



UCD College of Social Sciences and Law

**RESEARCH STORIES**

# Towards the Good Society

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# **Towards the Good Society**

UCD College of Social Sciences and Law is the leading centre in Ireland for education and research in the social sciences and related disciplines. The College comprises the schools of Archaeology, Economics, Education, Geography, Information and Communication Studies, Law, Philosophy, Politics and International Relations, Psychology, Sociology and the School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice.

The social sciences at UCD have an established international reputation – attracting students from all over the world to the diverse undergraduate and graduate programmes. UCD is highly ranked for social sciences in all the main international rankings of universities and is among the top 100 universities in the world for archaeology, development studies, law, political science and social policy.

Innovation is extremely important to the College and numerous interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary degrees are available on topics such as behavioural economics, cognitive science, equality studies, European affairs and European law, public policy, geopolitics, global migration and human rights. Degrees also include professional subjects in archaeology, economics, education, information and librarianship, law, social work and psychology. Some degree programmes facilitate students to liaise directly with partner organisations through project work or professional internships in Ireland or internationally.

As the leading centre for research in the social sciences and related disciplines in Ireland, the College of Social Sciences and Law concentrates on addressing fundamental issues concerning the nature of our society and applied issues that impact directly on public policy. The College's commitment to engaged research ensures a strong connection between the College and the community through its partnerships and collaborations, which aim to improve, understand or investigate issues of public interest or concern. Collaboration with partners in government, industry and civil society is an essential component in amplifying the quality and the social impact of research in the College. Academics in the College receive international recognition and major funding awards for their research, for example, from the Irish Research Council (IRC), the Royal Irish Academy (RIA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the European Union Horizon 2020 programme.

The diversity of research undertaken is clear from the research stories presented in this showcase. Topics include research into protecting young people's mental health and children's experiences of racism in schools to how our choices are shaping open data and the pursuit of The Good Society. Also referenced in this showcase is the recreation of material objects used by former generations at the UCD Centre for Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture, an innovative and world-leading facility, and the work being carried out by world-renowned expert Dr Marie Keenan into restorative justice in sexual violence cases.

These pieces of research, and many more on-going at the College, have had direct impacts on the way we in Ireland, and further afield in Europe and the rest of the world, view, interpret and make decisions towards a better society.

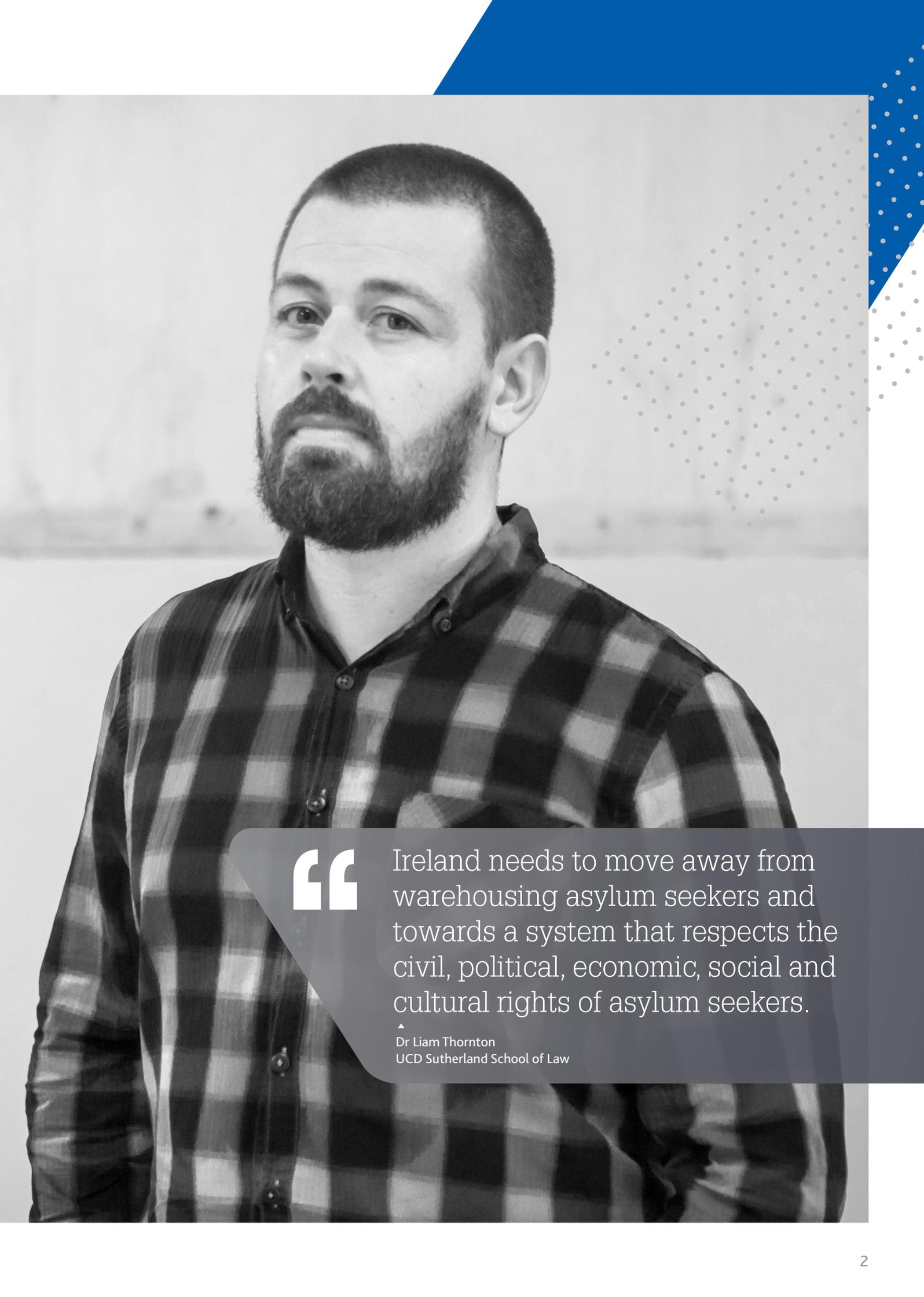
# DR LIAM THORNTON

UCD Sutherland School of Law

## Out of sight, out of mind

The way Ireland deals  
with asylum seekers is  
an Irish solution to  
an Irish problem.

Putting people in institutions, says Dr Liam Thornton, UCD Sutherland School of Law, is how we have always dealt with so-called 'problematic' groups resulting in their segregation from a society that simply does not care about them.



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Ireland needs to move away from warehousing asylum seekers and towards a system that respects the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of asylum seekers.

▲  
Dr Liam Thornton  
UCD Sutherland School of Law

# Out of sight, out of mind:

Ireland's treatment of asylum seekers is a denigration of their human dignity.

Asylum seekers in Ireland's direct provision system are forced into State dependency, restricted in where they can live and prohibited from employment for fear of criminal conviction. They are denied the same social rights other people in Irish society enjoy.

Dr Liam Thornton's research focuses on the systems and processes of law that have led to the denial of social rights to asylum seekers. He shows how segregation through the direct provision system is typical of how Irish society treats groups it believes to be troublesome and continually refuses to learn from its mistakes.

An asylum seeker is a person who comes to Ireland, makes a claim for protection from persecution or serious harm, but whose claim has yet to be ultimately determined by Ireland. Asylum seekers in Ireland live in designated centres away from the main body of Irish society. They are not allowed to work, are not entitled to social welfare and are excluded from social housing and rent allowance. If they move from these designated centres, they lose their right to bed and board accommodation and their allowance of €19.10 per week, an amount that has not increased since 2000. The system for determining whether an asylum

seeker is entitled to protection in Ireland can be slow and cumbersome. There is a high success rate in challenging rejection of protection claims before our courts. This leads to people spending several years in the system of direct provision. What started as a short term 'no more than six months' system, has become a stain on Ireland's human rights record.

Dr Liam Thornton has carried out a significant analysis of the formation of the direct provision system, utilising Freedom of Information documents to construct a picture of how and why the system of direct provision developed. He finds that since

asylum seekers started coming to Ireland, a hallmark feature of the Irish reception system has been the continual withdrawal and diminution of social rights. This, he says, is justified on the grounds of preserving the integrity of immigration controls and the protection of the welfare state from those who are not viewed as having a definitive right to be in the country.

"Direct provision is not on a statutory footing. It has not been set out in legislation, but is based on a series of ministerial circulars, written by civil servants and approved by various ministers. They have organised the removal of asylum seekers

from the welfare system process by stealth. And because asylum seekers are not entitled to work, they have been forced into a dependency on the system, while still being excluded from the welfare system afforded to the rest of society," Dr Thornton says.

Direct provision has worrying historical and even current parallels with how we have treated other politically labeled 'problematic' populations in the past. From the mass incarceration of our most vulnerable citizens in industrial schools, borstals, mental hospitals, mother and child homes and Magdelene laundries, there are times that the 'never again' and apologies for these past harms by our most senior politicians ring hollow.

When established, direct provision was to be a short term, no more than six month system. Yet, by mid-2016, there were almost 4,000 asylum seekers in the direct provision system. 12.4% of these asylum seekers have lived in direct provision for more than 7 years. Well over half of asylum seekers in direct provision have been in the system for over 12 months.

"Why do we continue to repeat the mistakes of the past? Why does the country continue to build institutions for parts of the population they don't like and then make excuses about it?" he adds.

Dr Thornton says that society will always come up with reasons why the system is working and can't be changed. For example, the initial excuse used in the case for keeping asylum seekers in the direct provision system was because there was a housing crisis in the country.

"Then, by 2003, it was to deter asylum seekers from having children born in Ireland. In 2008/9, the excuse was that the number of asylum seekers was dropping so it was proof that the system was 'working'. Now we are using the excuse of another housing crisis. We are constantly coming up with new reasons not to make a change – or continue

to recycle old reasons." Dr Thornton believes that society does realise that it is repeating the same mistakes of its past.

"There is an image that we have a respectable policy of allowing people to remain in centres but beyond that veneer of respectability, the more punitive, harsh face of Ireland is revealed."

The McMahon Report – which was published in June 2015 and came from a working group set up to investigate direct provision – made a number of limited recommendations on improving the system of direct provision. To date, very few of these recommendations have been implemented. Dr Thornton has been critical in his analysis of the McMahon report, and his opinions have received widespread media coverage.

Liam provided research support to the legal team in the C.A. v Minister for Justice case, which unsuccessfully sought to challenge the entire system of direct provision, on human rights grounds.

Thornton is equally forcible in his contention that transformative understandings of law, can be a part, but only part, of seeking to end the system of direct provision.

As well as engaging with non-governmental asylum organisations and other groups seeking to end direct provision, Dr Thornton drafted legislation in 2014 that was debated in the Seanad. This legislation sought, unsuccessfully, to provide a renewable residence right for those who had been in the asylum system for a period of five years or more. If the legislation had been passed, it would have enabled persons in direct provision to move out, and to benefit from the same rights and entitlements as afforded to Irish citizens.

His academic and legal policy work has influenced public debate while also highlighting the failure of the law and systems to fully recognise the rights of

asylum seekers. As well as engagement at the national level, he informed the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights about Ireland's lack of compliance with its freely accepted obligations under the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Only through engaging in protest, with asylum seekers now organising and agitating for their rights, coupled with the need for a fundamental discussion within Irish society, within the Irish political system, and within the Irish legal system on the inherent dignity of people, can Ireland remedy the appalling breach of human rights inflicted upon asylum seekers. Through placing human dignity at the heart of legal systems, there can be a move away from the denigrating direct provision system. With direct provision now into its seventeenth year of operation, it remains to be seen whether Irish society will finally begin to question how we recognise, respect and protect the fundamental human rights of asylum seekers.



#### ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Dr Liam Thornton is a law lecturer in UCD Sutherland School of Law. He teaches on a number of undergraduate and graduate courses and has a strong interest in social justice and law. Some of his areas of research relate to immigration law, social security law, European law, human rights law and children's rights. He has published numerous peer-reviewed journals and book chapters as well as edited a number of books. He is a regular writer of newspaper articles and blogs on these issues. Dr Thornton has also carried out tendered research for the Law Society of Ireland, the Irish Human Rights Commission and the Odysseus Network/European Commission. Prior to taking up his position in UCD, Liam was Research and Policy Officer with the Irish Human Rights Commission.

#### KEY RESEARCH INTERESTS

Asylum Seekers  
Human Rights  
Direct Provision System  
Law

“ There has been a tendency to exclude asylum seekers from supports that are seen as essential to allowing citizens and legal residents to live with a basic degree of dignity.

▲  
**Dr Liam Thornton**  
Law lecturer at UCD Sutherland School of Law

# DR BARBARA DOOLEY

UCD School of Psychology

## One Good Adult

Protecting young  
people's mental health  
is everybody's business.

Adolescence is the stage in life when most mental health problems begin. With early interventions, young people challenged by mental health issues can go on to reach their full potential. Research by Dr Barbara Dooley, UCD School of Psychology, shines a light into the world of young people's mental health.



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In the past there's been a focus on the physical consequences of drinking like liver damage but very few make the link to mental health difficulties. It has consequences.

▲  
Dr Barbara Dooley  
UCD School of Psychology

# One Good Adult

Protecting young people's mental health is everybody's business.

Growing up doesn't come without its challenges. Adolescence is a time when mental health difficulties increase, with international research showing that 75 per cent of all mental health disorders occur before the age of 25.

Dr Barbara Dooley's ground-breaking study "My World" — the first national study of youth mental health in Ireland — found that where young people engaged in drug and alcohol abuse, the likelihood of anxiety and depression increased.

As young people navigate the world they live in, they will come up against road blocks from time to time or things that affect negatively on their mental health. Delving into the causes of young people's depression and anxiety, looking at influences like alcohol and substance misuse and also looking at what factors help protect young people from anxiety and depression has been the passionate driver of Dr Barbara Dooley's work.

Before 'My World', her acclaimed piece of research on the subject of depression and anxiety in adolescents, very little data existed in this country and researchers and practitioners had to rely on world-wide research.

More than 14,000 young people aged from 12 to 25 took part in her study. The findings

of the report are now being used to inform public policy across a range of Government departments and by organisations working directly with young people themselves.

"We wanted to make a case to Government that mental health issues exist in Ireland and we need to consider the services and supports available to young people," says Dr Dooley.

They set out to look at the risks to young people's mental health but also to look at the protective factors too. These are the positive influences in a young person's life that help them grow their sense of resilience in the face of challenges.

"These things are important because we know if you support a young person early and the issue is resolved early, the person can

go on and achieve their optimum. But if you have someone who is struggling and they stay struggling, they don't achieve what they could achieve. If you intervene early, there's a much better outcome," says Dr Dooley.

Throughout her research, Dr Dooley found that the young person who sought help did better than those who didn't reach out for help. And when it came to asking for help, young males were much less likely to reach out than young females.

"There's always that stigma of acknowledging that you are going through mental health issues. It does take quite a lot of time for a nation to re-think about something as difficult as mental health. It is normal to experience mental health difficulties. It is unlikely that you will go through life without hitting some wall," she says.

Her research highlights the importance of the school environment in a young person's mental health, especially where increases in anxiety and depression were associated with bullying.

Because young people spend so much of their waking hours in school, her research finds that schools should consider their policies to support mental health. Since her research was published, the Department of Education has drawn up guidelines for Well-Being in Post Primary Schools.

Dr Dooley says because this is the only 'big' data that we have on the subject of young people and depression and anxiety, it has fed into a number of national policy documents and further studies. She says it will also no doubt be used by the newly established taskforce to take action to improve the mental health and well-being of children and young people.

Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People Helen McEntee recently announced that she would chair the taskforce, a diverse community-led group with a depth of experience across the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.

"There is now a recognition that the mental health of young people is an absolute necessity to be talked about in Ireland. This task force is a really big step forward in the process of how we think about young people and mental health," says Dr Dooley.

As a researcher, she was keen to look at the positive things that might protect a young person from experiencing anxiety and depression. Things like recognising the strengths of young people, building their self-esteem at home and not being too negative as a parent were all things that came up in the research.

"Being really able to listen, being open and listening when issues crop up is really important. Parents have these antennae. Having someone to turn to and someone to talk to is crucial. The research highlighted the importance of 'one good adult' in a young person's life," she says.

Alcohol and the impact it has on young people's mental health has been a major focus of Dr Dooley's work. Worryingly, only 65 pc of senior cycle students – those in fourth, fifth and sixth year in school – were falling within the low-risk range of alcohol consumption for adults as defined by the World Health Organisation. And this was affecting their behaviour across the board – from their school lives to their own self esteem.

"There is a really strong association between alcohol and how well they were doing. In the past there's been a focus on the physical consequences of drinking like liver damage but very few make the link to mental health difficulties. It has consequences," says Dr Dooley.

From home and school to youth groups and the wider community, she says young people's mental health is everyone's business and it's in everyone's interest to help mind it.



#### ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Barbara Dooley is an associate professor attached to the School of Psychology in UCD. She is also Deputy Registrar of UCD and the Dean of Graduate Studies in the University. She has more than 50 international peer-reviewed publications. She has previously been on the board of Young Ballymun, a project to enhance the lives of young people from the area. Dr Dooley was also Director of Research for Headstrong, the national centre for youth mental health from 2008 to earlier this year. Dr Dooley's particular expertise is in the area of applied psychological research designs and statistical analyses focusing on youth mental health. She has been involved in a number of large-scale national studies estimating prevalence of psychological problems in young people. She is currently a member of a pan-European group looking at the issue of body image in young people and a member of an international network of researchers in youth mental health.

#### KEY RESEARCH INTERESTS

Young people  
Mental Health  
Alcohol consumption and young people  
Family life  
Risk and protective factors  
Body image

#### FUNDING

Dr Dooley's research was funded by the One Foundation.

“ It is normal to experience mental health difficulties. It is unlikely that you will go through life without hitting some wall.

▲  
**Associate Professor Niamh Moore-Cherry**  
UCD School of Geography

# PROFESSOR DAVID MADDEN

UCD School of Economics

## Breaking Out

An Irish mother's education has significant implications for her child's future prospects.

An Irish mother's academic achievement, or lack thereof, plays a critical role in her children's future education and health. Professor David Madden, UCD School of Economics, has undertaken extensive research into the health and education outcomes of Irish children, with results that pose challenges for policy-makers.



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These are children who are already suffering from income and educational deprivation and now there is evidence of health deprivation too. These deprivations are accumulating in a small section of society.

▲  
Professor David Madden  
UCD School of Economics

# Breaking Out

An Irish mother's education has significant implications for her child's future prospects.

Children have no income of their own, no control over their household circumstances and very limited choice when it comes to many aspects of diet and lifestyle. Is a child born into a home with a particular socioeconomic status destined to face more challenges in terms of health, wellbeing and future prospects?

Professor David Madden's research on childhood and adolescent obesity and inequality of opportunity in education reveals that children's home lives have a critical influence on their health and education outcomes.

Most people would agree that all children in our society should have equal access to healthy lifestyles and high-quality education. However, several studies have demonstrated that children from less affluent backgrounds are more likely to struggle to complete their second-level education and fewer of them go on to further education.

Professor David Madden's research examines health and education outcomes at an early stage in childhood development, taking into account several defining factors, including the level of education of the principal carer, taken in most cases to be the mother.

His findings have revealed a clear socioeconomic gradient for children as young as nine years of age and that the level of education of a child's mother, specifically, has a significant effect on a child's lifetime educational and health outcomes.

"I think it's plausible to say that the biggest influence in children's early years is going to be their principal carer, who, in the majority of cases, is their mother," says Professor Madden, who is a Professor of Economics at UCD.

He chose maternal education as the yardstick of socioeconomic status as he believes

that, overall, it provides the most accurate measure. Questions about income tend not to result in clear-cut answers, he says, whereas "in terms of an accurate measure of socioeconomic status, the mother's level of education ticks a lot of boxes. Typically, it's an honestly and accurately answered question".

Several factors that appear to lie behind the differing outcomes in children's educations can be directly linked to the level of maternal education. For example, the number of books in a house (both adult and children's books) has a clear association with educational outcomes, and also tends to be linked to a higher level of maternal education.

While not all the factors contributing to children's educational outcomes can be accounted for in this way, Professor Madden finds that school and teaching factors do not appear to play as important a role as what is happening in each individual child's home.

**"In terms of the observed characteristics influencing educational outcome gaps, they seem to relate far more to things happening within the family home. School-related factors like class size and experience of teachers don't actually seem to have a significant impact,"** he says.

Diet habits and health awareness are also factors that overwhelmingly stem from a child's home life.

While there is evidence that childhood obesity may be levelling off in Ireland, Professor Madden's research suggests that this is not the case for all demographic groups. On a socioeconomic scale, there appears to be a higher transition rate into obesity — and a lower transition rate out of it — for children from less educated or affluent backgrounds. This contributes to the development of what Professor Madden calls a 'pattern of multiple deprivation'.

"This is a problem because these are children who are already suffering from income and educational deprivation and now there is evidence of health deprivation too. These are deprivations that are accumulating and occurring in a small section of society, and their multiple nature can make it very difficult to break out of."

Using the nationally representative Government-funded study of children, 'Growing Up in Ireland', Professor Madden has taken a highly-detailed approach to his studies on obesity and equality of education in Irish children.

The survey provides a wealth of information regarding children's economic and domestic circumstances but it can also be used to track the same group of children at different points of their development.

This enables a longitudinal approach to the subject matter, a method that reveals longer-term and more detailed results.

**Ireland is not the only country to demonstrate such socioeconomic gradients in terms of education and health. In fact, we probably sit somewhere in the middle of the road in terms of overall economic equality and social mobility.**

Professor Madden's research in these areas — as well as his other research in the areas of taxation, poverty and other areas — has sparked much public debate.



#### **ABOUT THE RESEARCHER**

Professor David Madden is Professor of Economics at University College Dublin, having worked at UCD since 1991. Previously, he worked at AIB Investment Managers, Davy Stockbrokers, the Central Bank of Ireland, the Ministry of Health, Nigeria, and the ESRI.

Public policy has been a constant theme in Professor Madden's research, and he has been a member of a number of advisory committees and boards established by Irish policymakers over the years. Other key areas of interest in his work include tax reform, inequality and poverty in Ireland and public health issues, and he has published widely in academic journals related to these topics.

#### **KEY RESEARCH INTERESTS**

Inequality  
Poverty  
Education  
Health Economics  
Socioeconomic gradients

**“** In terms of the observed, explainable characteristics influencing educational outcome gaps, they seem to overwhelmingly be to do with things happening within the family home.

▲  
**Professor David Madden**  
UCD School of Economics

# DR MARIE KEENAN

UCD School of Social Policy,  
Social Work and Social Justice

## Seeking Justice

The quest for fairness  
in cases of sexual violence

Restorative justice, victim offender mediation as well as healing circles in the Catholic Church are key to ensuring justice in cases of sexual violence. Research by UCD's Dr Marie Keenan on both child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church as well as restorative justice in sexual violence cases calls for better responses for victims, perpetrators, their families and society as a whole.



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Therapy can offer victims and offenders a lot of help in the aftermath of sexual violence, but victims were telling us they needed more. Victims were telling us they wanted to meet with their offender in the interest of healing and accountability.

▲  
Dr Marie Keenan  
UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice

# Seeking Justice

The quest for fairness in cases of sexual violence

Unless changes are made to the structure and organisational culture of the Catholic Church that created a climate in which clergy could offend, the cycle of violence is likely to continue albeit in some different guise. This is one of the findings made by Dr Marie Keenan, UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice.

In an international study on restorative justice in cases of sexual violence, Dr Keenan found that some victims and offenders require this justice mechanism in addition to criminal justice as it provides opportunities for voice, participation, validation, vindication, and offender accountability that contributes to the healing of both and to repair of the social bonds.

Dr Keenan was running a treatment centre for perpetrators of sexual violence against minors when she began what would later become an internationally significant study of sexual abuse by Catholic clergy and the response by the Church authorities.

"When I began this research child sexual abuse by Catholic clergy was a growing international phenomenon of great public interest and it was clear that nobody really understood the genesis of the problem. The public wondered how Catholic clergy could do what they had done to children given the long-held belief that these men had a divine "calling", and they had given up their lives to

work for God and community and essentially to do good," says Dr Keenan. "My research set out to answer these questions drawing on extensive research with all the key stakeholders, including the clergy offenders." Dr Keenan's findings are detailed in her internationally renowned book 'Child Sexual Abuse and the Catholic Church: Gender, Power and Organizational Culture.'

Rather than focusing solely on the psychology of the offender, Dr Keenan argued that the social and organisational influences on their lives as priests and religious must also form part of the inquiry. Her main finding was that organisational and

theological factors played a role (along with individual psychological factors) in the men's subsequent sexual offending. She elaborated each of the contributory factors in depth and in detail as she built a theory to explain, but not condone, sexual abuse by Catholic clergy.

"Individuals are accountable for their wrongdoing but if we only look at the individual perpetrator and don't look at the organisation and structures that allowed it to happen, then we are not getting to the root of the problem," says Dr Keenan.

Neither will we get to a good solution, Dr Keenan argues, because the structures of

the Catholic Church that gave way to this problem have only marginally changed – deviant behaviour, whether criminal or not, by some priests and religious will inevitably continue.

“The leaders of the Catholic Church are well intentioned in their responses to dealing with clerical sexual abuse, although they take an individualist approach, but if they don’t change the fundamentals of the organisational culture and system of governance that facilitated the problem then unfortunately individuals will continue to be poorly served – both clergy and laity alike.”

Dr Keenan’s research on restorative justice in sexual violence cases followed from her experience as a psychotherapist running a therapy centre for victims and offenders of sexual crime and from her research on sexual abuse in the Catholic Church.

Restorative justice focuses on healing the harm of violence in the aftermath of sexual crime and involves a number of methodologies including victim offender mediation, healing circles and restorative conferences involving community members.

“Therapy can offer victims and offenders a lot of help in the aftermath of sexual violence, but victims were telling us they needed more. Victims were telling us they wanted to meet with their offender in the interest of healing and accountability. Victim advocates and professionals were cautious about such initiatives, voicing concern about possible re-victimisation of the victim in such a process,” she says.

In two major studies on restorative justice in sexual violence cases, Dr Keenan set out to investigate such concerns and potentialities – drawing on the wisdom and experience of the relevant key stakeholders.

The first study took place in Ireland in 2012–2014 and was published in the report ‘Sexual Trauma and Abuse: Restorative and Transformative Possibilities’. The study found that victims of sexual crime wanted restorative justice; they wanted to face the offender in order to read statements or ask questions. They felt this would help them heal but also act as a mechanism of accountability. It would help in understanding – but not excusing – sexual violence and also aid family reconciliation. Victims felt restorative justice might help them to ‘get out of’ or formally close a relationship with

the offender and although not a requirement for a good outcome, these meetings can sometimes result in an apology and forgiveness.

Offenders said they would participate in restorative justice if requested to do so. They felt they had a moral obligation to do so and owed a debt to their victim to participate. They believed it would be an opportunity for the victim to confront the person who had harmed them, ask questions and receive honest answers. It was also an opportunity, they believed, to issue an apology and express sorrow for what they had done – and perhaps receive forgiveness. Restorative justice would result in healing for the victim, offender and both sets of families and allow the victim to move on with their lives.

All of the victims interviewed wanted a restorative justice system to be in place in Ireland, not as an alternative to the criminal justice system but as an additional justice mechanism. Even if they would not use it themselves, they believed restorative justice should be an option for all victim survivors who require it. They felt it would be particularly effective in cases involving intra-familial sexual violence or in cases involving young offenders.

Dr Keenan’s second study with Estelle Zinsstag on restorative justice in sexual violence cases was funded by the EU and was conducted in collaboration with KU Leuven in Belgium. In this study, Dr Keenan examines whether restorative justice is an appropriate mechanism in cases involving sexual violence from an international perspective, drawing on international experience and empirical work.

The study argues that restorative justice can complement criminal justice in cases involving sexual violence. Dr Keenan used the following four concerns of the current conventional criminal justice mechanisms as central to its main argument: the limited role that victims play in criminal justice and their dissatisfaction at being mere witnesses; insufficient offender accountability; the lack of attention given to the reintegration of sex offenders and the limited role that communities of care and citizens are afforded in criminal justice.

The study found that many of the reasons that prompt victims and offenders in non-sexual cases to engage in restorative justice were the same in cases of sexual violence. Victims of sexual violence want to be heard and to seek an acknowledgement of the harm caused to them. ‘How could you do this to me?’ is the question most asked by victims who have been raped and the only person who can provide the answer is the perpetrator.

Victims also see it as a chance to reclaim their voice – not as a victim but as a survivor.



#### ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Dr Marie Keenan is a lecturer at UCD’s School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice and is also a member of the Advisory Board of UCD Institute of Criminology. She is an Academic Advisory Board member for a review of the literature on sexual abuse in the Catholic Church for the Australian Royal Commission into sexual abuse of children in Australia. Before taking up a teaching and research position at UCD, Dr Keenan worked for more than 20 years as a social worker and forensic psychotherapist. She maintains a small consultancy as a forensic psychotherapist and restorative justice practitioner.

As well as countless peer-reviewed papers and conference publications, Dr Keenan has published four books on the issues of sexual violence, restorative justice and the sexual abuse of minors. She has also contributed chapters to many other books on these topics.

Dr Keenan has served as Chair of the Irish Family Therapy Association of Ireland, on the board of the Irish Penal Reform Trust and several advisory panels for Religious Orders in Ireland.

#### KEY RESEARCH INTERESTS

Child Sexual Abuse  
Clerical Child Sexual Abuse  
Catholic Church  
Restorative Justice  
Sexual Violence

#### FUNDING

University College Dublin  
The Tony Ryan Trust  
Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference  
European Commission Daphne Grant

# PROFESSOR AIDAN O'SULLIVAN

UCD School of Archaeology

## Material worlds

Understanding humanity  
by reconstructing the past

A materialistic world conjures up images of modern-day mobile phones, consoles and gadgets but people have always been obsessed by 'stuff'. Professor Aidan O'Sullivan, UCD School of Archaeology, seeks to recreate material objects from the past to help understand how people live with "things".



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One thing that archaeology teaches you is that nothing is a given, and all things change. Societies are always in a state of flux and change. Through telling the stories of the past, we hope to reveal to people the complexity and diversity of human experience.

▲  
Professor Aidan O'Sullivan  
UCD School of Archaeology

# Material worlds

Understanding humanity by reconstructing the past

Human life is fully mixed up with things, and archaeologists argue that it is our relationships with things, places and landscapes that actually make us human. The ‘stuff’ we have in our everyday lives also provides a glimpse into how we see ourselves — from the houses we build and live in, to the clothes and hairstyles we wear, to the ways we communicate through mobile phones, computers and technology.

People have always used material objects to create their own societies. Archaeology as “the discipline of things” interrogates how we live with, and through, material culture, to make our own worlds. Using experimental archaeology, Professor Aidan O’Sullivan’s research focuses on recreating material objects that were used by former generations to understand the knowledge, skills, technologies and materials that they had, and to understand people’s lives in the past.

If you go to a hidden corner of the UCD campus in Belfield, you will find archaeology students busy at work. But they are not digging up old pieces of the past; these are experimental archaeologists who are recreating that past to better understand it.

UCD Centre for Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture is one of the only

specifically designed and dedicated on-campus university facilities of its kind in the world. Established in 2012, it supports research projects, innovative teaching, and public outreach activities to create a better understanding of the role of crafts, technologies and materiality in people’s lives in the past, and in the present.

“Archaeology is the discipline of things. It focuses on how people create and live with material culture, giving us access to a full spectrum of the human experience, across vast spans of time. Experimental archaeology is one way to investigate things in the past, so we can gain a better sense of how people’s lives were entangled with knowledge, their



environment, and with each other” explains Professor Aidan O’Sullivan, who is the centre’s director.

“Experimental archaeologists reconstruct past buildings, technologies, environmental processes and objects to explore the role of material culture and materiality in people’s lives in the past”

“By physically building an early medieval or Viking house, we can better understand the practical skills and knowledge they had and how their lives were entangled with their environment. We explore why and how they chose different raw materials, and how those houses might have functioned in terms of heat, light, smoke and space. We gather insights into the life-story or biography of a building – how it might deteriorate or collapse across time.”

“Our archaeological researchers can make stone axes and use them to fell trees, turn the soil, or butcher meat, and with that experience and data, they return to museum collections with new eyes, and a much better sense of how those things were used by humans thousands of years ago.

Professor O’Sullivan highlights how the Centre’s archaeologists can cast bronze brooches, make pottery, forge iron, cook food, work with textiles and plants, all the time gaining knowledge into ancient crafts and technologies.

“All these insights are applied to genuine archaeological evidence found in excavations, and along with the knowledge gained through eyesight, hearing, smell and touch, our scholars have a more vivid sense of how the archaeological evidence of the past was originally created.”

The Centre is located on a field that belonged to a rural Dublin farm before UCD came to Belfield. The field was untouched by modern fertiliser or building, allowing the researchers to build structures in that soil and replicate genuine archaeological features, to discover how these structures look when uncovered in an excavation.

“We can carry out an experimental archaeology project and then do an excavation on it afterwards. We can ask: ‘What happens to the soil if we fire pottery at 1,000 degrees, and what would be left there afterwards?’ It gives us a way of understanding genuine archaeological sites.”

It is also an approach that gets to the heart of archaeological enquiry – how do we use things to live in the world, and how do those things actively shape us?

“Our own lives are bound by material culture. Every decision we make involves material culture – from the clothes and shoes we put on in the morning, to the things we carry, to the ways we organise the rooms we live and work in. We always use ‘things’ or ‘stuff’ to present ourselves to other people. From childhood, we become adept at reading social identities through the things a person uses – in terms of class, ethnicity, gender, and so on,” says Professor O’Sullivan.

“We tell our students when they first join us in UCD, they are already expert archaeologists – they have been unwittingly and unconsciously interpreting the surface of the world around them, through their reading of material culture for years”.

Professor O’Sullivan explains: “Through an archaeological education, we get them to look deeper...”

“Archaeology is about fragments. The past can be imagined as a jigsaw with lots of pieces missing, and no cover on the box to tell us what the picture should be. Experimental archaeology provides one way of putting some of those pieces of the jigsaw back together,” he says.

The centre also promotes a dynamic, problem or enquiry-based form of learning. Students are encouraged to be resourceful, creative, and to think critically, to solve problems and to work together. Through immersive, experiential learning, they gain insights into how a project can be completed successfully. Success comes from intrinsic motivation, teamwork, and from seeking solutions to simple, if tricky, problems.

A major part of the work at the centre is public outreach. If you happen to be walking on campus and peep through the gate, chances are a student or lecturer would invite you to come in and see what they are working on.

“We love reaching out to the public and telling stories about our past. We feel a sense of responsibility to tell them what we are doing. It’s the archaeologist’s basic instinct – find things out, tell stories about them”.

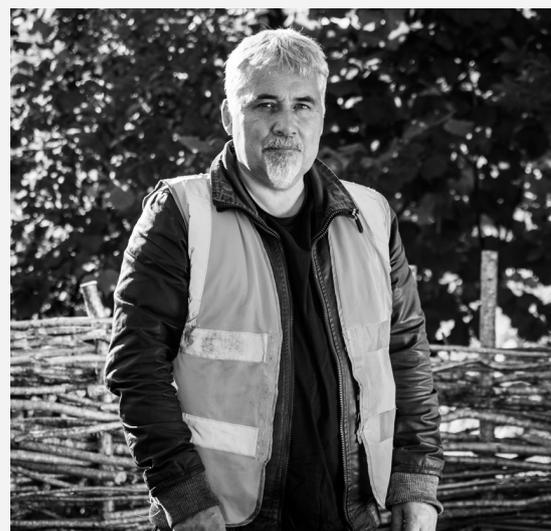
The centre is extremely active on social media and interacts with interested parties all over the world, promoting their work and UCD to an international audience.

Ultimately, Professor O’Sullivan’s research explores the diversity of human experience and how societies were organised.

“Archaeology is like time travel, as in that famous phrase ‘the past is a different country, they do things differently there’. As archaeologists, we travel back to past societies that once existed, and are no longer found in the world, such as Mesolithic hunter-gatherers, or Bronze Age Mediterranean societies, or Viking Age societies in the North Atlantic.”

“Those societies were once a way of organising human communities, and their life is not to be found anywhere today.”

“One thing that archaeology teaches you is that nothing is a given, and all things change. Societies are always in a state of flux and change. Through telling the stories of the past, we hope to reveal to people the complexity and diversity of human experience.”



#### ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Professor Aidan O’Sullivan is a Professor in UCD School of Archaeology, of which he is a former Head, and current Deputy Head of School. He is Director of the UCD Centre for Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture. His research interests include early medieval Ireland, wetland archaeology, and experimental archaeology and material culture studies. He has published numerous peer-reviewed publications and is a member of the editorial boards of several archaeology publications. A member of the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland (MIAI), he was also elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries (FSA), London. He has been invited to speak at conferences, seminars and events at universities across the world.

#### KEY RESEARCH INTERESTS

Experimental archaeology  
Material culture  
Ancient technologies  
Early medieval Ireland

#### FUNDING

The Irish Research Council underpins much of Professor O’Sullivan’s research through PhD scholarships and Postdoctoral Fellowships at the UCD Centre for Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture. The Centre has a Teagasc Walsh PhD Fellowship and several Marie Skłodowska Curie research fellowships are associated with the Centre. UCD also provides seed funding for individual projects.

# PROFESSOR DYMPNA DEVINE

UCD School of Education

## Sticks and Stones

Children's experience  
of racism in our schools

Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me? Professor Dympna Devine, UCD School of Education, captures children's voices as they grapple with status, hierarchy and peer cultures in an increasingly diverse Irish educational system.



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Adults need to be aware of the complex dynamics in children’s social worlds, so they can be properly supported when challenges arise.

▲  
Professor Dympna Devine  
UCD School of Education

# Sticks and Stones

## Children's experience of racism in our schools

Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me? There's an accepted wisdom that children don't really see differences in skin colour or social standing; that they don't understand what they are saying when they call other children names. But how do we know?

Professor Dympna Devine has dedicated her life's research to capturing the voices of children and young people as they navigate differences in power and status in the classroom. Name-calling – racist name-calling in particular – is shown to be an important tool used by some children in the assertion of their status.

The ethnic mix in school classrooms is changing, as Ireland becomes an increasingly multi-cultural society.

With this rapid social and cultural change come opportunities and challenges for teachers, schools and society in general. The challenges may be especially acute for children in the classroom who are distinguished by differences in terms of skin colour, lifestyle, language and religious beliefs.

Professor Dympna Devine's research involves working with both majority ethnic and minority ethnic children and young people,

including migrants and children from the Irish Traveller community. She listens to the child who is bullied for being different, the child who is called names and the child who perpetrates the name-calling, in order to understand what shapes their behaviour.

Professor Devine's work explores how the seeds of future behaviour, including racism, are sown in how children learn and play together, in the classroom, in the playground, on the way to and from school, in their communities. Children's social worlds are influenced by ethnicity, gender and social class and their experience of friendships and relations with peers sets the stage not

only for their self confidence and learning, but also for their behaviour as adults. How teachers and other role models in children's lives deal with discriminatory behaviour is crucial. "Adults need to be aware of the complex dynamics in children's social worlds so they can be properly supported, especially when challenges arise" says Professor Devine, who is Head of UCD School of Education.

"Children, even from a young age, are critically aware of social differences but adults think they aren't. Children know what they are doing [when they call names or exclude other children] and why they are doing it. They might not put labels on it but

they are acutely aware of the differences between each other”, says Prof Devine, whose background is in sociology.

Professor Devine emphasises children’s competence and resilience in her research and says we should include children’s perspectives more in our thinking about social policies and most especially about the education system, where children spend a significant part of their childhood.

“The voice of the child is crucial to give us a deeper understanding of their lives and the issues that matter to them.”

Her research shows how teachers need to be sensitive to the multiple challenges children experience in their lives inside and outside of school, in friendships and relationships and the influence this has on how children think and learn. This also includes recognising how children contribute to their family life, to their schools, to the wider society.

Schools, Professor Devine says, should be inclusive and represent the diversity of children in its community but, to achieve this, teachers and parents also need to be properly supported. ‘Pressure points happen when there is a break down in adequate supports, communication and understanding’ she says. It is especially important that clear procedures for monitoring and tackling negative incidents in schools are put in place.

Teachers, she found, are often not equipped with the resources to deal with the increase in diversity in the classroom. For example, children, whose mother tongue is not English, are currently provided with two years of English language support.

“But internationally we know that a child may be fluent in spoken English after two years, but it takes seven years to teach a child to write academically in their second

language. When the economic crisis happened, one of the first areas that was cut in schools was language support.”

This challenge over resourcing, she says, is an ongoing issue that needs to be tackled at government level. “Investment in these earlier years is crucial to ensuring the inclusion of migrant children in society, building on the potential they bring through their diversity and ambition to do well and contribute to Irish society.”

As one of the first researchers in Ireland to record and research migrant children’s experience of the education system in their own voices, Professor Devine’s work is internationally recognised and has contributed to both public and media debates.

She has worked closely with senior policy and government bodies to better inform policy and practice in relation to children’s rights and well-being in Irish society, and especially children in the education system. She is currently working on a number of EU research projects.

Examples include a study of supporting Traveller children and young people in making a positive difference in their schools and local communities. A second project is looking at patterns of change and continuity across three generations (grandparents, parents and young people) in coastal communities, including among migrant families who have settled there.



#### ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Professor Dympna Devine is Head of UCD School of Education and Co-Director of the MSc/PhD in Children and Youth Studies. She is Deputy Director of the UCD Childhood and Human Development Research Centre in UCD Geary Institute for Public Policy, one of Europe’s leading economic and social research institutes. She is a nominee of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to the National Advisory Council for Children and Young People. She is also a nominee of the Minister for Education and Skills to the Early Years Education Advisory Group. She has published widely on her research.

#### KEY RESEARCH INTERESTS

Migration  
Education  
Children’s rights  
Children’s voices  
Equality and Social Justice  
Sociology

#### FUNDING

Professor Devine’s research has been funded by the EU Commission, Department of Education and Skills, the Immigrant Council of Ireland, the Irish Research Council, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Fulbright Commission.

“ Behaviour at a young age mirrors behaviour in society – the seeds of future behaviour, including racism, are sown in today’s classroom and playground.

▲  
Professor Dympna Devine  
UCD School of Education



# PROFESSOR DAVID FARRELL

UCD School of Politics and  
International Relations

## Collaborate to innovate

Getting people involved in political debate through deliberative consultation is the way forward for Irish politics, according to Professor David Farrell, UCD School of Politics and International Relations.

This kind of consultation connects citizens to decision-making and can really make a difference as shown in recent social and political reforms.



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Citizens' Assemblies are an important add-on to our existing system of representative democracy.

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Professor David Farrell  
UCD School of Politics and International Relations

# Collaborate to innovate

Connecting people to politics  
in order to make a difference

Irish society has seen important change implemented following a collaborative process that put the general public at the heart of the process. The recent Marriage Equality referendum and subsequent legislation as well as Dáil reform are just two examples of real change emerging from a deliberative process that included citizens engaging directly with the Irish political system.

Professor David Farrell has been at the forefront of this new style of collaborative politics. He believes this form of deliberative consultation will make a real difference in achieving social and political reform.

Connecting people to politics and taking a lead in demonstrating the power of consultation in the democratic process has been an important principle of Professor David Farrell's work. After over twenty years living and working in the UK, Professor Farrell returned to Ireland in 2009, shortly after the economy plunged into recession. He noticed that in Ireland it was economists who were leading the media agenda with their views and thoughts on Ireland's future direction.

"If the economists can bring that skillset to the debate, there's no reason why political scientists can't do the same," he thought.

Professor Farrell led a group of political scientists who proposed that citizens should be brought into the heart of debates over constitutional reforms to improve how Ireland's representative system of democracy operates. "Timing was everything. People were clearly angry with politics and there was an appetite for more citizen-focused political reform."

"Our modus operandi was to seek to persuade the newly elected government in 2011 to establish a citizens' forum," Professor Farrell said. 'We the Citizens' was established, whose year-long activity of work culminated in Ireland's first national citizens' assembly

in June 2011. Funding of €640,000 came from Atlantic Philanthropies, a not-for-profit supporter of academic-based projects and themes that have potential benefits for society. A headquarters for 'We the Citizens' was set up in Dawson Street, Dublin, with a staff of three people and a budget to travel around the country, engaging with citizens, which Professor Farrell as Research Director described as "truly from the bottom up".

The data analysis underlying the assembly was presented to government, which some months later established the Irish Constitutional Convention (ICC). Professor Farrell was appointed research director with

key responsibility to ensure that the ICC followed deliberative practice.

The project was embedded in a growing scholarly interest in the practice of deliberation, which included a series of citizens' assemblies in Canada and the Netherlands in the early 2000s.

Deliberation involves the random selection of ordinary citizens who are provided with objective information, listen to and question the experts, and then engage in facilitated small-group discussions about policy issues.

Their recommendations are then fed into the political process either by referring back to government and parliament for decision or by referendum of the wider population.

The ICC operated over a 14-month period, meeting over the course of 10 weekends, following deliberative practice. Its 100 members comprised 66 citizens selected by an opinion poll agency, 33 politicians from the Oireachtas and the Northern Ireland Assembly and an independent chair, Tom Arnold, who was appointed by the government.

It tackled a "a crazily eclectic agenda" including marriage equality, a lower voting age and Dáil reform. Such an initiative was new in the political process and the collaborative nature of the work was hugely beneficial.

The ICC's strong recommendation for a marriage equality referendum was influential in the government's decision to call the referendum in 2015, which passed – making this the first time in the world that a deliberative process resulted in real constitutional change. A number of other ICC recommendations (such as on Dáil reform) are also in the process of being implemented.

Given the success of the ICC the government recently took the decision to establish a new Citizens' Assembly. This is a new deliberative process that follows the same principles as the Constitutional Convention. It consists of a random selection of 99 citizens chosen by an opinion poll agency, with a Supreme Court judge in the chair. The Assembly will consider a range of topics including the issue of Ireland's abortion ban. Professor Farrell has secured funding from the Irish Research Council to be the 'research leader' of the Assembly.

As for the students of today, Professor Farrell believes there is a healthy interest in politics, evidenced by the resurrection of UCD's Politics and International Relations Society, after a hiatus of more than 30 years. The Society was an important part of college life at UCD and its reappearance has energised students and staff alike.

The hunger in understanding democracy and how politics in Ireland works offers hope for the future, he believes.



#### ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Professor David Farrell is Chair of Politics at University College Dublin and Head of the School of Politics and International Relations. He joined the university in 2009 and is a member of the Royal Irish Academy. A prolific writer, he is the author of six books, has co-edited 12 other books and published more than 80 academic papers and book chapters.

Professor Farrell was tasked with supporting the research work of the Irish Constitutional Convention, which debated a range of issues and fed back information to the political system. It operated over a 14-month period and involved deliberation between 66 citizens elected by an opinion poll agency, 33 politicians from the Oireachtas and the Northern Ireland Assembly. He is currently the 'research leader' for the recently appointed Irish Citizens' Assembly.

#### KEY RESEARCH INTERESTS

Elections  
How Democracy works  
Party politics  
Deliberative consultation  
Parliaments and representation

#### FUNDING

€39,500 from The Irish Research Council for a project entitled *Research Leader Irish Citizens' Assembly 2016–2017*.

€640,000 from Atlantic Philanthropies to fund 'We the Citizens' throughout 2011.

“ Timing was everything. People were clearly angry with politics and there was an appetite for more citizen-focused political reform.

▲  
Professor David Farrell  
UCD School of Politics and International Relations

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

# NIAMH MOORE- CHERRY

UCD School of Geography

## Race for Rates

Poor planning decisions  
and conflicting interests  
have left Irish society  
paying the price.

Planners are charged with making decisions for the common good. But because of poor structures and conflicting interests, pressure to make choices for short-term gain usually wins out, leaving society to pick up the pieces.

A black and white portrait of Associate Professor Niamh Moore-Cherry. She has long, dark, wavy hair and is wearing a dark jacket and a striped scarf. The background is a blurred city street. A blue decorative element with white dots is in the top right corner. A dark grey quote box is overlaid on the bottom right of the image.

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People are already paying a massive social toll for poor planning, including those living in negative equity who paid over the odds for houses. When we get it wrong, it has massive social implications.

▲  
Associate Professor Niamh Moore-Cherry  
UCD School of Geography

# Race for Rates

Poor planning decisions and conflicting interests have left Irish society paying the price.

Planning decisions affect every part of society and are intended to enhance the quality of life of its people. These choices influence where we live, where we send our children to school, how we get to work and the hospitals we attend when we get sick.

Associate Professor Niamh Moore-Cherry's research focuses on how poor planning structures and policy, as well as pressures on local authorities to compete with each other for rates, leaves society counting the real cost of after effects such as ghost estates, negative equity and vacant city centre buildings.

The collapse of the Celtic Tiger had such a seismic impact on Irish society that its people will be dealing with the fall out for years to come.

Many sections of the community – from politicians to bankers – continue to bear the brunt of the blame but one of the fundamental causes of the crisis was planning and housing policy and implementation.

Associate Professor Niamh Moore-Cherry's research examines how the structures around planning and the intense pressure on those making the decisions continues to inhibit the optimum planning choices which have far-reaching implications for society.

One of the main reasons poor decisions continue to be made is the centralisation of power in Ireland, which has forced local authorities – particularly those based in Dublin – into a deadly race for rates.

"We have a very centralised system, which gets involved in every decision. This is very unusual and, in most other European countries, local authorities have stronger powers," says Associate Professor Moore-Cherry, who is an urban geographer and an Associate Professor at UCD's School of Geography.

"All the big decisions are made centrally and then the funding is allocated to each local authority. This means that they are forced to

compete against each other for that funding."

"Dublin's local authorities are not set up to work together. The only way they can raise funding is to increase rates so they are competing with each other for these rates, rather than looking at how to develop the city-region for the good of the society. "

She said that during the boom, developers were paying millions of euro in development levies in order to allow them to build housing estates on land under their remit.

"Were they going to turn planning permission down when they knew he would just go and build it elsewhere? Of course not. They were under a lot of pressure to get money in.

“This is what drove the Celtic Tiger madness with houses being built in Meath while vacant lots were left undeveloped within the city centre.”

She says that there was a perception at the time that Dublin was full and that land was running out. Developers, she says, “talked that up”, despite the fact that there were lots of sites vacant in the city centre that could have been developed.

“The role of planning is to make decisions for the common good. But the way the structure is set up means that there is a lot of pressure on senior management and central government to get extra housing, put in another playground – or whatever it might be – for the area.

“This means that the decisions are not being taken in the common good but as a result of whatever pressures are being put on them.”

The scale of Dublin, she says, is one of the reasons why this lack of co-operation between the local authorities is more visible in the capital and cited Limerick and Cork as examples of where the local authorities were working together in a more strategic way.

Dr Moore-Cherry’s research has also examined what she believes is a “traditional ambivalence” in Ireland towards the urban. She believes that this embedded urban/rural divide – which is not as prevalent in other countries – has a strong influence on planning decisions.

“The rural lobby is very strong and there are not many people arguing for urban affairs. Everything that was seen as being good for Dublin was seen as being bad for the rest of the country,” she says. “That means that local authorities find it hard to do what they want to do as there is no political desire to release funding for urban areas.”

“Why were there blocks of apartments being built in Roscommon if it was not an appropriate development? It’s about realising that one size does not fit all for planning. And it certainly does not fit for a whole country. Planning needs to be reflective and we need to realise that it needs to be different in different places.”

So, have we learned anything from our mistakes? It is hard to tell. In many places planners are in development control mode as a result of being burnt by over development during the boom. But in Dublin, for example, forward planning is not keeping pace with current needs and the needs of future populations.

“The planners are always behind the market and the planning permission system is not working as well as it should be. Some planners have very little understanding of how the market operates and are always one step behind,” says Dr Moore-Cherry.

Being one step behind could be catastrophic as getting planning and development decisions right is crucial to the entire society.

“We all live in the environment and development decisions affect real people. It is about housing, transport and hospitals: all the things that contribute to the quality of life of a society. The role of the planning system and planners is to facilitate and make decisions to enhance the quality of life of citizens.

“People are already paying a massive social toll for poor planning, including those living in negative equity who paid over the odds for houses. When we get it wrong, it has massive social implications. ”

Associate Professor Moore-Cherry’s research concentrates on understanding how cities are governed, how urban policy is developed and with what impacts and has generated a lot of discussion on the lack of urban policy in Ireland. Her work on the regeneration of Dublin city and the Docklands area has been published in both local and national media.

Her research into vacant space sparked a debate on the possibility of introducing a policy to allow the temporary use of vacant spaces in city centre locations. Her public engagement workshop on temporary space was one of the impetuses behind the creation of the ‘Connect the Dots’ network within Dublin city, which aims to explore, pilot and test a series of creative ways to activate vacant spaces.



#### ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Niamh Moore-Cherry is an Associate Professor in UCD School of Geography, University College Dublin. She is an urban geographer and her research is focused on understanding how cities are governed; how urban policy is developed; and with what impacts. She is the author of *Dublin Docklands Reinvented* (Four Courts Press, 2008), has co-edited two books and has papers published in national and international journals. She is a Senior Fellow in Teaching and Academic Development at UCD and has a strong research and practice interest in first year transitions and student partnership. She is: a member of the Social Sciences Committee, Royal Irish Academy; Chair of the IGU Urban Commission Young Scholars Committee; and has been elected President of the Geographical Society of Ireland, 2016–2018.

She teaches human geography, comparative urbanisation, and research design at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

#### KEY RESEARCH INTERESTS

Urban Geography  
Urban/Rural divide  
Planning  
Political Geography  
Urban Regeneration  
Vacant Spaces

#### FUNDING

Funding for some of Associate Professor Moore-Cherry’s research was provided by the Irish Research Council, European Regional Development Fund and the UCD Seed Funding Scheme.

“Local authorities are forced to compete against each other for funding. They end up in a race for rates, rather than looking at how to develop the city for the good of the society.

▲  
Associate Professor Niamh Moore-Cherry  
UCD School of Geography

# DR THOMAS GRUND

UCD School of Sociology

## The Social Network

Being part of a social network affects how you behave, act and live.

People have always lived their lives in social networks, but now this is played out online in social media. Our behaviour and position within these social networks, says Dr Thomas Grund, UCD School of Sociology, has serious implications for individuals and society as a whole.



“

Social networks greatly matter for what individuals do. Being embedded in networks affects how you behave, how you act and how you live. By being in those networks, you influence others as well.

▲  
Dr Thomas Grund  
UCD School of Sociology

# The Social Network

Being part of a social network affects how you behave, act and live.

Social media has become an important part of the lives of much of the world's population, with most members of one or more online social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. But social networks have always existed, influencing the way we live our lives as individuals and impacting on society.

Dr Thomas Grund's research focuses on social networks including examining their impact on individuals and societies as well as the relationships within groups such as criminal networks and football teams.

Social networks have a major influence on what individuals do. Being part of a social network affects how you behave, how you act and how you live. By being a member of a social network, you also have an influence on others and how they live their lives.

This is the focus of much of the research being conducted by Dr Thomas Grund, who is a lecturer at UCD School of Sociology. He started his research in a more traditional way, using social class to examine very specific behaviour, but then became interested in social networks.

It provided him with an interesting way to explore how individuals behave when embedded in a social structure. He examines in detail how what individuals do partly depends on what others are doing around them, helping him understand individual behaviours better. Examining online social networks — as well as real-life networks of criminals or professional football players — has been central to Dr Grund's work in this area. His research examines all types of networks and shows that we see the world through our position in the social networks we belong to.

Social networks affect individuals, making them behave in a way that affects society at a macro level. How people experience social networks matters and affects how we work as a team, group or society. The idea is that the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

**“First of all, I examine how individuals are embedded into networks and how individuals perceive themselves through them,”**

says Dr Grund, who uses complex data sets in his research.

Individuals don't see the whole social world — that means the position we have in the network has an impact on how we see the world.

“Because of this embeddedness into networks, most people experience that their friends have more friends than themselves. Not only do our friends have more friends than we have, they are also, on average, better looking than us.”

It is not a subjective thing. It is an objective score, says Dr Grund, based on our position in the network.

Dr Grund believes the best example of this is on Twitter. Almost everybody who is on Twitter follows someone who has more followers than

themselves. “Those who only have few followers are not seen by many others. The same argument applies to salary scales; it seems that other people earn more than we do.”

Thinking that people have more followers or friends, are better looking or even have greater salaries than we have actually has consequences on the way we view ourselves.

“If you live in these specific bubbles, you feel worse than you should feel. Networks can paint an inaccurate picture of others' interests, friends, followers, and salaries. This paints a distorted picture and people disproportionately see others as better than themselves. It can have a devastating effect on people's self worth.”

However, Dr Grund points out, it can also have a positive effect — if we believe people are doing better than us, it can motivate and inspire us.

A football stadium is an ideal arena to learn about social behaviour in networks because it is governed by clear rules; teams have well-defined boundaries and interaction between members of the teams can be studied objectively.

**“I love studying football. It is fascinating as it is almost like a social experiment where we can observe everything that is happening,”**

says Dr Grund. “In the real world, it is extremely hard to study how people relate and work with each other. But on a football pitch, it is extremely simple; we see how people behave in relation to each other.”

Dr Grund's findings show that teams are more than the sum of the individuals and are better without a central star player. “It is not just about bringing individuals together, it is about how they interact with each other to make a good team.”

During his research, Dr Grund examined 283,259 passes between professional soccer players in 760 Premier League games to show that teams that make more passes — and pass the ball equally between each other — score more goals.

More of his recent research shows that when players know each other for a longer time, they behave in different ways and the time the players spend with each other matters for being successful on the pitch.

Two players are more likely to pass the ball when they know each other more. Network experience

affects the way team members interact and ultimately leads to performance outcomes.

Dr Grund's examination of the world of football, social and criminal networks and the evolution of friendliness has gained much global media attention. Articles on his work have featured in the Wall Street Journal, Die Zeit, the Guardian, ScienceNews, ScienceDaily, International Business Times, The Voice, The National, ABC Radio, BBC Radio, the Irish Examiner and others. His research has led to invitations to give keynote talks at international conferences.

One of his studies that gained much media attention found implicit discrimination of referees against black players. It found that referees in the Premier League were 15 per cent more likely to give a black player a yellow card as opposed to a white one. However, it was implicit discrimination, which meant the referees were probably unaware that they were even doing it.

“Referees gave more yellow cards to black players on certain parts of the pitch. These were split-second decisions but as soon as they have time to think about it or reflect on it, they are less likely to give that yellow card,” says Dr Grund.



#### ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Dr Thomas Grund is a lecturer and an assistant professor at UCD School of Sociology, where he is also Deputy Head of the School. He has won a number of international awards, has co-written three books, has authored dozens of journal articles, book chapters and reviews.

Before coming to Ireland, Dr Grund was Assistant Professor and Deputy Director of the Institute for Analytical Sociology at Linköping University, Marie Curie Fellow at the Institute for Futures Studies and Stockholm University and post-doctoral fellow at ETH Zurich and Université de Montréal. He studied computer science and sociology at the University of Trier (Diplom), University of Cambridge (MPhil) and the University of Oxford (DPhil).

#### KEY RESEARCH INTERESTS

Social Networks  
Social Media  
Social dynamics  
Analytical sociology

**“It is not just about bringing individuals together, it is about how they interact with each other to make a good team.”**

▲  
**Dr Thomas Grund**  
UCD School of Sociology



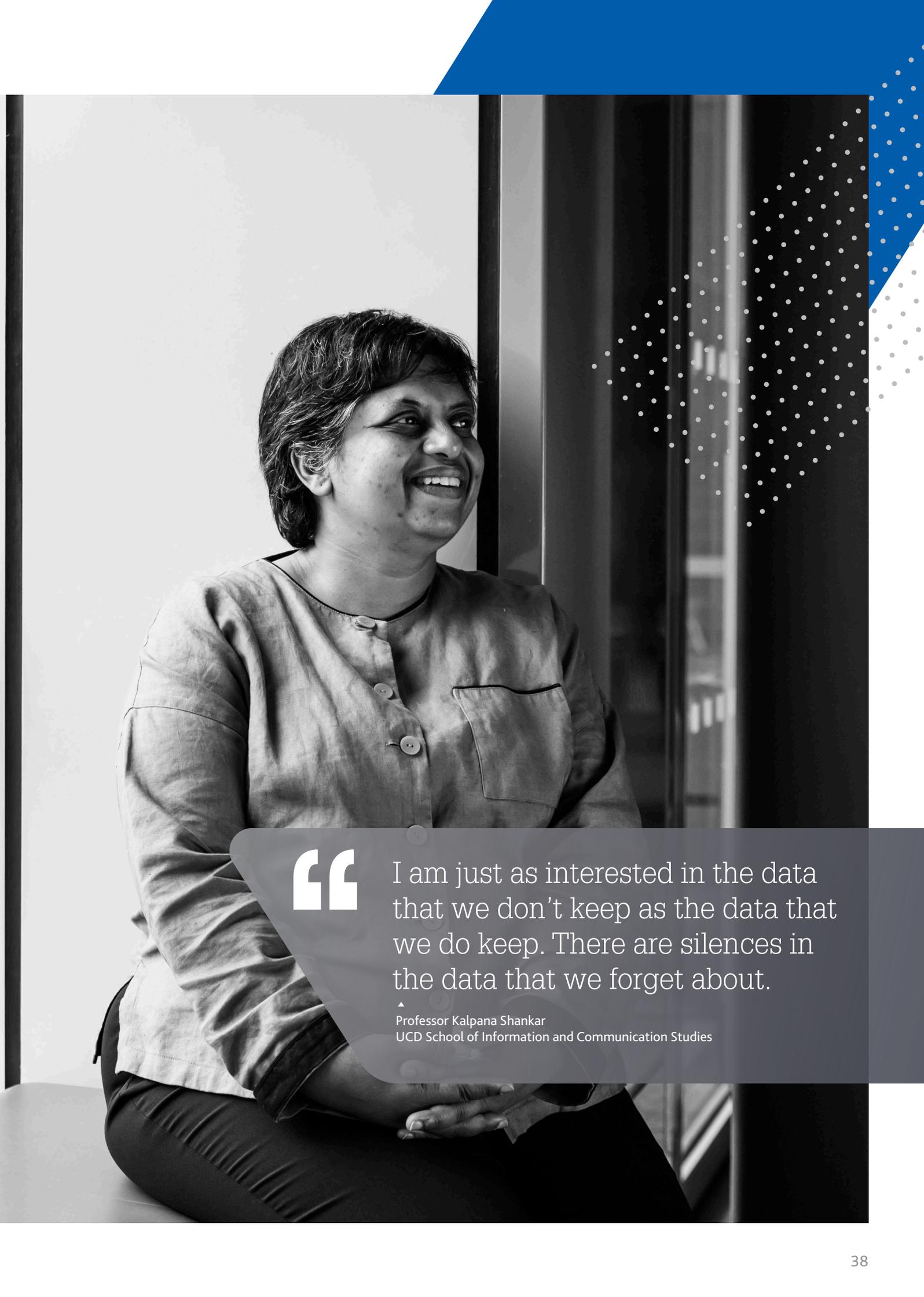
# PROFESSOR KALPANA SHANKAR

UCD School of Information  
and Communication Studies

## Invisible Choices

Open data and the sharing of information are generally seen as positives for society. But the choices we make when curating data impacts on what is collected, stored and used.

Professor Kalpana Shankar, UCD School of Information and Communication Studies, examines the social, political, legal and ethical influences on data collection, and their implications for the use of data.



“

I am just as interested in the data that we don't keep as the data that we do keep. There are silences in the data that we forget about.

▲  
Professor Kalpana Shankar  
UCD School of Information and Communication Studies

# Invisible Choices

## How our decisions affect Open Data

Full and open transparency has long been considered a ‘good thing’ for society with public and research data made available, shared and used for the common good. But the choices that are made when collecting data shapes the information that is then used to make decisions that impact on society.

Professor Kalpana Shankar’s research focuses on how data is collected, kept, used and managed. She investigates how the choices we make — whether for social, political or other reasons — when collecting that data can have implications on how society operates.

When most people think of data, they think of it as an objective set of numbers on which you can rely completely. Open Data is the idea that this information should be freely available to everyone to use and republish as they like — with the hope that shared knowledge will help shape and improve everything from society to public policy as well as foster entrepreneurship and job creation.

However, there are many invisible choices that frame the collection, organisation, and dissemination of data that influence how that data can be used, for what, and by whom. How do these choices shape the decisions we make for society on the back of that data?

Professor Kalpana Shankar has carried out deep analysis on Open Government Data and research data, studying documents, data trails and records that people leave behind and examining how these digital trails are shaped by those who create, use and manage data.

She finds that the choices we make when collating data can affect how the information is saved and this in turn shapes the choices we make for society based on that data.

“As a trained biologist, the life and health sciences particularly interest me and I became interested in the records and traces that we leave behind,” says Professor Shankar who is currently Head of School in UCD

School of Information and Communication Studies.

“I think that people take it for granted that the notes and records that are kept about them are true and accurate and this made me interested in looking at how these traces are shaped by those who create, use and manage them.”

Professor Shankar provides an example of studying the number of butterflies in Ireland. The data compiled may be perceived as definitive by those who come to use the data in the future but if you study how the data was gathered, you may see that it is not all black and white.

"The data could have been gathered in just one or two areas of Ireland — maybe with the largest populations of butterflies — and in the best weather when the butterflies are more visible. You think the data is solid and exact but it all depends on how and why the information is gathered and then managed and presented."

She also believes that it might suit some people to present data in a particular way as it ties in with the narrative prevalent in society at the time. "There may be reasons why a particular narrative is hidden or obscured," she says.

For example, it might suit to have data that shows a large number of homeless people in the country, if homelessness is an issue that is being highlighted in society at the time.

"We think of data as an objective set of numbers but they are not always objective — and there is always politics, with a small 'p', put into the data."

"We end up with data that is not neutral and then decisions — important decisions for society — are made on the back of data that may not be flawed, but have politics built into them. There are real impacts when this data is used to create social and economic policy.

"I'm not interested in whether those choices are right or wrong and it's not up to me to say whether the data is flawed. I am interested in the decision-making process — whether intended or unintended — that led to those decisions and how those decisions shape systems."

There are also lapses in the information being kept. For example, in the US, it is almost impossible to find solid data on the number of civilians killed by police.

"Numbers are often collated and hidden or not collated in the first place. How the data is described and managed depends on the political jurisdiction so it is also impossible to aggregate data across localities. So I am just as interested in the data that we don't keep as the data that we do keep," says Professor Shankar.

"For example, I might be the first woman of colour to join the Professoriate in Ireland but there is no way to say that definitively. In Ireland, we track gender but not ethnicity in terms of professorships.

"Yes, we track ethnicity at census level but not really anywhere else. There are silences in the data that we forget about. We have cultural, social and political reasons for collecting data.

"How do choices shape what's saved and how does what's saved shape our choices," she asks.

But choices have to be made about what is saved as there is not limitless space to keep endless data.

"Data needs constant care and feeding — and funding — in order to keep it useful and usable. Decisions need to be made about what we are keeping and how and where we are keeping it," she says.

Professor Shankar's research has opened a debate on the notion of having an Open Data policy just because it is believed this is something that an open democracy should have.

Professor Shankar's research raises the question of the long-term sustainability of data and what data will continue to be stored in the future.

"If I'm interested in housing policy in Ireland or climate change and I want to track it, how can I be sure that the data will continue to be tracked 50 years from now?

Can I trust it will still be there and useful or will it all just become digital tumbleweeds?"



#### ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Professor Kalpana Shankar is a Professor in UCD School of Information and Communication Studies, where she is Head of School. She has published numerous peer-reviewed journals and book chapters. Before joining the staff at UCD in July 2011, she was Assistant Professor at Indiana University-Bloomington's School of Informatics and Computing.

#### KEY RESEARCH INTERESTS

Open Data  
Research Data Management  
Data Sharing  
Information Infrastructures

#### FUNDING

The Irish Research Council and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation in New York have funded Professor Shankar's research.

“How do choices shape what's saved and how does what's saved shape our choices.



Professor Kalpana Shankar  
UCD School of Information and Communication Studies

# PROFESSOR MAEVE COOKE

UCD School of Philosophy

## In Search of the Good Society

What constitutes the 'Good Society' and how can we flourish as individuals within its structures and institutions?

Professor Maeve Cooke, UCD School of Philosophy, has spent decades reflecting on the best imaginable form of social order and how to improve existing societies in light of it.



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Probably until I die, I will be working out what I think the Good Society is and what we can do to achieve the social conditions necessary for human flourishing.

▲  
Professor Maeve Cooke  
UCD School of Philosophy

# In Search of the Good Society

What we need in order to flourish as human beings and the kind of society that is required for this purpose has been a central theme in the writings of Professor Maeve Cooke.

Engaging with the work of earlier and contemporary thinkers, she explores the question of what a good society might look like — a society that would place importance on the flourishing both of each individual human being and of the social order as a whole. She regards this as an issue that is relevant to every person on the planet.

Exploring possibilities for an alternative path to social development was the main concern of a group of critical social theorists that came to be known as the 'Frankfurt School'. The group's initial base was an independent institute set up in Germany in the 1920's to foster critical thinking against the backdrop of the turbulent growth of capitalist societies, and the socialist regimes emerging in response to them.

Taking her lead from this body of theory Professor Cooke initially intended to present her own vision of the social conditions necessary for human flourishing in what became her 2006 book, *Re-Presenting the Good Society*. But the philosophical complexities of what is involved in theorising

about social change for the better forced her to "take a step backwards".

The critically-acclaimed publication instead became primarily a reflection on theorising about the Good Society.

Professor Cooke, a social and political philosopher in UCD School of Philosophy, stresses the importance of critical theorising as a contribution to social change for the better; at its best such theorising is enlightening and illuminating; it opens our eyes to the socially produced obstacles hindering our flourishing as human beings and invites us to imagine alternative, better social orders. However, she also points out that in contemporary social theorising there are multiple ideas of the Good Society,

often merely implicit ones. Even within Frankfurt School critical theory there are very different imaginative projections of a better social order and very different views as to how—or indeed, whether—it could be achieved. How do we evaluate the merits of these competing pictures? Professor Cooke urges critical social theories to recognise the contestability of their critical diagnoses and visions of an alternative, better society, and to take seriously the challenge of defending them with reason in the public domain.

Professor Cooke continues her project to present an enlightening and illuminating picture of human flourishing within a Good Society. However, it remains very much an ongoing endeavour and, in her view, is likely

always to do so: "Probably until I die, I will be working out what I think the Good Society is and what we can do to achieve the social conditions necessary for human flourishing," she says.

Decades of research, however, have enabled Professor Cooke to identify elements she regards as indispensable for a Good Society.

At its core must be institutions and policies that foster individual freedom, not "a perniciously individualist freedom" but the kind that individuals can have only "through their interactions with others".

Connecting individual flourishing to the flourishing of other people, she says, requires a kind of society that would ensure that every human being is respected for their capacity to form and pursue their own ideas of what it is to lead a good life. In addition, it would make the substance of ideas of the good life a matter of public reflection and discussion.

She has come to appreciate the central role of institutions in shaping our identities, from the family, through sports clubs, schools, churches and workplaces, to the administrative, legal and political bodies that govern our lives as members of society. She points out that all these institutions can also be obstacles to human flourishing and must, therefore, be seen as open to criticism and transformation.

**"This is a firm conviction of mine and is based on my view that our identities, together with our capacity for freedom, are always open to development, and that we are formed by the institutions in which we live," she says.**

Institutions, likewise, are always open to development. Thus, it is always a two-way process.

Furthermore, she believes that the legal and political principles constituting the State, and regulating life within it, should be a matter of deep concern to citizens (broadly understood). She cannot conceive of a Good Society in which there wouldn't be democratic citizen engagement and efforts to work together to determine collective goods, even a "common good". But she cautions that the common good must be understood as permanently "under construction" by individuals and groups who hold divergent ideas of the good life and good society.

Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that politics is not always just about the Good Society but is often taken over by power interests, which "have to be contested and combated" in imaginative and effective ways.

Her more recent research focuses on the critical role played by acts of public protest such as civil disobedience and whistleblowing, particularly within a democratic context.

In a recently published paper 'Civil Obedience and Disobedience' she contends that civil disobedience should be thought of as a form of political protest that intentionally breaks the law for the sake of ethical transformation of the law and the system of political authority it enables.

**"The transformation is ethically motivated in the sense that it aims to change society for the better, which I take to mean a social order more conducive to the flourishing of each of its members."**

Every legally regulated association – such as the State – must punish law-breaking. However, in her Good Society there would be laws and public policies that acknowledge the importance of acts of civil disobedience for the on-going endeavour to make existing society better in an ethical sense.

By contrast, whistleblowers don't as a rule break the law but seek to highlight a discrepancy between the laws that are in force and actual observance of the law. Indeed, "whistleblowers are commendable for taking the law very, very seriously." But they too are driven by ethical concerns for a better social order. Thus, the contribution of whistleblowers to making society more conducive to human flourishing should also be acknowledged and reflected in laws and public policies.

While she doesn't see herself as having any specific or direct role to play in policymaking, Professor Cooke believes that the kind of work she and her fellow social and political philosophers do should have an indirect impact on public policy.

She has contributed to public fora on constitutional reform, she regularly organises public discussions on matters of social and political concern at the Royal Irish Academy and her books and published papers have enjoyed international critical acclaim and global distribution.

**“ My role is primarily to offer an orientation, a way of thinking about questions relevant to the Good Society and show the importance of thinking about these questions. ”**

◀ Professor Maeve Cooke  
UCD School of Philosophy



#### ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Professor Maeve Cooke is Professor of Philosophy at UCD School of Philosophy and a member of the Royal Irish Academy. Her books include *Language and Reason: A Study of Habermas's Pragmatics* (MIT Press 1994) and *Re-Presenting the Good Society* (MIT Press 2006). She has published numerous articles in scholarly journals and edited collections and has delivered hundreds of papers to academic audiences throughout the world. Her work has been translated into German, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Czech and Chinese. She is a regular contributor to public discussions in Ireland. She has held visiting appointments at leading universities in Germany and the USA and is the recipient of multiple prestigious research fellowships and awards. She sits on the editorial boards of a number of scholarly journals and is a co-director of the international colloquium "Philosophy and the Social Sciences", which meets annually in Prague.

#### KEY RESEARCH INTERESTS

Critical social theory  
Contemporary political theory  
Feminist theory  
Religion in modern democracies  
Freedom and Authority  
Democratic Dissent  
Political Violence

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