

# Milieu



MU Geography Society  
42nd Edition

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## **A Note from Professor Gerry Kearns, Head of the Geography Department, Maynooth University.**

Welcome to our Milieu. Here you can find geographers talking about racism, about environmental justice, and about the idea of the Creative City. You will find us thinking about ecofeminism, about regional approaches to Geography, and about geological time-scales. You will find us learning through work-placements, through the study of cinema, and the serendipity of travel. You find us in the field, in the study, and in the classroom. Or, at least you find our reports from these places because right now most of us are at home. So, this volume has been assembled and will be distributed online. This was a remarkable enterprise and achievement. My congratulations and my thanks go to the writers and editorial team.

How will geographers make sense of the tragedy of Covid-19? I am sure that next year's geographers will be thinking about the interconnectedness of places sketched out by the track of this virus. We will think about the racism that has produced such unequal vulnerability (Mitchum 2020), the environmental injustice that puts so many of the people of southern China in close proximity to the ecologies where new strains of influenza emerge (Wallace 2016), and the ways creativity was mobilised to make new online communities under crisis (UNESCO 2020). We will no doubt also ask how feminism offers a way to think about Covid-19 as produced by a particular relation with nature (Hutner 2020). We will be trying to understand how geopolitical structures, national cultures and regional politics shaped mortality (Micallef 2020). We will explore ways to understand the emergence of this new virus in the context of our Anthropocene (Settele et al. 2020). As Milieu 42 shows, geographers have the curiosity and analytical acumen to rise to the challenge.

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## A Note from The Geography Society

The Geography Society would like to start by saying a massive thank you to the editorial team which included William, Caoilfhionn, Conchúr and Siobhán. They went above and beyond to make sure this year's Milieu was published. Things were made difficult with the current pandemic and without their dedication and hard work this edition of Milieu would not have been possible. The Geography Society greatly appreciate all the hard work and dedication they have put in.

The Geography Society is a great way of meeting new people and making friends. It teaches you great communication skills. For example, the society must liaise with the Geography Department for events and activities.

The society, along with the department, come together to create the Milieu magazine. This is another great opportunity to learn new skills and meet new people. For example, advertising for people to send work in to launching it, printers must be organised, working and communicating with each other to put it together.

There is plentiful of skills and fun to be had by being part of such a wonderful team. As President of the committee, I have learnt so much about myself, met new friends along the way and created lifelong memories all of which will be cherished.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite current first years, second years, Erasmus students and postgraduate students to email me, if you are interested in getting involved with the Geography Society, in the next academic year. If you are interested in joining please contact me by email at: [kate.quinn.2019@mumail.ie](mailto:kate.quinn.2019@mumail.ie)

We are looking forward to meeting you, and we hope you enjoy this year's Milieu!

*Kate Quinn*

**President of Geography Society**

## Geography Society at Fairs Day 2019



**Kate Quinn (President) and Adam Conway (Vice- President) at Fairs Day 2019.**



**Geography Society Stand at Fairs Day.**

## **Editorial Note**

Welcome to Milieu 2020! The 42nd Edition of Milieu, and the very first online version of the annual Department of Geography magazine. As a Department, we have managed to work together and make online teaching possible in such difficult circumstances. We couldn't possibly let COVID-19 stop Milieu.

We are incredibly excited to bring you articles, photos and memories from both students and staff this year. We had a phenomenal selection of articles submitted to us, on a variety of topics ranging from eco-feminism, film studies, geography work experience and power and race. We also have included memories from when we could travel further than the 2km radius, with photos from the Geography Field Trip in Lanzarote. Not jealous at all.... There are some special inclusions from students who are nominated for awards and modules that were taught this year. This is all topped off with a selection of reminiscences from the year in our photo section.

The editorial team would like to thank each author who submitted such interesting articles, contributions and great photographs from the department activities over the past year. We would also like to thank the Geography Society and Department of Geography, especially Neasa Hogan and Adrian Kavanagh, for their assistance and encouragement in bringing Milieu to life this year. Without their help and support, we would not have been able to make this possible.

Thank you for reading and we hope you enjoy the very first online version of Milieu!

Caoilfhionn, Conchúr, Siobhán and William.

Milieu 2020 Editorial Team



## Approaches to Human Geography

**Author:** *Niamh Henry*

*The following short play was produced as part of the GY305 Approaches to Human Geography Module. The play is set in the 1970s, as geographers gather to try to come up with a solution to the possibility that geography might be removed as an academic discipline in universities across Ireland.*

*Three geographers with very different approaches to human geography are in the middle of a debate about which of them has the most effective, valuable way to do geography. Dr. Sarah Martin, a radical feminist geographer, Professor Colin McCullen, a regional geographer, and Dr. Seamus Murphy, a spatial scientist.*

**Prof. Colin McCullen:** We're all here to discuss our individual approaches to geography so we can come to one inclusive, effective way to ensure geography remains as an academic discipline. We cannot let what happened in Harvard to happen here... Shall I go first?

**Dr. Sarah Martin:** Sorry, if you don't mind, I'm going to say my piece first. After all, it took myself and my fellow feminist geographers long enough before our voices were heard.

**Dr. Seamus Murphy:** Ladies first. I'm interested to see your points...

**Dr. Sarah Martin:** Well, let me start from the beginning. Environmental determinist theories? Men. Regional Geography studies? Men. The mighty quantitative revolution and spatial science? Oh, shocker, men. In all these approaches which claim to be "dominant" and most "valuable", you have all been completely ignorant of all the amazing research and studies which have been done to develop approaches and theories to geography by FEMALE GEOGRAPHERS, since the beginning of the discipline. No wonder we're in

this pickle now, fighting for the survival of geography! Have you even for a second given a thought to how much development could have been accomplished in the discipline if anyone had listened and learned from a female geographer rather than ignoring any bit of knowledge that was created? If geography was inclusive of gender, then we would have better ways of studying geography and we would have studied issues concerning women. From the very start, much of what constitutes as geography has been solely constructed by men, and that is the problem with geography.

**Professor Colin McCullen:** Okay, you have made a valid point, geography has ignored the knowledge produced by women for a long time and it is shamefully wrong. However, in your area, what is the approach to doing geography? How is it contributing to the discipline?

**Dr. Seamus Murphy:** Yeah, I agree with you, women should have been given more credit, and I acknowledge that, but, as Colin has already pointed out, where is the method here? What's your approach as a radical feminist geographer?

**Dr. Sarah Martin:** Our approach is a social reordering of how we study geography. We do not have one core theory; we have multiple. Our focus is on transforming the patriarchal societies of which we live in. The hierarchal traits of men dominate women, limiting them for succeeding in life the same way men do. Their opportunities are barred, and we are being left behind. Geography needs to be revised in a way which is inclusive of gender. Gender is just as important as any other factor in studying geography. It is equally as important as economic, political or cultural factors!

**Dr. Seamus Murphy:** I completely agree, Sarah, it's wrong how women have been ignored in the history of our discipline. To be fair, how can we progress and call ourselves an academic discipline if we haven't listened to a female perspective? Why is it that women weren't listened to in the past? Sarah, do you know?

**Dr. Sarah Martin:** There's this whole idea that only men produce objective knowledge, and women are too emotional to produce concrete studies. We have a theory that is based on epistemology and explains how we produce knowledge and where it comes from. The traditional view has always been that men produce logic and objective knowledge, and women are the total opposite. This is not true! Our epistemological theory has proven that women produce just as logical knowledge as any man would, and it is the normative roles in society that have contributed to the ideology that women cannot produce objective knowledge because they're too attached to nature. It is all rubbish, and I strongly disagree. For the gender problems to disappear in geography, we need to demolish the patriarchy!

**Professor Colin McCullen:** Can I just say, isn't your approach a bit too sociological to be an approach to geography? I mean, it is a great approach and all, but wouldn't you be better off researching your topic using a sociological imagination rather than geographic thought?

**Dr. Sarah Martin:** We focus our theories on how the social construction of gender dominates space in women's lives. That's one thing we share in geography; we all study space, place, or both. In the public space, women feel fear, and it's seen as a space of masculinity and fear, whereas in the private space, it is assumed women feel safe and calm. In fact, the opposite is true as studies have proven that most violence against women occurs in private space. This is because media tend to report the violence which happens to women in the public space, and the media is ignorant of violence which happens in the home. Violence and fear against women are geographically distributed among various places and spaces. Some women see some spaces as threatening and others as not. A woman finds certain places threatening where a man wouldn't. Knowing this information, we can formulate theories that will help women see some places and spaces as less dangerous.

**Professor Colin McCullen:** I must say, it is quite interesting to hear a female's perspective on doing geography, and your points are extremely important and valid.

**Dr. Seamus Murphy:** I mean, my way of doing geography is completely different, but I do respect what you do, and I see how your approach is important in pushing towards a more progressive society and a safer space for women. Although to be fair, in my field, we do have a large amount of female spatial scientists, and they're very much involved in our work.

**Dr. Sarah Martin:** I appreciate that Seamus, I know there are a few female spatial scientists in your field, and I think that reflects where society is going. Women are taking part in more scientific approaches across many disciplines, but I still feel like there's room for improvement. Right, Colin off you go. What's regional geography, and why should we care?

**Professor Colin McCullen:** So, in a nutshell, we regional geographers predominantly focus on analysing and describing the uniqueness of different regions. This helps us understand what has been imprinted on the landscape from the past, and it changes and transforms landscapes and cultures.

**Dr. Seamus Murphy:** We're here to understand which of our methods is the most effective to ensure geography remains as an academic discipline. How is writing down what the land looks like and how it influences culture going to keep us there? It is too basic! There is no science behind this. Give me one reason why you believe your approach is effective?

**Professor Colin McCullen:** I'm sorry? You think our methods are basic? We regional geographers would go out analysing landscapes from dawn to dusk, seven days a week, to produce maps and descriptions of local areas to help us understand how it changes and develops. We spend hours and hours walking around analysing every single detail. The detail we have produced is by far more realistic than anything you spatial scientists produce with all



your assumptions. The amount of effort we put into every single project we take on is humungous, and we work incredibly hard. We take a physical approach. We go out to these places and learn about them from the landscape and the people. Yeah, that's right. We talk to people! Proper face to face communication is essential in producing knowledge on geography! One thing I can certainly vouch for is that regional geography has many female regional geographers who are included, producing amazing, illustrative, detailed accounts of regions across Ireland.

**Dr. Seamus Murphy:** Oh, please, your idiographic methods are not needed. It's laws and models and theories that are essential to the survival of geography!

**Professor Colin McCullen:** Disagree with me if you like, but I don't believe there is any need for statistical models and theories in geography. The sheer amount of effort put into creating detailed descriptive accounts of these places is scientific enough on its own, in my opinion. Geography is an exceptional subject, just like history. We do geography our own way with our methods, and I believe it can be just as effective as any other discipline. We are living in this world, and we do not even understand how we came to be the way we are. Regional geography is influenced by possibilism, and it is an optimistic view of how the environment gives us options. We react to these options, and this is what shapes our unique regions and gives us our culture.

**Dr. Sarah Martin:** That is true, Colin! I've read a few accounts written by female regional geographers, and there clearly is a huge amount of effort put into these accounts, but the fact that there are no theories doesn't convince me that it's a good enough approach to allow for the survival of our discipline.

**Professor Colin McCullen:** We do not classify our methods as scientific, we are solely idiographic in practice, and we do this to our best ability! We're moving away from science!

**Dr. Sarah Martin:** So, you're telling us that your approach uses no theoretical practices? How is this approach going to help us remain as an academic discipline in such a fast-paced world? The world today is so interconnected. Globalisation is spreading like wildfire, aren't all regions the same apart from a few minor differences? Laws and theories are essential to the production of concrete knowledge! Vague, simplistic descriptions of different places are just not enough to keep us in the university.

**Dr. Seamus Murphy:** Your approach is limited, there is only so much knowledge you can produce about regions! It's way too basic for what the world is looking for right now. Does either of you have any ideas?

**Professor Colin McCullen:** Yeah? In order to progress today, regions need to be looked at even further in order to truly understand our own nature!

**Dr. Seamus Murphy:** No, absolutely not! The world is becoming more technologically advanced, it's moving faster than ever before. We need problem solvers, people who are trained to handle large amounts of data. Also, have you even looked at the other disciplines who aren't struggling for survival? They use nomothetic methods! We need to catch up with the world's other academic disciplines! There is a need for scientific methods, and if these methods are put into practice, they can seriously solve a lot of geographical world issues!

**Dr. Sarah Martin:** Explain one of the methods you use so I can better understand.

**Dr. Seamus Murphy:** We have developed models which help us understand how distance impacts on human behaviour, a seriously important topic in society right now. For example, Burgess' Concentric Urban Land-Use Model helps cities understand the placement of people by distance from the city. The further you move away from the city, the more developed, middle-class communities you'll find. These models help us understand what's going on in the world! Don't you see?

**Dr. Sarah Martin:** But don't you spatial scientists do everything by hand? I mean, how accurate can these models truly be?

**Dr. Seamus Murphy:** We make assumptions, but otherwise, it would be impossible to propose these models. When we are studying an area, we assume an isotropic land surface, we assume population densities are the same and that everyone has perfect knowledge, the 'Economic Man' as we call it, and will act rationally. We're technologically limited, but the focus remains just as important! We use scientific methods, based in mathematics and statistics, to understand spatial relations between locations and how this influences human behaviour!

**Professor Colin McCullen:** Having studied landscapes, I can assure you that topography creates barriers to movement, so this is certainly something that needs to be included in your models. Your "isotropic" plain idea is ridiculous and unrealistic. You skew your attention to space in your study, but place is just as equally important!

**Dr. Sarah Martin:** The 'Economic Man' produces perfect knowledge? Ha! Another obvious reason why we need to include gender in the approach to geography, you're leaving out 50% of the world's entire population! Also, the idea that everyone acts rationally is ludicrous, and you're naive to believe that. Crime rates? Violence against women? Only in a perfect world does everyone act rationally. Social issues are essential to any model that claims to present society, even if it solely represents locations. These issues matter, especially gender, and it needs to be represented!

**Dr. Seamus Murphy:** Once we become more technologically advanced, I am sure we will be able to include social issues and more realistic perspectives of the landscape, but for now, we are limited. But you cannot deny that spatial science is the way forward to ensuring our survival in the university, it's modern, it's nomothetic, we produce theories, models, laws! We cannot continue chasing after everyone else as they progress their discipline to fit modernity. We are

finished lagging behind! As a concluding note, I would just like to point out that if it wasn't for the emergence of spatial science, our discipline would have ceased to exist long ago!

**Professor Colin McCullen:** Look, we'll agree to disagree for the purpose of avoiding an argument. But I myself will continue to study regions, I'm too old now, and I'm pretty content in how I carry out my work (chuckles).

### **Suggested Readings**

Cresswell, T. (2013) *Geographic thought: a critical introduction*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

## **The Importance of Historical Climatology in Understanding Past and Future Climate Variability and Change**

**Author: *Ruth Rochford***

Our climate is changing. This is not news. It is the unequivocal truth. The planet, the world, and its environments have been changing for centuries. Although the field of historical climatology has made significant contributions to understanding past climates, it could make many more contributions to our present-day discussions on the world's global climate knowledge, its impacts, and our responses. (Carey, 2012). Historical climatology is the study of historical changes in the climate and their effect on human history on development. It can be a useful tool in predicting a vulnerability in climate variations, climate extremes, and natural disasters. However, it also depicts social representations of climate and the geographical locations of the affected areas. If the location had a strong team of researchers and the resources to prevent climate impacts, perhaps disasters would not be as prominent. Therefore, the use of historical climatology is essential in observing our changing planet. In this sense, geographers can monitor and contrast past climate variability in order to better inform current understandings.

Locally, Ireland has a rich history of weather watching. The earliest recovered weather diary stems from 1682, written by John Kevan in Co. Kilkenny for the Duke of Ormond. (Dixon, 2017). It was in the 1800's that geographers learned how to take quality instrumental observations, ensuring that observers would be able to guarantee correct information. It is even said that Oscar Wilde's father was a keen weather recorder, highlighting severe weather events in Ireland. While weather diaries were kept for qualitative information before gauges, which gave detailed representations of weather, ship logs also proved essential in recording the climatology at the time.

Why is historical climatology essential in understanding past variability and change? It enables the geographer to gauge past climatic conditions, help understand the reconstruction of analysis, highlight the societal impacts of events, and outline a broader range of climate history that can be compared to today. 'Millions of weather, ocean, and sea-ice observations recorded by mariners and scientists over the past 150 years are being recovered'. (Old Weather, 2018). These data are made freely available in digital formats suitable for climate model assimilation, retrospective analysis (reanalysis), and other kinds of research. The performance of data-assimilating modeling and extended reanalysis systems is greatly improved. The uncertainty of results (especially in sparsely observed regions like the Arctic) is reduced, and new long-period calibration and validation datasets are being created. As the historical data resource is extended farther back in time, it will be possible to study a wider range of weather and climate phenomena, allowing geographers to better understand their impact on the Arctic and global environment, now and in the future'. (Old Weather, 2018). Data like this can provide valuable insight into past climatology while also providing a reference for geographers, scientists, or students to contrast the climate of today.

When it comes to global warming today, the record of the past is particularly crucial for understanding the broader historical processes that lead to climate change. There is also a link between climate change and art, and how it can impact our society. 'There is now a growing realisation that improvements in the quantity, quality, and resolution of instrumental and documentary historical observations, proxy paleoclimate data, and developments in both reconstruction methodologies and dynamical historical reanalysis, can provide new baselines of global weather and climate. The latter can be employed to test climate models for climate change detection and provide an essential historical framework within which to develop an understanding of potential changes in weather and climate impacts, risks, and extremes.

However, embracing wider collaborations with, or inputs from, the social sciences, humanities, and the arts, seems to remain beyond the current thinking or capacity of the mainstream climate science community'. (Allan et al., 2016).

Perhaps historical climatology should be examined at a local artistic level along with the climate science community in order to gain a further level of qualitative information. It is easy to gain access today to information about our changing climate. It is on the television, on our phones, and discussed widely, however, many years ago, this information would not be as accessible as today. In the past, people began to learn about climate variability and change by artistic imagery such as paintings of the flood levels in Venice, which portrayed high water levels in the Italian city. Cultural artifacts such as paintings provide evidence to support the importance of historical climatology in understanding the past and preventing change for the future.



**Figure One:** View of the flooded Piazza San Marco

**Source:** Chilone, 1825

Climate never works alone; it emerges from both physical characteristics of the climate system and the cultural construction of how we treat our planet. Climate perceptions vary among people and places, and they are continually changing over time.

Historical climatology explores past discourses and the social representations of climate, however, sometimes these representations and perceptions can have implications. 'One area that has witnessed rapid growth over the last decade is research focusing on the construction of regionally specific climatic histories and historical extreme weather events, and investigations of social responses to these events' (Oosthoek, 2015). The discourse is essential in depicting historical climatology, but narratives change and adjust over time depending on where they are coming from. It can change because of political inequality, the power of government, or the socio-economic dimensions of a location. Socially, historical climatology is an essential source of analytic importance, however, it can also have negative implications. Social representations of climate can differ between everybody, often giving unequal geographies of vulnerability spread across the world. Historical climatology can play a unique role in how society can portray and uncover the impacts and responses to climate change and how our ancestors treated it. This can also serve to inform future generations that may otherwise struggle to regain records that we have lost or destroyed.

Proxy data is essential in discussing historical climatology. Proxy data is data gathered from natural resources of climate variability and made up of a broad selection of indicators that helps to reconstruct temporal and spatial patterns of weather and climate. Climate reconstructions have helped to uncover climate data, which broadened our understanding of past climates. While encouraging us to make societal changes to our world today and possibly undo the damages we have made to our planet in the past. Detailed descriptive data can help us to pinpoint where we can change, as Brazdil et al. (2005) states; 'good dating control, high temporal resolution and focus on anomalies and natural disasters', are an advantage to this data. However, it also has its downfalls. Discontinuous structure of records and bias by the selective perceptions of observers can be 'a drawback to the scientific community'. (Brazdil et al., 2005).

Historical climatology may be described as ‘the more important cousin of environmental history’. (Oosthoek, 2015). Understanding the past helps us to interrupt the future. By understanding how society dealt with extreme weather conditions in the past helps us to design and orchestrate coping strategies for our ever-changing climate for our current climate variability. From composing this critical reflection, it has dawned on me that climate is as much cultural as it is scientific. Historical climatology provides coverage of the past to help interrupt the future, proving to be vital to our social relations, power dynamics, and our narratives of the past and future. It explains socio-economic relationships, economic domination, and vulnerability across the globe. History reveals the future of our changing climate by examining the past. Social history develops historical climatology, making it very important for understanding the past and enabling future contributions.

Our choices today will impact our future. The choices that we make may also determine historical climatology records that, perhaps fifty years from now, Geography students from Maynooth University will look upon as they compose a critical reflection on.

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## Ecoféminisme

**Author:** *Garance Convert*

*Throughout the twentieth century and in recent decades, there has been much global discussion and select action in relation to both gender equality and environmental issues. While many may view the two as potentially separate issues, most undervalue the role that feminist thought, and the ecofeminist movement, plays in shaping progressive contemporary interpretations of global environmental politics.*

By looking at the World Green Agenda and the main feminist movements during the late 20th century, many connections have been made between gender and environment. It was not usual for people to make some links between these two different theories and ways of thinking. A lot of feminist intellectuals and activists found some relevant aspects to discuss the colossal impact that environmental issues have on women. Feminism is the political, ideological, and social movement that has the primary goal of creating a society based on the equality of sexes in economic, political, and social terms. In the middle of the 20th century, women fought for more equality and more rights and they obtained, mostly in western countries, some success. While feminism has a primary concern with the relationship between men and women, and more broadly, about all minority groups, environmental politics has a primary concern with the relationship between human beings and their environment. After the rapid industrialisation of developed countries during the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, some scientists, intellectuals, and citizens began to understand that the economic growth and the capitalist system of many western countries was not as safe as they thought. This is where environmental politics and green parties emerged, when people realised the consequences and impacts that new technology and progress had on the natural world. In order to develop a green ideology, politicians began to talk about concepts

such as justice, democracy and equality, creating institutions and steps specialised to think about the environment, about climate change, and about the targets that countries have to fill. In this context, a lot of women also realised that the impacts of various environmental issues had a more significant impact on women than men. In 1974, the French writer Françoise d'Eaubonne wrote: 'Le féminisme ou la mort', where she introduces the term ecofeminism. Ecofeminism is a branch of feminism that explores and emphasises the connections between the issues of societal domination of women and the societal domination of nature. We can wonder, therefore, the extent to which feminism and gender theory challenge a mainstream understanding of global environmental politics and environmental policy generation. We will begin by showing that a lot of evidence has been found to explain that women and nature share the same men's oppression, which means that the way we are considering environmental issues might be questioned. We will look at women's implications in environmental politics and, more currently, in climate change action, to affirm that they have an opportunity to emancipate themselves when they fight for the environment. Finally, we will see the issues that human beings are going to face in the current times, especially women, and discuss the limits of ecofeminism in a world where fighting for the planet is now an emergency.

Women were often the first ones to stand for environmental causes. There are many examples that demonstrate cases in which women were impacted to a greater degree by a given environmental issue and acted in response. In 1973, in the Garhwal region in India, the Chipko Movement, a social and ecological movement that was led by women, began. (Shobhita Jain, 1984). They were defending the forest interests against big industrial companies that were destroying it for management and exploitation. In these areas, women's work was mostly in small scale agriculture. When men are leaving to work in town, women take care of their homes and natural spaces that surround the village. These women depend on



the forest more than outside investors. In this instance, women can be viewed as more invested in their natural surroundings.

When we look at the different visions and images of gender and nature histories, a lot of elements are identifying nature in a feminine way. People previously referred to 'mother nature', seeing nature as a wild, uncontrollable woman who can make storms and droughts, etc. Indeed, the language shows us a select vision of nature. Maril Hazlett (2004: 706) talks about the way the famous best-selling influential novel 'Silent Spring' written by Rachel Carson has been criticised. 'The voices in the backlash argued that when Carson questioned pesticides, she revealed herself as a bad, misguided, unreliable woman- a powerful force of social disorder'. After the scientific revolution emerged, one can view man's need to control nature, which means controlling women by reinforcing patriarchal values into society. The patriarchal thought would be that women are natural, and men are cultural, and so men might try to control nature (Bistuer, Josepa Brú, 2004, 221).

Ecofeminism emerged in the 1970s-1980s as a potential answer to the breathlessness of the modern technological and industrial world. Whether we talk about countries from the South or the North, ecofeminism is considered an international movement, seeking to join women from all over the world. Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva in their co-written book 'Ecofeminism' try to show every woman that wherever you are, there are always environmental and gendered issues you will need to fight. 'One had looked at the capitalist world system from the perspective of the exploited people and nature of the South, the other had studied the same processes as they affect women from the viewpoint of someone who lives "in the heart of the beast"'. (Mies, Shiva, 1993,1). These two activist women wanted a real change in their society. They became aware that by creating connections between gender and ecology, they could have more power, and by protecting the environment, they fight for more women's rights and seek power equality in the decision-making

process at different geographical scales.

As discussed, women are often more impacted by environmental issues and therefore are more involved in select ecological movements. We are now going to see how women look at the environmental debate and what they propose as environmental policy and solution. Following the development of global cooperation to resolve climate change issues, we can see that intergovernmental and United Nations conferences have been organised. For example, the Stockholm Conference in 1972, the 1987 Montreal protocol, or the creation of Agenda 21 in 1992 in Rio. At the same time, women, who must consider the environmental and gendered issues, also created some international organisations in order to raise relevant issues and suggest relevant propositions. A 'Women's Action Agenda 21', an outcome of the Miami Women's Conference was written in 1991 and is evidence that women need more decision-making power in the fight against climate change: 'We, women of many nations, cultures and creeds, of different colours and classes, have come together to voice our concern for the health of our living planet and all its interdependent life forms'. (1991, Preamble). They want a real societal change and have a strong program for action. Their targets look much higher than the ones in the Agenda 21 of the United Nations, and they ask for: 'the creation of a permanent gender-balanced UN Commission on Environment and Development to promote environmental awareness and to station ombudspersons in every region of the world, to receive and investigate NGO, group, and individual complaints about environmental hazards, maldevelopment, government, and private misuse of UN and international aid funds and violations of UN conventions, treaties, and international law'. (1991). On a more local scale, other examples demonstrate that women in action for the environment can be more efficient than men. Susan Buckingham gives us an example of a case study on waste management authorities in the UK. In order 'to explore the extent to which they considered how their policy and practice may have gendered impacts'. (2004, 150). Indeed, if women,

in this case, were not remaining 'on the periphery of waste management' (2004, 150), they would be more efficient because they will obviously keep in mind that in order to take care of human health, their children, they need to recycle wastes, to reduce nuclear wastes and to improve quality of life. Buckingham says: 'Through focus groups and interviews that, when pressed, respondents volunteered several examples where women and men would experience waste in different ways', (2004, 150) demonstrating that women often have a unique role to play in the delivery of green policies.

Finally, we question the limits of ecofeminism in a world where fighting for the planet is considered an emergency and where all human beings must join together to obtain a real solution. Women still don't have the same rights as men in a lot of countries, which is why many suggest a women's only protest for the environment. They understand that it is easier to fight for the environment when they are not under patriarchal domination, and so they created some social movements only for women. As an example, we can look at the 'Greenham Common Movement' that was initiated in 1981 in Europe to protest against the deployment of US nuclear missile sites. In Cardiff in Wales they created a base camp, and, according to an article published in *The Guardian* in 2017: 'By February 1982 it had been decided that this was a women-only protest- and this as crucial: a woman's place was not in the home, but at a protest'. (*The Guardian*, 2017). This is an interesting protest, which is calling for women's emancipation and for stopping environmental crises and nuclear weapons in the interest of people's health and safety. More recently, in France, on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019, a weekend was organised in Bure, Meuse, where an activist camp settled to disrupt on the creation of a nuclear waste landfill site. The goal of this rally was to protest in a non-hierarchical group in order to create an inclusive space, not reproduce the domination rules and systems that we are used to in society. This is a way to enhance the power of

the environmental protest without feeling any oppression in social movements. Women are therefore challenging the way ecologists, policymakers, and global organisations are trying to generate a green policy. They demonstrate that not considering half of the population is not an effective way to face climate change issues, which has now become an emergency. Perhaps the limits to ecofeminism would be that the movement frequently doesn't include men. However, many have expressed the reasons why they could not freely fight beside men without feeling oppressed, and as such, feminism is finally also one of the significant issues to resolve in the current world. We can look at the famous dystopian novel called *The Handmaid's Tale*, written by Margaret Atwood in 1985. This dystopia describes a fictional situation where a few men rose to power in the United States and created the Gilead State, a new society based on Christian religious rules that put forward the traditional values and women's duty in procreation in order to avoid the human race's extinction. It is one way, even if not real, to imagine the future (or the current times) and to understand that patriarchal environmental policies will work only if they possess the complete control of women and of nature. However, the many examples we have seen above are evidence that human control on the earth has real limits. If human beings want to survive collapse, they must let women fully participate in the generation of inclusive global environment policy.

To conclude, feminism and gender theory are challenging mainstream understandings of global environmental politics and environmental policy generation because of the connections a lot of intellectuals and feminist activists made between the domination of men on both nature and women. Many examples show how women's organisations are more than efficient and that their opinions must be valued on a global scale in order to prevent, with all other human beings, the imminent consequences of a changing climate.

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## Geological Time Scale

**Author: David Ensor**

*This article discusses the Geological Time Scale (GTS). Commencing with a definition of the GTS and its purpose and applications, it will be considered why submissions for change to the time scale might be made to the International Committee for Stratigraphy (ICS). How such submissions are made, together with the controversy surrounding possible adoption of new time scales will be examined using the Anthropocene as a case study. Zalasiewicz et al. (2013:4) explain the primary means by which the Geological Time Scale is conveyed by the publication of the International Chronostratigraphic Chart. The International Commission issues this chart on Stratigraphy (ICS), the most recent chart being version 2019/05, available online at [www.stratigraphy.org](http://www.stratigraphy.org).*

The passage of time and events that have taken place are recorded in the Earth's rocks, particularly in stratigraphic successions and by various signals contained within them, including palaeontological, chemical, and magnetic signals. (Zalasiewicz et al., 2013: 4). Studies of these rocks have allowed scientists to rebuild the 4.6-billion-year history of the Earth into a GTS. The Stratigraphic Guide (2019) explains that the chart is divided into systems, series, and stages based on chronostratigraphic units, which encompass all rocks formed during a specified interval of time. These chronostratigraphic units correspond to intervals of geologic time, known as geochronologic units, such as a given 'period', 'epoch', or 'age'. The intervals of geologic time represented by geochronological units are established by the science of dating, to determine the sequence of events in the history of Earth. Numerical ages are also included in the chart. Cohen et al. (2013: 199) explain the purpose of the ICS in formulating the chart as meeting the need to have 'a single set of global chronostratigraphic units defined by specific boundaries', thereby

creating an international standard for geological mapping available to all users. The chart caters to a wide range of users – geologists, scientists, and professionals in many fields, earth science students, and those that might have an interest in the long-term history of the Earth. Walker et al. (2013: 259) regard a geologic time scale as invaluable in investigating any aspect of Earth's development, in any place, and for any time.

The ICS chart is not a static document but is subject to regular revision, as may be demonstrated by the ICS announcement in 2018 of the formal subdivision of the Holocene series/epoch into three stages/ages (Walker, M. et al., 2018). The driving force for changes in the geologic timescale results from increasing knowledge, technical advances in areas such as biostratigraphy, chemostratigraphy, magnetostratigraphy, and astrochronology. High-resolution studies, often with continuous drill cores, are now more common, providing much more detailed information than was available when earlier versions of the chart were formalised. (Walker et al., 2013: 262). The guidelines for the establishment of global chronostratigraphic standards were prepared by Remane et al. (1996). These reinforce the requirement to define units of the Phanerozoic (up to 540 million years ago) using boundary stratotypes. This boundary only relates to the lower level of the chronostratigraphic unit and is known as a GSSP, or global boundary stratotype section and point. It is more popularly known as a 'golden spike'. The ICS chart shows a significant number of approved 'golden spikes,' and it is the ICS intention to approve GSSPs for other periods, including the Precambrian. Remane et al. (1996: 79) outline the requirements for submitting a GSSP, including that it should be tested in several locations, and if possible, on different continents. The volume of work and technical expertise required in getting formal ratification for the subdivision of the Holocene is well documented by Walker et al. (2018). The working group must first approve proposals, then by the Subcommittee, followed by the ICS, before it goes to the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS)

for final approval. In all cases, there must be a 60% majority. The possible ratification of the Anthropocene as a new epoch will be no less demanding.

Zalasiewicz et al. (2011: 835) relate how scientists, in the late 19th century, were beginning to recognise that humans were influencing changes on Earth. The Italian geologist Stoppani coined the term 'Anthropozoic' in the 1870s. The relationship between CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations in the atmosphere and global warming were being explored. It was in 2002 that Crutzen, an atmospheric scientist, proposed that the Holocene epoch had ended. Changes to climate, land, oceans, and the biosphere were so significant as a result of human activity, that a new epoch of geological time was effectively in place, the Anthropocene. As Zalasiewicz et al. (2017: 3) point out, this was an informal designation as no amendments to the GTS can take place without final ratification by the IUGS. As the use of the Anthropocene term became prevalent in scientific and other literature, the Stratigraphic Commission of the Geological Society of London became involved, leading to an invitation from the Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy of the ICS to establish a working group in order to examine the issue. Consequently, the Working Group on the 'Anthropocene' (AWG) was formed and began work in 2009. Zalasiewicz et al. (2017: 4) point out that the group had a much wider composition than previous working groups, which were mainly composed of stratigraphers and palaeontologists, specialising in rocks and fossils. The reason for this was the implicit consideration of the impact of human activity on the Earth system.

Representatives from climate science, archaeology, human history, and polar science contributed to the breadth of expertise. However, it is pointed out quite clearly that the tasks required of the AWG were geological in nature. As such standard stratigraphic procedures referred to above had to be followed. The group role was to evaluate the relevant stratigraphic evidence. The volume and

technicality of work is reflected in an article published by Waters et al. (2016). They report that the AWG had made significant progress on evaluating whether humans had changed the Earth system sufficiently to produce stratigraphic signatures in sediments and ice that would differ from the Holocene and would remain in the geological record. A crucial line of enquiry was to establish when the stratigraphic signal became recognisable, i.e., when it was synchronous. Wide ranges of anthropogenic signals were identified, some novel in the Earth history, some advanced and some not so advanced. Driving forces for signals related to technological development, population growth, urbanisation, and increased resource use. Recent anthropogenic deposits included increases from mining, quarrying, waste disposal and construction. Half the concrete manufactured in the world has been used since 1950 and 98% of the aluminium. Materials such as plastics, which degrade very slowly, became commonplace in the 1950s. Fossil fuel combustion is another source to leave a permanent marker in sediments and glacial ice. Sedimentary processes have been interfered with as a result of land cultivation, deforestation, the building of dams and drilling for minerals, etc. Geochemical signatures include elevated concentrations of polyaromatic hydrocarbons and pesticide residues. Nitrogen and phosphorus have doubled in soils in the last century due to fertilizer use. The group regards the most globally synchronous signal to be that from nuclear weapons testing, beginning around 1945, but most identifiable between 1954 and 1964. Biotic change as an indicator of the Anthropocene is also covered, with the suggestion that current rates of extinction could push Earth into a sixth mass extinction event. The climate and sea-level change signals were not regarded as being as strongly expressed as some of the stratigraphic signals referred to above. The above summary serves to indicate the volume and complexity of work involved and it was not until August 2016 that the AWG presented its evidence with interim recommendations at the 35th International Geological Congress in Cape Town. The report published by Zalasiewicz et al. (2017)

recommended, based on a non-binding vote of the AWG, that the Anthropocene was stratigraphically real, and should be formalised as an epoch based on a mid-20th century boundary. The next statement identified that there was still considerable work to be done, as an appropriate GSSP had to be selected, along with auxiliary stratotypes. The best primary marker was identified as radionuclide signals associated with nuclear testing. It was not until 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019 that the AWG took a formal vote and approved the concept of the Anthropocene with a start date of the mid-20th century. It is hoped to put a proposal to the Subcommission by 2021, at which point the final ratification process may begin.

In conclusion, getting a change or addition to the GTS is a lengthy and complex procedure. It is also a process that can cause disagreement. This is especially evident as there are several alternative suggestions for the start of the Anthropocene – Rudiment proposing a date of 8,000 years ago with the cultivation of rice - Lewis, and Maslin proposing 1610 (the Orbis spike), when colonisation caused massive loss of life in the Americas – many advocate the start of the Industrial Revolution around 1800 – others advocate capitalism as the date of a new epoch, calling it the Capitalocene. Edgeworth et al. (2019), members of the working group, criticise the AWG decision. They state that the chronostratigraphic method is unsuitable for determining the start of the Anthropocene, agreeing with Ruddiman as the requirement for an isochronous boundary ignores extensive evidence of early changes. They contend that the method is suited to geological timescales of millions of years, not for use on what they regard as archaeological and historical timescales. It is an essential contribution to the debate, which will continue to develop. The GTS is an important resource for those wishing to understand the Earth's history and sequence of events. However, it is only by human understanding and action can the threat of the Anthropocene be addressed, and potentially catastrophic consequences avoided, including or excluding the Anthropocene in the GTS is hardly relevant to the future of humanity.



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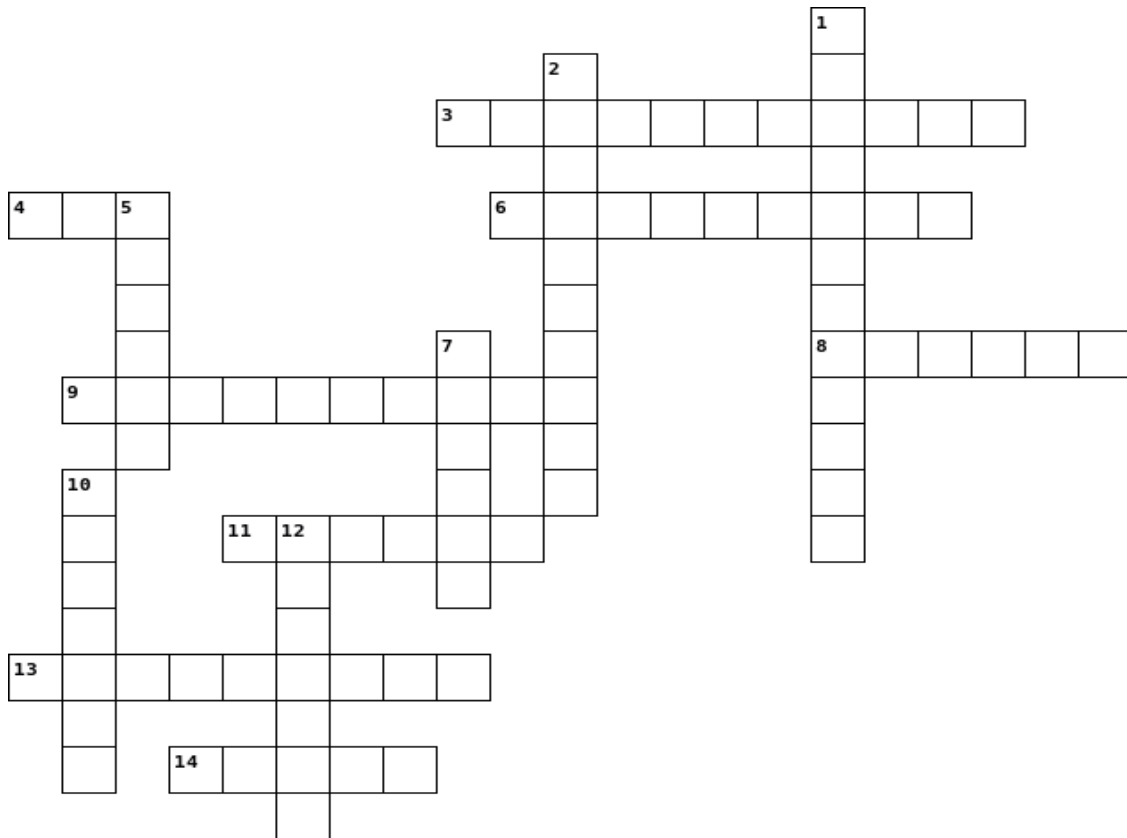
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# Milieu Crossword



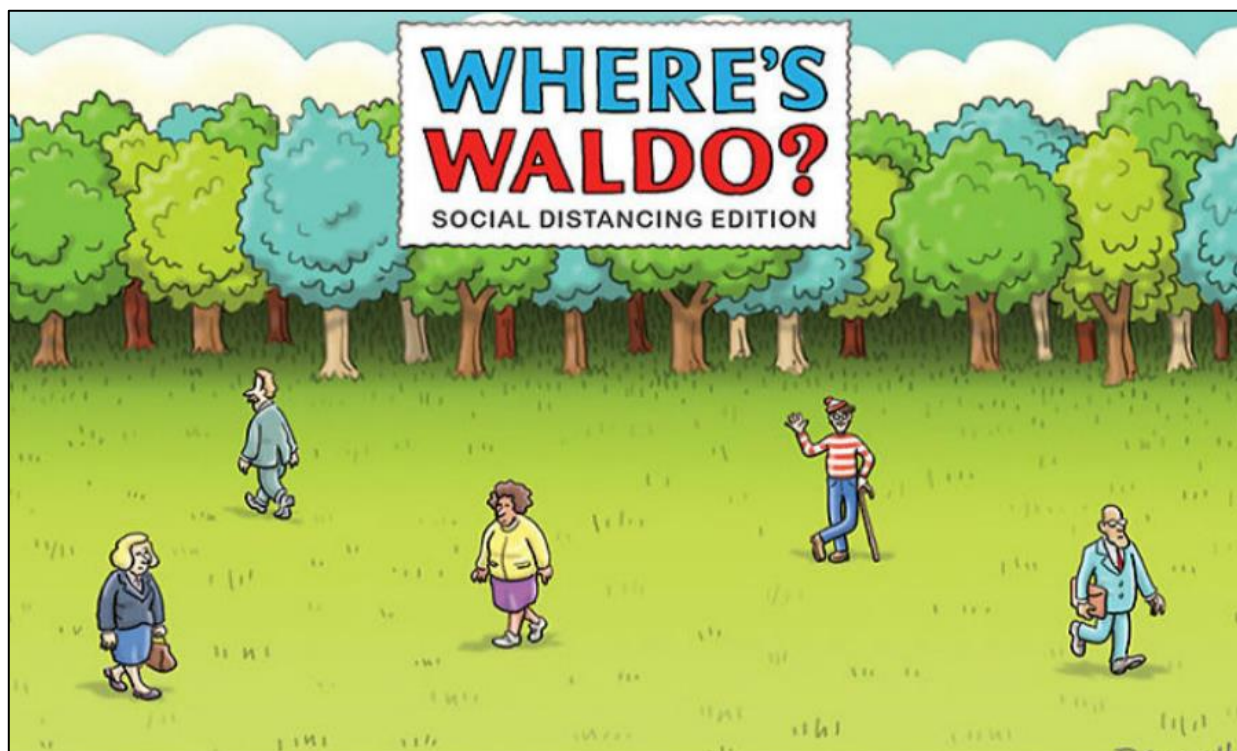
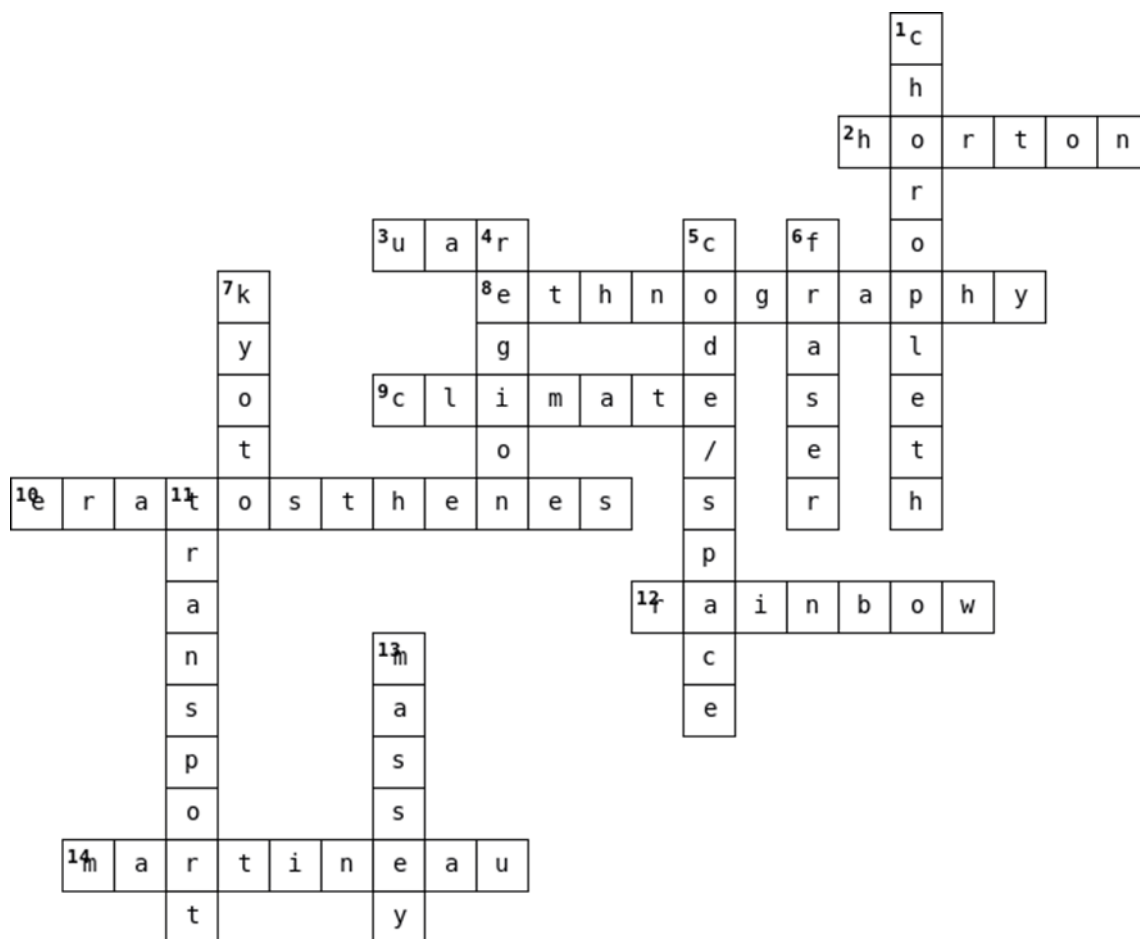
## Across

2. The tendency of water to flow horizontally across land surfaces when rainfall has exceeded infiltration capacity is named after R.E. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. A former sovereign state composed of Egypt and Syria (Abbrev)
8. A methodological approach that seeks to provide immersive and holistic analyses of social phenomena.
9. Long-term average weather conditions at a particular location, typically over a period of 30 years.
10. The first person to use the word "geography" was \_\_\_\_\_.
12. The \_\_\_\_\_ coalition consisted of Fine Gael, the Labour Party, and the democratic left.
14. H. \_\_\_\_\_ is often credited as being the first female sociologist

## Down

1. Map that uses colour and shading to display the intensity of a feature within a space.
4. Area distinguished by distinctive commonalities and combinations of cultural and physical features.
5. When software and the spatiality of everyday life become mutually constituted, that is, produced through one another
6. The editor of the Anniversary Essays celebrating 40 years of geography in Maynooth.
7. A Japanese city famous for its role in climate change protocol
11. The largest energy-consuming sector in Ireland.
13. The term power-geometry was coined by D. \_\_\_\_\_.

## Answers



## Second-Year Field Trip 2020: Lanzarote



“Does anyone remember where we parked the car?”



“Who can name 45 types of metamorphic rock?  
... You?”



“Be careful out there folks. The lizards are at least  
this big!”



“What do you mean; ‘which rock is our  
favourite?’”



“Seriously, can anyone remember where we  
parked the car?”



“And to your left... More rocks!”





“Lesson number one: Always start the day with squats.”



A pair of mugs... and some students!



## **Workplace Experience with the Geography Department**

The Department of Geography offers the opportunity to follow a work placement module in third year (GY399). This module allows a student to apply and enhance his/her geographic knowledge and skills in an external working environment (outside Maynooth University). Apart from developing skills, students have used the experience to test out a career path, enhance their CVs and develop their professional network. The module consists of the equivalent of two weeks of full-time work with an employer. Assessment includes a placement log and an essay, critically reflecting on the relevance of geography skills in the workplace. In previous years students have worked within, amongst others, local authorities, environmental organisations, within Government departments, in Leinster House, in a library, in consultancy firms, and with conservation organisations. In this section Amie Lawlor and Emily Dunney give a great impression of their experiences in the academic year 2019-2020.

***Dr. Chris van Egeraat***

**Work Placement Coordinator**

## **Work Experience at Teagasc**

**Author: *Amie Lawlor***

I undertook my work placement with Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority. The organisation deals with many different subjects that directly relate to my geography degree, such as water quality, crop production, soil science, animal, and rural economy. I chose to undertake my placement here as I felt it would develop my knowledge and skills required in my professional career. Teagasc established its “Agriculture Sustainability Support Advisory Programme” (ASSAP) team that is working with farmers to improve water quality all around Ireland. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has listed ten significant pressures that are affecting water quality nationally and states that agriculture is the first most significant pressure within all water body points, stressing the importance of this advisory programme.

During my work experience, I assisted Ms. Fiona Doolan, an advisor on the ASSAP team. Ms. Doolan was allocated the Athy and Morell catchment. Therefore, I was working closely with farmers in these areas to advise and improve local knowledge about water quality and its importance. Being an agricultural advisor, Ms. Doolan allowed me to assist her during farm visits to local farmers in her catchment areas to ensure that necessary measures were in place and were working well. Most of our research was mainly conducted in the Athy catchment, where sediment, phosphorous, and nitrogen are the leading causes of the “at-risk” status in this area. All pressures in this area are related to agriculture. Therefore, investigations were necessary to understand why such pressure exists, and what can be done to solve the problem.

This work experience allowed me to accompany Ms. Doolan on a local catchment assessment. This was an excellent opportunity to gain skills that you can't gain during in-class lectures. After ensuring that all health and safety measures were in place, we took a kick sample from the water body. We



rubbed off a rock into the net to ensure any vertebrates whose habitats are on a rock were collected. The sample was placed in a white basin, and a small amount of water was put over it.



**Figure One:** Example of Catchment Sample  
**Source:** Author (2020)

While the sample was let sit for approximately three minutes, we took physical, chemical measures. This is very important as it tests the dissolved oxygen (DO), turbidity, sediment, temperature, acidity (PH), and conductivity. This was followed by a biological assessment of the water sample. Some vertebrates are much more sensitive to pollution than others. Therefore, looking at the biodiversity of the sample helps to indicate the level of pollution in the water body. The type and quantity of vertebrates were recorded and scored - anything below 6.25 is at risk, while anything above 6.25 is probably not at risk. Throughout the catchment area, most samples were scoring around 4, indicating significant pollution in the area. As the team and I moved further upstream, the samples improved, scoring 8.2 and showing remarkable biodiversity.

The fact that the sample improved upstream indicated the existence of a significant pressure that was polluting the water body somewhere between

the upstream and downstream points. Nitrogen leaching is a severe problem in this catchment. We started each day by searching the database for a farmer that was located near the water body at the point where we recorded high levels of nitrogen. It is essential to refer to the catchment team's research and notes to help select a farm in the area that is most impacted by nutrient leaching. When we arrived at the selected farmyard, we introduced ourselves and explained the purpose of our visit. It is essential to clearly explain the aims and objectives of ASSAP and point out that it is a voluntary programme. After this introduction, we conducted a farm walk that involved walking the whole farm looking for potential threats that could be affecting the water quality in this area. We started walking the fields that had a water body flowing through them.

When walking through the farmer's field, we spotted silage stored in wrapped bales that were located too close to the stream. The effluent produced has a high BOD. This oxygen demand can cause a reduction of dissolved oxygen in the receiving water for several miles. This has been responsible for several fish kills throughout the country. Therefore, the effluent must be collected and not be allowed to enter the environment. Ms. Doolan encouraged me to look at several items to assess whether effluent was leaking from the stored silage bales located beside the stream. There will be a presence of sewage fungus. If there is a large amount, you will be able to see puddles, or a small stream, of effluent beside the water body. There may also be excessive nettle growth, green areas, or burnt grass indicating discharge. After inspection, it became quite clear that effluent was seeping from the bales. There was excessive nettle growth in this part of the stream, and one could also see effluent seeping from the bales. On another occasion, we noticed a farmer that had allowed his cattle access to the stream as a drinking point. Ms. Doolan advised the farmer to invest in a drinking trough and to fence off the drinking point at the stream to prevent further pollution of the water body.



**Figure Two:** Water Sample Analysis on Site

**Source:** Author (2020)

Due to good soil quality, there are many large tillage farmers in the Athy area, focussing on winter and spring barley. The land is composed mostly of limestone rock. The soil type has a wide range of uses and is mostly responsible for the area's reputation as a tillage stronghold. Although the quality of the soil is positive, its use leads to a lot of nutrient loss in this area. Soils support is an integral part of life on earth. They filter our water, breakdown and transform organic wastes, store carbon, support wildlife, and preserve records of our ecological and cultural past. Most farmers in the area are poorly educated on the consequences of overfertilizing land on the environment. Therefore, Teagasc wants to know whether farmers follow their guidelines when putting nutrients out on the land.

Conducting a farm walk on a tillage farm was slightly different to on farms with livestock. There

were different factors to pay attention to. Instead of looking for silage pits and feeding/water points, we ensured there was a buffer between any water source and the tillage crop. This included any drains, even if there was no water in them at the time of inspection. Buffer zones are an area of land between the water source and crop that is left alone, allowing grass and vegetation to grow. Not only do buffer zones encourage wildlife, but they also act as a barrier between the water source and land. If nutrients are added to the soil shortly before rainfall, there is no time for the nutrients to be absorbed by the soil, and runoff occurs. The buffer zones act as a barrier, preventing the nutrients from ending up in the water source.

Ms. Doolan asked me to advise tillage farmers to use cover crops in the empty fields during the winter months as these crops offer many environmental benefits and opportunities to improve soil structure, crop rotation, and water quality. As the cover crop establishes in the soil, it generates an extensive root system. This recovers the nitrogen leftover from the previous crop. Ms. Doolan also recommended taking soil samples before putting fertilizer on the land to ensure the farmer is not overloading the land with nutrients resulting in more nutrients being lost.

Ms. Doolan has been working in the Athy catchment for some time, and we went back through all the visits that had taken place in this area since the beginning of the programme. We assessed the information concerning the nutrients, phosphorous, nitrogen, and sediment, leached from the soil, and entering the water sources. This is an essential part of the job as it helps ASSAP and the EPA to assess the effects of agriculture on the water quality in the Athy catchment area. Using the data from the catchment assessment team, we were able to get a good understanding of the impact which agriculture practices were having on the water quality in this area. This was necessary as Ms. Doolan had a meeting with the Eastern Midlands team. The purpose of this meeting was to evaluate the progress the catchment team and the ASSAP team had been making over the past few months. I was given permission to attend the

meeting and got a taste of the overall aim of the project as well as the different elements that are involved in improving Ireland's water quality. This meeting was one of the highlights of my placement. Although I was not allowed to participate in the discussion, listening to it was phenomenal and gave me a real insight into what the working world is like.



**Figure Three:** Water Quality Information Session  
**Source:** Author (2020)

The amount of research, fieldwork, and lab studies that are involved in this programme is astonishing, and it takes a lot of time and dedication. Each person explained the problems in each of their 'areas of action'. It was fascinating to hear about the different stages involved in improving the water quality in the different areas of action over the coming months/years. Each ASSAP member went through weeks of training to be able to reach the objectives of The Water Framework Directive to the best of their ability. Much attention to detail and effort goes into preparing reports, making farm calls, and improve the farmers' knowledge of water quality. Other members of the team looked at other things such as domestic waste pipes, septic tanks, urban wastewater pressures, domestic wastewater treatment systems. These are all listed as significant pressures on water quality in Ireland.

As part of the work placement, I also got a chance to talk to many of the scientists to understand better

their areas of work and what their jobs involve. I talked to hydrologists, geomorphologists, ecologists, and hydro geomorphologists. These are all careers I could pursue after graduation. It was interesting to talk to these professionals about the paths they took to get to where they are today. Many gave me their email, and they offered me to contact them whenever I need help or advice in the future. Importantly, I was also told to contact the catchment assessment team if I wanted to secure a work placement in their line of work. This work placement module is an excellent opportunity for any student to get a first-hand experience into the world of work. This module has given me new skills and knowledge that I can reflect upon and use in many of my other modules. I have gained a world of information and connected with some fantastic people that I would not have met without this module.

## **Work Experience at Golder Associates Ltd.**

**Author:** *Emily Dunney*

As part of the work placement module offered to geography students in third year, I carried out a two-week block placement with a company called Golder Associates. Golder is a global organisation offering consulting, design, and construction services, with clients representing the world's major drivers of development: Oil and Gas, Mining, Manufacturing, Power, and Infrastructure.

I was based at the Golder Irish office in Naas, Co. Kildare. I chose this particular organisation because of their expertise in waste management. They focus on sustainability with an aim to address the challenges of economic and environmental sustainability in Ireland, while also trying to balance the needs of local businesses and communities. Their goal is to help clients achieve business goals but also to minimise the environmental impacts their operations can have on the local environment. Golder Naas provides such services through a combination of experts with a range of expertise. The Naas office has a focus on consulting, but also provides services for design and construction related to their specialist areas of earth, environment, and energy.

This company deals with different topics that directly relate to my geography degree. This allowed me to test my knowledge of some of the modules I had completed, including fluvial geomorphology, geographies of pollution and urban geography. I choose to undertake my placement at Golder as I felt it would develop my knowledge and skills required in my professional career.

During my work experience, I assisted Trevor Montague, the Geo-Environmental Director. On my first morning, he introduced me to the team I would be working with for the duration of my placement and explained the project I was going to be working on. This project was based on Irish Lamps Recycling Co. Ltd. who were in the process of applying for end-of-waste status with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for their

product, waste glass. An end-of-waste status would allow the product to be used as an aggregate in concrete. I was shown the approach that would be taken with this client and given a template of previous proposals submitted to the EPA for similar projects. I was provided with the background information of the company and the details of the proposal so far. My activities started with studying the relevant legislation and key terms I didn't fully understand. I researched the relevant legislation related to end-of-waste and studied the concept of the circular economy as I had never heard of it before. Following this, I was tasked with writing the sample final report for the EPA.

The most interesting aspect of the placement was that I got to experience first-hand how our country is taking steps in the right direction towards a more sustainable economy, and also how difficult it is to do so. Applying for end-of-waste status is a long and expensive process. Sustainability is probably one of my favourite topics of geography and it was interesting to see aspects of urban geography that I had learnt about in college being used in a real workplace setting. I was able to witness the analysis of data from batch leach tests carried out to ensure there was no contamination of mercury or phosphorus in the glass samples. After extracting files from the computer, I was tasked with interpreting and manipulating the data. The SPSS skills I acquired in second year came in handy when analysing the data and producing graphs for the final report. It was decided that further data were required on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the production of glass. This could demonstrate the positive impact of Irish Lamp's product on Ireland's carbon footprint, due to the reduced production of glass from new raw materials. I had to analyse the groundwater threshold values and compare these with the results of previous batch leach tests. The output was recorded in Excel spreadsheets and I had to compile tables for the final report.

I realised the importance of writing and verbal communication in the workplace. My work needed to be well planned and organised for the team to work efficiently and smoothly. My work had to be



clearly laid out and easy to read so that there was no time wasted for anyone trying to understand it during team discussions. Working as part of a team had to be one of my favourite aspects of working in the office. I found it easy to present my research to a small group and it reminded me of tutorial settings in college. As a group, we discussed and worked through any problems. Much of the written communication occurred via an online network, which was another new experience for me. It allowed me to access all the data the company had about a client and the SharePoint aspect of it was useful for discussing key points with other colleagues.

At Golder, I had the opportunity to use geographical methods and perspectives to tackle a variety of modern issues such as demographic changes, economic inequality, environmental justice, urbanisation and so forth. With the Irish Lamps case, I was dealing with a very topical phenomenon – climate change and its consequences. Irish Lamps are making changes for the better by working towards urban sustainability and a circular economy. I got to experience the ethics of environmental degradation and sustainability. Irish Lamps are stepping away from a consumer-focused linear economy, towards a more environmentally considerate pathway. I was provided further insight into the significance of abilities, values and motivation required to live sustainably. To illustrate trends and relationships in our economy, I had to engage with subjects relating to physical and human geography.

When the placement was coming to an end and I began reflecting on everything I had done over the two weeks. I was proud of what I had accomplished. The report for end-of-waste status for Irish Lamps was my main project and focus. Having finished the report, and preparing to submit it, I felt a great sense of achievement with the work I had completed and the contribution I had made. Seeing my writing transform from a draft that was lacking in evidence into a well written and detailed report was amazing. I was made to feel like a valued member of the team. Overall, I really enjoyed my time at Golder. I have learnt many

transferable skills, such as communication skills (presentation, writing, discussing), teamwork, problem-solving abilities and IT skills. I have acquired intellectual skills such as critically assessing theories and evidence for informed decision-making. I have discovered new personal attributes like time management, responsibility, coping with uncertainty, flexibility and creativity. I have gained a sense of professional orientation that I would never have gotten a chance to experience without this work placement. While working as part of a group I have gained new social skills, and I now understand how cooperation and communication benefit teamwork. Learning to be flexible and adaptable is important as these traits are regarded as assets in today's job market.

As I have a special interest in sustainability, I enjoyed getting the first-hand experience with one of the key issues facing modern society. The substitution of primary materials with recycled materials was a concept I had not yet been introduced to in college. I have a keen interest in environmental risk management in Ireland and I am glad I got an insight into the kind of work I may be doing if I pursue a career in sustainability. The fact that the work concerned a case in County Kildare, my home county, made it extra interesting. The overall experience sparked further interest in pursuing a career in this field.

## Humboldt in Cuba: From frizzy hair to swimming postmen

**Author: Dr. Ronan Foley**

As an undergraduate geography student in UCC in the late 1970s, we were made struggle through a ‘History and Philosophy of Geography’ course. As a crass teenager, I barely understood a word or remotely appreciated the eminence of our guest lecturer, a certain Anne Buttimer. But I did remember some names and Alexander von Humboldt was one of them. Fast forward to January 2020, and a spur-of-the-moment trip to Havana for a five-day stay. Enjoying being in a crumbling but elegant *casa particular* near the Plaza Vieja in the old town, I went out for a walk early one morning. Coming around a corner near the square, I spotted a small plaque and realised the building in front of me on Calle Oficios was a small museum commemorating Humboldt’s first visit to Cuba in 1800-1 (he returned in 1804). In fact, the house lent to him was previously owned by an Irish General, Alexander O’Reilly, but he used it to house his instruments and botanical collections for the duration of his stay.



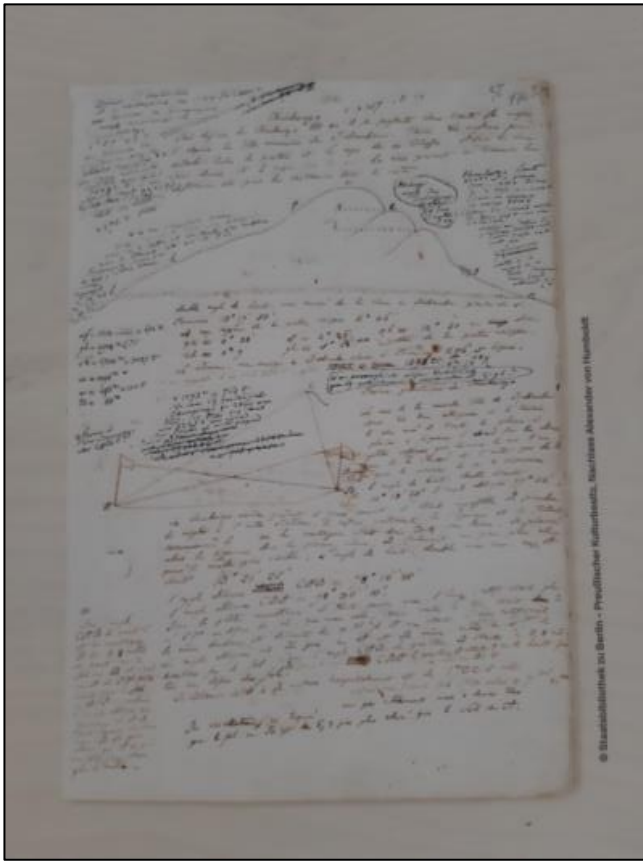
**Figure One:** Front of Humboldt Museum

As I wandered around the exhibition, armed with a better understanding these days, I realised that in

retrospect, Humboldt was way ahead of his time in so many ways; as an early nature-society geographer and even a relational geographer, who also took interest in everything from species evolution to slavery. Equally he was a robust scientist and what one might even call a keen ‘methodographer’, who was also fully tuned in to social and cultural geographies and social inequalities. His trip to Cuba was part of a wider circuit of Latin America that included visits to the then highest known mountain in the world, Chimborazo, in 1802, where he formed many ideas around variations in plants at altitude and even a sense of their micro-spatial evolution; an idea that preceded Darwin by around 40 years. In fact Darwin drew a lot from Humboldt, took his books on the *Beagle*, and they actually met in London in 1842. Like Darwin, Humboldt really believed in the power of observational science and method backed up with ground truthing and a very humanist eye. He had grown up doing experiments on his own land in Prussia, before transferring his method to the very different spaces of Latin America. For him, and the trips to Cuba and beyond proved this, nothing worked better than detailed fieldwork, backed up by copious notes, data and analysis.

The museum in Havana contains many replicas and copies of instruments, maps and some of his books, including one he wrote on Cuba in 1827. There are replicas of his field notes (Figure 2), fantastic jottings with a mix of text, drawings, sketches and tables, all of which were written up in detail in his large books. One of those books, which he worked on most of his life, called *Cosmos*, rather ambitiously attempted a descriptive geography of the whole world at the time. He was also one of the very first scientists to use the metric system, it having been formally adopted and approved only the year before, 1799, in Paris. Oddly, he also used an old French measure called the *toise*, a distance of around 195cm; rather unscientifically derived from, ‘the length of the king’s foot multiplied by six’.





**Figure Two:** Extract from Humboldt's Field Diaries

He also carried with him a large number of cumbersome instruments including barometers, sextants, theodolites and one fascinating object called a hygroscope or hygrometer. This was a piece of kit, designed specifically to use human hair to measure relative humidity. It was originally invented by de Saussure (one of the founders of modern meteorology) in 1788 and essentially used human hair's tendency to get frizzy when wet, as a scientific way to measure humidity. As the hair in the instrument got wetter or drier, it moved the dial on the instrument. A modern replica was to be seen in the museum (Figure 3). What also made Humboldt's scientific measurements in the field so interesting was that they were among the first of their type to be made outside Alpine environments. Because Humboldt knew the Alps, he recognised a wide range of geological, botanical and other natural features that looked familiar, yet on the other side of the world. That holistic understanding of the interrelationships between humans and

nature, what he called *Naturgemälde*, ('nature assemblage'), is also central to most ecosystems thinking and was given a global context in Humboldt's writings.

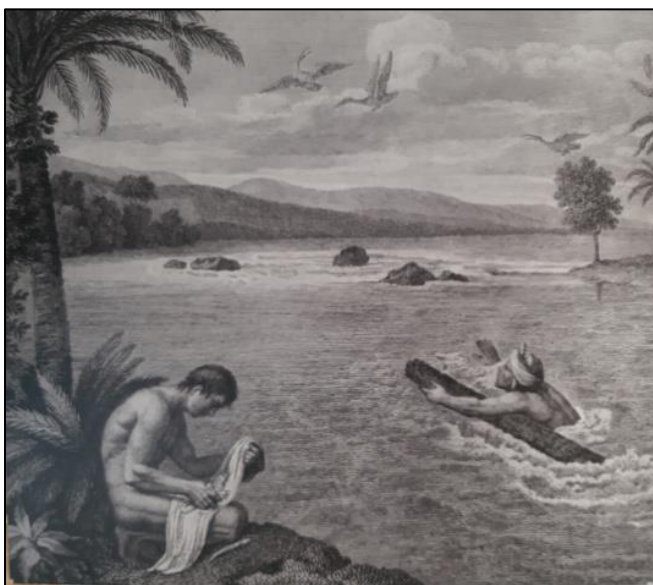


**Figure Three:** Replica Hygrometer used by Humboldt

In that wider vision, he was also acutely conscious of human's impact on the natural environment, and its mostly negative effect. Again, he is almost a forerunner of thinking on climate change and globalisation, but his immediate recognition of the huge importance of biodiversity was well ahead of its time. He wrote in his travel diaries, '*What an innumerable wildlife, where man does not disturb the course of nature or the elements more powerful than he (sic) is*', a prescient statement also given the current effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic and its possible roots in environmental loss and closer human-wild animal interactions.

For all that Humboldt was a scientist of the natural world; he also found it hard to detach himself from

a wider social scientific instinct as well. In the museum, there are also many examples of Humboldt's humanist observations. From these, he clearly operated as a cultural geographer with the heart to recognise inequality and injustice. He recorded mortality and occupancy rates at the two Havana hospitals, early examples of data on hospital utilization and place-specific mortality rates, some fifty years before John Snow 'founded' medical geography. Throughout his life, he was a huge opponent of slavery and its pernicious nature as both an economic system but also its impact on human freedom and dignity. Even though he visited and became friendly with US President Thomas Jefferson on his way home from his voyages, he never quite forgave Jefferson's acceptance of slavery in the US. He had an ethnographer's eye, recording the art and architecture of Cuba as well as local languages and the richness of cultural practices that did much to counter European attitudes of the time. As a writer on swimming, needless to say I was particularly delighted to find sketches of the swimming postmen (*el correo que nada*) of Trujillo in modern day Peru; whose dedication to delivering the mail meant tying it in bundles on their heads and swimming down rivers, sometimes with the aid of logs, to deliver it.



**Figure Four:** Swimming Postmen, Peru

A recent book by German author, Andrea Wulf (2015), attempts to remind people of the power and reach of Humboldt's life and work, with a particular focus on his journey to Cuba and other parts of Central and South America. One insight she notes is his suggestion that one can only truly understand nature by feeling nature. That has a strong resonance to work with colleagues in the UK and New Zealand work around the intimate sensing of nature for health and wellbeing (Bell et. al., 2019); but also, the ongoing importance, so cruelly absent in our current Covid-19 lives, of the ability to go outside and measure stuff. Let us hope we can follow in Humboldt's footsteps and get back out there again soon.

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## ***The Handmaid's Tale: A woman's place in a state of exception***

**Author:** *Rebecca Dempsey*

A simple definition of power is 'the ability of one agent to affect the actions or attitudes of another' (Corbridge, 2009: 575). However, *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017, Canada, Barker), reveals that state power can rapidly enact a 'state of exception' (Agamben, 2005) in ways that affect existing power relations, including gender roles.



**Figure One:** *The Handmaid's Tale*, Offred (2017)

**Source:** IMBD. (2017) *The Handmaid's Tale*.

The strategic declaration of a 'state of exception' is exposed in *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017, Canada, Barker), a Netflix series that depicts a dystopian U.S future where the Sons of Jacob, a right-wing Christian group, seize military control over the U.S and establish an even more patriarchal and exceptionally violent regime that oppresses and enslaves women. The central thesis of this essay will argue that the threat of a 'state of exception' (Agamben, 2005) is an underlying reality for any society, including America. It can be used by state authorities to strip men and women of their existing civil rights to bring societies closer to be 'on the road to becoming Gilead' (Hetching, 2017). After

introducing the concept of a 'state of exception' (Agamben, 2005) and how women are 'othered', this essay examines how gender is affected by the power geometries that exist in 'Gilead', and how women transgressed those new socio-political orders.

Giorgio Agamben (2005) claims that a 'state of exception' (Agamben, 2005) occurs at a time of political crisis, where citizens of a state face life-altering consequences. For example, in the case of Nazi Germany, when Adolf Hitler took power in 1933, he declared the 'Decree for the protection of the People of the State, which suspended the articles of the Weimer constitution concerning personal liberties' (Agamben, 2005: 2). Agamben (2005) also points to the United States in 2001, when President George W. Bush declared the 'War on Terror' to justify the use of military force in the U.S and authorised the detaining and putting on trial 'noncitizens' assumed to be involved in acts of terrorism (Agamben, 2005: 3). Agamben (2005:3) states that President Bush's 'state of exception' erased 'any legal status of the individual, thus producing a legally unnameable and unclassifiable being'. In *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017, Canada, Barker), the Sons of Jacob similarly exert their power to implement a 'state of exception' (Agamben, 2005) in the U.S following a civil war that was strategically launched at a time of environmental peril with a 'society whose birth-rate is in serious decline' (Wilson-Beevers, 2019).

In Gilead, women are sorted into groups to mirror their function in the patriarchal society, reflecting the domination of men in Gilead. Sibley (2009) asserts that the creation of individuals as 'other generally reflects a power asymmetry and involves negative stereotyping' (Sibley, 2009: 85). In the mise en scène of *The Handmaid's Tale*, women's bodies are colour-coded and 'othered' in relation to the function they can offer the male commanders of Gilead (The Take, 2018): the Wives represented in blue, Aunts in brown, Marthas in beige, and Handmaids in red. The commanders do not see women as people but according to their function.

Commander Fred Waterford uses ‘multiple women to maximise what he needs from the female gender’ (The Take, 2018).

Linda McDowell (1998), drawing upon Efrat Tseelon, stresses that ‘bodily distinctions are crucially important in the production of inferiority’ (McDowell, 1998: 92). Tseelon suggests that if a ‘woman is constructed as seduction’ (Cited in McDowell, 1998: 92-3), she will be punished for it. For example, in Season 1, Episode 8, we see how the Commanders of Gilead ‘other’ women. Here, costume plays an essential role in the *mise en scène*. Commander Fred Waterford sneaks his Handmaid, Offred, into the city to an illegal nightclub where she wears his Wife’s blue robes. However, underneath she is exposed as his source of sexual pleasure, against her will, with ‘sexy signifiers’ by shaving her legs, giving her red lipstick and a revealing dress (The Take, 2018). This reflects the ‘othering’ of women in Gilead, where Handmaids are depicted as ‘sex objects’. In public, the Handmaid’s in Gilead are signified by scarlet, which degrades them for their sexualised role in bearing children for the Commanders. They are further disgraced by being called demeaning names by the Wives. Tseelon further suggests that if a woman is ‘constructed as a spectacle’, she is also ‘culturally invisible’ (McDowell, 1998: 92-3), an insight that can be used to understand the Commander’s Wives in Gilead, who are dressed in a ‘Virgin Mary blue’ (The Take, 2018). A colour that inspires respect but desexualises the Wives because they cannot bear children. The Wives show how the crisis in society, which has become so obsessed with fertility, results in men only seeing fertility as attractive (The Take, 2018).

Doreen Massey’s (1994) essay on power geometries and time-space compression, discusses who has power in the city and who is oppressed. Her argument directly relates to women’s place in Gilead’s society. Massey (1994) claims that in the city, groups of individuals have the power of mobility and access to resources, while other groups do not, and are effectively ‘imprisoned’ (Massey, 1994: 3). Massey (1994) points out that

there are also individuals who contribute significantly to society but are effectively imprisoned by it. This idea is mirrored in Season 1 of *The Handmaid’s Tale* (2017) through the character of Fred Waterford’s wife, Serena Joy. We learn that Serena played a pivotal role in the creation of Gilead as a writer-activist who led a ‘domestic-feminist movement with her book *A Woman’s place*’ (Till, 2019). During the height of the fertility crisis, Serena argued that it was now a woman’s moral responsibility to become a mother, and fertile women should be used as a national resource (Till, 2019). Serena essentially set up the roles of Handmaids and Wives in Gilead unknowingly, and, as a woman in the dystopian state, she is now oppressed by her ideals, in a world where it is now illegal for women to read and write.

This idea that Serena is trapped in a world she helped create is emphasised in Season 1, Episode 6 of *The Handmaid’s Tale* (2017, Canada, Barker) when the Commanders and Wives of Gilead host Ambassador Castillo from Mexico, regarding trade negotiations. Costumes and actors play a significant role in the *mise en scène*. Firstly, Ambassador Castillo is presented as a female, dressed in a bright yellow pantsuit, accentuating her as the only woman who holds power in the room (*The Handmaid’s Tale*, 2017, 10:33). The positioning of the actors is also important in the scenes that follow. The camera focused on the Ambassador, who is surrounded by men as she controls the conversation, pointing to the central role she plays in her society, a stark contrast to the women of Gilead. The Ambassador addresses the Wives, who are positioned away from the conversation, to hear their opinion on Gilead’s society, referencing Serena’s book. When Ambassador Castillo asks Serena: ‘did you ever imagine a society like this...a society in which women can no longer read your book, or anything else?’ (*The Handmaid’s Tale*, 2017, 15: 42), the camera records a close-up of Serena, who struggles to answer honestly, cutting to Fred as she looks over to him in panic. This represents women’s lack of honest and free speech in Gilead, as Serena is

oppressed by the new power-geometries that now exist in the very society she helped to build.

Cresswell (1996) states that an act of transgression serves to call out an ideology being imposed and can 'tell us something about "normality" as it questions the structure and workings of society (Cresswell, 1996: 9). In many cases where there is a 'state of exception' (Agamben, 2005), transgression is common as citizens struggle to cope with the consequences that include their liberties. Having an intellectual background and playing an imperative role in creating Gilead, Serena Joy becomes the focus of transgression against the state of Gilead in Season 2, Episode 13, in her frustration to change the law and allow women the right to read and write. However, Cresswell (1996) also points out that it is at this moment when two different ideologies clash during transgression, that 'normative geographies are defined by those with the power to do so' (Cresswell, 1996: 10), and in Gilead, men have unrestricted control of this power. The consequences of Serena's transgression show just how far women can be stripped of their rights, as reactions to transgression underline the 'values that are considered correct and appropriate' and strictly define who is in place and who is out of place (Cresswell, 1996: 21).

McDowell (1999) asserts that places for 'men's use and for women's use are often distinguishable' (McDowell, 1999: 96). She suggests that some buildings have distinct 'grandeur' that are linked to male structures of power and maybe 'intimidating to enter' (McDowell, 1998: 96). This is what we see when Serena enters a courtroom of men. Lighting plays a vital role in this scene. As Serena enters the courtroom, it is dark and dimly lit by a few lamps, mirroring McDowell's (1998) interpretation of male-dominated structures being intimidating. This darkness represents the sinister atmosphere in the courtroom, controlled by the corrupt Sons of Jacob. Serena walks in alone and stands on a pedestal under a harsh spotlight, intensifying the scene by exposing her on her own. She has nowhere to hide while she is surrounded by

powerful and threatening men (The Handmaid's Tale, 2017, 24: 19).

McDowell (1997) stresses the question of whose body is allowed where and whose is out of place (McDowell, 1997: 19), and in this scene, Serena is depicted as out of place. As the scene continues, she is joined by other Wives who support her amendment. The spotlight remains on Serena, but it now represents hope for women's rights. The camera angle points upwards towards Serena and the wives, conveying a sense of power and unity among the Wives (The Handmaid's Tale, 2017, 25: 15). However, this hope is destroyed when Serena begins reading from the Holy Scripture. Here, props play a significant role in the *mise en scène* as the Holy Scripture that Serena reads from is uncovered from a cloth, reflecting the fact that women are not permitted to possess books. This act of transgression is depicted through a close-up and camera focus of the scripture as Serena holds it (The Handmaid's Tale, 2017, 26: 59), breaking the existing law, and many Wives begin to leave out of fear. Later in the episode, we see the consequences of Serena's transgression when her finger is amputated, solidifying a woman's place in Gilead.

The Handmaid's Tale (2017, Canada, Barker) is a harrowing feminist warning regarding women's rights in a state of exception. The series depicts real issues of the present and the real possibility of a state being pushed to a radical stripping of women's rights. Jeffrey Somers (2019) asserts that taking a closer look at our society today allows us to 'see that male attitudes towards women have not changed nearly as much as we might like' (Somers, 2019). It is not hard to imagine this reality coming into being. The Handmaid's Tale (2017, Canada, Barker) has found its way into various campaigns against women's rights. In May 2019, 'Alabama's entirely male senate passed a ban on abortions at any stage in pregnancy', making no exception for cases of rape or incest (Wilson-Beevers, 2019). Wilson-Beevers (2019) draws this male decision over women's bodies as a horrifying mirror to the decisions of the patriarchal society of Gilead. Such a quick decision over women's right to their bodies



represents the ease at which the othering and oppression of women can be done when faced with any form of crisis. Showing the seriousness of how a “State of Exception” (Agamben, 2005) can affect women, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (2017, Canada, Barker) forces society to look at itself and ask, ‘If faced with such dire circumstances, what could we be capable of?’ (Cohen, 2017).

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## **Black Within White: The Power Geometries of North America.**

**Author:** *Tara Kelly*

This paper analyses the four-part series by Ava DuVernay titled *When They See Us* (2019), which documents the story of a rape crime committed in Central Park in 1989. The victim was a white woman, the lead prosecutor, a white woman, and the suspects, five black males. Over the four episodes, we watch the wrongful arrest, interrogation, and conviction of these five black teenagers as race becomes a burden, subjecting them to inequality from the very beginning. In this paper, I analyse how filmmaker Ava DuVernay depicts Massey's (1991) concept of power geometries using cinematic landscapes that portray the different degrees of mobility and power blacks and whites had within the same spaces and places they inhabited in New York. After providing a brief discussion of the context of racial segregation, I also introduce Slater's (2009) concept of 'black within white' to show how the races are not completely segregated, but internally divided and simultaneously existing at different scales. Then I describe how the film shows what the 'black within white' status quo was in New York in the late 1980s through shots that communicate different power hierarchies justified through racial ideologies. DuVernay shows how these power geometries are reinforced within predominately white law enforcement agencies and the media, and I will explore how these are also affected by ideas of place and othering.

To begin, Massey & Denton (1993) discuss how segregation makes black poverty permanent, rather than allowing the opportunity to integrate and progress in society. Examples of early segregation included black entrances to buildings, black water fountains, and black public seating, all of which are rooted in the historical context in North America and the development of North American society. Forcefully introduced to the continent as slaves in the 1600's, the black community was presented as the 'other' from the very beginning of the mixing

of race in America. This self-other dynamic stemmed from ideas of domination and exploitation, and the construction of a group in this sense reflects early ideas of power (Sibley, 2009). The window of opportunity for black integration was shut down with the introduction of the Jim Crow laws in the late 1870s, which restricted the mobility of black Americans by forcing them to engage with public spaces differently than white citizens; an example of segregation as a social condition through the inability to integrate. At the beginning of the 20th century, many African Americans migrated from the restricted Southern states to the Northern cities as these cities were becoming centres of production. African Americans then became part of the unskilled labour force, which was needed to oil the cogs of Fordist capitalism.

As the continent developed, the racial hierarchy solidified itself through policies and segregation techniques, one of these being the introduction of ghettos. Ghettos can be described as a 'spatial clustering of any social group' (Slater, 2009:492). Although these locations were spatial, the segregation was racial as white policies and power located African Americans as they were the only group ever to experience urban ghettoization in the US (Slater, 2009). As white families moved out of the cities and into the suburbs, highways were built to connect the two. At the same time, a process of urban renewal meant that existing ghettos were relocated to make room for construction, and were often placed directly beside the highway, creating a physical divide between black and white. This early segregation of the city created physical and social borders between the two communities, and systematic capital disinvestment ensured that ghettos evolved rather than dissolved.

It is with these early power relations that I want to introduce Massey's (1991: 29) discussion of power and place relating to time-space compression and the rapid connection of the world. With the effects of globalisation, feelings of place are no longer just located locally, but rather through a 'global sense of the local'. It is through this that local identities



are created through multiple scales at the same time and with which I will connect Slater's (2009) concept of 'black within white', as local identities have been impacted by globalisation in North America, and as the races are simultaneously existing in the same space but with different degrees of power and mobility which I will highlight throughout my film analysis.

I want to begin by analysing the series with the concept of power, as power as a concept can be viewed as spatially enacted rather than possessed (Corbridge, 2009). Through power, the ability to move comes freely to some, and others begin to be spatially imprisoned by the lack of mobility. We see this in episode 1, 11:15, when the status quo is depicted: black within white. A wide shot shows black youths in a room with white officers. The scene incorporates low levels of lighting, and the camera angles are used to emphasise positions of power further. The camera points downward when filming a black boy, and points upward when filming the white officers. As part of the mise en scene, on the back wall we can see 'Community Affairs' above the noticeboard which represents how residents and officers are all part of the same 'community' in the same part of the city, but they do not live and work together in the same homes and offices. This conveys the power geometries of the community, and although black and white are mixed, white has power.



**Figure One:** White Power Hierarchies

**Source:** Dailymail, 2019

Within white power there are also hierarchies which are shown at 18:45 in episode one, (Figure One). The white female prosecutor is describing the night of the crime to a room full of white officers. Light and language are used in this scene to reflect power, the white prosecutor is highlighted, and the officers in the dark. The person of power is using language to appeal to the emotion of the officers to convince them that the black community is to pay for this crime, using language like 'Animal, thug, they'. This scene enforces the 'us' and 'them' dynamic between the races and shows that although race can be viewed as a social construction, it has material consequences that could be detrimental (Winders, 2009). This scene shows us the tiers of white power coming together and creating a common enemy based on the notion of 'other', which reflects power geometries and involves negative stereotyping, as discussed by Sibley (2009).

To further examine the concept of power, we need to look at place, which has more considerable significance than just geographical landscape. Tuan (1977), Relph (1976), and others describe place as subjective, with cultural and personal significance. The feeling of place can then be influenced by power and mobility as it is experienced on a personal level. In episode 1, 56:22, a wide-angle shot shows the black boys

within the white walls of the prison, a possible metaphor for black incarceration and lack of mobility in a mixed society (Figure Two).



**Figure Two:** Black within White, a visual representation.

**Source:** Popcornreel (2019)

This shot reinforces the idea of the prison as a place of belonging for black males, and that they ended up here purely through the fault of white ideologies. The metaphor here could be used to depict the complexities of place through cinematic landscapes as the white walls create a visual representation of the status quo: black within white. To further examine power, the role of the media is crucial as it projects and reinforces ideas within society. In episode 2, 1:43, a black man is walking with a radio listening to news reports of the Central Park crime. The reporter uses the term ‘wilding’ just as a group of white males are also out ‘wilding’.

The mise en scene in this shot incorporates both races along with the voiceover, reflecting the racial privilege of mobility as the white males are not subjected to any crimes or punishments for the same actions. The role of the media here creates dichotomy further to justify the status quo: black within white. Similarly, in episode 3, 1:08, the voiceover by one of the boy’s states, ‘They say boys will be boys, but when do we ever get to be boys?’. The filmmaker here is using diegetic and non-diegetic sound to convey ideas of inequality, allowing the viewer to listen and take in subsequent

images to process the message. This statement reflects the hierarchies of power again as black boys have less mobility than white boys and feel ‘half in, half out’ rather than completely excluded, reflecting the concept of black within white.

To conclude, it is based on Massey’s (1991) concept of power geometries that we can view racial hierarchies as an everyday component of the lives of the people connected in the chain. As spaces and places are not blank, but rather influenced by identities and power, we can see this portrayed in DuVernay’s series. As a viewer, we watch as places of law enforcement become problematic places of inequality and hierarchical injustice. Although subjective, it is hard to miss the visual representations of both past and present power geometries in the series. In addition to this, the concept of ‘black within white’ is relevant throughout as it almost summarizes the simultaneous yet separate existence of racial groups existing in parts of North America. A deeply rooted and undeserved set of power geometries that are captured in DuVernay’s work.

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## The problem with the creative city: A creative discourse of Venice, Italy.

Author: *Hannah Redmond*



**Plate One:** Venice Carnival 2018

**Source:** ENCA, 2020

What gives a city the label of being a “Creative City”? This is a question that has been playing on my mind and one I wish to talk about with you readers. According to Richard Florida in his book “Cities and the Creative Class” (2003), a city becomes a “Creative City” when it attracts the “Creative Class”, a group of people that are seen to think and act creatively as a form of “social capital” in an urban area resulting in economic gain for that locale. Florida (2003) notes that this highly educated “Creative Class” are attracted to a city partly due to the presence of the three factors of economic development; Technology, Talent, and Tolerance, if a city possesses all three of these attributes then that city will supposedly attract a creative class of highly trained professionals that will bring economic growth to the area (O’Callaghan, 2010), resulting in the city earning the title of a “creative city”. The idea of living in a city that possesses these attributes is very appealing. However, is it too good to be true?

This idea spoken about by Richard Florida fails to address the social problems and inequalities that

can emerge in an urban area (Chatterton, 2000), and also ignores the geographical context of an urban area to which this idea is being applied (O’Callaghan, 2010). These social problems can be seen when studying Venice, Italy, a place with a unique geography as it possesses a vast network of canals and increasing levels of catastrophic flooding. This flooding was observed recently in November 2019 when the whole city, including residential and retail buildings, became inundated. This urban area has experienced disinvestment in housing and flood defences for ground floor apartments. This disinvestment in the city follows a pattern of other urban areas that have then undergone profitable redevelopment as a result of disinvestment at the expense of lower-class urban residents (Slater, 2011).

This city is a hugely creative place with a large tourism economy with tourists flocking to it to bask in the creativity that is on offer here. The one thing that comes to my mind when I think about this city is how beautiful it is with fantastic architecture and traditional activities on display. However, Venice is plagued by a process known as gentrification. Shaw (2008) describes gentrification as “a generalised middle- class restructuring of place, encompassing the entire transformation from low-status neighbourhoods to upper-middle-class playgrounds”. In the case of Venice, this new middle- class is made up of tourists who have been attracted to Venice for its beauty and its attributes of being a “shrine for human creativity” (Calcagno et al. 2013). The gentrification and subsequent displacement of residents have resulted from the rapidly growing tourist industry and the increasing amount of rental properties for short term visits resulting in the raising of housing and accommodation prices (Good, 2005). Gentrification as a result of tourists and tourism is labelled by many academics such as Sequera et al. (2018) as “touristification”. This example of social problems as a result of the use of creativity as a form of economic gain in an urban area leads me to believe that Florida’s ideas of what he thinks makes a city creative can damage a city and the people

living in it due to the approach that does not take into account geographical and social factors.

A proportion of the population of working professionals in Venice are engaged in very traditional creative industries. These entrepreneurs, artists, poets, and musicians can be defined as the “super-creative core” of this creative class (Florida, 2003). The commodities that this “super-creative core” spend time creating attracts tourists to the city. Tourism has been used in Venice as an economic tool to overcome the adverse effects of economic decline and recession (Sequera et al., 2018) experienced here. The creative activities carried out in Venice such as mask making, textile industry, woodworking and the building of the iconic gondola that attracts tourists due to its “romantic” (Paolo Russo et al., 2009) image, and also glass making and the famous Venetian glass produced here have all been turned into tools to attract tourism to the area in order to create a profit (Calcagno et al., 2013).

The lively and creative Venetian Carnival is displayed in the image above. The bright colours, intricate craft making, and theatre of the carnival are all attributes of this historic event celebrated in Venice. The carnival takes place in February and has been turned into a spectacular two week “cultural commodity” (Re, 2015) for the economic gain of the city. Tourists flock to Venice annually to purchase and dress in elaborate costumes and masks and to also enjoy parades, food, music, and the lively atmosphere and party ambiance as well as theatre and Opera performances all carried out by the creative class, this creative class are however suffering as a result of the growing tourism economy to which they are the driving forces behind.

These traditional displays of creativity that are engrained in Venetian history and culture have been used as a marketing gambit by the government officials to brand Venice as a “showcase city” (Calcagno, 2013) to attract tourists for economic gain in the considerable tourism economy present. This ever-growing tourist economy has, however, pushed the original residents out of the city due to

the combined rising property prices and low wages of this now displaced population who are part of the “creative class”, driving this increase in the tourism economy.

The original residents of this city are struggling to keep up with increasing property prices as apartments are being converted into holiday homes for tourists who are willing to pay more money to stay in the city (Good, 2005), because who would not want to stay in this historic and hauntingly beautiful city. Landlords and property owners have become aware of this desire of tourists, and willingness to pay inflated prices and therefore have subdivided apartments to rent on websites such as Airbnb on a short-term basis, this form of renting is more profitable for owners as they get more money for less space (Good, 2005). Due to this lack of affordable housing for people with a low-income, there has been a considerable displacement of this population to nearby islands that are more affordable, this has caused fragmentation and break down of these communities as people are no longer residents in Venice, they are instead commuters, this pattern has been ongoing for the past thirty years (Paolo Russo et al, 2009).

The effects that this label “the creative city” has had on Venice and its population are marked in the landscape with a declining resident population due to a large commodification of housing for the tourist market (Good, 2005) and upward pressure on the housing prices leading to the gentrification of the area (Sequera et al, 2018). Venice has labelled itself as an epicentre for creativity, drawing tourists from far and wide to be immersed in this creative landscape full of history and tradition. Government officials in Venice have tried to combat this declining resident population through the introduction of a different type of creative class to gentrify the area; this class are third-level students. The new community was introduced with the hope that they would “repopulate” the city with permanent residents rather than vacationers (Paolo Russo et al. 2009). This introduction of a new creative class follows



the ideas of Richard Florida (2003), who claimed students are a tremendous driving force in making a city creative. However, residents blame the student population just as much as the tourists for gentrifying the city and driving up property prices, this is due to the attractiveness of student districts to visitors due to the presence of lively and atmospheric nightlife and the cultural activities that surround student life (Paolo Russo et al, 2009). The student population has also created a “creative cluster” due to the centralisation of the universities in Venice and the student residences situated in and around these institutions (Paolo Russo et al, 2009). This creative cluster has the power to rejuvenate the city and breathe life back into this city affected by the displacement of a permanent resident population. However, there is a risk of it creating further tourist gentrification as tourists search for more authentic experiences in Venice. Therefore, flocking to student districts driving property prices up further (Paolo Russo et al, 2009).

Venice, a beautiful city. Images like the one above reveal the true splendour and magical quality of this famed city. However, the breath-taking images don't reveal the underlying social problems that have resulted from the tourist gentrification of the city and resulting property price increases, as well as the declining resident population in the city. This lack of a permanent population means that there is a lack of security and feeling of community in the city. The culture here is put on display for the tourists and tourism economy, resulting in its diminishing resident population responsible for the showcasing of culture. The gondolier that is rowing down the canals of Venice, guiding the tourists around the sites, and contributing to the tourism economy is unlikely to be able to afford rent in the city in which he works. Unfortunately, the involvement of Venetians in the “Creative Class” has resulted in their displacement due to gentrification. This photo that I have shown above clearly depicts a creative city with a creative class driving it forward, but the creative classes are the ones who are suffering as they cannot afford to live in the city of their own making.

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# **A Critical Commentary on France and the United States of America: Approaches to Climate Change**

**Author: Aoife Murphy**

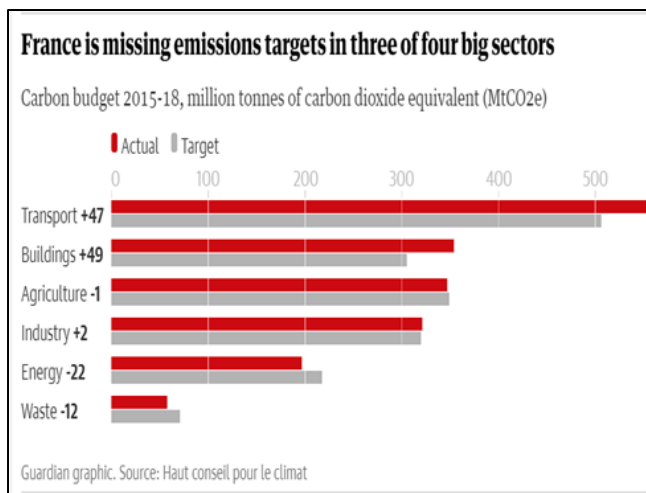
The 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) declared that ‘change in the Earth’s climate and its adverse effects are a common concern of humankind’ (U.N., 1992). This article set out specific goals called the ‘Global solidarity principles’, that all parties involved should follow to protect the climate for the present and future generations. These goals stated, ‘full consideration should be paid to the needs of developing countries, especially those most vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change to all parties should promote sustainable development’ (Szarka, 2011). Since global bodies of power have stressed the need to combat climate change and face the harsh realities of humankind’s mistakes, many agreements, policies, and laws have started to come into effect all around the world, some with positive feedback, others with negative feedback. The Paris Agreement (COP21) was the first-ever universal, legally binding global climate deal, and it was adopted by 195 countries globally (E.U., 2019). This agreement was brought into effect to bridge the gap between today’s policies and climate-neutrality before the end of the century with aims such as to reach a ‘low-carbon’ economy (E.U., 2019). As host and chair to COP21, France played an influential role in comparison to countries such as the United States, who joined and requested to leave within five years. The stark differences between these states show how successful these agreements can be with full cooperation. Greta Thunberg stated, “This is the biggest crisis humanity has ever faced” (Allen, 2019), changes need to happen, and only heads of states can be responsible for those changes to happen successfully.

Historically, France achieved significant greenhouse gas reductions before other nations, over the 1980s and 1990s, when their energy-

related emissions fell by 23 per cent (Szarka, 2011), as the environmental movement began. Some could say they were the leading country in Europe to implement a climate change strategy in the early 21st century. The positive feedback of their efforts led them to be the host to the most prominent agreement regarding climate change internationally to date. The Paris Agreement played a significant role in France’s growth by helping establish targets and fund grants that promote the discourse needed for change.

The agreement also supported multilateral negotiation processes involving all stakeholders to help form sustainable and dynamic agreements (Chrisafis, 2019). The French took a significant stance with ambitious goals, President Francois Hollande, as the centre of the agreement, declared they would be lowering their emissions by 40% of what the levels were in 1990, in comparison to many countries who choose 20%. This is one example of how ahead the French were at the beginning of these talks. Ultimately, the French establishment firmly believed that climate policy should not impair national economic competitiveness in the global economy, but should be seen as equally important, and it has still been treated that way up until current talks of COP24 (Darby, 2019). However, French climate policy in the 2000s was not short of ideas or initiatives, such as introducing a carbon tax in 2009, but at times lacked sustained political will. Currently, they are struggling to meet their COP21 targets, particularly regarding transport, where a carbon budget is set in place. However, carbon dioxide emission reduction has not been occurring fast enough in France. During the period shown in the figure one, annual emissions decreased by only 1.1%, which is much less than planned (Chrisafis, 2019).





**Figure One:** Carbon Emissions targets for budget, 2015 - 2018.

**Source:** Chrisafis, A., 2019

Support and cooperation from the French population on combating climate change have increased dramatically since the COP21 agreement. In the 2019 European elections, the Green Party won 13.5% of the votes (EuropeanParliament, 2019) and has continuous support from the current French president, Emmanuel Macron. At the current U.N. climate talks, COP24, France, one of Europe's most climate ambitious countries, is now facing the difficulty of imposing any economic pain in the name of tackling climate change (Chrisafis, 2019). The tax proposal sparked weeks of riots by a group known as the 'Yellow Vests' which devastated Paris and left four people dead. If France's government wants to continue its ambitious goals, especially in the transport and building sector, they must listen to the working-class groups who are opposing the changes, as it is the sector being most affected. France must now listen to their country, as support for the Green Party is rising and riots are beginning, if they are to take part in future U.N. climate talks and be at the forefront of the fight against global warming.

The United States and China joined the Paris Agreement at the same time with similar goals. The Obama administration at the time initially saw the

idea of combating climate change as a dire issue, and they began by giving a \$500 million grant to the "Green Climate Fund" as their first commitment to the convention and negotiations in Paris (Schreurs, 2014). A decision that served in stark contrast to the previous Bush administration who were convinced that U.S. economic interests were best served by withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol. Therefore, when it came to discussions regarding COP21, the Americans were constrained, and many politicians viewed climate as a low rate issue. As President Trump's international energy and climate advisor Wells Griffith said, "We strongly believe that no country should have to sacrifice their economic prosperity or energy security in pursuit of environmental sustainability" (Friedman, 2019). This is in stark contrast to the progress made in 2009 at the Copenhagen Summit, where the USA pledged to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the range of 17% below 2005 levels by 2020 (E.U., 2019). Following the past ideals of President Bush, Trump took action to leave the agreement, and his administration has received negative feedback since. The U.S. Global Change Research Program reported that climate change could kill thousands of people in the U.S annually. Furthermore, the economy could face a 10% reduction in GDP if the state fails to introduce preventative measures (Friedman, 2019), such as their previous targets made with Obama's leadership. Additionally, Trump's government recently issued a dire report warning of massive economic losses if carbon emissions continue to feed climate change unchecked. However, the U.S. leader regularly denies the claims, usually through his social media, such as in 2012, "The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive."

In November 2019, the United States of America began the process of officially leaving the agreement. Although this has not been without a negative backlash in the form of riots and protests, including those that occurred on the president's doorstep in Washington. President Trump is also continuously criticised in the media globally. The

president's ideas of returning to the high use of oil and coal go entirely against the promises made as they signed up in 2015, for example, Trump attended the 45th G7 summit held in France in 2019 (Liptak, 2018). However, he skipped the discussions relating to the environment and climate. Subsequently, he held a press conference, in which he stated: "I think I know more about the environment than most people" (Liptak, 2018). As U.N. discussions move on now to COP25, the globe now faces an even more difficult task of lowering global emission and becoming a carbon-free economy, as a vetoing nation has taken a significant step back into the past.

The 'climate divide' that separated the USA and the E.U. during the early 2000s was primarily caused by disagreement over economic impacts. With the new leadership in the U.S., this divide has been reinforced again (Schreurs, 2014). The centrist French president, Emmanuel Macron, has been a constant supporter of climate action and has tried to encourage other European nations to aim for neutral carbon dioxide emissions across the E.U. by 2050 (Szarka, 2011). Whereas his counterpart Donald Trump when promising to "make our planet great again", focuses on the economic impacts, government expenditure, and implicitly suggests the agreement is just a hoax constructed by competitor states. These stark differences are the reasons why the media is often comparing their leadership and focusing on their differences. For instance, in The Guardian's 'The Tale of two Alphas', when Trump avoided the climate talks hosted in France at the 2019 G7 summit. There are even some worries that America's departure from future climate negotiations and their influential status globally, could encourage other countries to relax their efforts at cutting emissions.

The United States withdrew from the Paris agreement because it "disadvantages American workers and taxpayers" (Wayt, 2019). Yet, the French president, Macron, faced a crisis in climate policy as the 'Yellow Vest' are rioting in the capital against a new carbon tax intended to urge motorists to change their behaviour and force France to reach

their targets as part of their agreement. Similarly, riots in the U.S. are occurring just as frequently, but on the other side of the argument, New York City allowed 1.1 million public school students to skip class to participate in global climate strike protest (Wayt, 2019). However, there is still the belief that investing in our climate is vital for our futures. That can be seen with the Green Party support in France. Whereas, the belief on the other side of the world, is that Trump is acting in the right manner. His head environmental advisor, Wells Griffith agrees with his move to leave the climate movement (Friedman, 2019). The main contrast between these two states is their view on the economy concerning combating climate change. However, they both are pushing their countries to their limits, and the population is beginning to retaliate against them. There is no denying that both countries are struggling to adapt to their leadership when it comes to global warming, and the leaders themselves are struggling to hear their citizens' views and worries.

Both developed countries signed their first international climate treaty in 2015. Four years later, with the withdrawal of the U.S., it reduces other countries' emission space and raises their emission costs, and refusal to contribute to climate aid and funding makes it more difficult for developing countries to mitigate and adapt to climate change (Zhang, 2017). There is no denying that Trump's move to leave future climate talks and break their Paris treaty targets, is a move away from the primary goal of a carbon-free economy and sustainable, smart growth and a safe globe. Thunberg spoke in the U.S. again, in the home state of the American president, with a massive turn out of supporter's and she urged them to change the future for the USA (Holden, 2019). She leaves them with a simple but important message "to everyone – to unite behind the science and to act on the science", if other countries can listen and make changes to adapt while protecting their economy, why can't America do the same?

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# **Environmental Justice in Global Environmental Policies**

**Author:** *Malin Andersson*

## **1. Introduction**

Environmental injustice, as well as environmental issues overall, goes beyond national borders. The ability to tackle the injustices is, therefore, also transnational, contributing to difficulties in making efficient efforts to reduce them and assess who is responsible (Allison, 2013). As this essay will point out, the global complexity of environmental injustices inhibits global environmental policies to offer adequate solutions, although several attempts are made. First, environmental justice in global environmental politics will be discussed by explaining the emerge and globalisation of the concept and the movement, as well as the influence it has had on the sustainable development discourse. Second, environmental justice in waste management, particularly the rising issue of e-waste, and related policy responses will be further evaluated as an example. In final, a conclusion is made, stating that global environmental policies draw attention to environmental inequalities to a certain degree, but the incorporation of a justice perspective is not as discernible.

## **2. Addressing Environmental Justice in Global Environmental Policies**

There is a multitude of evidence pointing towards the existence of unequal exposure to adverse environmental consequences. These inequalities in exposure to environmental “bads” can be based on intended or unintended racism, locating hazardous facilities closer to people of colour and people with a lower income. (Roberts, 2007) People of colour and ethnic minorities are, in other words suffering a higher risk of being exposed to environmental issues (Mohai et al., 2009), which is not a new phenomenon. Rising awareness of and attention to environmental injustices took place in the US during the 1980s. The uneven distribution of waste sites was noticed since they were more likely to be

located close to areas predominantly habited by a black population. (Lehtinen, 2009) From an initial focus on the racist dimensions, environmental justice today includes a broad range of intersectional discrimination grounds, such as class, age, and gender. It also includes more environmental impacts than waste, even if waste has continued relevance. The uneven impacts of climate change, affecting some areas more than others, and different possibilities to adapt are more recent issues where environmental injustices are highlighted. The distribution of environmental “goods”, for instance, access to green areas, is another emerging aspect within the environmental justice frames (Walker, 2012).

### *2.1 Globalisation of Environmental Justice: Free Trade and Transnational Solidarity*

The globalisation of questions concerning environmental justice has made the concept expanding from mainly centring inequalities in the US to including an international focus. International agreements and organisations promoting free trade, for instance, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and World Trade Organization (WTO), have played essential roles in the globalisation of trade and inequalities (Mohai et al., 2009). This is contextualised when corporations can decide to locate certain activities in remote areas where environmental regulations and labour costs are low. Dangerous facilities are, therefore, more likely to be placed in more deprived areas with a smaller social and political power, often in the Global South. (Mohai et al., 2009) It is not only the inequalities that are increasingly globalised. The reaction to international environmental inequalities has also extended over nation borders in environmental justice movements, or “transnational solidarity work”, to use the words of Roberts (2007:286). Environmental justice movements are influenced by the context in which they are applied; an organisation promoting environmental justice in the US has different understandings and key concerns compared to an Irish or a Bangladesh movement. However, there is

a general view that the cultural and physical environment are inseparable and that both must be included in the way hazardous environmental impacts are treated, in national and international politics. (Mohai et al., 2009)

The environmental justice movements underline three cores of justice; distributional justice (striving to a more just distribution of environmental risks), recognitional justice (recognising the existence of more vulnerable groups and areas), and finally, procedural justice (Schlosberg, 2003; Walker, 2012). The way justice is fulfilled and retained is connected to procedural justice. Participation is a part of procedural justice and forms an essential aspect of the movement's idea of justice. Local perspectives and knowledge must be included for environmental action to be just. (Schlosberg, 2003). The level of participation is also essential. If local groups are only informed of already made-up decisions or if their knowledge is impacting the outcome is fundamental. That raises associated questions regarding who participates, who is excluded, and what questions the participants can affect are. This is a broad subject of discussion within international development (see, for instance, Cornwall, 2008 and Mubita et al., 2017) that will not be further evaluated in this essay. What is notable here is that environmental justice groups are striving to make their voices and experiences heard - to participate in the processes aiming to increase environmental justice. As the example of waste will show, the efforts have been successful to various degrees.

## 2.2 Environmental Justice and Sustainable Development

Sustainable development, emerging as a part of international environmental policies after the Brundtland report in 1987, is based on three dimensions; ecologic, social, and economic sustainability. All of them are necessary in order to reach sustainable development (WCDE, 1987). The sustainable development discourse has significantly impacted environmental policies, as demonstrated in the 17 international sustainable development goals in Agenda 2030, which were agreed on by member states of the United Nations in 2015 (UN, n.d.). The initial definition of sustainable development embraced some elements that reflect ideas of environmental equity, as illustrated in the following quote from the Brundtland report:

*"When urban air quality deteriorates, the poor, in their more vulnerable areas, suffer more health damage than the rich, who usually live in more pristine neighbourhoods. When mineral resources become depleted, late-comers to the industrialization process lose the benefits of low-cost supplies. Globally, wealthier nations are better placed financially and technologically to cope with the effects of possible climatic change."* (WCDE, 1987:45)

The quote indicates an awareness of global inequalities concerning who is affected by environmental bads, for example, air pollution and the ability to adapt to climate change in international policies. As Haughton (1999:234) argues, justice is an important part of the social dimension of sustainability since the other dimensions will not be reached unless social justice is included. According to Mohai et al. (2009:423), this is not necessarily true since actions focusing on social sustainability might not be either environmentally friendly or economically efficient. Sustainable development needs to be compatible with the market, making it an attractive concept for a variety of actors. Nevertheless, this also contributes to a prioritising of ecological modernisation rather than social justice (Walker,



2012). Intergenerational justice is included to some degree (Lehtinen, 2009), reflected in the general aim to sustain a development that enables present and future generations to meet their needs (WCDE, 1987), but the development's potentially unequal impacts are not the priority.

The critique against sustainable development and international policies is hence based on the focus on unlimited economic growth, presumed to contribute to better conditions for everyone, which has shown not to be the case. Instead, the growth is unequal, as the uneven spatial distribution of negative environmental impacts suggests (Mohai et al., 2009). According to Walker (2012), inequality can be used as a descriptive concept, providing an image of, particularly exposed neighbourhoods.

The response to inequalities would then be changed in the distributional structures of environmental goods and bads (Haughton, 1999). Nevertheless, awareness of inequalities does not inevitably mean that injustices are targeted. Injustices are more relative, depending on the socio-cultural context (Mohai et al., 2009), and they include the structures creating inequalities; in this context, it could comprise of the activities that generate waste, air pollution, etc (Haughton, 1999). In order to increase the environmental justice, instead of equality exclusively, states and corporations need to change significantly (Mohai et al., 2009). Therefore, it could be argued that environmental justice frames are not included in international environmental policies. The awareness of existing environmental inequalities is present to a certain degree, as demonstrated in the quote from the Brundtland report, but there is a discrepancy between awareness of inequalities and actions being made to tackle injustices. As the example of waste and e-waste below shows, the need to change existing structures has had a very limited effect on international environmental policies.

### **3. Example: Waste and E-waste Management**

One field where international policies have tried to address environmental inequalities is waste management, the environmental issue that initially spurred the environmental justice movement. Here, more recent problems related to electronic waste, or e-waste, and associated policies, will also be discussed.

Waste management was central when environmental injustices in the US made it to the headlines in the 1980s (Mohai et al., 2009). Some people were, and are, more likely than others to be placed in the proximity of waste sites, created by the present way to produce and consume (Walker, 2012). The globalisation processes mentioned above have expanded the issue and added an international dimension to waste management and related environmental justice. Hazardous waste sites are not only placed in less powerful areas within a region or country, but the whole world is used in order to find the most suitable places for dumping waste (Mohai et al., 2009). The outcome of the globalised waste management is similar to the regional scale. In a global context, poorer countries are more often the importer of waste, which disproportionately affects vulnerable groups within these countries. This makes waste management issues a question of environmental injustice in more current time as well (Mohai et al., 2009), indicating a spatial as well as social inequality (Agyeman, 2013). The growth of the informational economy adds to the waste issue since it contributes to large amounts of hazardous waste being distributed globally (Mohai et al., 2009).

Working with e-waste and other sorts of waste often include dangerous tasks and are, in many cases, assigned to people of colour, women, teenagers, and other more vulnerable groups. Moreover, there is often a lack of access to appropriate protective gear (Agyeman, 2013). Pressure from activists and local communities promoting environmental justice has contributed to changes in international e-waste regulations (Mohai et al., 2009). The European Union is regarded as a forerunner in adapting policies where hazardous substances are regulated, which has been part of the union's environmental policies since the

1960s. Since 2003, the EU has had directives concerning e-waste in Waste Electric and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directives, which is also regulated to a certain degree in Restrictions on Hazardous Substances (RoHS). Furthermore, legally binding regulation on the registration, evaluation, and authorisation of chemicals (REACH) was agreed on in 2007 (Selin & VanDeveer, 2006). These regulations and directives aim to decrease the amount of hazardous waste and dangerous substances, for instance, by increased recycling of electronic equipment, as well as making producers and users responsible for the generated waste. This is in line with the general goal of sustainable development (Selin & VanDeveer, 2006). The regulations of waste management in the EU member countries influence global waste policies due to the relatively ambitious level and the pressure it puts on the international counterparts. The EU's importance in international trade also affects international waste policies (Selin & VanDeveer, 2006). The international treaty formulated after the United Nations Environmental Programme's (UNEP) Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Waste in 1989 was agreed on in order to prevent the export of hazardous waste to developing countries. According to the fourth article of the treaty, the signing parties should:

*“Not allow the export of hazardous wastes or other wastes to a State or group of States belonging to an economic and/or political integration organization that are Parties, particularly developing countries, which have prohibited by their legislation all imports, or if it has reason to believe that the wastes in question will not be managed in an environmentally sound manner” (UNEP, 1989:15)*

Thus, there are attempts on an international as well as European level to deal with waste issues, which are connected to environmental justice. The influence of EU's ambitious waste policies on international regulations could indicate that the effectiveness of global environmental policies in addressing disproportionate e-waste exposure is, if not ideal, then at least in the right direction of becoming more ambitious.

However, as the example of e-waste shows, the policies at the European as well as international level are not functioning perfectly. E-waste is dumped in developing countries, where recycling and disposal regulations are often lacking. The dumping of old electronics is sometimes labelled as efforts aiming at “bridging the digital divide” (Agyeman, 2013:2). Nevertheless, receiving used technology is not necessarily benefitting the country, since the electronics are often useless. Toxic substances from the e-waste are also likely to spread to the surrounding areas, affecting people working at the waste sites as well as the whole community. This has negative impacts on the environment and human health (Selin & VanDeveer, 2006), and therefore provides an adequate example of an environmental injustice unsuccessfully targeted by global environmental policies. The injustice is spurred on by the separation of wealthy consumers and the people who are suffering from the effects of the consumption (Agyeman, 2013).

Agyeman (2013) argues that the newly emerging discourse of environmental justice is limited because it must fit inside the frames of renewable energy and climate protection, rather than keeping the initial focus on discrimination and social justice. The limited influence of The Base Convention treaty and the European waste directives on these injustices indicates that environmental policies need to include environmental justice to a more significant extent, not only by displaying an awareness of environmental inequalities and adapting a notion of justice into ecological modernisation but by formulating environmental policies that put more exposed and already vulnerable groups in the forefront. That entails a refocusing of economic policies on production and consumer behaviour, which in the EU are characterised by the promotion of highly waste-generating consumer patterns (Selin & VanDeveer, 2006). Drawing back to the previously mentioned definition of justice, and the necessity to change existing structures, the transformation of the structures that create the inequalities is crucial.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, there is an awareness of environmental inequalities in global environmental policies, which is demonstrated in the sustainable development discourse as well as in EU and international waste policies. This could presumably lead to the conclusion that global environmental policies are efficient in addressing environmental injustices. However, as has been discussed throughout the essay, the awareness of inequalities is not synonymous with efforts made to reduce injustices. This is supported by the failure of global policies to regulate the export of e-waste to less developed countries. The inclusion of environmental injustice issues in the policies are also mainly a result of pressure from social movements, rather than an aim originating from the international community itself. An explanation of the failure could be directed to the transnational character of environmental issues, making legislations and the assigning of responsibility hard to achieve. In short, this essay has strengthened the idea that global environmental policies can significantly increase their efficiency in tackling situations where vulnerable populations are more affected by negative environmental impacts.

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**GY347 USA Presidential Elections Task and  
Kavvy Awards 2019/20**

**Author: Dr. Adrian Kavanagh**

Each year (well each year since 2017), as part of the Electoral Geography (GY347) module, students get the chance to apply what they learn from class in the USA Presidential Election tasks. Why write a boring essay about presidential election campaigns in the USA when you can work on an actual election campaign - admittedly a fictional election, or - as I prefer to call it - an election set in a simulated environment. Students get to work through all the different stages of a presidential campaign - the pre-primaries year (including the Iowa State Fair), the primaries, the many suspensions of election campaigns, the party conventions, the debates, the "October Surprise" and, of course, the nail biting tension of Election Night (sadly not broadcast this year from Maynooth, but instead from Laois via the GY347 teams page).



This module aims to inculcate in the students valuable transferable skills, such as the ability to lie with a smile on your face, to stab life-long friends and family members (sorry Larmour!) in the back, and how to be easy about openly praising people that you'd been slating only a few days earlier. Valuable life lessons that students will take on into their working lives, no doubt!  
*(I am being (slightly) tongue-in-cheek here. The task was not only about teaching students about*

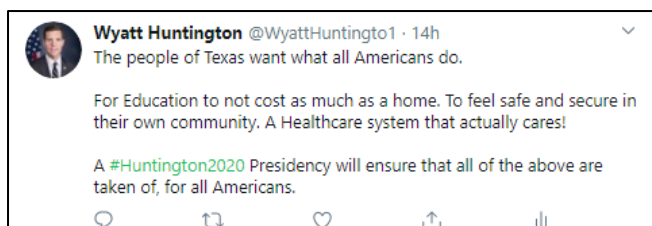
*how to back stab effectively, but it did also involve other skills such as team work, strategising (political naturally), learning how to communicate political messages to different audiences (using social media and traditional forms of political communication) and making use of data (i.e. opinion poll figures) to shape campaign/canvassing approaches.)*

Democrat's so called ,political answers'...	
	
	
	
	
	

Following in the footsteps of Presidents Mel Walzer (David Shiels), Bill Wright (William Durkan), Dick Johnson (Amy Byrne) and Cyndi Lopez (Jessica Doherty), it was time this year for a new president to emerge and the contest this year was won by the Republican team, headed up by Governor DeAndre Durant (Luke Byrne) and his



running mate, Melania Cabello (Sonal Thompson), ultimately thanks to a wafer thin victory in Ohio, with the Democrat team, led by Governor Wyatt Huntington (Darragh Hogan) and Senator Montana West (Sylvester Grogan), narrowly losing out.



At the end of the task I normally announce the winners of the Kavvy Awards - the students who excelled in different aspects of the Presidential Election Tasks and reward them with some "cheap tat" from the nearest One Euro shop. (I know Chris van E hands out lollipops, but I'm too cheap for that...) This year I was unable to hand out said "cheap tat" to the deserving winners. Given how vicious and nasty this year's campaign was (I've never been so proud...), it's only important that the winners get something for their efforts, even if it is just a mention in *Milieu 2020*... GY347 Class of 2020, I salute you. Kavvy Awards winners, I salute you!!!



**Credits:** The memes here are largely the work of the Republican Team (and especially Sophie Eisenbarth), while the Wyatt Huntington Twitter account was set up by Darragh Hogan.

## Kavvy Award Winners 2019/20

Best poster (Primary Elections phase): Sophie Thiesen – *honourable mentions: Aidan Doyle, Luke Byrne, Megan O'Kelly*

Best poster (General Election phase): Lauren Keeler – *honourable mentions: Rachel Browne, Sophie Eisenbarth, Megan O'Kelly*

Best “candidate team” (Primaries): Team DeAndre Durant (Luke Byrne, Eric Donegan, Aidan Gilsenan)

Best “candidate team” (General Election): Team Montana West (Rachel Connolly, Katie Feeney, Sylvester Grogan)

Best “duo”: Tara Murphy and Ryan McCabe (*the Francis and Claire Underwood of Election 2020*)

Best excuse: Wyatt Huntington (Darragh Hogan) at the Big Debate (*"the Russians interfered with my microphone"*)

Most improved poster: Rachel Browne – *honourable mentions: Robert Holohan, Lauren Keeler*

Best flip flop/Best at apologising/Best sidekick: Nicole Carr

Highest quality posts (Democrat Team): Ryan McCabe

Highest quality posts (Republican Team): Pierce Mulholland

Best poster (Humour): Sophie Eisenbarth

Overall Kavvy Award for Campaign Excellence: Megan O'Kelly (*Biden and Trump need to hire her...NOW*)

## Maynooth Geography Students nominated for USI: Student Achievement Awards Ireland

Three students from the Department of Geography have been nominated by Maynooth Students Union for the USI: Student Achievement Awards Ireland.



First year Aoife Hynes and final year students Julian Nagi and Nicole Carr have been nominated for the awards to take place May 27<sup>th</sup>. Two of the nominees, Julian and Nicole, were kind enough to discuss their nomination and their role in Maynooth Student's Union.

### Julian Nagi

My name is Julian Nagi and I am in my final year of studying Single Major Geography. I have been nominated for the "Part Time Officer of the Year" SAAI award. I am the current Arts, Celtic Studies & Philosophy Faculty Convenor in Maynooth Students' Union.

In my role, I represent over 5,000 students on the University Faculty & the MSU Executive. I am assisted in my role by over 45 Student Academic Representatives. Some of my work over the year includes getting permission to share Faculty documentation with the Academic Representatives for consultation purposes, working with a department to establish a new Student-Staff Liaison Committee and successfully lobbying the University to upgrade air conditioning in one of the University's largest lecture halls.



**Pictured:** Julian collecting signatures for a petition calling on the reversal of campus accommodation hikes and postgraduate fee increases.

### Nicole Carr

Nicole has been nominated by Maynooth Students' Union (MSU) to the Union of Students Ireland (USI) Student Achievement Awards Ireland (SAAI) and she has been shortlisted in the 'Student Representative of the Year' category.

Nicole is excellent within Access to Education, in particular the HEAR Programme and brings her knowledge and experience of this programme and how it effects so many students with her in all of her voluntary roles.

She is the HEAR Senator and sits on MSU Student Senate, Executive Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOAC), LEAD Caucus (Leadership, Engagement, Democracy, Awareness), Academic Affairs Caucus (AAC) Leader, the Working Group of Caucus Leaders and the Welfare & Equality forum as that position. She is also the Secretary of the Access Society, the Online Communications Officer of Literary & Debating Society and a Student Engagement Ambassador. Before being elected to Senate in October 2019, she still chose to advocate for Access Students in a variety of ways and her success since becoming a senator is immeasurable with her main achievements being her work on the Accessible Documentation policy, her vital involvement in the creation of a student-

to-student Irish Support Centre and being elected the first leader of the Academic Affairs Caucus. Nicole has also got roles under the University as a Student Ambassador and as a MAP Ambassador and has been praised in her honesty, hard work and creativity when doing this work.



**Pictured:** Nicole at the Fridays for Future, Climate Action Protest, December 2019.

The very best of luck from all in the Department of Geography to Aoife, Julian and Nicole!





John and Pat Hume Scholarship Award recipients Bernard Essel (front row left) and Conchúr Ó Maonaigh (far right)



Jennifer Carlton (Maynooth Student Awards recipient) with Prof Philip Nolan (President of Maynooth University)

## Geography Department Award Recipients 2019/20



Maynooth Student Awards recipients Nathan Kane and Jessica Doherty



**Above:** Pre-Ceremony Reception for Maynooth Geography students receiving Maynooth Student Awards



**Left:** Laura Garry and Jessica Doherty, Maynooth Student Awards recipients

**Right:** PhD candidate Shirley Howe receiving the Eda Segarra Medal for top ranked Irish Research Postgraduate student in arts, humanities and social sciences. Pictured with Supervisors, Dr Chandana Mathur (Department of Anthropology) and Dr Conor Murphy (Department of Geography)







## Graduation September 2019





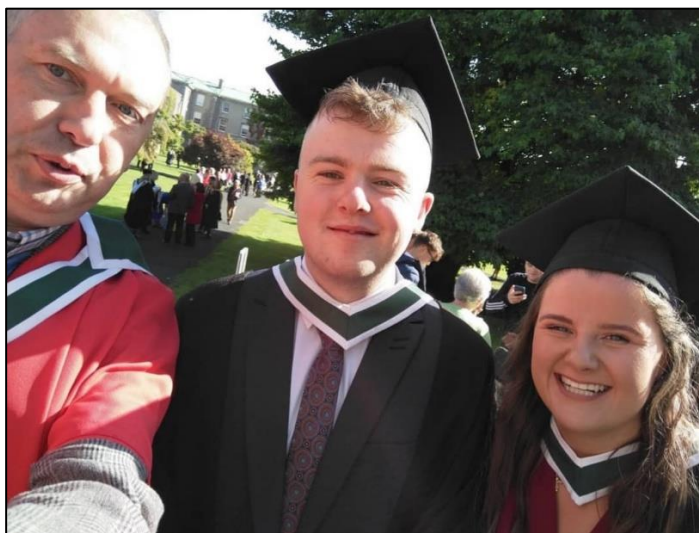








# Selfie Special with Dr. Adrian Kavanagh



# Memories from 2019/20



Climate Change MSc recording for RTÉ climate change special *Mooney Goes Wild*.



Dr. Ro Charlton and Sir Geo Kafka



Members of the Department of Geography at Climate Strike in Maynooth





Neasa and Sir Geo Kafka



Prof. Jim Walsh's retirement coffee



Una, Jennifer and Neasa hiding behind the flowers at Jennifer's leaving presentation



Head of Department Gerry Kearns welcoming the new Postgraduates



We welcomed new lecturers to the department this year, one being Dr. Debangana Bose





MSc GIS and Remote Sensing Students welcoming the new sensefly eBee RTK



Dr. Lisa Orme welcoming TY students in Geo Week



Geography award winning students!



