

Social Sciences Research Centre Joint Secretaries' Report 2021

- 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 since its foundation in 1966. Central to the SSRC's identity has always been a broad and inclusive approach to interdisciplinary social science research. The SSRC is recognised as a dedicated research cluster within both the Moore and Whitaker Institutes.
- The SSRC, which now has 78 members, continues to host four distinguishable principal strands of research: Equality and Diversity; Smart and Liveable Cities and Towns; Street Market Traders in Contemporary Ireland; and Changing Rural Communities. By no means of course are these principal strands of research exhaustive of the research interests of SSRC members. A feature of the SSRC historically is that it has always welcomed proposals for new strands of research activity.
- Specific research projects, and a selection of recent publications, relating to individual SSRC members can be found listed in the [SSRC's webpage](#).
- Within the Equality and Diversity strand of research, Dr Su-Ming Khoo is the Principal Investigator in the 3-year Irish Aid Coalesce project on higher education quality and equity in Ireland and South Africa, BCAUSE (*Building Collaborative Approaches to University Strategies against Exclusion in Ireland and Africa: pedagogies for quality Higher Education and inclusive global citizenship* IRC-COALESCE 2019-2022). 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: Research, Teaching and Practice 2020-2024; and the [Connected Sociologies Curriculum Project](#). Among Dr. Khoo's invited presentations in 2021 was the paper [Sustainability, and the Transdisciplinarity and the Public epistemic role of Higher Education](#), ACUS Colloquium 7 Oct 2021. Her publications in 2021 include: [On decolonial revisions of modern social theory](#), *International Sociology* 36,5, 704-719; Floss, M.; Ilgenfritz, CAV.; Rodrigues, YE; Dilda, AC; Corrêa, APB; de Melo, DAC; Barros, EF; Guzmán, CAF; Devlin, E; Saldiva, PHN; Khoo, S; Gonçalves, MR; the Planetary Health MOOC Group (2021) [Development and assessment of a Brazilian pilot Massive Open On-line Course in Planetary Health Education: an innovative model for primary care professionals and community training](#), *Frontiers in Public Health*; Kara, H. and Khoo, S (2021) [Qualitative and Digital Research in Times of Crisis: Methods, Reflexivity and Ethics](#). Bristol University Press.
- Prof Kevin Leyden and Dr Mike Hynes continue to be active in advancing a programme of social science research related to 'Smart and Liveable Cities and Towns'. Dr. Hynes's recently published book *The Social, Cultural and Environmental Costs of Hyper-Connectivity: Sleeping Thorough the Revolution* (2021, London: Emerald Publishing Limited) seeks broader critical engagement with the design, development and adoption processes of contemporary digital information communications technologies. These technologies have been the catalyst for tremendous leaps forward in the fields of medicine, employment, education and communications. However, this new digital age has also brought a unique set of societal, cultural and environmental challenges that have yet to be fully understood and, - where necessary -confronted. A case can be made that hopes to develop an information super-highway that would be an instrument for human flourishing has given way to vast stores of worthless trivia and technologies that are colonising our attention in everyday life. Dr Emmet Fox and Dr Mike Hynes are leading participants on an international research project titled: 'COVID-19: Everyday Life and Social Practices Research Project'. This research

project is providing a theoretically informed empirical analysis of the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the everyday lives of individuals around the world. Making use of a cross-cultural social practice framework, the project team seek to analyse the impact of the crisis on citizens' everyday consumption practices across diverse contexts spanning Europe, the USA, Asia and Australia.

- Dr. Mike Hynes's and Dr. Tony Varley's study of the St Nicholas Street Market located in the centre of Galway City, and whose origins go back to medieval time, has continued in 2021. A central aim of this research (located within the 'Street Traders in Contemporary Ireland' research strand) is to reconstruct how the market's traders and customers view the market functioning as a social institution. To this end, the views of the present-day traders and some visiting customers were surveyed before the onset of the COVID 19 Pandemic. Based on this research it is planned to produce an SSRC working paper in 2022. How the market has gone in the space of four decades from being a farmers' market to being a cosmopolitan market was the subject of a paper delivered on-line at the Sociological Association of Ireland's annual conference held in early May 2021. Dr. Varley also appeared in Dawid Piotr Szlaga's documentary film 'Stories from the Galway Market' released in the spring of 2021.
- Within the Changing Rural Communities strand of research Dr. Gerard Moran has co-edited a collection of essays, *Heroes of the Great Famine*, with Christine Kinealy and Jason King (Cork University Press). He has also published two academic articles: 'Marriage and the Famine Irish in Five Points New York in the 1850s' in *New Hibernia Review* (Autumn, 2021) and the 'Famine Crisis in the West of Ireland, 1879-82' in the *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*. An essay on 'Uncovering the Irish Famine Orphans in Canada' also appeared in *The Historian as the Detective: Essays in Honour of Raymond Gillespie* (Four Courts Press), edited by Terence Dooley, Marian Lyons and Salvador Ryan. In September 2021 Dr Mícheál Ó Fathartaigh's monograph, *Developing Rural Ireland: A history of the Irish agricultural advisory services*, was published by Wordwell Books. The book's 13 chapters offer a pioneering study of state intervention in Ireland (in the form of the agricultural advisory service) and the impact of the work of the advisors (male and female) in the shaping of rural Ireland over the course of the last century and the first decades of the present one. On foot of this publication (and *Birth of a State: the Anglo-Irish Treaty*, a book co-authored with Liam Weeks and published by Irish Academic Press in October). Dr Ó Fathartaigh has had articles published widely in the national, vocational and local press, and has appeared on local, national and international radio, as well as on RTÉ. During the past year Dr Tony Varley has devoted time to 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.
- As was the case for much of 2020 the five desks available in the SSRC's rooms in St. Declan's, Distillery Road, were inaccessible for long periods in 2021 as a result of restrictions relating to the public health emergency. Among the scholars to use the SSRC's facilities in St. Declan's when they were accessible were Dr Mike Hynes, Dr Tony Varley, and Dr Niloufar Omid. During the early autumn months of 2021 the SSRC hosted two visiting students under the new Erasmus mentorship scheme, Thea Otte from HW-Fulda (Undergraduate) and Sonia Raguso from the University of Bologna (Postgraduate), with Dr Su-Ming Khoo serving as principal mentor and Dr Mike Hynes as an additional mentor.
- 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 2021, **12,411 'unique'** or different visitors have visited the webpage and over **109,325 pages** were examined. In all, the webpage has attracted **231,911 'hits'** in the current year. Dr Hynes also maintains the SSRC's active twitter account that currently has **1,295 followers**.

Dr Mike Hynes and Dr Tony Varley (joint secretaries, SSRC)
14 December 2021