

Social Sciences Research Centre Joint Secretaries' Report 2020

- 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. 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.
- In view of the public health emergency declared in March 2020 the past year has posed many challenges for centre for interdisciplinary research inside the university. The SSRC, which has **83 members** at present, continues to be home to four distinguishable main strands of research: Equality and Diversity; Smart and Liveable Cities and Towns; Market Traders in Contemporary Ireland; and Changing Rural Communities.
- 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](#). 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 continued work with the 3-year Irish Aid Coalesce project on higher education quality and equity in Ireland and South Africa, BCAUSE, with Prof Paul Prinsloo UNISA and Owen Harney, the project postdoc. The first work package, an International Expert Collective Intelligence panel was held in April 2020. This project is connected to a number of wider collaborative research networks and platforms, [Convivial Thinking](#) including Dr Khoo's involvement as lead editor of and contributor to this JIWS [Journal Special Issue](#) and Acta Academica [Special Focus article](#). Dr Khoo is a member of the African Critical Higher Education Studies Network [ACUS](#), [Critical Internationalisation Studies Network](#), [Bridge 47 Knowledge Exchange Partnership](#), the COST [CA19129](#) consortium on Decolonizing Development Teaching, Research and Education, and the [Connected Sociologies Curriculum Project](#). At the end of 2019, Dr Khoo began an ongoing ERASMUS-DELTA teaching collaboration with the FHWS Wuerzburg, KSH and Munich School of Philosophy (see forthcoming article by Khoo and Kleibl, ISIA 2020). Resulting from involvement in the [PRO-RES](#) non-medical ethics network, Dr Khoo has co-edited three rapid publication volumes with Dr Helen Kara on Researching in the Age of COVID-19, published by Bristol University Press (see this Sage Methodspace [interview](#)). Dr Khoo has sat on the Intersectionality Committee for Athena Swan, and contributed to the HEA ethnicity and race monitoring initiative, recently launching the first Irish race and ethnicity in higher education survey on 7 December 2020.
- 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 led *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 2019 but was unsuccessful. Funding of €4.5 million had being requested for this pan-European research project. Dr Mike Hynes was a guest speaker at the International Scientific & Practical Conference 'City as a Classroom' held online on the 25th to 28th August 2020 from Ukraine and is also an appointed champion for Galway's 'Nature Park City' initiative recently launched by the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins.

- Dr Mike Hynes and Dr Tony Varley, at the invitation of the Galway Market Traders' Committee and withing the Market Traders in Contemporary Ireland strand of research, are continuing to pursue their study of the Galway market traders. Along with analysing 56 questionnaires, completed as part of the initial phase of the research, in-depth interviews have been completed to date with 13 veteran market traders. The final report of the research relating to the Galway Market will be launched next March to coincide with a photographic exhibition that members of the Market Traders' Committee are organising as a 'City of Culture 2020' funded event.
- Within the Changing Rural Communities strand of research Dr Gerard Moran's recent research has concentrated on James Hack Tuke and his assisted emigration scheme; the famine of 1879-82; and marriage and the Irish famine emigrants in New York in the 1850s. He was also been working with the Galway Heritage Officer on certain facets of western rural poverty. Among his publications are G. Moran and Chrisine Kinealy, eds., *Famines in Ireland Before and After the Great Famine* (Quinnipiac University Press and Cork University Press, 2020). Dr Mícheál Ó Fathartaigh's major research priority in 1920 has been completing the research for a forthcoming monograph, *Developing Rural Ireland: A history of the Irish agricultural advisory services*, to be published next year by Wordwell Books. During 2020, he has devoted much of his time to researching and writing up developments in the timeframe spanning 1945–2000. During the past year Dr Tony Varley has spent time co-editing a book ('Inside Rural Ireland: Power and Change since Independence') that has grown out of a conference – held on campus in June 2018 – to mark the James Hardiman Library's acquisition of the Muintir na Tíre archive.
- Dr Emmet Fox and Dr Mike Hynes are both leading participants on an international research project titled: 'COVID-19: Everyday Life and Social Practices Research Project'. This social scientific project aims to present a theoretically informed empirical analysis of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and associated socio-material disruptions on the everyday lives of citizens around the world. Adopting a cross-cultural comparative social practice framework, the project team seek to analyse the impact of the crisis on citizens' everyday consumption practices across diverse contexts, with cases spanning Europe, the USA, Asia and Australia.
- During the early months of 2020 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 this time were Mr Michael Donnelly, Dr Jonathan G. Heaney, Dr Mike Hynes, Dr Gerard Moran, Dr Mícheál Ó Fathartaigh, Dr Niloufar Omidí and Dr Tony Varley. Early in 2020 the St. Declan's facilities were also 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 2020, **14,897 'unique'** or different visitors have visited the webpage and over **180,599 pages** were examined. In all, the webpage has attracted close to **335,689 'hits'** in the current year. Dr Hynes also maintains the SSRC's active twitter account that currently has **1,282 followers**.

Dr Mike Hynes and Dr Tony Varley (Joint Secretaries, SSRC)
15 December 2020