

Sociology at Maynooth University - A Historic and Leading Role

The Roman Catholic church was at the forefront of the development of Irish sociology. It was at Maynooth in 1973 that the first Professor of 'Catholic Action' rather than sociology was established. Father Peter McKeivitt who took up that professorship is usually credited as the first modern Irish sociologist.

We are the longest established Sociology Department on the island of Ireland, having been established in 1937. We were honoured to host a visit from the President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins, himself a sociologist, on our seventy-fifth anniversary in 2012. Read more about President Higgins' visit on page 2 of the *University News* [here](#) Paul Gillespie of the Irish Times reflects on President Higgins' speech on the occasion [here](#).

We have played a central role in establishing and developing other disciplines and departments at Maynooth including, Anthropology and Applied Social Studies. We have longstanding collaborations with Adult Education and a range of departments through our founding and central role in the Maynooth University Social Science Institute (MUSSI), with Professor Linda Connolly as Director.

[The Centre for the Study of Politics](#) is located within the Department of Sociology at Maynooth University. In 2007, we started an innovative BA in Politics that took advantage of the strong interest in the department in the understanding of all the forms of politics and built upon and enhanced this with additional staff and new expertise, perspective, and insights.

The [Irish Journal of Sociology](#) was founded in the department in 1991, under the editorship of Michel Peillon and Tony Fahey. It recently returned to the department, edited by Brian Conway from 2013 to 2017.

Department staff have played key roles in the [Sociological Association of Ireland](#), including Paul Ryan's role as President until 2018. In 2019, the department hosted the Annual Conference of the [Political Studies Association of Ireland](#) for the first time. Delma Byrne was President of the [Educational Studies Association of Ireland](#) from 2014 to 2016.

For more on the history of Irish Sociology, and Maynooth's place in it, check out some of our own departmental research:

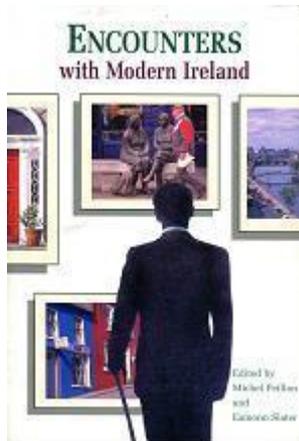
Brian Conway's research on the [history of Irish sociology](#) and the distinctive forms taken by '[Catholic Sociology](#)' in Ireland

Peter Murray's research on church, state and knowledge - particularly in his book with Maria Feeney on *Church, State and Social Science in Ireland*, reviewed [here](#) by Diarmaid Feirtéar

You might also find this interesting - from the early history of Maynooth sociology, a [May 1958 letter from Maynooth Sociology Professor Jeremiah Newman](#) to the Director of the Dublin Institute of Catholic Sociology appraises the contribution that a group of students

about to be ordained for the Dublin archdiocese might best make to the Institute's work; analysed here by Peter Murray over 50 years later

The best way to find out about the scope and breadth of the discipline is to read what sociologists have to say. Below you will find several links to publications written by our staff.



1) The Irish Sociological Chronicles

The Irish Sociological Chronicles series, of which there are seven volumes in print, brings sociology out into the world. The first edition of the *Irish Sociological Chronicles* was published in 1998, and the most recent edition in 2010. This span of time does not map precisely on to the trajectory of Ireland's recent economic boom (arguably it started in 1993, or in 1994 when the term 'Celtic Tiger' was coined). Nevertheless, the overarching narrative contained within these seven volumes over a fifteen-year period, contributed by 83 different authors, sketches a sustained sociological interpretation of this unique period in contemporary Irish history.

The series provides a space in which sociologists reflect in an engaging way on current matters that capture their imagination, and which we hope will capture the imagination of you the reader. Academic writing is often condemned as turgid and somewhat removed from the social reality of everyday life. These volumes provide a welcome antidote to that tradition. All of the contributions assembled here are topical, accessible and written in a style which does not condescend to the reader. They speak to people about real places, events and occurrences that have touched all our lives. As well as making an important intellectual intervention, the books are also a visual treat. The viewpoints of the various contributors are complimented by those of contemporary artists and photographers. A series of arresting images which are interspersed throughout the books offer a visual commentary on contemporary society.

2) Publications

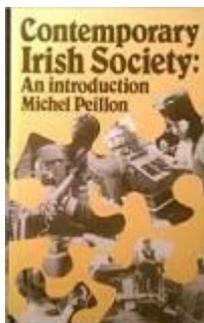
Staff in the Department of Sociology produce a wide range of publications from authored and edited books to journal articles, book chapters, media articles and blogs.

You can see what individual staff have published on the [people pages](#) and many will have links to electronic versions of the articles which are stored in the [eprints archive](#) in the library.

In March 2015 we profiled a book by each member of staff on our homepage. See [here](#).



Charting Irish Society



In 1982, Michel Peillon published *Contemporary Irish Society*. It was described by [Fanning and Hess](#) as "Ireland's first proper sociological monograph, as distinct from a work of social anthropology, political economy, social administration or Catholic thought. Rather than focus on rural change and urbanisation as Catholic sociologists had done, he considered the Church as an interest group alongside others. In Peillon's analysis, groups such as farmers, the working class, the bourgeoisie and the state identified interests and often pursued contradictory projects. "

The *Irish Journal of Sociology* was founded in the department in 1991 (see above for more details)

From the dawn of the Celtic Tiger to the dot.com crash that laid the foundations of the financial bubbles to follow in 2008, across a period of huge transformation in Irish society, Maynooth Sociology published a series of *Irish Sociological Chronicles* - books drawing together short interpretive essays that used sociological insights to make sense of the changes happening around us in Ireland at the time. To this day these stand as insightful and readable live accounts of a changing society. They included volumes on:

[1997-98](#)

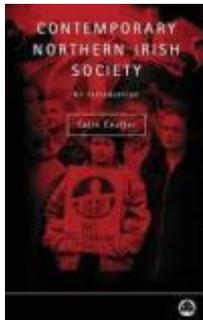
[2001-2](#)

[2003-4](#)

[2005-6](#)

[2007-8](#)

[2009-10](#)



In 1999, Colin Coulter published the first overview text of the structure of Northern Irish Society.

Later, Mary Corcoran joined Perry Share in writing the third edition of *Sociology of Ireland*, with Brian Conway joining them for the fourth edition in 2012.

Global Sociology

Although the department has played a key role in understanding Irish society it has always been highly internationalised - in terms of where our staff have studied, where they carry their research, who their research and teaching partners are, and a whole world of academic, professional, and public connections.

The map below provides a summary picture of some of the global ties of our current staff.

