

Social Sciences Research Centre Joint Secretaries' Report 2019

- Since its foundation in 1966 the Social Sciences Research Centre (SSRC) has provided a focus and forum for interdisciplinary research between economists, geographers, political scientists, psychologists, and sociologists at NUI, Galway. The year 2019 has seen some further progress recorded in the effort to revive the SSRC as a centre for interdisciplinary research inside and outside the university.
- At the heart of the SSRC's identity has always been a broad and inclusive approach to interdisciplinary social science research. 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 social and historical science disciplines centrally involved in the revived SSRC. It has further always been considered important that the membership of the new SSRC Board be drawn from across the different social and historical science disciplines at NUI Galway. The SSRC, which has 80 members at present, is currently home to four distinguishable strands of research: Equality and Diversity; Smart and Liveable Cities and Towns; Market Traders in Contemporary Ireland; and Rural Communities and their Development.
- Specific research projects, and a selection of recent publications, relating to individual members within each of the centre's four 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 both the Moore and Whitaker Institutes.
- Within the Equality and Diversity strand of research, Dr Su-Ming Khoo has the following to report relating to the BCAUSE project and the critical HE studies initiative. In April 2019 Dr Khoo was awarded a 3-year Irish Aid Coalesce funding of €350,000 for a project on higher education quality and equity in Ireland and South Africa, BCAUSE. At the Open Education Resources conference in April Dr Khoo presented a keynote address and ran a panel on critical higher education (with Prof Andre Keet). In May 2019 by Dr Khoo convened a panel on engaged and citizen science at the Sociological Association of Ireland's annual conference. Last August Dr Khoo participated in the Critical Higher Education Studies Winter School at Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, where she presented a contribution on 'Emancipation as Rebellion or Repair' and joined the Impact initiative of the African Critical University Studies (ACUS) initiative (led by Prof Andre Keet and Dr Dina Belluigi).
- Prof Kevin Leyden and Dr Mike Hynes continue to be active in advancing a programme of SSRC-based social science research related to 'Smart and Liveable Cities and Towns'. They are currently leading *BEChange*, a H2020 application (H2020-SC1-BHC-2018-2020 Innovative actions for improving urban health and wellbeing - addressing environment, climate and socioeconomic factors). Phase one of the application was submitted in October and is currently under evaluation; phase two is scheduled to be submitted by April 2020. Funding of €4.5 million is being requested for this pan-European research project.
- Dr Mike Hynes and Dr Tony Varley, at the invitation of the Galway Market Traders' Committee, are continuing to pursue their study of the Galway market traders. Along with analysing 36 questionnaires, completed as part of the initial phase of the research, in-depth interviews have been completed to date with 11 veteran market traders. A paper, based on some aspects of the research, was read at the Sociological Association of Ireland's annual conference held last May in Galway. The final report of the research on the Galway Market will be launched next summer to coincide with a photographic exhibition members of the Market Traders' Committee are organising as a 'City of Culture 2020' funded event. A grant from the College of Arts of €2,000 was acquired during the summer to assist with aspects of the market research and its dissemination.

- During 2019 the five desks available in the SSRC's rooms in St. Declan's, Distillery Road, were in full use. Among the scholars to use the SSRC's facilities in St. Declan's during 2019 were Mr Michael Donnelly, Dr Martin Javornicky, Dr Jonathan G. Heaney, Dr Mike Hynes, Dr Gerard Moran, Dr Mícheál Ó Fathartaigh, Dr Cliona O'Keefe, Dr Niloufar Omid and Dr Tony Varley. The St. Declan's facilities have also been occasionally used by BSc (Applied Social Sciences) students working on projects under the supervision of Dr Mike Hynes.
- 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 2019. Since January 2019, 18,238 'unique' or different visitors have visited the webpage and over 172,658 pages were examined. In all, the webpage has attracted close to 321,123 'hits' in the current year. Dr Hynes also maintains the SSRC's active twitter account that currently has 1,254 followers.

Dr Mike Hynes and Dr Tony Varley (joint secretaries, SSRC)
10 December 2019