes co-organised and moderated the day-long 'Place-makers' symposium and workshop that constituted one strand of the 'Architects at the Edge' festival.

Dr Mike Hynes and Dr Tony Varley, at the invitation of the Galway Saturday Market Committee, have commenced a study of the Galway weekend market traders. At present, some 36 questionnaires - completed as part of the initial phase of the research - are being analysed. It is proposed to conduct interviews with some of the market traders in the New Year.

Dr Mike Hynes is continuing to be engaged with an ongoing student-centred research project (explicitly identified with the SSRC) on the topic of spatial mobility within Galway City. Reflecting this research activity, a number of academic papers have recently been published.

Dr Mike Hynes and Dr Tony Varley (Joint secretaries, SSRC)
11 December 2018