

MILIEU 2025

50TH ANNIVERSARY

EDITION

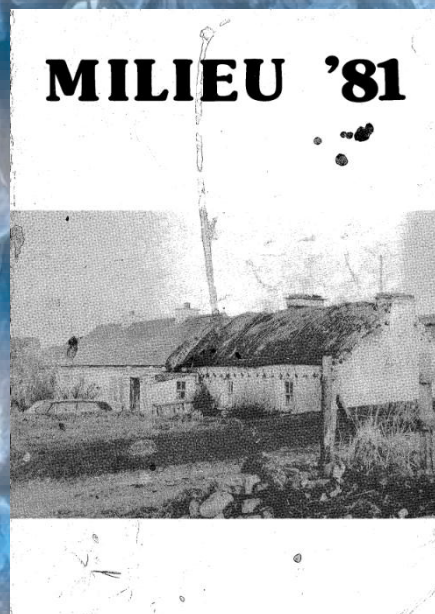
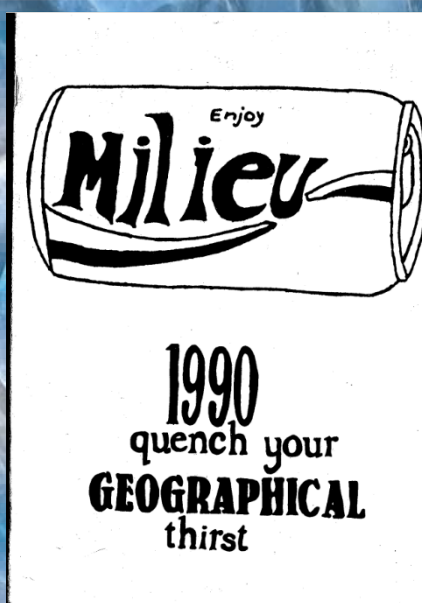


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FOREWORD FROM THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Dr. Stephen McCarron

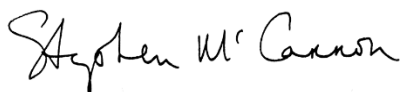
It is my great pleasure and honour to write a short foreword to this year's special 50th anniversary Milieu, marking five decades of unbroken publication. This is a really remarkable achievement by so many students and colleagues over that time.

This rich tradition and heritage of original work, published for the world to see, is a truly significant legacy of Geography at Maynooth and one that technological 'progress' cannot ever hope to replace. It is through 50 years of change that Milieu has triumphed by surviving, and if any lesson can be learnt in that, it is the value of perseverance in supporting what is the right thing to do. Upholding those values of celebrating original scholarship and knowledge creation, witnessing the transformative power of engagement in academic study are perhaps never more relevant and important than at this very time. Our families are under persistent aggressive attack, both physically by dominating force in many places including Ukraine and Palestine, and ideologically and economically in the USA and around the world as democracy is undermined and undervalued.

Objective truth and the right to live in peace, or even be let to live, is an ever more precious thing, under all these assaults and more in this fast-changing world. Academia and the scholarship and observations of all students of the world have long been an important light to hold up against such darkness by drawing on the records of the past and casting informed predictions and warnings into the future. It must be listened to in order to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, and every contribution to such an effort helps, and this is why Milieu exists and is published, forming part of the public record, to give reasoned evidence-based opinion for discussion and in this case, much inspiration.

From the poetry of Haikus to images of smiling new friends made on fieldtrips there is much to be inspired by and draw hope from in this truly significant milestone Milieu. I congratulate all involved in its production to the highest standards and commend it to the world and thank all involved for carrying on the tradition of promoting learning.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Stephen McCarron". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Stephen McCarron, Geography HoD, Maynooth, 2025

EDITORIAL

Dr. Adrian Kavanagh

Fifty years is a long time. A very long time. More than two lifetimes for most of the authors of the various articles in this year's *Milieu*, but sadly not this member of the editorial team for *Milieu 2025*. Much has changed in Maynooth Geography and in the lives of Maynooth Geography students over that period; some change for the better, some change, maybe not. But some things remain the same. For many of the authors in this year's *Milieu* this will be the first time that they will get to see their work in published form. That's exciting. I can recall feeling that same level of excitement from way back in...er 1991 when my first ever *Milieu* article saw the light of day, a short review of the political situation in what was then Yugoslavia. Over the past fifty years, since the publication of the first *Milieu* in 1975, many Maynooth Geography students have had their work published in *Milieu* and gone on to "bigger and better things". This includes one of the world's leading geographers, Gerard Toal or Gearóid Ó Tuathail, whose 1980 debut *Milieu* article features as one of our "flashback" pieces in this year's journal.

For five decades *Milieu* has been a part of the fabric of Maynooth Geography life, but its relative importance has, to be honest, been declining over the past decade, or so. *Milieu* launches used to be one of the biggest social events in the Maynooth Geography calendar; the 2008 launch took place in the illustrious surrounds of Carton House, for instance. In more recent years, however, *Milieu* launches have tended to be rushed affairs, as overworked editors struggled to get the journal over the line just before the end of lectures, and poorly attended. And there was no launch last year! The putting together of *Milieu* used to involve a large number of people, including staff and Society members, as well as the editorial team. For instance, I remember putting in a number of late nights in the Cartography Lab, when I was a Society committee member in 1992, along with the editor and other Society members, with help from John Sweeney and other (then) staff members working on that year's journal, using a new package (which I think was called Pagemaster) that promised to save hundreds of pounds in typesetting costs. Today, the putting together of *Milieu* has become almost a one-person show. We quickly reverted to an online journal at the onset of COVID (which has allowed for later submissions, not necessarily a bad thing), but since COVID the direct involvement of the Society with *Milieu* has become quite limited. To be honest, *Milieu* would have probably died in 2020 if it had not been for Dr. William Durkan, who almost single-handedly kept the journal alive over the following three years. Since William departed to UCC in 2023, I've tried to fill his very large shoes (TBH, I'm talking figuratively there, I suspect William's actual feet are not that large) over the past two years with the aim of at least getting *Milieu* to its 50th anniversary. Where *Milieu* goes from here, it is hard to say.

But there would be no *Milieu* without the help of a large number of people. Thanks to co-editor, Dr. Caoilfhionn D'Arcy, but especially for her cover art, as well as to our fillers editor, Shirley Howe, who is responsible for most of the "less academic" elements of this year's *Milieu*. But an especial thanks to all of our contributors, most of whom are undergraduate students. Without you, there would be no *Milieu* this year. The level of variety/quality this year is well on a par with previous editions. If this sadly proves to be the last ever *Milieu*, it will be a very good one to finish with, at least!

WORK EXPERIENCE AT LULLYMORE HERITAGE PARK, COUNTY KILDARE

Lucy Kouznetsova, Year 3/Final Year (Single Major)

Introduction

As part of the GY399 work placement module, I was hosted by Lullymore Heritage Park in early September 2024. Lullymore Heritage Park is a conservation site that is rewilding its peatlands. This is what sparked my interest in applying for a work placement here. I was keen to gain insight into ecological conservation work. Apart from habitat restoration and biodiversity tours, Lullymore Heritage Park also run tours on the history of labour in the peatlands. They also offer a variety of permanent and seasonal family-friendly activities. Finally, they host ecological fieldtrips for secondary school students. In fact, after completing my two-week work placement, I was offered, and accepted, a part-time contract to work as a fieldtrip guide at the park. This report starts, in the next section, with an overview of my work placement activities. This is followed by a reflection on the relevance of geography skills in the workplace.

Overview of my work placement

The primary focus of my work placement was to contribute to the recording and mapping of different vegetation species found in the rewilding peatlands. Before starting, the site coordinator, Ray Stapleton, sat down with me to plan my work for the two weeks. This included looking over the species inventory already produced, saving screenshots of different plants on my phone to facilitate species identification, and outlining the areas that I had to cover via satellite imagery on Google Maps.

Since I would be spending most of my time alone in the peatlands, it was also mandatory to conduct the risk assessment. Appropriate outdoor wear was a must: warm layers, waterproof clothing and wellington boots or hiking boots (depending on the weather). There was also a risk of sinking into the bog, so we exchanged phone numbers to further ensure my safety. Ethics was also covered. I was concerned about trampling on the vulnerable species found on the peatlands. But Ray reassured me that the land receives minimal footfall, so having the odd student walk across it would not harm it. He further emphasized that, since this activity is for educational purposes, the benefits gained far outweigh the potential temporary flattening of some vegetation.

After all this, it was time to get started, or so I thought. I climbed over the boardwalk fence and was immediately overwhelmed. The peatlands were vast, and having done habitat surveys in the past, I realised I was missing a surveyor tape. So, on the first day I drove back to Maynooth University to borrow a pair of surveyor tapes from the biology department. They proved to be of use. Since I was alone, I improvised by tying the surveyor tapes to the boardwalk pillars. This gave me an approximate 10x10m section to work with. As I moved up a dedicated part of the peatlands, I moved the surveyor tapes along with me. However, this method was soon abandoned. It turned out that I just needed to

give it time to get familiar with the peatlands. Within three days I used landmarks to orientate myself instead. I eyeballed sections based on features like ditches or rows of trees.

I found it challenging to take physical notes while out in the peatlands. I tried to make voice notes on my phone instead and, although it felt weird at first, I quickly got used to it. I was alone, so no one could hear me talking to myself anyway. I described everything I saw and reported the location of species in each section. As requested by Ray, I also gathered soil quality data. I used a soil meter to measure soil pH, moisture, and temperature. Finally, I took photos with my camera of anything I wanted to ask questions about later, or things that I found interesting.



Figure 1: Boardwalk over peatlands in Lullymore Heritage Park (Kouznetsova, 2024)

By the end of the first week, it was time to write up all my observations into reports. This included transcribing voice recordings related to the different sections I had covered. Each description was accompanied with a cropped screenshot of a map with the given section outlined manually. I produced complimentary reports with additional reflections, descriptions, and several images, which served as an aid. I presented Ray the following reports: Plant and Fungal Distribution Report, a Photographic Reference for Habitat Survey Report, a Presence-Absence Matrix, and Soil Meter Report.

I continued to work on these reports during the second week of the placement, and my final submission to Ray included additional documents that could be used by future Department of Geography placement students. For example, I included a template Presence-Absence Matrix in MS Word format, ready to be filled out. While carrying out the fieldwork, I found it challenging to refer to images on my phone for species identification. So, I went the extra mile and put together a field guide. I included two copies: a PDF version, and an MS Word doc version to facilitate future students.

The activities during the second week of my work placement were more diverse. I put together a pilot birch heatmap through ArcGIS. Birch trees are a pioneer species - they are one of the first trees to show up in a barren landscape. So, although it is natural for them to be in the rewilding peatlands, indeed they are part of the peatland ecosystem, there is also a risk that they'll soak up too much moisture and dry out the peatlands altogether. On that note, I had the chance to practice my ArcGIS skills by inputting collected coordinates into the programme and figuring out how to visualize the data.

Finally, during this second week I was offered to shadow the team on a secondary school fieldtrip. Apart from the peatlands, Lullymore Heritage Park also has some woodlands. This is where they take students for an ecology fieldtrip, which is a mandatory component of the Leaving Certificate biology course. I helped the students with recording abiotic data in the woodlands. I was nervous at first but quickly settled into my role and it ran smoothly. I explained to students how to use two small recording devices, and the students then had to do it themselves under my supervision.

Reflections on Geography skills in the workplace

So, were there any skills from my Geography degree that shone through in my work placement? Yes, there were lots. The most obvious one is fieldwork. Fieldwork is one of the foundational pillars that make up an undergraduate geography programme (Boyle, et al., 2007; Hope, 2009). As a single major geography student, I went on a fieldtrip to Berlin last spring, as part of the GY206 Geography Field Trip module. Risk assessment and ethics were covered there, so I understood the importance of planning and organization before carrying out fieldwork at Lullymore.

Critical thinking is another skill gained in Geography degrees. The importance of sustainability was covered in almost all my modules in Maynooth University. This is something I reflected on while out in the peatlands. When carrying out habitat surveys, I got to be 'up close and personal' with the ecosystem. For instance, there were endless fields of Devil's Matchstick lichen that were not visible from the boardwalks (shown in figure 2). Feelings of awe and admiration were mixed with melancholy, however. Where there is 'rewilding' or 'conservation' of ecological sites, there is usually a story about ecological degradation. My emotional response, along with the overall atmospheric perception in the peatlands, where I spent hours alone immersed in its sensory details, motivated me to reflect on this relationship between society and nature. This was the educational immersive experience Ray was referring to earlier.

The last transferable skills that I would like to touch on are interpersonal skills gained from Geography. Presentation skills and public speaking in Maynooth's undergraduate Geography programme, or potentially across the wider educational system in Ireland, seem to fall short of international standards.

When helping with the secondary school fieldtrip in Lullymore, I felt a lack of confidence when speaking in front of the students.

Upon reflection, I realised that across my time at Maynooth University, I've only done an accumulated 40 minutes of public speaking – at best (in GY201 and GY206). Before transferring to Maynooth from UCD, I did an estimated 20 minutes of public speaking there within a similar time frame. Moreover, most presentations were done in groups – so students may only get 2 minutes of individual speaking. While on Erasmus exchange, I noticed that confidence in public speaking was relatively low among Irish students. When discussing this with my classmates, a Spanish student explained that weekly presentations are very common in her home university, so she gained a lot of confidence in public speaking since the start of her undergraduate geography programme.



Figure 2: Up-close photo of Devil's Matchstick lichen (Kouznetsova, 2024)

That said, my perceived lack of confidence in public speaking at Lullymore may not have been as problematic as I thought, since at the end of my placement I was offered a part-time position as a field guide! Since then, I have experienced many hours of public speaking while independently directing ecology fieldtrips for secondary school students, and I now feel much more confident in giving presentations. Still, I think there is room for improvement in Irish undergraduate geography programmes by giving more attention to public speaking skills.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Lullymore Heritage Park. It was an excellent opportunity to gain insight into ecological conservation work. I would highly recommend other undergraduate students to apply for a work placement through the 399A module. It is a great way to expand your networks in a field that you may want to pursue a career in. You never know what might happen, it could be your way into a job after graduation!



Figure 3: Image of P.E.A.T. Pole (Peatlands Environmental Archaeological Timeline Pole). Top fire symbol shows where the raised bog would have reached before industrial extraction cut it down to current level. (Kounzetsova, 2024).

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TRADING SKYLINES FOR SEASCAPES: A CITY GIRL IN INISHBOFIN ISLAND

Aoife Wynne, Final Year/Year 3 (Major)

Nestled off the west coast of Ireland, 11km by sea from Cleggan Pier, Inishbofin Island is a rugged gem where the Atlantic meets land, history, and culture, and a way of life far removed from the hectic energy of city streets. As a geography student born and raised in the hustle and bustle of Dublin life, I found myself on this remote island, notebook in hand, ready to study coastal erosion and the island's topography as one of 23 students participating in the Geography Department's GY205 field trip. (Plate 1). What I had not prepared for was how deeply this island would make me feel.



Plate 1: GY205 Fieldtrip Group, Inishbofin Island, 28th March 2024. Source: Howe, S.A. (2024)

Inishbofin Island was formed during the Quaternary Period. The island is small, making all the sites we visited accessible by foot, and is a raw piece of Earth displaying glacial effects on the landscape. The island is currently inhabited with a population of 184 people (CSO 2024). It is approximately 5.5 kilometres from the northwest of Galway, accessible by ferry (Meehan *et al.*, 2019). The fieldwork carried out aimed to collect data to identify characteristics of the island, and its physical and socio-

cultural geographies, as well as to collect new data to add to the island's research. The methods I used to collect data were mainly qualitative research, observations, focus groups, and secondary data. I spent my days learning about and documenting the island's geological transformations, the relationship between land and sea, the impact of coastal erosion, and the resilience of the community on the island.

Coming from a city where life is structured around busy roads, big and bold buildings, and artificial lights, I initially felt out of place in what I first perceived as the island's stagnant way of life. The roar of noisy cars was replaced by the call of sheep and seabirds, and streetlights were exchanged for the brilliance of the moonlight untouched by the urban glow. The landscape was lush with vegetation, wildlife, and livestock. I was unaccustomed to the stillness and deep connection between land and sea. This connection of land to sea was evident wherever you were on the island. While sea and land connection is a fundamental aspect of Earth's ecology, shaping societies, landscapes, ecosystems, and climates in many ways, it leaves you with a fresh feeling and a real connection to nature. This is hard to find in my world.

As the days passed, the island began to charm me as I took in the salty breeze and embraced the stillness. I felt a weight lift that I did not know I had been carrying, and I no longer felt the need to rush. I stopped counting time in minutes and instead focused on the natural elements like the slow sun dipping below the Atlantic horizon. The island taught me to be present, and I felt almost stuck in time. During the fieldwork, all these feelings were prominent throughout the week. Examining this interlinkedness of sea and land was an important part of our study. At a glacial till we studied on Trá Gheal on our first day, I wondered how many storms battered along the coast and how many rocks were buried in the sediment that were only exposed because of the relationship between sea and land. The till was made up of countless different rock types that scattered across it. Across the sea from Trá Gheal, we could see Inishbofin's sister island, Inishark, depopulated in 1960 after a series of severe storms. It was clear to see the erosion happening in real-time by the way the waves hit the coastline. Due to the ongoing erosion and increasing severity of storms, parts of Inishbofin's coastline are now cemented with a variety of barricades, such as gabion sea walls to protect the coastline from further decline, showing the natural versus anthropogenic forces.

On day three of fieldwork on the East End beach, we were required to do solo reflective fieldwork about how the island had made us *feel*, thinking about Ingold's (2000) theories of dwelling, and research in geography and island studies on the characteristics of islands. I noted how the landscape was calm compared to how the sea that surrounded it was wild. We walked from carboniferous limestone to metamorphic rock. Metamorphic rock is millions of years old, so while I walked on it, it put the creation of the earth into mind. At nearby Dumhach Beach, we sat on a slab of Conglomerate rock, which was layered through stratification, a rock made up of coarse and fine material. Sitting on this rock that was millions of years old made me feel so insignificant when all this creation was possible. I listened to the reading of Tim Robinson's book about how the Twelve Pins of Connemara were created while we looked out at them on the horizon, pushed together through the earth's magnetic fields (Figure 2). I realised that sediment is a geological time machine that helps us understand how and why the earth was created, one of the world's greatest accomplishments.



Figure 2: Viewing the Twelve Pins from Dumhach Beach, Inishbofin Island, 28th March 2024. Source: Howe, S.A. (2024)

A notable site of the island is St Colman's Monastery. It was founded circa 665 (Lash, 2019: 83), with a 14th-century church now on the site of a 7th-century abbey in Knock townland, towards the east quarter of the island. This location also looks out onto the Twelve Pins, with a beautiful scenic view of the landscape and the sea. The graveyard includes some medieval gravestones, and it is still in use by the island community with a few plots, many being family plots, and some tarnished rocks that possibly represent graves too. During the colonial period of the island, a scientific study was conducted surveying the skull sizes of local people, with racial theory being that this corresponded to levels of intelligence. Skulls had been hidden in this area by Islanders for protection until the 1890s when two scientists from Trinity College heard of these skulls and found it the perfect opportunity to steal them for their survey. There were believed to be 40 skulls that were broken and seen as useless to them, so they took 12 back to Dublin to conduct the research. At this time, Irish people were considered barbaric and uncivilised by English colonisers, and there was “virulent racism” (Nelson, 2012), so they justified their actions through their belief of superiority. The return of the skulls in 2023, 133 years after their robbery, had a significant impact on the people of the island as they walked the skulls back in a coffin to their final resting place in St Colman's. This repatriation acknowledges the historical and appalling injustices committed against the community and serves as a step toward healing and reconciliation.

Due to their importance to the landscape, it holds relevance to the indigenous community of Inishbofin, which can lead to future protection and preservation.

This site, therefore, holds significance for the Islanders and for me because of the way it made me feel. What I noticed about the graveyard was how all the graves were laid towards the beautiful view facing east. In Christianity, this placement symbolises the direction of the rising sun and the resurrection of Christ, illustrating the influence of religion on the people of the island and the landscape. The site almost had a feeling of generational struggle that all Irish people had to endure at the hands of colonialism. This made me empathise with the struggle of this community who were oppressed as well as the larger community. However, it showed inspiration to me too, through the resilience of those who came before and the capacity for positive change to come. Conversations with locals in the evenings, in the only pub open at that time of year on the island, the Beach Bar, revealed a perspective of life that was refreshingly different from mine. I was touched by their ability to find contentment in the simplicity of island life and the joys of self-sufficiency. This is an existence not dependent on constant stimulation but one rich in meaning. In the beginning, I felt like an outsider looking in trying to grasp this “foreign” way of life, but I was taught something invaluable, not just about geography but about an intentional way of living. The contrast between the city pace and the unhurried existence of island life had me wanting more every day.

Upon reflection on what I learned and how this fieldwork experience made me feel, it ignited a new sense of wonder that I can apply to my studies. It is difficult to create this same sense of wonder when I had only ever existed in a human-made landscape. When I sat in Inishbofin, a raw piece of the earth, it made me feel connected to something timeless, as if the land and sea were telling me stories of the past, grounding me in the present. My research, though focused on geography, became intertwined with something more personal. Inishbofin was no longer just a field trip or a case study; it was an experience, a life lesson in observing and appreciating the unfiltered beauty of the world. As I mentioned, the island made me feel insignificant, but in the best way possible, reminding me that nature operates its own system, oblivious to human demands or schedules.

As my time on the island ended, I knew I was leaving with more than just field notes and data for my GeoGuide. Returning to my life in Dublin, I carried Inishbofin with me and a newfound wonder for the delicate balance of nature and the earth. While my research was analysed and my Geoguide data was presented perfectly, and I would later be delighted and humbled to receive the Geography Department's 'Best Performance of Fieldwork' award, the true impact of this trip to Inishbofin is something that could never be quantified, only felt.

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Inishbofin Island (Co. Galway). Source: Jack Kelly (2017)

COVID 19 HOTSPOTS IN SMALL VS LARGE CITIES DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF THE PANDEMIC, COMPARATIVE STUDY OF IRELAND AND CZECHIA

Isom Whelan, Final Year/Year 3 (Single Major)

Introduction

According to the WHO (WHO, 2023), a pandemic is a worldwide spread of a new infectious disease. It is important to look at the epidemiology of a pandemic to understand how and where it spread to slow the spread or for future reference. In December 2019, a new pandemic emerged from China, now known as the Covid 19 pandemic, lasting two years.

It is important to look at the epidemiology of a pandemic to understand how and where it spread to slow the spread or for future reference. For this paper, I will compare the spread of Covid 19 in Ireland and Czechia, with focus on the difference between the spread in smaller cities versus capital or larger cities. When doing research for this paper I first looked at three articles, one on the spread of Covid 19 in Europe, one on the spread of Covid 19 in Ireland and the third looking at a method of studying the spread of Covid 19 in Czechia. It is important to understand the spread of the Covid 19 pandemic for health officials to prepare in the case of a similar future situation, to avoid previous issues. I will then discuss the comparison of the spread of the pandemic in rural and urban areas in Ireland and Czechia.

We can see different approaches to the mitigation of the pandemic throughout Europe. In Ireland the mitigation measures that were in order provided a reduction of '78-86% during the first wave of the pandemic between March and May 2020' (Bernard Cazelles, 2021). the response of the government and health officials in Ireland was more successful than other countries. Czechia had one of the highest levels of covid-19 cases in Europe. There was criticism in the Czech Republic about the rollout of restrictions, and the general response of the government to the pandemic. I will discuss more about the restrictions further in the paper.

Demographic and Health profile of Ireland

Before I discuss the spread of Covid-19 in Ireland I feel it is vital to first discuss a demographic and health profile of the country, to understand the extent of infection and death rates, to determine the spread of the disease. The population of Ireland from the 2022 census is said to be 5,149,139, up 8% from the previous census in 2016 (2021 census cancelled due to covid). The population is 1,458,154 people in the capital city of Dublin. The largest inward migration into Dublin, Cork, and Meath (CSO, 2022). The population density is 72 people per square kilometre, which is important to know when looking at the spread of pandemics.

The life expectancy at birth in 2017 was 79.6 years for males and 83.4 years for females. The average life expectancy in 2019 was 81.8 years, which grew by 5.43 years from the year 2000 (WHO, 2019). The department of health in Ireland is the determinant of health policies for the country. Public

healthcare in the country is provided by the health service executive (HSE). In 2020 only 36% of the country's population had access to free healthcare with the use of a Medical Card, a card given by the HSE that allows a proportion of the population who are disadvantaged to access free healthcare services. A larger percentage of the population access private healthcare or are in a middle zone of not being able to afford private healthcare but are not eligible for free healthcare with a medical card.

Group
Adults aged ≥65 years who are residents of long-term care facilities. Consider offering vaccination to all residents and staff on site.
Frontline healthcare workers (HCWs)* in direct patient contact roles (including vaccinators) or who risk exposure to bodily fluids or aerosols.
Aged 70 and older in the following order: 85 and older 80-84 75-79 70-74.
Other HCWs not in direct patient contact.
Aged 65-69. Prioritise those with medical conditions** which put them at high risk of severe disease.
Key workers (to be further refined) including those providing services essential to the vaccination programme e.g. logistical support.
Aged 18-64 years with medical conditions** which put them at high risk of severe disease.
Residents of long-term care facilities aged 18-64.
Aged 18-64 years living working in crowded accommodation where self-isolation and social distancing is difficult to maintain.
Key workers in essential jobs who cannot avoid a high risk of exposure to COVID-19. They include workers in the food supply system, public and commercial transport and other vital services.
Those who are essential to education and who face disease exposure - primary and second level school staff, special needs assistants, childcare workers, maintenance workers, school bus drivers etc.
Aged 55-64 years.
Those in occupations important to the functioning of society, e.g., third level institutions, entertainment and goods-producing industries who work in settings where protective measures can be followed without much difficulty.
Aged 18-54 years who did not have access to the vaccine in prior phases.
Children, adolescents up to 18 years and pregnant women (to be refined).

Figure 1: Vaccination Allocation Sequencing (Health, 2020).

With the rollout of the covid 19 vaccine, there was a specific system for those who had underlying health conditions, or those who were essential workers (Figure 1). In December 2020 the Irish government announced a strategy for the distribution of the vaccine. Displayed is the vaccination allocation strategy for the country, from the Irish Government. The structure of governance of healthcare in Ireland is set as 1. Government-> 2. Minister for health-> Department of health (policy and legislation overall stewardship)-> 3. HSE board-> HSE (operations & uptake data surveillance) (Ireland, 2020).

By January 27th, 2024, a total of 3,870,000 people in Ireland had their 1st covid 19 vaccines, and a total of 7,935,475 vaccines have been distributed including booster vaccines (Ireland, 2024). It is important to understand, that receiving the covid 19 vaccine did not guarantee that you would not catch the disease, but will make you less contagious, and contagious for a shorter amount of time, which will slow the spread of the disease is highly vaccinated populations (Jack Feehan, 2021). Surprisingly, the capital Dublin was one of the counties in 2022 which had the lowest percentage of over 12-year-olds that were fully vaccinated. I will discuss this in further in the next section of the paper.

The spread of Covid 19 in rural areas versus cities; Ireland

For this paper I want to look at how covid spread through Ireland, by studying the infection rates in rural areas compared to cities, to understand how the disease spread around the country, and the demographic impacts. I will do this by looking at infection rates from official health websites of Ireland, and past articles written on points of interest (POI'S) for the spread of covid 19.

The first case of Covid 19 in Ireland could be from one of two people, both who had recently travelled to northern Italy, and when arriving back in Ireland had presented with a cough, and later a fever. Both patients travelled through Dublin Airport, so we can see this as an epicentre for the beginning of the spread of the disease. The first diagnosed case was a middle-aged lady, who travelled from Dublin airport to Northern Ireland on February 17th, 2020. The second was a young male student who was from Dublin. He had travelled from an area of Northern Italy, on February 29th, 2020, which was later identified as an initial European Epicentre for the spread of the disease.

These two cases are important to note, as we look deeper into how the disease spread around the country, and from which areas it was the worst. A study done on different geographical settings for the escalation of the spread of covid-19 in Europe, confirmed that the spread of the disease was highly linked to certain points of interest (POI'S), such as cafes, bars and restaurants. This is an important aspect to determine, as rural areas may be seen as more isolated than cities, and so it is easy to assume that the levels of infection would be higher in cities, rather than in rural areas. What I want to determine, is whether this is true or not in the case of Ireland.

Firstly, I want to look at the infection rates per county and compare the larger cities to smaller towns. Between June 28th, 2020, and 14th of November 2020 we can see large differences of infection rates throughout the country.

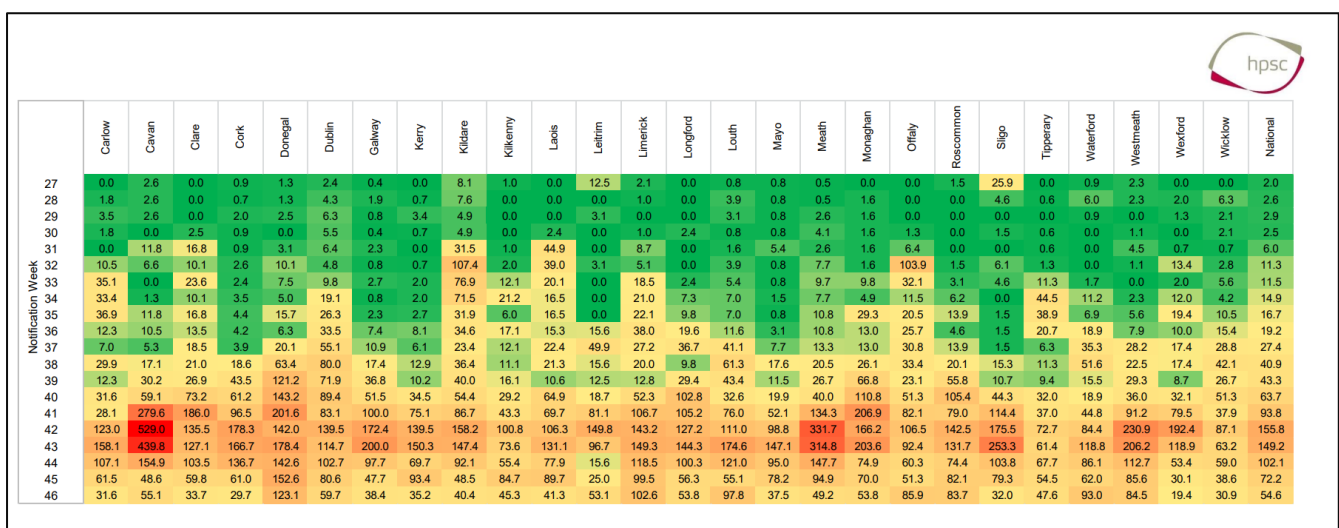


Figure 4; Heat map of weekly incidence rates of confirmed cases of covid 19 per 1000 population, by county, from week 27 (28/06/2020-04/07/2020)-Week 46 (08/11/2020-14/11/2020). (HPSC, 2022).

On the table from the HPSC (HPSC, 2020), we can see that from June until around the middle of September, for most of the country there were relatively low incidence rates (Figure 2). The highest rates during this period were also seen in more rural counties, as compared with the cities of Dublin, Galway, and Cork (the three largest cities in the country). The highest rates could be seen in Clare, Limerick, Kildare, Offaly and Laois. During these months the country was on strict lockdown measures, including social distancing, mandatory use of masks on public transport and in indoor public areas, and a travel rule of restrictions from travelling outside of 20km of persons home unless for health-related reasons.

We can see that from September when restrictions began to ease more, the incidence rate began to rise with a second wave of the disease, but especially in Cavan, Meath, Sligo, and Westmeath. As many of the first cases of Covid-19 in the country were due to travel, we could assume that the spread through these counties in the beginning came from people returning from travel. But due to the highest incidence rates coming after the second wave, it would be more valuable to look at the spread through the communities in the rural areas, through POI's, and compare how the number of POIs to the population affected the rate of spread.

I will take two of the counties mentioned above, Cavan and Meath, look at their populations and the number of POIs in the town centres of these counties. County Cavan is in the East of Ireland, with a population of 76,176 in April 2016 (CSO, 2017). The total area of the county is 1,930 sq. kilometres, making the population density 39 people per kilometre squared, compared to Dublin cities area of 345 sq. kilometres. Using OpenStreetMap I found that in Cavan town there are 14 bars/pubs and 15 restaurants/cafes. The town is relatively small, with the population only being around 12,000 people. During the first wave of covid 19 restrictions, restaurants, cafes, and bars were restricted to takeout/delivery, and most of them forced to close or shut down for good.

We can see that with restrictions easing before the second wave, hospitality beginning to reopen in June, that the level of infection rate inevitably grew. As this seems obvious, it is important to understand that though people will now be meeting at these POI's, the population density of the area is the most important factor. The more people gathered in a smaller area, the higher the likelihood of a rapid escalation in infection rates. From October, we can see level 4 restrictions being introduced to Cavan.

In Meath, the population in 2016 was 195,044 (CSO, 2017), the population density was 83 people per km/sq. The population of Meath town, Navan, from census 2022 was 30,000. Again, using OpenStreetMap I found that the number of restaurants/cafes is 18 and the number of Bars/Pubs is 17. Of course, Navan is bigger than Cavan town, but since from September 21st the restriction on Wet pubs was lifted, it could be that there was an increase in the population meeting at bars/pubs, which as we can see from the number of bars/pubs in the town is high.

A study done on the spread of covid in Europe by Frederick Hass (Hass, 2021), gathered POIs using OpenStreetMap to look at if areas of social gatherings were correlated with the virus hotspots. It separately used population density to also determine hotspot areas of the virus, but I believe these are correlated, as the more people in an area of social gathering that could be carrying the disease leaves a higher chance of the disease spreading faster. This study found that population isolated regions could

be seen as cold spots, which is contradictory to my theory thus far, that isolated areas in Ireland can be seen as hotspots compared to cities.

To further understand this, I will now go on to talk about two larger cities in Ireland to compare to the more rural areas. I will use Dublin and Cork as my examples. The capital city Dublin had a population of 1,345,400 with a population density of 70 people per km/sq. in 2016. According to an article in the *Irish Independent* (Nolan, 2018), Dublin contained 772 pubs in 2018, and Cork contained 995. These are figures per county, not per city, but compared to county for Cavan and Meath, Cavan had 220, and Meath had 195. I do not want to put the focus on the fact that after strict restrictions were lifted on wet pubs the incidence rate rose, but for counties outside of Dublin it can be considered a factor as to why this happened. This rule was only lifted for counties outside of Dublin, which may explain why the incidence rate in Dublin did not rise as much as others I have mentioned.

We can see the same in County Cork, with a population of 417,211 people in 2016. It is the second most populous county, and the largest county in the country. It is surprising to me that though these counties (Dublin and Cork) are the most populous, the incidence rate was low during this period, compared to smaller counties, though Meath is one of the most population dense counties. It was also interesting to note that Dublin in 2022 had the lowest level of people over the age of 12 years old that were vaccinated against the disease, which would make you believe that the covid rate should have been higher, but due to stricter lockdown measures, we can see that this was not the case for the beginning of the pandemic.

Demographic health profile of Czechia

According to the CZSO, the population of Czechia in 2022 was 10,533,000 people (CZSO, 2022). The population density in 2022 was 134 people per SQ.km (CIA, 2023). The life expectancy at birth in 2021 overall was 77.4 years, which is lower than the EU average. In 2019 there was a substantial difference of 4 years between the life expectancy of men living in Prague and other regions in Czechia, like the Ústecký region (policies, 2021). Since the 1990's Czechia has had a system of social health insurance, which is heavily regulated by the government. The largest health insurer VZP insures 56% of the population (policies, 2021). The ministry of health is the main body which oversees health care policies and running many health care providers. It was the leading authority during the pandemic.

The vaccine was first for those working in hospitals and nursing homes, police, soldiers, and citizens aged 60 and older. The country was behind in the vaccination process compared to other EU countries. The vaccination was free for all citizens, but there was a high percentage of those refusing the vaccine. By April 2021 Czechia was one of the worst countries in Europe for the level of positive cases presented.

Figure 3 shows how the highest cases in Czechia were from March/April 2021, when the vaccination distribution had begun at the end of December 2020. Sixty-four percent of the population were vaccinated in 2024, compared to Ireland which was 75%. By May 2020, the response to covid in Czechia was viewed as successful with the use of a 'blanket quarantine' (quarantining persons entering the country for 14 days). In Autumn 2020 the number of positive cases in the country rose dramatically.

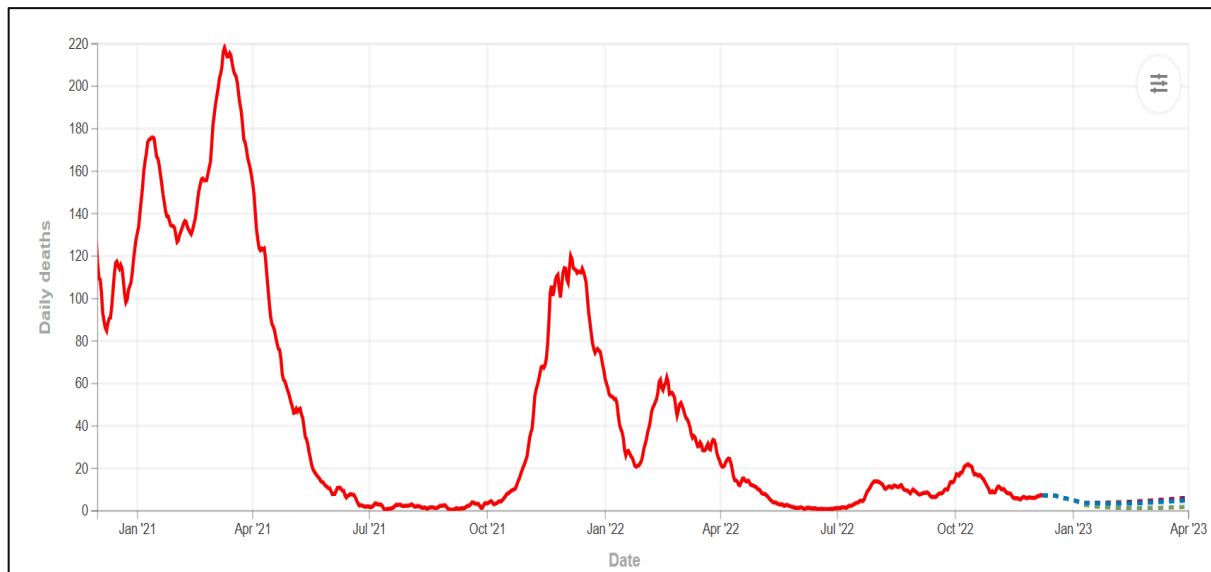


Figure 3; All daily deaths specific to Covid 19 patients. (IHME, 2023).

The spread of Covid 19 in rural areas versus cities; Czechia

The first cases of Covid 19 in Czechia reported on March 1st, 2020, and like the cases in Ireland, from people who had travelled back to Czechia from being abroad in Northern Italy. It was difficult to find where the pandemic first started in Czechia, blocking a part of my research.

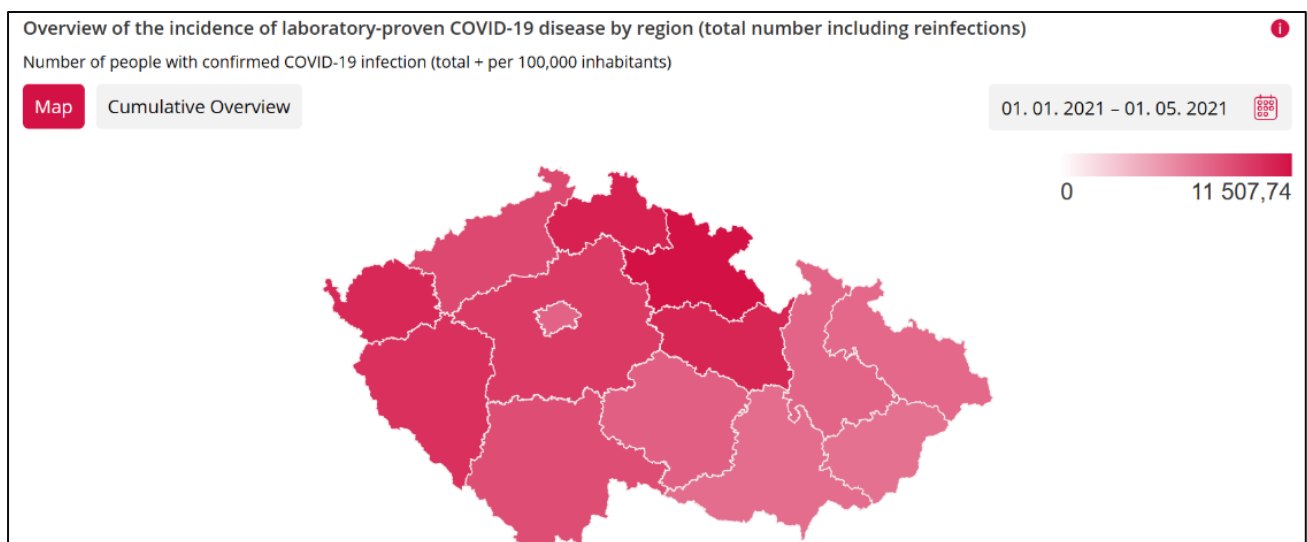


Figure 4; Overview of the incidence of laboratory- proven covid-19 disease by region (total number including reinfections) (Republic, 2024).

Figure 4 shows incidence rates from the 1st of January 2021 to the 1st of May 2021 during the Third Wave and highlights how the highest levels of infection were not from the capital, Prague, but from surrounding areas. Different points in time the highest infection rates changed from region to region.

For every region we can see a trend, of cases rising from mid-September, and then dropping after November. A study of statistics on the website for the Czech Ministry of Health illustrated that:

- Four regions in Czechia contained the highest numbers of active cases from 1st June 2020 until 1st December 2020. Prague City region, Central Bohemian region, South Moravian region, and Moravian-Silesian region. Central Bohemia had 16,449 cases at the beginning of November 2020. (Republic, 2024)
- The third highest was Moravian-Silesian region, which is in east Czechia. The total population of this region was 1.2 million at the end of 2020 (CZSO, 2022), which we can compare to the total population of Prague, which at this time was 1.3 million. Looking at size of the Moravian-Silesian region compared to Prague, it is interesting that there were almost similar case rates from June-December. (Republic, 2024)

I will now look at this region, and where I suspect the hotspots to have been. The capital of this region is Ostrava, so I will focus on this city. The total area of the city is 214.23 SQ km. The population of the city in 2020 was 294,446 people, making the population density around 1,374 people per SQ km (CZSO, 2022). From Mid-October 2020 restrictions included the closing of retail stores and schools that were still open, but restaurants/ cafes could still operate on a takeaway basis, the same as restrictions mentioned for Ireland. Using OpenStreetMap I found that in Ostrava centre there are around 26 restaurants and cafes, and 26 pubs/bars.

Prague in 2020 had a population of 1.3 million people, with an area of 496 SQ km, making the population density 2,620 people per SQ km (CZSO, 2022). It was difficult for me to find the number of POIs in Prague but using google maps I found that there are currently at least 5 pubs/bars per neighbourhood, and a more extensive number of cafes and restaurants compared to Dublin.

Discussion and Comparisons

I mentioned how it can be easy to focus on cities when looking at the spread of pandemics due to population size. It is known that epidemics usually begin spreading rapidly in megacities, and then spillover into rural areas. My aim of this paper was not to debunk the clear statement that epidemics spread faster in rural areas than urban, as this cannot be true due to population density, but rather to understand how rural areas/ smaller cities became hot spots during the pandemic.

Urbanisation influenced the spread of diseases, as there are more possibilities for transmission among highly dense populations. So, what I wanted to understand, is why, during waves of the pandemic, the infection rates were higher in less densely populated areas, compared to main cities in Ireland and Czechia.

Now, it is evident that there are similarities between the initial spread of Covid 19 in Ireland and Czechia, with slight differences occurring later, with relation to the differences of mitigation in each country. From the beginning, we can see that in both cases the disease spread from travellers coming from Northern Italy, and initially the highest rates of infection were of course in the major cities, Dublin, and Prague. During the second wave of the disease, we see that the rates of infection grew significantly for the rural areas in Ireland, but at the same rate throughout all regions of Czechia.

During the third wave in Czechia, an entire region with the same population as Prague, had similar rates of infection, despite being less dense than the capital.

To understand this, I looked at the restrictions at during these waves, and used POIs to try find a meaning behind the hotspots. I used OpenStreetMap and google maps to estimate POI's during this time per population and restrictions. During the second wave of Covid-19 in Ireland, many POIs were closed or only open for takeaway services, but restrictions seemed less strict in the less populated cities. I take this fact, and use it as a point to make, in showing a possibility as to why these smaller cities could have been hot spots.

With the case of Czechia, it was harder to gather information on POIs and the spread of covid in smaller cities but again using the idea of POIs for the city of Ostrava, I tried to clarify a point as to how I believe this city, may have been the epicentre of the hotspot that the Moravian-Silesian region had been. This is not as clear as the case for Ireland, and in figure 4 you can see that as time went on, in 2021 western regions had become more infected compared to the east, due to changes in restrictions. The hotspots and cold spots changed from region to region in both countries, but during the first year we can see that the main hotspots were outside of the capital cities, and in less densely populated areas, such as Ostrava, or county Cavan.

Conclusion

This paper analysed Covid-19 transmission in Ireland and Czechia, comparing urban and rural areas. Findings indicate that while population density plays a role in viral spread, policy responses and POI density significantly influenced infection rates.

Rural areas and mid-sized cities in both countries became unexpected hotspots, often due to premature lifting of restrictions and concentration of POIs. More research to understand how future mitigation strategies could balance urban and rural responses would be needed. This study highlights the need for region-specific policies rather than saying that urban centres alone drive pandemics.

Future research should expand on Czechia's rural infection patterns, as limited data poses challenges when understanding its pandemic trajectory. Despite limitations, this study provides insight into the complex dynamics of pandemic spread beyond major cities.

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ROLL UP, ROLL UP TO ‘THE CIRCUS OF CLIMATE HORRORS’

Michelle Curran and Shirley Howe



The Circus team (L-R): Anthony (Dept. of Design Innovation), Michelle, Shirley and Nick (Dept. of Geography) at Glastonbury, 2023

The Circus of Climate Horrors is a novel and exciting outreach project from ICARUS and the Geography Department, in collaboration with Design Innovation at Maynooth University. It takes Climate Change outreach to high-profile events and audiences beyond the science festival circuit, engaging with communities with little or no exposure to research. Climate Change is the defining challenge of our generation. While most of the public now accept the science there remains a lack of urgency to achieve meaningful climate action. Effective science communication is critical to combat this. We engage audiences with relevant, contemporary issues surrounding rising greenhouse gases, sustainability, and climate change. *The Circus* includes a mini-big-top tent decorated with the Climate Stripes reflecting global warming since 1850. Our research informed, hands-on, carnival-style games, demos and activities explore carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas, its effects on the Earth's atmosphere,

and the resulting impact on our climate. This approach allows the audience to connect with Climate Change in fun, creative and participatory ways, and provides a chance for our visitors to think about future climate action, either as individuals or collectively as a society.



Educating the future at Electric Picnic, 2023

The *Circus* launched in 2023, and we welcomed thousands of diverse visitors at multiple major public events targeting various audiences. We debuted at Science Futures in Glastonbury, to an audience of 250,000 in June 2023, the first non-UK university to be selected to attend. Later that summer we exhibited at Electric Picnic (funded by SFI), and in October 2023, we contributed to an on-campus event, Maynooth Research Week. In 2024 we became an in-demand exhibition with invitations that included Maynooth University Green Week, Picnic in the Park, organised by Maynooth Community Council, Glastonbury Festival, the 35th International Geographical Congress Conference, and we finished off the year by exhibiting at SFI's Science by the Sea as part of a Science week pop-up. Our team had the opportunity to have hundreds of meaningful conversations with visitors eagerly taking the opportunity to share their lived experience of changing weather patterns and to learn more about climate science directly from scientists. Engagement includes visitors contributing their climate thoughts through written pledges and wishes on the *Climate Pledge Wall*, where visitors are encouraged to make commitments to improve their own climate footprint. So far, more than 2,000 visitors have promised to adapt their behaviour and push for policy changes!

The *Circus* also brings live science outreach into the curriculum at Maynooth University. In 2023, MSc Climate Change students undertook a competitive module challenging them to design a new game for



The Circus engaging with MU students during Research Week, 2023

the stall. The winning entry, a Sea-Level game called “*The tides they are a’changin’*”, highlights the impacts of flooding amongst coastal communities and joined the exhibit last summer, thanks to support from the Geography Department. This year’s MSc Climate Change class will undertake a similar competition and ‘take over’ the *Circus* during Maynooth Green Week. This provides students access to a career-boosting experience and exposure at events that would otherwise be unobtainable to taught students.

Our important message of climate science and climate action, provides the public with the chance to explore ideas and meet real climate scientists outside a formal university setting. Visitors leave with a sense of hope about our climate’s future, alongside some practical understanding of what it will take to get us there. We have plenty planned for 2025 and look forward to developing our offering, leading thousands of engaging conversations with the widest variety of different audiences, and inspiring hope and climate action.

THE ‘RURAL IDYLL’ IS A MYTH

Andrew Bisland, Year 2 (Double Major)

‘The Rural Idyll’ can be defined ambiguously. However, according to Shucksmith (2018), he portrays the rural idyll as idolised as an ideal place to live referring to traditional values and a freeing way of life. Although this mindset of the rural idyll is socially accepted as it is shaped by societal views and visions and is only true and benefits from people of wealth and power within the ‘rural’ community. I will compare and balance the rural lifestyles of Ireland and Malaysia to get a strong and balanced outlook and challenge the rural idyll to display the complexities of the reality of ‘rural life’ in each diverse country and how they diverge from the ‘Rural Idyll’. The ‘Rural Idyll’ when concerning rural lifestyles in Ireland and Malaysia is a myth referring to the challenges and complexities where various issues arise in one's life concerning economic impairments, undeveloped services and lifestyle struggles.

The rural ideology in relation to the Irish countryside is an aspect of landscape and a “more relaxed pace of life” (Cawley, 2020) and a more connective life towards family and nature. If you ask most of society to imagine rural Ireland, they would 9 times out of 10 mention green grass, hills, open landscape, peaceful areas, farmlands and this is due to famous songs (Feilds of Athenry, Pete St. John, 1970) and famous movies and shows (Normal People, Rooney, 2019). In the songs they almost over idolize being a part of the Irish land “Low lie the fields of Athenry, where once we watched the small free birds fly” (genius.com, n.d.) and referring to Normal people, Conal hates when he moves out of the countryside to Trinity, idolizing the loving aspect of rural Ireland “I left Carricklea thinking I could have a different life” “I hate it here” (‘Episode 4’, (2020), Normal People, Series 1, episode 4. RTE, 28 April.) The rural idyll of the Malaysian countryside is complex. The Malay countryside was sculpted by depictions of a “rural idyll that reflected colonial justifications for colonialization” (Kotarumalos, Nur Aisyah, 2022). It was almost like the people who colonized created an image of Malaysia as being peaceful and an unexacting place to live and needed change and help from these colonizers, but in reality they Malays were seen as almost lazy but the people who colonized Malaysia were more or less covering up draining the Malaysians resources and hard worked landscape for their own benefit, creating an image they were “helping” them but in fact, the Malays were very well off in rural areas and didn't need any help. The Colonizers knew how good the Malaysian rurality was and gaslit society into thinking it needed help so they could benefit from it. (Rahman and Bahfen, 2014) argue that the main images society see the national identity of Malaysia is formed from images of the kampungs depicted by cartooned art by famous artist Lat. He often depicted contrast between rural and urban lifestyles (nostalgic villages – modern evolvement) quoting that “Lat’s cartooning work has received international recognition” (Rahman and Bahfen, 2014). Both Ireland and Malaysia are portrayed in similar ways as having a romanticized countryside (rural idyll) by society through nature influenced by popular tv shows and songs (Ireland) and through popular art and colonization (Malaysia) leading to both rural idylls being myths.

The reality of living in rural Ireland is a topic that challenges the rural idyll of Ireland being idolized. The main challenge of lifestyle in rural Ireland is the economic challenges every person deals with that

doesn't live in a “modern” or “Urban” area within Ireland. There has shown to see less and less traditional and family orientated farming across the country and in other EU countries. It's idolized that farmers wake up early, go out to their farm and live off that peacefully and have it easy due to family traditions. This is far from the truth. According to (Brennan et al., 2021) he states, “The demands of modern farming can place substantial stress”. The more life goes on the more demand for modern farming equipment, strategies and methods become, and traditional farmers are feeling more stressed and most likely have to overcompensate their farming to “keep up” with the modern standard of farming. This will easily lead to unemployment and worse case; farmers may have to give up their lifestyle of farming due to the industry being over modernized. Farming is experiencing a “decline in the sense of security in rural areas” (Brennan et al., 2021), this will lead to loss of population, less funding for rural areas and a lower quality of life. Mental health can depict a person's lifestyle, and most people don't like to speak about it due to many reasons, but according to (Brennan et al., 2021) “poor weather, workload, and financial pressures” are “key stressors” for the rural community in Ireland and from a survey done “over half of the farmers surveyed experienced stress or anxiety from their farm” (Brennan et al., 2021). Referring to the “rural idyll”, Irish transport in rural Ireland is often not pondered about but the transport system is scarce. According to (Carroll, Benevenuto and Caulfield, 2020) they state that over 70% of trips by car were outside of Dublin, due to the limited access of public transport across the country. If you don't have a car or access to public transport this will impact on your lifestyle as you will either end up sacrificing a part of your lifestyle or financing the cost of driving a car. Recently there was a storm Ashely that impacted mostly rural areas in Ireland as it came from the west coast creating a red and orange weather warning warned by Met Eireann. Rural areas are more vulnerable to any climate impacts due to less funded infrastructures. According to (O'Donnell, 2024) 16,000 homes, farms and businesses were without power the day the storm came. ESB stated the rural areas hit the “bearing the brunt of the winds” (O'Donnell, 2024) mainly Galway, Kerry and Mayo experienced the most impact resulting in flooding, destruction of land and power cuts. In this context the rural idyll is challenged through economic, modern farming stress, transport and naive rural landscapes of climate dissatisfaction which in everyday life drastically impact a person's lifestyle and way of living than typically idolized about.

The reality of lifestyle in rural Malaysia is a topic that can be challenged in the aspect of the rural idyll and how rural Malaysia is imagined. According to (Thangiah et al., 2020) Globally, most of the rural population are poor and in most developing countries, if you live in rural areas, you will have a higher chance of experiencing poverty. While Malaysia was a very poor country its statistics have changed for the better lowering their poverty rates from ‘58.7% in 1970 to 1.0% in 2016’ (Thangiah et al., 2020) even though the average rural income is lower than urban wage and standard of living. Although the poverty is at an all-time low currently, the rural communities of Malaysia must depend on their own independent ways of living, mainly through farming. The government in Malaysia is very corrupt and doesn't fund the rural communities, therefore you must either find work or live for yourself. This will fluctuate a person's lifestyle in their day to day lives. These people are currently and were always facing economic justifications just to barely live for themselves. Malaysia and most Asian countries are known for their high life expectancy, according to (Selvaratnam and Tin, 2007) they state that living in isolation can lead to loneliness and perhaps, depression and “while a majority of 104 elderly respondents are staying with someone, 21.21% of the respondents are staying alone” (Selvaratnam and Tin, 2007). Although the elderly in these rural areas may suffer from mental health issues, they often

socialize with one another through family, local activities like ‘rukun tetangga’ (neighborhood watch group) or ‘gotong-royong’ (neighborhood voluntary teamwork) (Selvaratnam and Tin, 2007). This challenges the idyll that the elderly just live alone but are well respected and indulge in tradition, community and are very family oriented. The most impactful trend seen in rural areas has been the migration of the younger generation towards “modernized” areas such as Ipoh as the main migration within Malaysia and Singapore as the abroad route of migration. This influences the Idyll of lifestyle as traditionally young people work with their families to survive in rural areas due to lack of modern facilities. Now that the world has gotten more opportunity for the future, younger people are starting to run away from traditional and move to ‘Urbanized’ areas. This crushes the traditional (older) population of Malaysia as the generations must live for themselves with no help from the younger and more able generation as they have flocked to a more urbanized area. In this context the myth is night and day, this shows economic struggles within corrupted government, the elderly population struggling with mental health and mass migration of the younger generation towards urbanized areas. This battles the traditional image of people being family orientated, having peaceful lifestyles and don't see through the hardship the Malays have to go through to survive.

In terms of comparing the two diverse contrasting countries when referring to the ‘Rural idyll’, it is clear for me to state that in both contexts they are myths. Ireland is romanticized for its peacefulness, beautiful landscapes and strong farming background but no one considers the economic and farming stress, lack of infrastructure and transportation and landscape naiveness when battling with climate occurrences. Malaysia is similar in economic complexities and hardship. The elderly struggle with isolation and mental health issues, and the younger generation are flocking elsewhere for more ‘Urban’ ways of living and almost ‘breaking’ from traditional lifestyles. This handles my thesis of how the ‘Rural Idyll’ in both contexts are myths when referring to imagined as peaceful, traditional and family oriented life when it has its complexities challenging the ‘Rural Idyll’

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“WE LIKE TO TALK ABOUT COMEBACK CITIES, BUT THE TRUTH IS THAT EACH AND EVERY EFFORT TO REGENERATE THE RUSTBELT AND REINVENT THE DECLINING INDUSTRIAL CITY HAS FAILED”

Lucy Denver, Final Year/Year 3 (Double Major)

Although many attempts to regenerate the rustbelt have failed, it is not fair to say every declining city is unable to be reinvented from its industrial past. Harvey laid the foundations for rustbelt regeneration in 1989, yet it took over twenty years to see his strategy truly come to life in attempts of regeneration. Cities such as Glasgow and Liverpool followed old methods of regeneration, and we can now recognise why they were unsuccessful. In contrast to this we see parts of Harvey’s research, in particular the close relationship between people and place, in action in cities such as Leeds in the U.K. and Cleveland in the U.S., which prove that the key difference which makes reviving the post-industrial city possible is community wealth building through anchor institutions. By following this method fortunes are changing across the U.K and the U.S rustbelt.

Glasgow’s pursuits of rejuvenation through remarketing began in the 1980s, which was assumed to be the most effective method at the time. Various public events were launched, such as the ‘Glasgow’s Miles Better campaign’, and naming Glasgow ‘European City of Culture’ (Boyle, 1994). However, the actual culture of Glaswegians was not celebrated in these events. Minimal attention was paid to the local people of Glasgow who were suffering because of a lack of investment in basic public services. Instead of sustaining its current population, Glasgow spent its money attracting new populations and businesses. ‘Over 8 million’ pounds were spent on ‘special, one-off, public relations oriented events’ (Boyle, 1994). Glasgow therefore never was truly regenerated as a rustbelt city but rather put on a temporary mask of being reinvented, which its people suffered behind.

Similar to how Glasgow appeared to use their own culture to promote the city; Albert Dock portrays Liverpool as the model comeback city. However, Albert Dock in just one of many kilometres of abandoned dockland in the city and regenerating a small amount of it for tourists is insignificant to Liverpool’s people. Again, there were significant funds required to facilitate the rejuvenation of Albert Dock, and this means less money was spent on the city’s residents. The project came to ‘an estimating cost of around £5.5bn.’, and overtime the once central ‘design excellence, heritage and place-making’ diminished, and was replaced by ‘increasing the city’s market share and economic growth’ (Faiger et al. 2021). Once again, the city’s residents were left behind as the biggest institutions competed to attract investment, meaning their comeback was unsuccessful.

Glasgow and Liverpool have failed in reinventing themselves enough to be called a comeback city. Both had one common issue in their approach, which is how power was distributed in the city, and therefore where the focus was. Glasgow and Liverpool were primarily concerned with attracting tourists and investors from other cities, as they believed this was the best way to rejuvenate rustbelt cities. Their aim was to support the city’s residents through the trickle down of profits which would eventually come after investment. Unfortunately, these profits instead returned to the investors from

already wealthy cities such as London, meaning nothing changed for majority of the city's population. Research has resulted in the rise of a new approach which has contrasted these old methods, and has had far better results. This approach is called community wealth building. Harvey refers to the principles of this in his work discussing a shift from 'managerialism to entrepreneurialism' (Harvey, 1989). Urban entrepreneurialism prioritises the 'considerable autonomy of local action' (Harvey, 1989). Local action and local focus are the key to community wealth building, which is what both these regeneration attempts were missing. Harvey recognises that the organisation of space is dependent on a 'variety of complex forces and social agents', not just on one aspect such as tourism development, or attracting investment (Harvey, 1989). There should instead be 'an interlocking of spatial practices', which should be 'a spatially grounded social process' (Harvey, 1989). Hambleton discusses this change to 'new civic leadership' and highlights that place-less power should be challenged (Hambleton, 2015). Harvey's focus on space and it's people in rejuvenation can be modernly defined as community wealth building, a process which focusses on 'retaining more wealth and opportunity for the benefit of local people' (CLES(a), 2018). This wealth is retained by giving what Harvey described as 'considerable autonomy' to 'local action' in the form of anchor institutions.

The Centre for Local Economic Strategies in the U.K. emphasises the importance of anchor institutions in the changing fortunes of the city of Leeds. They define an anchor institution as one which has 'an important presence in a place', and 'is tied to a particular place'. (CLES(c), 2023). Throughout there is a continuous emphasis on the local, which is what differentiates this regeneration from Liverpool's and Glasgow's attempts. Leeds's main anchor institution has been Leeds Teaching Hospital. One of the main issues faced in community wealth building is funding, as the main anchor institutions are locally based entrepreneurs. Leeds struck a balance between a local institution, the training hospital, which is funded by a bigger corporation, the NHS. The teaching hospital as an anchor institution benefits the people of Leeds in multiple ways. Leeds has '114 neighbourhoods which are in the top ten percent of most deprived areas in the U.K.' (CLES(b), 2023) This has negative implications for health and life expectancy, 'reducing it by up to 12 years from the U.K. average'. (CLES(b), 2023). The Leeds Training Hospital uses local data to prioritise disadvantaged neighbourhoods in funding. (CLES(b), 2023). The hospital is helping change Leeds's fortunes by combating poverty at its source as well as dealing with its effects. Careers in the hospital are encouraged in local schools through work placement, with particular attention paid to 'schools in more deprived postcodes to redress the balance' (CLES(b), 2023). Leeds Training Hospital also hires 'a higher than average share of employees from the 20% most deprived areas of the city', to continue to fight poverty. (CLES(b), 2023). It is clear that the work of this anchor institution is carried out by the people of Leeds, and for the people of Leeds. The city now reports 'considerable economic growth in its city centre over recent years, with significant growth in the financial services sector' (CLES(b), 2023). It is a model example for community wealth building and a U.K. comeback city.

Community wealth building and anchor institutions have also led to the success of Cleveland, a rustbelt city in the U.S. The Cleveland Collaborative noticed that 'Urban anchors— typically hospitals and universities—have sometimes isolated themselves from the poor and struggling neighbourhoods that surround them' (Wright et al., 2023). It is the recentring of these urban anchors in Cleveland which allowed for its changing fortune, 'prospects and income of the 60,000 people who live in these neighbourhoods' (Wright et al., 2023). As seen in figure one, in Cleveland multiple anchor institutions

joined together to form what is now known as ‘The Greater University Circle’, including organisations such as The Cleveland Foundation, University Hospitals, and Cleveland State University (Wright et al., 2023). All these organisations are locally rooted and receive enough funding to allow for change.

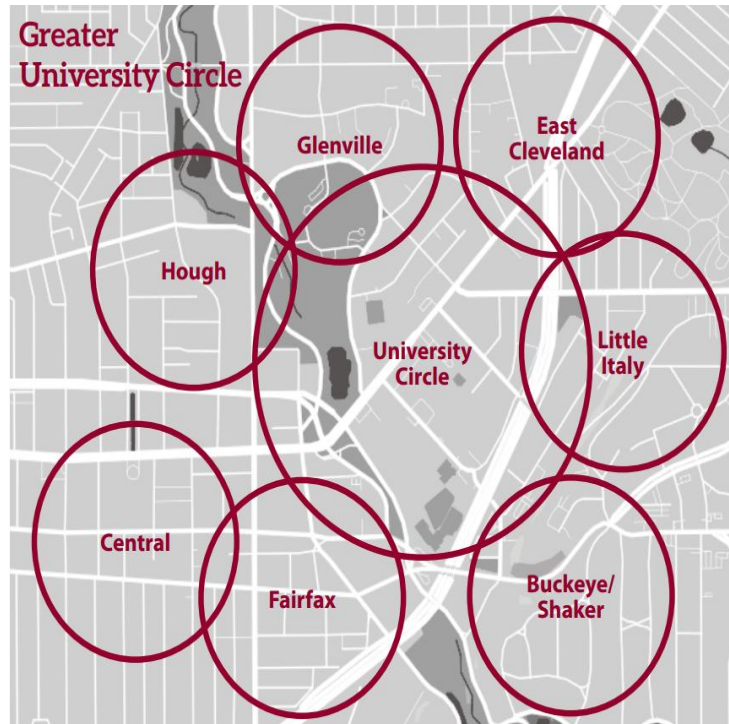


Figure 1: The Greater University Circle of Cleveland (Wright et al. 2023)

The Democracy Collaborative highlights five key areas of focus for the success of community wealth building, made possible by anchor institutions. The first of these is ‘inclusive and democratic enterprise’ (McKinley et al., 2023). This goal focuses on moving from ‘absentee owned firms’ to ‘municipal owned’, which contrasts what was done in Liverpool where all investment and funding was external (McKinley et al., 2023). Another goal is fair work, which equips the city’s people with skills to create ‘a strategic approach to workforce development’ (McKinley et al., 2023). This is seen in Cleveland’s ‘healthcare research, biomedical, and IT infrastructure’, ranking ‘sixth nationally in healthcare employment’. (Wright et al., 2023) Locally rooted finance is also a key objective of community wealth building which is delivered through the anchor institutions of Cleveland and of Leeds. Another aim is progressive procurement, which prioritises ‘social and environmental value for the institutions as well as the local community’ (McKinley et al., 2023). Finally, going back to Harvey’s emphasis on place in urbanisation, ‘just use of land and property’ is a focus area for Cleveland, which ensures that the community takes back ownership of the city’s property and ‘combats displacement’ (McKinley et al., 2023). Overall, these five focus areas show that to make progress we must not view community wealth building as a ‘technical economic power’ (Howard et al., 2018). Instead, the priority lies with meeting ‘people’s basic needs under conditions potentially of lower levels of economic growth’, and the ‘question of power’ which enables this to happen (Howard et al., 2018).

Harvey's innovative take on the importance of place's relationship with people in urbanisation is what has driven the modern day changing fortunes of post-industrial cities such as Leeds in the U.K., and Cleveland in the U.S. Unfortunately for Glasgow and Liverpool their attempts failed because there was a need for a redistribution of power and key objectives to fully achieve comeback cities, which wasn't realised at the time. New research and practice have proven that community wealth building through anchor institutions is the only way to rejuvenate the post-industrial city, with particular emphasis on 'interlocking spatial practices' and 'autonomy of local action' (Harvey, 1989).

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FROM THE *MILIEU* ARCHIVES (1977): THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY GEOGRAPHY IN IRELAND

G. O'Chronicle

(the identity of G. O'Chronicle is uncertain, but is rumoured to be Proinnsias Breathnach)

Geography in Britain

Geography as a university discipline was relatively late in coming to these islands, as compared with a much older tradition in Germany and France. Although the Royal Geographical Society had been in existence since 1830, the first university department in the United Kingdom was not established until 1887, when Oxford played the role of pioneer. This might appear surprisingly late, in view of the extent and age of the British Empire at the time. In any case, Cambridge (1888) and Manchester (1892) quickly followed Oxford's example and university geography spread rather quickly after this. The first honours course in geography was not introduced until 1917 (Liverpool), followed in 1918 by London and Aberystwyth, and in 1919 by Cambridge.

A new university discipline obviously must look outside its own bounds for its first practitioners. British geography looked both to the natural sciences and history in this respect, and the consequences may be detected in an emphasis in early British university geography on the influence of the natural environment on the development of human culture over time. This tended to produce a focus on rural cultures which was quite out of place in a highly urbanised/industrialised country, and may indicate a strong French influence, especially that of Paul Vidal de la Blache.

E. Estyn Evans and the first Irish university geographers

One of the most influential geographers in this mould was H.J. Fleure at Aberystwyth, and it was a pupil of Fleure's – E. Estyn Evans- who became the first fulltime university geographer in Ireland when he took up a post at Queen's University Belfast in 1928. Although Belfast itself was a major industrial centre, Ireland generally presented a rich laboratory for a geographer of Evans's training, and it would be fair to say that he had a profound influence on subsequent geographic thought in Irish universities.

Evans was subsequently appointed to the first professorship of geography in Ireland in 1945 at Queen's. The first professorship of the National University was not institutionalised until 1959 at Cork, although a fulltime geographer had been appointed there in 1932 in a composite geology/geography department. In Galway, the original Queen's College, established in 1945, had a statutory requirement to provide a course in physical geography in the geology department from the beginning. However, the first fulltime geographer was not appointed there until 1962, and a professorship followed in 1970.

In University College, Dublin, the first fulltime post was created in 1950, while a chair followed in 1960. In Trinity College, a diploma course in geography was started in 1931, and T.W. Freeman was the first fulltime geographer in the College from 1936, but a professorship did not emerge until 1966. Magee College in Derry got its first geographer in 1951. The course here was linked to that of Trinity until the mid-sixties, when the College was incorporated into the new University of Ulster. This is centered on Coleraine, where the doors opened in 1967 with a professor of geography from the start.

Expansion in the 1970s

The 1970's have evidenced a further spurt in the development of geography in Ireland. The discipline was introduced to Maynooth in 1971. The elevation of the courses in the teacher-training colleges to degree status has produced a significant extension of the geography departments in these colleges. Geography has also been incorporated into the courses of the National College of Physical Education and the National Institute of Higher Education at Limerick, and the Ulster Polytechnic in Northern Ireland. The result has been a doubling in the number of university-level geographers in the last decade.

The inevitable impact which this rapid expansion will have on the traditional character of Irish geography is not yet clearly visible. What this "traditional character" is may be gauged from the papers which have appeared in *Irish Geography*, the annual journal of the Geographical Society of Ireland (founded 1934), which first appeared (as the *Bulletin* of the GSI) in 1944. In its first twenty-five years, a full third of the papers have been devoted to geomorphology alone, while many more have been related to physical geography directly and indirectly to physical geography generally. This affiliation to natural science, referred to earlier, is further apparent from the fact that in both Trinity College and Queen's University, geography is part of the Natural Sciences Faculty, while in Coleraine geography is part of the School of Botanical and Environmental studies. In addition, in both Cork and Galway, the geography departments, although now part of the Arts Faculty in both cases, sprang originally from the geology departments. Although there has been a significant increase in the representation of social-geographic papers in *Irish Geography* since the late sixties, the physical dominance still persists, if the 1975 issue of the journal is anything to go by.

Another one-fifth of the papers in the journal have been historical in nature, which as suggested earlier, is hardly surprising. As a result, there has been a distinct dearth of work in Irish geography related to contemporary socio-economic issues, a feature of which has not created any esteem for the discipline in many important circles. Indirectly, this may in part be due to the proportion of non-nationals working in Irish geography departments, which has always been high, in addition to the on-going legacy of early influences.

However, there has been a notable increase in the number of Irish-born geographers obtaining work in university departments here in recent years. Perhaps more significantly, many of these have received their post graduate training in North American universities, and have, as a result, come under influences different from those obtaining at home. While there is doubtless room for several approaches and several areas of emphasis within the discipline, it may be that there has been an unwarranted lopsidedness in Irish university geography. In this light, recent developments will hopefully lead to a more balanced, and hence healthier, geographic community in this island.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY GEOGRAPHY IN IRELAND

G.O'Chronicle

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In University College, Dublin, the first fulltime post was created in 1950, while a chair followed in 1960. In Trinity College, a diploma course in geography was started in 1931, and T.W. Freeman was the first fulltime geographer in the College from 1936, but a professorship did not materialise until 1966. Magee University College in Derry got its first geographer in 1951. The course here was linked to that at Trinity until the mid-sixties, when the College was incorporated into the New University of Ulster. This is centred on Coleraine, where the doors opened in 1967 with a professorship of geography from the start.

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The 1970's have witnessed a further spurt in the development of geography in Ireland. The discipline was introduced to Maynooth in 1971. The elevation of the courses in the teacher-training colleges to degree status has produced a significant extension of the geography departments in these colleges. Geography has also been incorporated into the courses of the National College of Physical Education and the National Institute of Higher Education at Limerick, and the Ulster Polytechnic in Northern Ireland. The result has been a doubling of the number of university-level geographers in the last decade.

The inevitable impact which this rapid expansion will have on the traditional character of Irish geography is not yet clearly visible. What this "traditional character" is may be gauged from the papers which have appeared in *Irish Geography*, the annual journal of the Geographical Society of Ireland (founded 1934) which first appeared (as the *Bulletin of the G.S.I.*) in 1944. In its first twenty-five years, a full third of the papers have been devoted to geomorphology alone, while many more have been related directly and indirectly to physical geography generally. This affiliation to natural science, referred to earlier, is further apparent from the fact that in both Trinity College and Queen's University, geography is part of the Natural Sciences Faculty, while in Coleraine geography is part of the School of Biological and Environmental studies. In addition, in both Cork and Galway, the geography departments, although now part of the Arts Faculty in both cases, sprang originally from the geology departments. Although there has been a significant increase in the representation of social-geographic papers in *Irish Geography* since the late sixties, the physical dominance still persists, if the 1975 issue of the journal is anything to go by.

Another one-fifth of the papers in the journal have been historical in nature, which, as suggested earlier, is hardly surprising. As a result there has been a distinct dearth of work in Irish geography related to contemporary socio-economic issues, a feature which has not created any esteem for the discipline in many important circles. Indirectly, this may in part be due to the proportion of non-nationals working in Irish geography departments, which has always been high, in addition to the on-going legacy of early influences.

However, there has been a notable increase in the number of Irish-born geographers obtaining work in university departments here in recent years. Perhaps more significantly, many of these have received their post graduate training in North American universities, and have, as a result, come under influences different from those obtaining at home. While there is doubtless room for several approaches and several areas of emphasis within the discipline, it may be that there has been an unwarranted lopsidedness in Irish university geography. In this light, recent developments will hopefully lead to a more balanced, and hence healthier, geographic community in this island.

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Plate 1: The original article, as it appeared in *Milieu* 1977

A BOOMING CHRISTMAS GRAVITAS

Shirley Howe, Assistant Lecturer

There are certain guarantees associated with the Department's staff team Christmas gathering. The first is festive cheer. The second is lots of good laughs, and the third guarantee is tasty food. The fourth is participation in a gathering whereby eminent Geographers debate the great issues of our time, from the ethical implications of AI in spatial analysis to the impacts of climate change. Geography voices, resonating with deep empirical knowledge and booming with gravitas, contribute to an elucidative exchange that culminates in THE QUIZ.

On Thursday 19th December 2024, in the Rocque Lab, the power of debate and transformative learnings became fully evident in the final quiz round entitled "Who *is* that?"

To test your level of booming gravitas, identify the Geography Department staff team members whose images (below) were disguised in the 2024 Quiz.



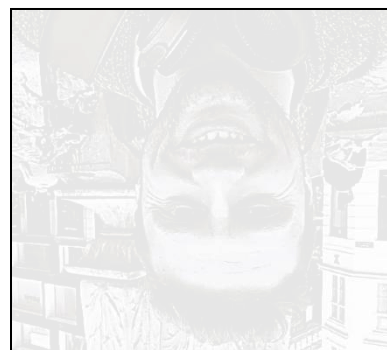
1. Who *is* that? _____



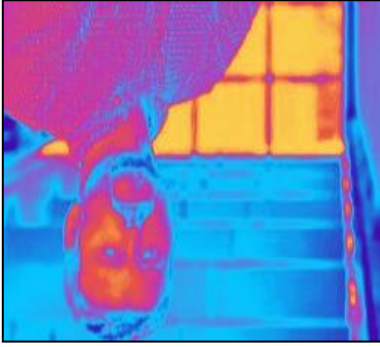
2. Who *is* that? _____



3. Who *is* that? _____



4. Who *is* that? _____



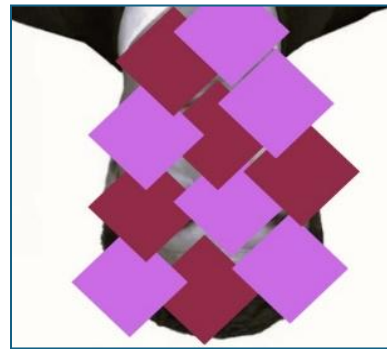
5. Who is that? _____



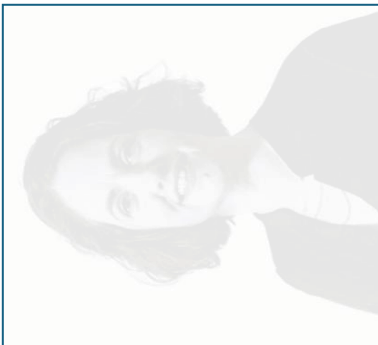
6. Who is that? _____



7. Who is that? _____



8. Who is that? _____



9. Who is that? _____



10. Who is that? _____

For the correct answers, and your score, turn to page 80

RURAL IDYLL OR RURAL IDYLL-NOT?

Clodagh Laramie, Year 2 (Double Major)

Introduction

The Rural Idyll is a concept that is gripped tightly into everyone's minds. Rural areas are thought of through positive imagery; picturesque, quaint, romantic, wholesome, peaceful. This is popularised by media as well as in times of crisis. Yet, for some this rings true to their lived experience of rural areas. Unfortunately, this idea allows for issues, like rural poverty, that permeate rural areas to be swept aside. To use farmers as an example of the experiences of rural Ireland, when looking at the identity-based approach of farming, to the assumption that farmers are wealthy, to the remoteness of them, we can understand why rural poverty isn't often thought of in relation to rural areas. As a result of the negative aspects, rural poverty in particular, the representation of the Rural Idyll is shattered.

The Rural Idyll

The Rural Idyll is the romanticised version of rural areas. It's the idea of having a strong sense of community, where it's "inclusive and neighbourly" (Shucksmith, 2018), with ideas of nature, away from the noisy urban life. It's wholesome, safe, perfect- everything that urban isn't. Ultimately, it's seen as a "counterpoint to modernity" (Woods, 2011); traditional. We see the Rural Idyll perpetuated within media, seen in movies through long shots of the countryside. A recent, popularised example being *'The Banshees of Inisherin'* (2022). Most rural Irish movies have the sense of small-town loving, where everyone is friendly and knows each-other, which can be seen in romantic-comedy *'Leap Year'* (2010). The Rural Idyll has peaks of popularity, for example it gets accentuated in times of a crisis. We saw this with the COVID-19 pandemic (Goodwin-Hawkins et al., 2022). Some people left urban areas in hopes of respite in rural areas, while others didn't have the choice and had to leave due to the financial hardships seen in urban life, with many moving back to their family home. Yet, even this was romanticised, with the message of as long as you have nature, you are at peace. On the flip side, many were able to escape to rural areas, to go to the Rural Idyll, namely thanks to remote working.

In certain regards, the Rural Idyll is real. Some parts must ring true as a reason that people believe it in so fiercely. Either in the form of lakes, mountains, rivers, cliffs or green fields, the latter being the case of most of Ireland, rural areas are picturesque. Having nature surround you leaves you with a sense of calmness. Rural areas seem so much quieter than urban areas as you're away from where there's lots of people, construction and cars. You can hear the birds chirp and, in most of rural Ireland, the cows 'moo' or the sheep 'baa'. Rural areas are known to have a lot of space, as it is one way to classify them. There are less houses, less cars on the road and overall, less people, furthering the idea of the quietness of rural areas. In most small Irish communities, everyone does know each other. It makes logical sense that if there are limited services and facilities, that with only one school, or church, or pub in an area, people will recognise your face and know your family. In all these ways, the Rural Idyll is real.

Critiquing the Rural Idyll

We can start to tear apart this idea when looking at the concept of Good Countryside. This is the idea that the countryside is inherently good (Shucksmith, 2018). The Irish government, through policies, are trying to maintain rural areas. For example, with policies in many counties not allowing anymore one-off housing on account of sustainability. This way of thinking places an assumption that rural areas have no issues and the way it is now should be sustained (ibid.). Understanding this in relation to the Rural Idyll means looking at all the negative aspects of rural areas that come along with the many positive ones.

Rural areas have a whole plethora of issues, but the most difficult to see is rural poverty. As Commins (2004) says, in rural areas there's "fewer employment options and lower levels of service provision", this evidently leads to high levels of poverty. Shucksmith (2018) argues that, though increasing the minimum wage would be "effective" in helping those struggling financially, it wouldn't solve all problems as the reasons behind limited employment options are a direct result of "poor access to transport, services and training". Rural poverty doesn't usually come to mind first when thinking of rural issue for a couple reasons. One is that the people who live in rural areas are quite proud. Farmers consider farming "a way of life" (Hayden et al., 2021) so it's difficult to admit that what's considered apart of them is not sustainable financially. As the concept of Rural Idyll is so prevalent, people see poverty as a "personal failing", that things like poverty shouldn't be happening in places so amazing, and therefore, it must be them who are doing something wrong (Commins, 2004).

Assumed wealth again negatively effects how rural poverty is viewed by the general public. When thinking of farmers, often there's an association with financial success. Owning farmland is seen as inherently wealthy and land ownership "is the basis for status in rural communities" (Commins, 2004). But often farmers are "asset rich but cash poor" (Hayden et al, 2021), so they may own their land, but they aren't making enough money to maintain it. The next logical thought may be that they should sell their land if they need money, but there's often a sentimental attachment with land, especially if it has been in their family for generations (ibid.). Furthermore, the type of farming you do has a huge impact on your income. In 2022, an average dairy farm had an income of "just under €151,000" (Teagasc, 2023). In the same year, for Cattle rearing, it was "just over €9,400", while for Sheep farms it was "close to €16,500" (ibid.). With most types of farming, farmers don't even make a livable wage. And they often work until they can't anymore, with no intention of retiring (Hayden et al., 2021). In fact, the average age of Irish farmers is 58 years old, with 33% of farmers over 65 years old (Teagasc, 2025). There are also low levels of private pensions seen from farmers. Farmers disregard private pensions due to the lack of knowledge of them, little trust in pension providers or no perceived value in tax-incentives (Hayden et al., 2021). This further pushes farmer to continue working well into retirement age. All the evidence points to farmers often earning a low income, yet still people perceive owning a farmhouse or land as inherently wealthy.

Rural poverty not being understood as a prevalent issue can also be attributed to rural areas being sparsely populated. This is one of rural areas defining features. This means that on the literal sense, often no one sees the visible consequences of these issues. More importantly, surveys don't report on these low incomes as the people are so dispersed. In urban areas, you would be able to see both the visible signs of poverty and it in data. And with poverty in urban areas, although they don't fix it, there

are organisations or places you can avail of to help. But in rural areas, often you are too far away to get adequate resources to help (Commins, 2004).

As mentioned, the Rural Idyll is real to some level, for some people. Yet with the undetectable levels of rural poverty, these two things cannot co-exist. Everywhere has positives and negatives to living there, rural areas are not the exception. The positives of rural areas are unique as it feels like a step into the past, which is a pull for people to live there, yet you can't look at the Rural Idyll and think to the future (Shucksmith, 2018). Everything that's romanticised about rural areas are the aspects that are slowly changing and modernizing; small communities, nature, farming. The Rural Idyll is more real to those who visit rural areas than those who live in it (Vepsäläinen, Pitkänen, 2010). They don't see the negatives like rural poverty. Rural poverty is difficult to notice, which is why the Rural Idyll is a rampant concept. But once you see the negative aspects, they outweigh the positives. Of course, rural living is mainly amazing for a lot of people, but the idea of the Rural Idyll, that it's perfect all the time, isn't true. If you are financially struggling, you don't notice or care about the beautiful or peaceful area you live in. The Rural Idyll is a façade to cover all rural areas problems.

Conclusion

Both are and can be true; the Rural Idyll is real for some, and rural poverty makes the Rural Idyll a myth. By highlighting the reason for the popularity of this concept, and to what extent is it real, we are able to look at what it covers up. Looking to farmers, the truth of rural poverty becomes clear. Yet, it is difficult to notice due to the pride, assumed wealth, and remoteness of farmers. By understanding rural poverty and its complexities, like the lack of private pensions, the idea of the Rural Idyll crumbles.

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Dr. Martina Roche at the launch of the *HER-SELF* report in Renehan Hall on 7 March 2025. Source: Prof. Rachel Msetfi's X account (@MsetfiLab)

THE DECLINE IN INSECT POLLINATORS IS A GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ANTHROPOCENE

Conor Strickland, Final Year/Year 3 (Double Major)

The Anthropocene, ‘used to simply describe the time during which humans have had a substantial impact on our planet’, has seen a myriad of environmental changes emerge with each change posing a new threat and difficulty for human society on Earth. (Pavid, n.d.) Anthropogenic environmental change has seen increased pressure placed on Earth’s natural spheres, especially the biosphere. It is not to say that these changes are not themselves interlinked and interconnected; they indeed are. Changes within one sphere, for example within the biosphere, would have knock-on effects experienced to some extent within the other four spheres, namely being the lithosphere (earth and soils), the hydrosphere (water), the cryosphere (ice), and the atmosphere (air). Major thresholds and tipping points (TPs) are on the brink of overturning as a result of continued anthropogenic acceleration of natural processes to the point where it is impossible to recover to the natural cycle without consequence in the future.

One of these aspects in threat of change is biodiversity, especially the decline of insect pollinators. This environmental change may very well be representative of the Anthropocene and this essay will critically examine and analyse this statement with reference to the main drivers and impacts of insect pollination decline. This essay will examine the biodiversity crisis and the TPs related to it, societal responses to the decline of insect pollinators, and analyse the Amazon rainforest as a key case study.

As part of the global climate and ecological crisis experienced due to the anthropogenic shifts in the natural systems of the Earth, the biosphere has been placed under pressure. Biodiversity loss is a prominent factor of discussion and much needed consideration going forward, with it usually being a representative of the Anthropocene directly. From the initial formation of the biosphere approximately 3.5 billion years ago with the first life being prokaryotes, the timeline has often seemed incomprehensible to the human scale. TPs today, such as the Amazon rainforest dieback and low-latitude coral reefs die-off, have been at different levels throughout geological time sometimes much higher and sometimes much lower. (www.pik-potsdam.de, n.d.) What is critical about environmental change and TPs today is the rate at which they are occurring. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) defines a tipping point as ‘critical thresholds in a system that, when exceeded, can lead to a significant change in the state of the system, often with an understanding that the change is irreversible.’ (www.esa.int, n.d.) Biodiversity loss and particularly insect pollinator decline has almost reached a point beyond irreversible change. This can be seen in the increasing rate of extinction within species, a change that has much exceeded its natural rate of change. The baseline rate of extinction naturally lies at 0.1-1 species per million per year. However, as research shows ‘Populations of fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals have declined by an average of 58 per cent over the last 40 years. Extinctions are commonplace, running at 1,000 times the typical rate seen before humans walked the Earth. (Lewis and Maslin, 2018) This is no different for insect species as seen on the IUCN Red List, the list giving each species a label regarding its conservation status. Out of the 12,568 species

labelled under “insects”, nearly one thousand species are threatened, with a total of 2,422 out of 12,568 (18%) ranked Vulnerable (VU) or more threatened. (IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, 2021) Many of these species listed are key pollinators to ecosystems and habitats. As the biosphere is linked directly to the other spheres such as the lithosphere, the atmosphere, and the hydrosphere, key losses in the biosphere loops continually and impacts the other spheres that are interconnected and interlinked to the biosphere. With environmental change altering landscapes that cannot be replaced, insect pollinators with specific ecological niches cannot adapt to the rate of change and consequently die off. Societal responses nowadays have begun to focus on solutions to this problem by introducing policies to tackle both the problem of this increased rate of anthropogenic environmental change and secondly to target solutions towards the mass-extinctions within both flora and fauna species worldwide. Researchers have begun to coin this period of the Anthropocene now as the ‘sixth mass-extinction event’ much comparable to the K-Pg or Cretaceous event that wiped out the dinosaurs approximately 66 mya. ‘Experts now believe we’re in the midst of a sixth mass extinction. Unlike previous extinction events caused by natural phenomena, the sixth mass extinction is driven by human activity.’ (World Wildlife Fund, 2022).

Societal responses have been rather lacklustre when coming to the task of minimising anthropogenic insect pollinator decline. Conservation efforts over the years have failed to meet initial targets and continue to dwindle and further spiral out of control. ‘There is little political appetite among political leaders for any fast or sweeping change, however unsustainable the prevailing order of neoliberal consumer capitalism may be acknowledged to be’. (Bluhdorn, 2015) The Anthropocene extinction crisis ongoing since the opening of the Anthropocene itself has spurred a vast array of political policy and measures to halt the ongoing rate of mass-extinction experienced by all species worldwide.

A prime example of this policy formerly introduced to meet 20 targets on biodiversity loss was the AICHI targets, a COP10 and UN collaboration on policy making to reduce the ongoing biodiversity crisis. These targets were to be reached on a worldwide level by all UN countries between the years of 2010-2020. Of these 20 targets, covering 60 subsections and elements to monitor overall progress, none were fully reached. (Greenfield, 2020) ‘The 20 Aichi biodiversity targets are broken down into 60 separate elements to monitor overall progress. Of those, seven have been achieved, 38 have shown progress and 13 elements have shown no progress. Progress remains unknown for two elements.’ (Greenfield, 2020) Another more recent initiative has similarly been introduced for the years of upwards to 2030 in the form of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These 17 targets each tackle a specific element of the problems of the Anthropocene. Known together as The 17 Goals, section, or goal 15 focuses on life on land, specifically to ‘protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss’. (United Nations, 2023) We will have to wait and see until 2030 to fully reckon with whether we, as a society, have again failed, or have just begun to turn on a more positive path for the future.

Policy regarding biodiversity, and especially with insect pollinator decline as a prominent aspect of consideration, is a key factor to account for as this aspect directly manifests itself as a representative product of the Anthropocene. Anthropogenic environmental change due to the world being in the Anthropocene, the time under which humans impact the planet, has ensured that a renewal of environmental politics and policy is an utmost priority on today’s agenda. A central case study of

anthropogenic environmental change can be found in the Amazon rainforest and surrounding area of Amazonia, South America.

According to research, the Amazon rainforest dieback is likely to see itself at the tipping point within the next 2-3.7 years as a result of 6 degrees Celsius of global warming. (www.pik-potsdam.de, n.d.) The Amazon rainforest, spanning across 9 countries, is sometimes known as ‘the lungs of the Earth’. One in ten global plant or animal species reside in Amazonia and the rainforest is a key element of the biosphere and the natural functions of various cycles, for example the oxygen and carbon cycles, associated with and linked to the biosphere. Again, these cycles are interconnected and interlinked. What affects one will come to loop around forming a feedback loop, usually with further detrimental effects than before. This will indeed spell global impacts once tipped over the limit and will have irrefutable effects for human society globally. The short essay by Crutzen and Stoermer in the year 2000, arguably the most central text for the rise in popularity of the idea of a reality of the Anthropocene, highlights the key issues faced by the conservation efforts within the Amazon rainforest. ‘Human activity has increased the extinction rate by thousand to ten thousand fold in the tropical rain forests and several climatically important “green-house” gases have substantially increased in the atmosphere.’ (Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000) With the ongoing and continual degradation of ‘the lungs of the Earth’, humanity may struggle to adapt to the global environmental change with upwards to 25% of global oxygen and carbon processes seeing severe disruptions in their natural processes. ‘Biologic changes also have been pronounced. Extinction rates have been far above background rates since 1500 and increased further in the 19th century and later; in addition, species assemblages have been altered worldwide by geologically unprecedented transglobal species invasions and changes associated with farming and fishing, permanently reconfiguring Earth’s biological trajectory. (Waters et al., 2016) Ongoing anthropogenic environmental change representative of the Anthropocene itself holds the capacity to manifest tremendous societal and climatic challenges, as seen with the danger of the Amazon rainforest dieback and global insect pollinator decline, both experienced now in time as well as for the foreseeable future.

As of February 2024, the formal rejection for the term of the Anthropocene has been rejected by the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) and sees the firm rejection to declare the reality of a new Anthropocene epoch on the geological timescale. (Carrington, 2024) With the specific date of the Anthropocene debated between scholars, some who argue from the Industrial Revolution onwards and with others who argue from the “Great Acceleration” post-second world war onwards, it is acknowledged the term will see use onwards by bodies and individuals within the Anthropocene Working Group (AWG).

The Anthropocene as a term is of one to unite humanity in fixing its course for a better future. This essay has critically analysed and examined insect pollinator decline as a global environmental change representative of the Anthropocene. The ongoing biodiversity crisis, a ‘sixth mass-extinction event’, has shown decline in all species globally threatened or worse off. Insects and insect pollinators are no different from this. Lately, a focus on societal response and the achievement of targets to reach suitable levels of progress within tackling the Anthropocene and its challenges has been on the agenda. However, this progress has been meek and passive, failing to reach initial targets set out at prior dates for the hopeful future to which they can be achieved by. Insect pollinator decline has only perpetually declined. The case study of the Amazon rainforest has seen other challenges rise and manifest as the

Anthropocene continues to endure and as time marches on, unfazed by it all. Insect pollinator decline only continues to increase, not only in the Amazon rainforest and surrounding Amazonia, but on a global scale. In conclusion, the best time to have significantly acted was 20 years ago, the second-best time is now. Insect pollinator decline can be seen as directly representative of the Anthropocene, and it is now up to only us to halt its rate of decline and restore it to a natural state, much like all other challenges posed by anthropogenic environmental change. As perfectly surmised again by Crutzen and Stoermer; ‘an exciting, but also difficult and daunting task lies ahead of the global research and engineering community to mankind towards global, sustainable, environmental management’. (Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000).

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GY205 Fieldtrip 2025 – students on Clare Island, 19 March 2025. Source: Maynooth Geography X account (@MaynoothGeog)

THE GEOGRAPHY OF TELEWORKING

Daron Harten, Final Year/Year 3 (Double Major)

Teleworking defined broadly by van Egeraat (2024), as work done at locations separate from the location of the employer or client for whom the work is being done, and which involves electronic interchange between two locations. Donovan and Wright (2012), define teleworking as a way of working using information and communication technologies in which work is carried out independent of location. From these definitions we see the key aspect of teleworking is the use of ICT, this is how it differs from simply working from home. A farmer may work from home but does not use ICT, so is not a teleworker. Donovan and Wright, (2012), explain that an interest in teleworking first developed in the 1970s in response to the oil crises in America. Donovan and Wright, (2012) highlight the ECaTT survey completed within the EU that found just 6% of EU employees practiced teleworking with this figure higher in Scandinavia. Ireland fell below the average with a figure of just 4.4 %. However, these are likely not full-time teleworkers as O’ Drisceoil, (2005) highlights this can include those working at home just once a week. While teleworking adaptation was slow initially the Covid-19 pandemic made it much more popular. A WDC, (2020) report found that of the 5,639 people interviewed during the pandemic 68% were working completely remotely and 24% were working a mix of remotely and onsite. Additionally, working from home was popular among those interviewed, only 6% indicating they would not want to work from home after the pandemic This piece will examine how the conventional workplace may continue to be replaced by a virtual workplace, also it will reflect on the impact of teleworking on peripheral regions in Ireland. It will do so by looking at the benefits and critiques of teleworking, the rise during covid and was this shift successful, a regional breakdown and identifying why adoption is lower in rural areas.

Benefits of teleworking for employees:

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic brought a shift towards home-based working in Ireland and the high figures seen during the pandemic have decreased but not to pre-pandemic levels. There are many reasons why people wanted to continue home-based working, Donovan and Wright, (2012) found through their research that 91% of Irish teleworkers enjoyed a positive experience highlighting the reduced use of fossil fuels, saving on transport cost and improved work/life balance, 54% highlighted the improved work/life balance as the primary motivation for working from home. Therefore, people that enjoyed positive experiences with working from home and wanted to continue this. From the surge in people home-based teleworking during the pandemic it is clear that it is possible conventional workplaces be replaced by shared virtual workplaces.

Management critiques of teleworking:

As highlighted earlier adaptation of home-based working was slow in Ireland, WDC (2017) highlight the figure for homebased workers in the 2011 census, this was just 83,326 or 4.7%. Excluding those involved in agriculture, forestry and fishing this figure falls to 2.8%, by excluding those groups this is a closer representation of those actually teleworking. One reason adaptation was low was because of the feelings and beliefs of managers. Managers find it harder to exert authority over remote workers, Van Eggerat (2024), for many middle managers this is a major concern as they may feel the significance of their role reducing if they can no longer micro-manage. Another critique highlighted by Gillespie and Richardson (2000), is how they managers felt a lack of face-to-face engagement would lead to issues regarding controlling monitoring and motivating worker. Ultimately, managers wanted employees in offices to watch what was happening at all times, highlighting a lack of trust between parties.

Rise of teleworking during the Covid-19 Pandemic:

While management and organisations had critiques and had held off on teleworking, the covid outbreak and government policies preventing movement of non-essential workers meant organisations had to adopt this approach. The WDC (2020) phase two report found 68% of respondents working completely from home during the pandemic. WDC (2022), a phase three report found a national average of 37.4% were working at least half of the days at home. These two reports highlight the huge shift towards remote working during the pandemic and showed the ability of workers to work through virtual workplace reducing the significance of the conventional workplace

Was teleworking a success during the Pandemic?

Through working from home, workers got to experience the benefits outlined above. Many workers enjoyed their experience and wanted to continue with it. For organisations and managers who felt employees needed micro-managing the fact that 52% worked more hours while just 7% worked less may be a surprise, also 62% felt more productive and just 14% felt less productive (WDC,2020). Therefore, both the employees and the organisations experienced benefits. From the huge surge of people teleworking during the pandemic and the success of it, it is possibly that the conventional workplace be replaced by a virtual workplace or at least a hybrid model.

Working from home by region:

The WDC (2022) report provides figures regarding the number of those working from home between 2018-2022. The data included people working from home or from a co-working space. Looking at the data gathered from those that usually working from home the national average was 28%, with the Dublin region having the highest figure, 39%. The “usually works from home” figure is made up of people working at least half of the days at home.

Table 1: Percentage of employment, usually working at home, 2018-22

Q1	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	% points Change 2021-22
Border	10.6	10.0	11.5	28.6	22.1	-6.5
West	7.1	7.7	9.8	31.7	22.1	-9.6
Mid-West	8.4	6.3	8.0	32.4	21.8	-10.6
South-East	7.6	7.9	11.0	29.8	23.7	-6.1
South-West	6.7	7.9	9.3	33.9	23.2	-10.7
Dublin	5.7	5.9	7.8	49.1	39.0	-10.1
Mid-East	7.9	6.2	7.6	36.4	26.0	-10.4
Midland	7.9	7.2	8.8	29	20.9	-8.1
State	7.2	7.0	8.8	37.4	28.0	-9.4

Table 1: Percentage of employment usually working from home 2018-22. Source: WDC (2022)

Table 1 gives a regional breakdown of working from home numbers in Ireland from 2018-2022. Here we can see that in recent years Dublin had developed as an important area for home-based workers. Prior to the pandemic many more regional areas had higher numbers working from home, but these may not be teleworkers, these people could be involved in agriculture or forestry, many border areas are mainly rural with reliance on farming. Today the rise in more urban metropolitan areas is likely a

rise in teleworking, opportunities to engage in teleworking are higher in metropolitan regions because this is where many organisations are already based. A common idea with teleworking is that it will allow increased opportunities for peripheral regions, the idea is that if people do not need to work in an office, in Dublin for example they may move to a peripheral location. The WDC (2020) found that 23% would consider relocating while 16% said they may consider relocating but just 7% had relocated. Someone considering relocation does not mean they will.

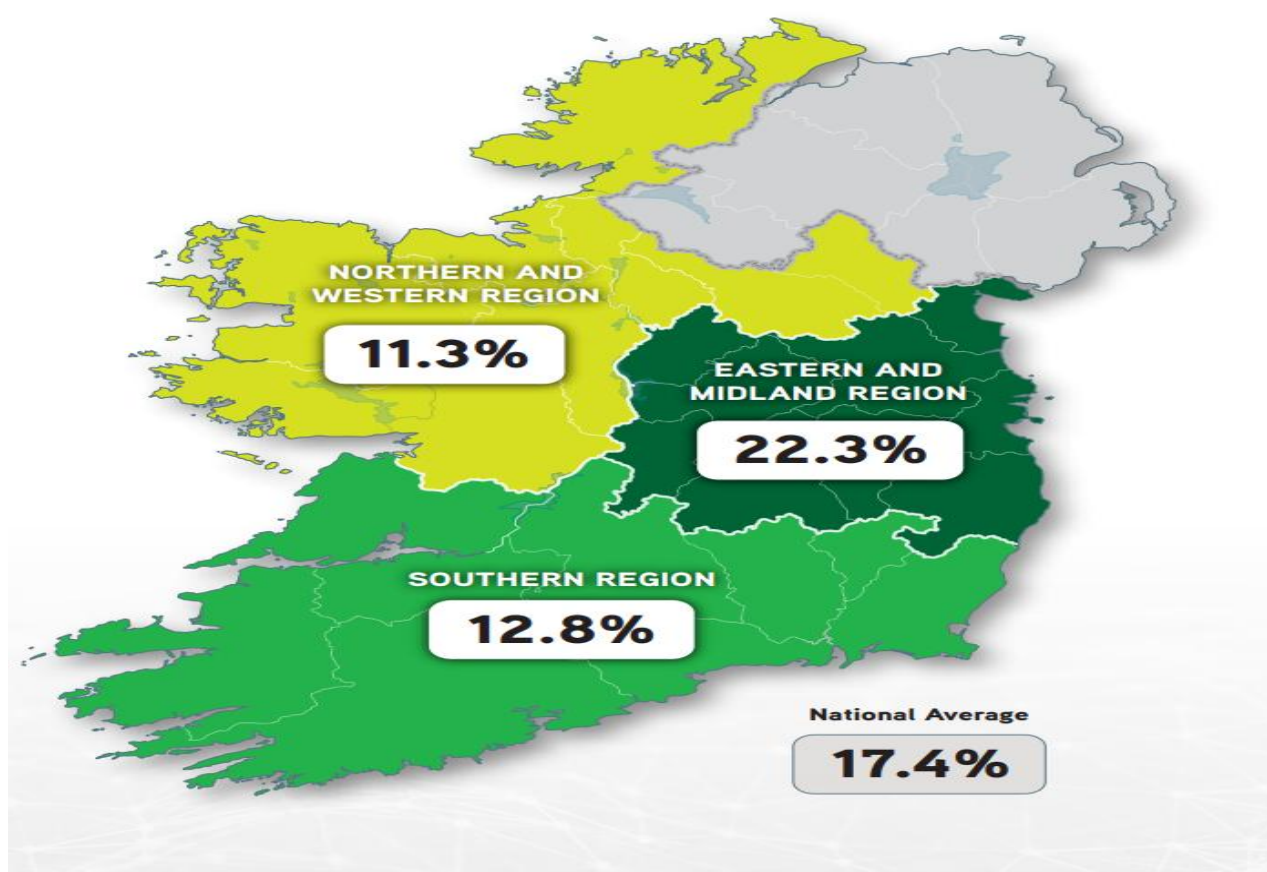


Figure 1: Workers capable of operating from home as a share of total employment. Source: Daly, (2020)

Daly (2020) gives a breakdown of the percentage of workers capable of operating remotely as a share of total employment for each of the regional assemblies and a breakdown by local authority. Once again, we see how the significance of the Dublin region with the Eastern and Midland region containing by far the highest percent, 22.3%, higher than the national average, 17.4%. Daly (2020), county breakdown shows 186,476 private sector workers in Dublin's four local authorities capable of operating remotely. Outside the Dublin region Cork, Ireland's second city was second followed by Kildare and Meath key commuter areas. In contrast, Longford had the lowest number with just 1,322.

Why is teleworking lowest in rural areas?

As can be seen teleworking in Ireland is heavily based around metropolitan areas. As explained earlier this phenomenon became popular during the pandemic and many have continued to work from home. With many organisations based in Dublin and many workers adopting a hybrid model it explains why many teleworkers are based here and why so few have relocated to more rural counties. Even a long commute once a week may leave a worker wanting to remain in the metropolitan area. Additionally,

challenges associated with rural counties include poor broadband, Donovan and Wright (2012), conducted research that found 62% of respondents felt poor broadband was a limitation to teleworking. Also, loneliness and lack of face-to-face contact could be highlighted.

Ranking	Local Authority	Estimated Number of Private Sector Workers Capable of Operating Remotely
1st	Dublin City	84,702
2nd	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	39,982
3rd	Fingal	34,178
4th	Cork County	29,074
5th	South Dublin	27,614
6th	Kildare	18,475
7th	Meath	14,659
8th	Wicklow	12,887
9th	Limerick City and County	10,555
10th	Cork City	10,333
11th	Galway County	9,739
12th	Louth	8,478
13th	Donegal	8,001
14th	Wexford	7,163
15th	Kerry	6,775
16th	Galway City	6,620
17th	Tipperary	6,396
18th	Clare	6,350
19th	Kilkenny	6,061
20th	Waterford City and County	5,761
21st	Mayo	5,043
22nd	Westmeath	4,461
23rd	Laois	3,888
24th	Cavan	3,346
25th	Offaly	2,953
26th	Carlow	2,831
27th	Sligo	2,803
28th	Roscommon	2,785
29th	Monaghan	2,383
30th	Leitrim	1,380
31st	Longford	1,322
Actual National Total (Q2 2020)		387,000

Source: Regional Assemblies of Ireland calculations using data from the CSO's Q2 2020 Labour Force Survey / Census 2016¹⁵

Table 2: Estimated number of workers capable of working from home per local authority. Source: Daly (2020)

Conclusion:

In the years during and after the Covid-19 pandemic there have been more people than ever teleworking in Ireland. The shock that the pandemic brought meant managers had to forget about any

critiques they had of the system and trust their employees to operate remotely. This was a successful with many workers remaining just as if not more productive and many enjoying positive experience when operating through a virtual workplace. Therefore, it is clear that in the future this virtual workplace will continue to play its part in the working landscape in Ireland but most likely in a hybrid model allowing employees experience the benefits of teleworking and the conventional workplace brings. The idea that this shift will bring more equal economic development for peripheral regions however is not necessarily the case. Up to this point the idea that if people are working remotely people will simply relocate out of urban areas has not been the case. It is more than just work that keeps people in a place, someone in an urban area may enjoy the social life the areas offers or friends they have made and do not want to relocate.

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UNDERGRADUATE FIELDTRIP TO LANZAROTE ISLAND, JANUARY 2025

Alexia Antochi, Aisling Baxter, Amelia Carroll, Nathan Clarke, Dr Michelle Curran, Conor Deenihan, Ross Donelan, Olive Dufficy, Ellen Dunne, Rebecca Fox, Áine Ghriofa, Ella Haden, Dr Shirley Howe, Anna May Keegan, Sophie Kehir, Lucy Kouznetsova, Kerry Lawless, Kevin McGrath, Pearse McKeever, Dr Stephen McCarron, Lauren McGarry, Cathal Morahan, Andreea Daria Palaghie, Cian Ward, and Lillie Yore.



Plate 1: Department of Geography Lanzarote Fieldtrip Participants, 26-31 January 2025

On 26 January 2025, twenty-two GY307A and GY206 Geography undergraduate students, and three staff members, swapped the January blues in Ireland for five days of fieldwork under the blue skies of Lanzarote, the Canary Islands. Through development of their geographical skills and thinking within Lanzarote's distinct landscape, the island's geologic and socio-cultural layers, past and present, became revealed to students. This was a very busy, successful week packed with learning through a diversity of teaching and assessment methods, yet also full of fun.

During our evening classes, students in smaller collaborative groups reported on each day's work. Included in their presentations were a daily Haiku, and an "Image of the Day" to analyse a specific fieldwork site and topic. These tasks, which became hugely enjoyable, supported development of speaking, writing and observation capacities, and being fully present in the field. They enhanced teamwork and communication. Importantly, they also built learnings in core fieldwork skills including how to take photographs, map, sketch, and write fieldnotes so that findings are systemically gathered

and documented to hold value as credible research data. Each staff member also wrote and presented a Haiku of the Day. A selection of our daily Haikus and images are presented here.

Day 1

The hazy pale sun,
Landing in Arrecife,
Makes me feel hopeful.

Winter warming to
Meet volcanic architects.
Lava, roads, hopes flow.



New amongst the old,
Climbing along the Loose Cliffs,
A day exploring.

Red ochre brown gold,
The colours of home's autumn,
Now we know their heat.

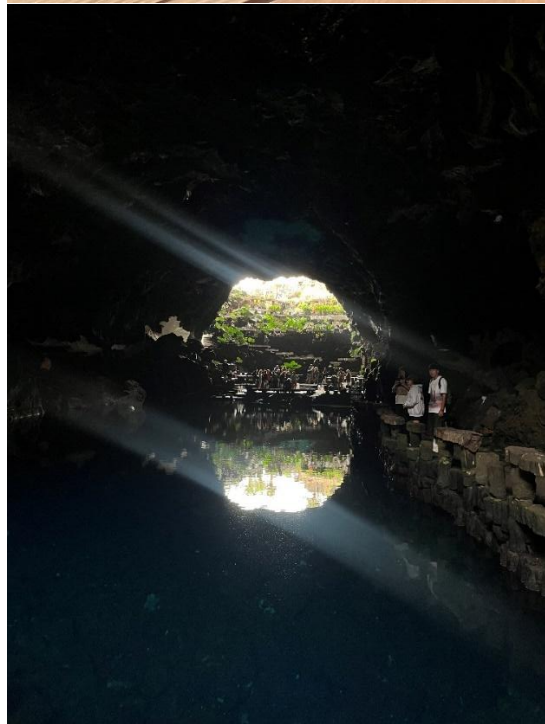


Day 2

Noon at El Golfo,
Scents of sea spray filled the air,
I felt I was whole.

First to look, to see,
Yet seeing is not thinking,
Thought causes ripples.

Waves kiss rugged shore,
El Golfo's green lake shimmers,
Fishermen set sail.



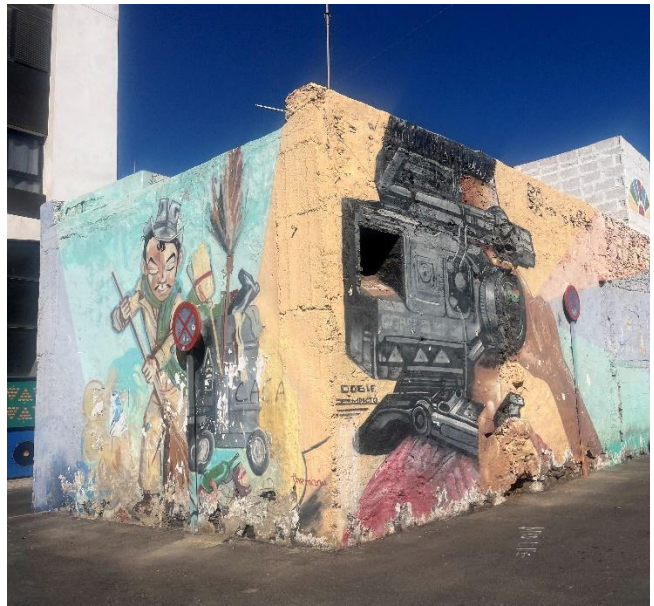
Day 3



Oh, Del Agua Caves,
You did more than touch my soul,
My mind is renewed.

Old stones whisper tales,
Waves carved paths for dreams to sail,
New dawn greets the past.

White roofs, two storeys,
All homes are created equal,
Some more equal than others.



Listen. Water, shoosh, laugh,
jacaranda tree whisper,
dove call. All being

Was strange, now normal,
Barren landscapes of the desert,
Palette white, green and blue.

Whispers in the dark,
Stalactites drip like soft tears,
Secrets held in stone.



Day 4



Baking in the sun,
My feet sank into the sand,
Home seems different.

Big hotels chase beach,
Hot sand wiggles through our toes,
Glass walls deny access.

Saramago's pens flows,
Reality bends with thoughts,
Dreams in every line.

Books big and small sized,
Languages near, far and wide,
José's library lives on.

Day 5

Space, place, time and scale,
Islands, sea, people and rocks,
What a week it has been!

Lichen restaurant,
Studying the sequence,
We had fun with Steve.

Dark skies, cooling breeze,
Best group leading the tour,
No lost memories.

Five days, knowledge flow.
Shared in sun, sky and trade winds.
Take it home. Farewell.

Field Sketch:

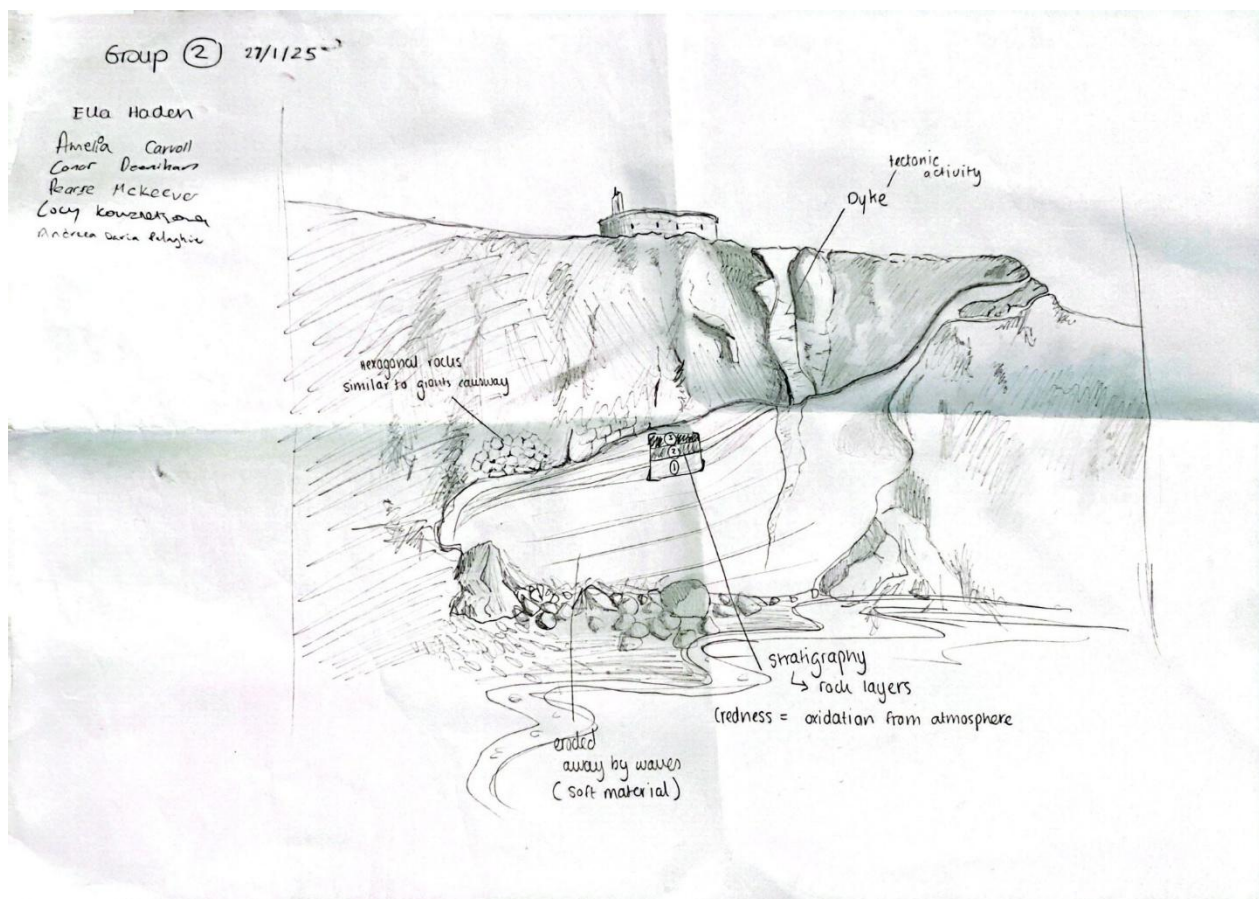


Plate 2: Group Two's field sketch of stratigraphy from an exposure at Playa Blanca, on 27 January 2025. Drawing by Ella Haden in collaboration with Amelia Carroll, Conor Deenihan, Lucy Kouznetsova, Pearse McKeever and Andreea Daria Palaghie.

FROM THE *MILIEU* ARCHIVES (1975): THE POET AS SOCIAL GEOGRAPHER

Sean Casey, Year 3 (1974-75)

Social geographers since the 1950s have stressed the fact that, to understand the character of a landscape and the forces that shape that landscape, one must understand the subjective views of the inhabitants of that place, their aspirations, beliefs and values. It is in this area of study, the intangibles in the landscape – the inner life of a community – that the social geographer can benefit from the poet's vision.

The poet is, par excellence, the sensitive man in his community, he has his finger on the pulse of society. His gift lies in the ability to enter into the minds and hearts of men, to see with their eyes, to feel with their feelings, to understand their motivations and passions. The poet is somewhat apart from men in that his penetration of vision and his power of articulation enables him to state clearly what most of us vaguely feel or dimly comprehend. He has the power to discern the patterns and interrelationships that give order and coherence to the seemingly unrelated series of events and activities that give his community its distinctive character.

Patrick Kavanagh, poet, and sometime small farmer, lived and worked for 35 years of his life in the drumlin landscape of his native County Monaghan. He is thus doubly qualified to articulate the comedy and tragedy of rural life, the pull of irregular fields, the love/hate relationships between the peasant and his stoney grey soil. Much of his work, in his middle period (1930-1950) is a consideration of themes which are of major interest to the rural social geographer in their studies of rural social change.

In the poem, *Shancoduff*, Kavanagh equates his low squat black hills with the Alps and the Matterhorn. He sees his few rushy acres in a time scale that goes back to the Old Testament. The strangers in the landscape, “*the cattle drovers*” who take shelter in “*the Featherna Bush*”, see the same landscape in a very different light:

*“Who owns them hungry hills
That the water hen and snipe much have forsaken?
A poet? Then by heavens he must be poor.”
The proud possessor of these black hills overhears the stranger’s gibe, and cries:
“I hear and is my heart not badly shaken?”*

In these few lines Kavanagh says much about the peasant's perception of his resources; he is a man far removed from the economic maximiser of classical economic theory. Like the alien strangers in the Shancoduff landscape, planners who try to impose their economic-centred solutions on rural social problems, without giving due consideration to the peasant's socio-religious attachment to the land, stand in grave danger of “badly shaking the peasants heart”.

The constant use of townland place names, e.g., Mucker, Inniskeen, Glassdrummond, Drumcatton, illustrates Kavanagh's perception of the Irish peasant's powerful attachment to his native place. For Kavanagh the naming of a place is a love-act, for – as in the Old Testament – to name a place is to claim it as one's own. For the peasant the townland is his country, the parish his nation, and the county his universe:

*“We borrowed the loan of Kerr’s big ass
To go to Dundalk with butter*

*Brought him home the evening before the market
An exile that night in Mucker."*

The key word here is *exile*, a term which at once gives us an idea of the peasant's social field, and the intense social interaction that takes place (or has taken place in the past) in rural society at townland level.

The peasant is prepared to shed his blood for his land and defend his farm boundaries with "*blue cast steel*", should the need arise. In his poem, *Epic*, Kavanagh equates a local row over – "*a road of rock, a no man's land*" – with another row of the same year, "*the Munich bother*", which led to the outbreak of the Second World War. This juxtapositioning of the local row and the universal war illustrates the importance of the family farm: the farmer considers his few acres as his territory, his kingdom: "*a local row, Gods make their own importance*". Endless disputes over farm boundaries and *rights of way*, in these areas of fragmented holdings and long memories, fill the local newspapers from week to week, and may possibly account for the high concentration of solicitors' offices in these *zones of conflict*!

In his long poem, *The Great Hunger* (1942), Kavanagh gives his most detailed exploration of the major social, economic and spiritual problems in the small farming community. Patrick Maguire, the central figure in the poem, is the archetype of the rural Irish bachelor. He is a man who accepted the Mother's advice and "*made a field his bride*". Maguire convinces himself that:

*"Children are tedious in the hurrying fields of April;
When men are springing across wide furrows
Lost in a passion that never needs a wife"*

Such ideologies, reinforced by a warped sexual morality, established the pattern of non-marriage and late marriage, so characteristic of rural Irish demographic history since the Famine. The reluctance of the parents to sign over their holding to their *children* is another of the social themes in *The Great Hunger*. Maguire remained faithful to his Mother until she died:

*"At the age of ninety one
She stayed too long, wife and Mother in one
When she died
The knuckle bones were cutting the skin of her son's backside
And he was sixty five."*

Maguire's household is typical of the impoverished areas in rural Ireland: ageing parents, surrounded by their *middle-aged children* with no prospects of marriage. In such an oppressive climate the aspirations of the inhabitants sink lower and lower, houses fall into disrepair, land is under-utilised, and the incidence of alcoholism and mental disturbance is the highest in Western Europe.

Maguire has moments of insight when he realises the tragedy and poverty of his condition:

*"He returned to his headland of carrots and cabbage
To the fields once again
Where eunuchs can be men
And life is more lousy than savage"*

This imagery is contrasted with the fanciful urban perception of the rural way of life:

*"A peasant has no worries
In his little lyrical fields
He ploughs and sows
He eats fresh food;*

*He loves fresh women
He is his own master
As it was in the beginning"*

The harsh difference between the urban perception of rural life and the harsh reality of the struggle to eke a subsistence out of the stoney grey soil is one possible reason for the bitterness of the present clash between trade unions and farmers unions on such issues as food prices and income tax.

Of course, all is not poverty and tragedy in the rural community, and Kavanagh celebrates the positive values of rural life in many of his poems:

*"Through the mist-chill fields I went
With a pitch fork over my shoulder
Less for use than for devilment
The threshing mill was set up, I knew
In Cassidy's haggard last night,
And we owed them a day at the threshing
Since last year. O, it was delight"*

The communal and social aspect of work that is depicted in this extract from *Tarry Flynn* was, for long, one of the more positive values in rural life. However, increased mechanisation – despite its many advantages – is breaking down the close neighbourhood interaction of the past and replacing it with a self-contained farmer, whose only contact with his neighbour is likely to be *"a doff of the cap after mass on Sundays"*.

These are but a few of the themes in Kavanagh's work that are of interest to the social geographer. This is not to say that Kavanagh was merely a social commentator, his vision goes much deeper than that – to the very meaning of existence, the finding of God at the heart of the Universe. Kavanagh was, above all, a realist in social matters, setting down faithfully what he perceived with his poetic vision; a vision that is often more penetrating than that of even the most sensitive and skilled social scientist – social geographers included.

THE POET AS SOCIAL GEOGRAPHER

Sean Casey, 3rd Year

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In his long poem 'The Great Hunger' (1942) Kavanagh gives his most detailed exploration of the major social, economic, and spiritual problems in the small farming community. Patrick Maguire, the central figure in the poem, is the arch type of the rural Irish bachelor. He is a man who accepted his Mother's advice and made a field his bride. Maguire convinces himself that:-

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Such ideologies, reinforced by a warped sexual morality, established the pattern of non-marriage and late marriage, so characteristic of rural Irish demographic history since the famine.

Plate 1: An excerpt from the original article, as it appeared in *Milieu* 1975

THE INVENTION OF DISPOSABILITY: CIGARETTES AS A CASE STUDY

Grace Murphy, International Student

Introduction

Post-World War II American consumerist culture and its concomitant patterns of behaviour is what Max Liboiron's statement, 'Modern disposability was invented. The truism that humans are inherently wasteful came into being at a particular time and place, by design,' points a finger at. Like modern 'disposables' themselves, the idea of disposability had to be invented and integrated into people's lives. This integration was expedited by advertisements that painted consumerism as a building block for happy families, responsible citizenship, and healthy communities through the morally sound qualities of convenience, self-gratification, and instant pleasures. These can all be observed in the sleek design of mass-produced cigarettes. Cigarettes – the consumer good that literally invites its purchasers to repeatedly set their money ablaze with the promise of an instant feeling of relaxation. Disposability, with its vision of endless growth achieved by turning people into repeat customers, a feat built on first convincing people to discard old purchases without a thought, is a modern invention. It is an invention that is embodied by cigarettes.

Historical Context

Invention of Disposability and Past Consumption Behaviours in America

Post-World War II American manufacturers were then realising a world where products could move through, instead of permanently into, the consumer marketplace, by emphasizing disposability above all other qualities (Liboiron, 2013). Plastic, the fundamental material that has come to define consumer culture in America and elsewhere, has managed to walk the line between disposability and durability. As a commodity, plastic quickly and thoughtlessly becomes disposable. As a material, it is often wildly durable, enduring in the environment for centuries. Qualities that are foisted onto plastic goods, such as planned and/or stylistic obsolescence, often send goods into the trash well before the plastic itself reaches the end of its shelf life (Liboiron, 2013). Plastic's ability to fulfil just about any role needed of it and America's post-WWII socioeconomic position, characterized by manufacturing capacities radically expanded due to the rapid increase in industrial demand during the war and an unscathed status compared to other combatants, led to a metastatic spread of the material throughout that society (Beudaert, 2023).

Plastic's usurpation as the stuff of choice for manufacturers meant consumers had seemingly little choice but to buy goods made of it (Beudaert, 2023). Then again, why should mid-20th century consumers have been inclined to avoid it when they were inundated by advertisements and rhapsodies by professionals about the miracles of the Plastic Age (Beudaert, 2023). The marketplace was inundated by products that were cheap, invisible as they immediately became waste and were seamlessly removed by waste management systems in wealthier world regions and designed to explicitly discourage reuse or repurposing to neutralise people's initial reluctance to dispose such products (Beudaert, 2023). Thus, modern disposability was created with the help of socially delineated criteria for determining when an object became waste. Disposability, as has been suggested, goes hand in hand with ideas of consumerism. Consumerism, and more simply the gathering of objects believed

to be helpful in one way or another, has a history in America that begins well before the eventual ubiquity of disposability.

Disposability enables a consumerist culture that strives for infinite growth by encouraging a cycle of wasting and purchasing of new stuff. Disposability's roots in post-World War II America established a striking contrast between America's secular-religious values and the emerging reality of the post-war consumerist society. America's historical relationship with disposability contained a tension between the traditionally high value placed on Protestant values of thriftiness and prudence by American society and the eventual creation of a consumer culture that needs to create new wants to feed on (Martin, 1993). However, America's relationship to its puritanical inheritance has hardly ever been without complications.

By some accounts, America was already a country fixated on the idea of economic growth by the early and mid-nineteenth century (Martin, 1993). A century earlier, conspicuous consumption was cemented as a social marker amongst America's elites with some material culture headed downstream as lower classes set out to emulate the image of these elites, such as tea ware that was found in homes of various classes in colonial America (Martin, 1993). In some colonial homes, well-dressed ladies served their guests with broken glasses as they gathered in an unfurnished room, highlighting how nascent consumers had to carefully decide their purchases and thus held onto goods past their prime as long as they still functioned (Martin, 1993). This pattern of behaviour illustrates people caught between desires created by the impression that ownership of certain goods correlated with higher status and the reality that financial restraints necessitated resourcefulness. Clearly, they were not yet touched by the ideals of an entirely disposable, and hence replaceable, world. One area of consumption does however have a deep history of disposability – European and Euro-American tobacco smoking culture.

Pipe Stems - Forefathers of Cigarette Butt Litter

The radically disparate ideas regarding humanity's relationship to the natural world and its resources that existed between Old World colonizers in North America and the indigenous peoples of those lands was no less evident in the case of tobacco. European explorers who landed in the New World during the Age of Exploration were quickly exposed to tobacco, bringing it back to their own homelands by the late 1600s (Tushingham et al., 2018). Tobacco, which had been utilized by Native Americans for ritual purposes for generations, was commodified and transformed into a powerful global cash crop and trading item (Tushingham et al., 2018). European commodification of the plant occurred with such rapidity to have obscured much in situ archaeological evidence of Native smoking practices (Tushingham et al., 2018). Alternatively, white ball clay pipe stems, the stems of kaolin pipes produced in Britain and Holland and imported into the American colonies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, have been described as the cigarette butts of archaeology (University of Virginia Library, n.d.). The former is analogous to the latter as they are quite ubiquitous in human settlements, and they endure for centuries. Additionally, the kaolin pipes were mass produced, relatively cheap, and easy to dispose and replace (University of Virginia Library, n.d.). Ceramic, like plastic, is a durable man-made material. Unlike many metals, fibres, and paper, ceramics will survive in the archaeological record long after they were produced. Plastics will assuredly fulfil this role in the coming generations to an exponentially more widespread extent. These kaolin pipes are identified by their narrow bore size, a characteristic that abetted their fragmentation and dispersal.

Pieces of white pipes are such a familiar sight at archaeological sites in England and America that their changes in bore sizes are utilized in dating the sites themselves. Between 1600 and 1800, the stems went from a diameter of 3.571 millimetres to 1.5875 millimetres (Deetz, 1996). Increase in the availability of tobacco at this time led to longer smokes from larger bowls with the longer, thinner stems supposedly minimizing the amount of matter that might otherwise end up in the smoker's mouth (Deetz, 1996). These longer stems were snapped as needed whenever tobacco resin buildup made it

difficult to draw smoke through (The Brick Store Museum, 2021). Evidently, these pipes were purpose-made to be disposable and careless disposition practices were commonplace. Larger bowls for more tobacco and thinner stems, more vulnerable to resin blockages and therefore demanding of more breakages, meant producers, importers, and the middlemen who sold the products directly to the consumers could expect bigger business. It is clear how the mindset which produced these kaolin pipes and fomented a smoking culture in which one gradually, but literally, destroyed their pipe can be compared to modern blasé attitudes towards cigarette butts.

Emergence of Pre-Made Cigarettes and Introduction of Filters

An increase in advertising on the part of a handful of standard brands over the course of the 1910s meant that cigarettes gradually captured more of the smoking market from the old guard of pipes and cigars (Proctor, 2011). Like the idea of disposability itself, smoking cigarettes had to be made a socially acceptable act in order that businesses might make profits (Proctor, 2011). The mechanization of the cigarette production process that has been increasingly refined since the 1850s has ensured a steady and cheap supply to drive into customer hands (Proctor, 2011). This triumph of manufacturing capacity has led to an unfathomable amount of littered cigarette butts. In the United States, they produced 68,000 tons of trash per annum as of 2010 (Proctor, 2011). As of 2021, cigarette-related litter made up 48.4% of Ireland's litter pollution nationwide (Gov.ie, 2022). This litter represents a serious source of waste, due both to quantity and quality. Filters became commonplace during the 1950s and 1960s to assuage growing concerns over health risks associated with smoking (Cummings et al., 2023). This change in mass-produced cigarettes led to a smoking culture responsible for ever-increasing quantities of waste.

The implementation of filters has led to even more complicated problems for human and environmental health. Mid-20th century cigarette advertising promoted filters as a healthful invention in the world of cigarette smoking. Another interpretation of this fact is to say that filters were a means of insuring continued profit flow from consumers who might have otherwise grown anxious of smoking. There is evidence that filters lead to heavier smoking. Between 1960 and 1990, filter length and the degree to which vent holes diluted the smoke both increased significantly, necessitating more cigarettes to achieve satisfaction (Cummings et al., 2023). This was undoubtedly a happy turn of events for the companies who could then sell ever increasing amounts of product. Common sense also suggests that this fact has led to evermore butts entering the environment. To return to Liboiron's statement, smokers, like any other group of people, are not necessarily inclined to wastefulness.

Before the era when modern filters became standard fare, discarded cigarettes quickly degraded or were re-smoked (Proctor, 2011). Plasticized filters, however, are much less biodegradable and thus remain in the world for longer (Proctor, 2011). It is accepted that some smokers still collect butts with enough life left for personal use when circumstances prevent the acquisition of fresh smokes. In places like Indonesia, collected butts might be recycled into new cigarettes at an industrial level (Proctor, 2011). In the first scenario, the unknown chain of ownership naturally presents a variety of risks from questions over the original smoker's health to questions concerned with what the butt may have been exposed to since being discarded. Industrialized 'recycling' can be seen as mixing many different sources of tobacco which may have been exposed to all kinds of flora, fauna, and/or bacteria/viruses. As has been suggested, the filters themselves pose serious environmental problems when they become scattered throughout the natural world.

Harms and Propulsion of Cigarette Butts as Litter

Filters, both used and unused, are toxic. Experiments involving various types of aquatic organisms have proven that the introduction of either pose serious threats to the surrounding ecosystem (Proctor,

2011). This is due to the chemicals that are found in all filters, fresh or old, and the chemicals that leach into them as the cigarette is smoked. The historical record of the development of filters is strewn with numerous explored and aborted plans to infuse any number of foreign agents to create a more effective product (Proctor, 2011). Today, smokers habitually inhale the industry standard, plasticized cellulose acetate fibres, as well as other compounds like humectants and flavourings found in unsmoked filters (Proctor, 2011, pp. 486). Butts' other component, paper, has its own share of misgivings that make it toxic and long lasting as waste. A discarded cigarette with some length left on it can introduce bleach, ink (should the brand name be printed on it), and burn accelerants, such as citrates and nitrates, into ecosystems (Proctor, 2011). The nature of cigarettes and the pattern along which smoking etiquette has evolved over time has crippled attempts at easing the burden this waste presents.

Like disposability, the overwhelming tide of butts littered wherever and whenever can be traced to a certain time. As indoor smoking bans were placed into effect around the time of the new millennium, smokers took to the streets. Outdoor smoking, removed from the indoor setting complete with handy ashtrays at every turn, seemingly presents little disposable opportunities aside from the ground itself. In America, where smoking now has a depleted social cache, it is difficult to find somewhere to properly discard a butt. In specific places in America, like state parks which frequently explicitly ban smoking by law, the ground is often strewn with butts as there is naturally no infrastructure implemented for the prohibited activity. Butts, with their synthetic components, can even be found intact in charcoal grills and firepits of these parks. Even in a country like Ireland, where smoking in public is far from unusual and thus public trash cans have built in ash bins and ashtrays are a common sight on outdoor tables, one can observe smokers tossing butts wherever they happen to be standing. The tendency of cigarette smoke to thoroughly permeate one's clothes might be hypothesized as a barrier to the alternative of holding onto butts until a more fitting receptacle is found. Additionally, the inherent ephemerality of cigarettes and the ease which can think of them as 'just a little bit' of trash might very well keep people from internalizing the extent of such an action. Even appropriately disposed butts can escape the waste stream, whether it be due to an overturned ashtray or wind that carries them from a landfill. Cigarettes are resistant to environmental solutions that focus on biodegradability due to their nature as a vehicle for moist combustible gasses (Proctor, 2011). To be biodegradable, an object must be vulnerable to heat and moisture, two qualities that are antithetical to cigarettes. The reception that the implementation of paper straws received illustrates the frustration and resistance that cigarettes might expect should manufacturers switch to eco-friendly materials. Cigarettes, with their self-containment and their plasticized filters and papers, make their disposable design clear.

Conclusion

The suggestion of Liboiron's statement, that disposability had to be created, and that wastefulness had to be normalized, is founded upon historical awareness of America's post-World War II consumer and advertising cultures. While the want to cultivate a collection of material goods may predate this triumph of business, the specific time and place Liboiron evoked took materialism exponentially higher by putting the military-industrial complex to work for commercial profit purposes. These purposes required a rewiring of popular consumption habits to turn people into return customers who were willing to discard previous purchases – a goal greatly aided by the innovations of the Plastic Age. One such invention was that of the plasticized cigarette, from filter to paper. Filters, a supposedly healthful invention, can lead to increased smoking habits and more litter that is toxic to boot. Like earlier kaolin pipes in England and the American colonies, cigarette butts have come to pepper our modern world. Their design precludes any meaningful reuse attempts and the constraints imposed by the purpose of smoking stunt efforts at redesigning a more 'eco-friendly' product.

Cigarettes are perhaps the perfect distillation of how the invention of disposability has transformed the way significant portions of humanity approach waste. There is virtually no other use for them except to be burned through, thoughtlessly thrown out to pollute soil, waterways, or any other thing that might ingest it, and repurchased time and time again for as long as the consumer stays hooked. Cigarettes' overt connection to mid-20th century American advertisements and consumer culture further cements the tie that binds them to the waste crises of the modern age.

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MAYNOOTH GEOGRAPHY: STEP BACK IN TIME



Plate 1: Dennis Pringle and Paddy Duffy at an event in the Rocque Lab (15 September 2016) to mark Dennis earning an award for Lifetime Contribution to the Geographical Society of Ireland



Plate 2: Paddy Duffy on fieldwork in Vicarstown, Co. Laois, with Second Year Geography students in 2007

MAYNOOTH GEOGRAPHY: STEP BACK IN TIME



Plate 3: Event to mark the retirement of Dr. Paul Gibson, 29 September 2018



Plate 4: Reunion Event for Alumni of Maynooth Geography Department in Renehan Hall, 22 April 2010

MAYNOOTH GEOGRAPHY: STEP BACK IN TIME



Plate 5: Undergraduate fieldtrip to Antrim, March 2011



Plate 6: Dr. Shelagh Waddington's final undergraduate lecture in the Iontas Theatre, May 2016

USING THE PAR MODEL TO EXPLAIN THE IMPACTS OF THE 2023 TURKEY-SYRIA EARTHQUAKE DISASTER

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On the 6th of February 2023, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit the southeast of Turkey and parts of Syria, which killed 56,000 people (Naddaf, 2023). Another earthquake then followed, with a 7.5 magnitude. Around 200 aftershocks also followed after both earthquakes (Naddaf, 2023). Due to the country being located on the Anatolian plate between the north and east Anatolian faults, Turkey is prone to earthquakes (Naddaf, 2023). Wilks (2024) states that Turkey is an active earthquake zone with a large number of fault lines, as it is “one of the world's most earthquake-prone countries”. However, the earthquake that occurred in February of 2023 was the deadliest earthquake to hit Turkey since 1999 (Uwishema, 2023). This essay will discuss how the PAR model is used to explain the impact of this earthquake disaster.



Plate 1: Damages after Turkey-Syria Earthquake. Source: Center for Disaster Philanthropy, 2023

Syria was already suffering through an existing humanitarian crisis, so the earthquakes that had occurred only exacerbated this situation. 85% of households were unable to meet their basic needs before the disaster. In Turkey, 40% of households had already lived below the poverty line before the earthquakes occurred. This disaster led to the infrastructure economy in Turkey costing \$50 billion and in Syria, \$5.2 billion. According to Mavrouli et al. (2023), These earthquakes have caused “extensive primary and secondary effects on the environment”. They have led to severe damage to the infrastructure and buildings as in the initial quake, 850,000 buildings had crumbled, as well as in the aftershocks (The Guardian, 2024). This can be seen in Plate 1. During the aftermath of the disaster, there was a “massive international rescue and aid operation” which involved many countries and organisations (Wilks, 2024).

The Turkey-Syria earthquake was referred to as an earthquake disaster. A disaster is a situation/event that overwhelms local capacity, necessitates a request for national or international assistance, and

causes great damage, destruction, and human suffering. Blaikie et al. (2005) state that a disaster is the “intersection of two opposing forces”, vulnerability and “physical exposure to a hazard”.

A hazard is a process, phenomenon, or human activity that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, social and economic disruption, or environmental degradation. A hazard perturbation is a stress factor that controls if there is an outcome to “experience harm due to exposure” (Turner et al., 2003). Most of the time, the stress factors are brought on by “trigger mechanisms” from “human activity”, leading to a trigger event (Blaikie et al., 2005).

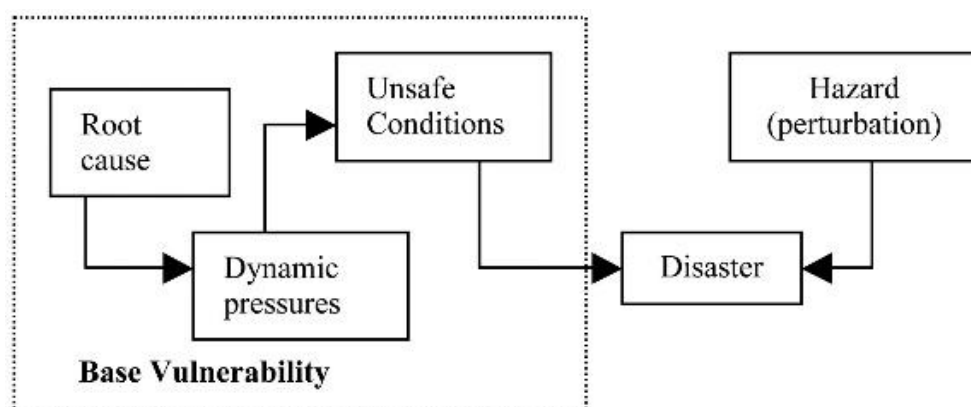


Figure 1: PAR Framework. Source: Turner et al., 2003

Risk is assessed as a combination of social vulnerability exposures and hazards. The PAR model and framework, seen in Figure 1 define risk as a “function of the perturbation” of an “exposed unit” (Turner et al., 2003). It is influenced by society and community. Many sequences of perturbations and stressors that interact contribute to vulnerability. (Turner et al., 2003)

This PAR framework can be used to analyse the Turkey-Syria earthquake, along with the PAR model shown in Figures 2 and 3. The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria and the severe economic crisis in Turkey can be determined as the hazard perturbation.

The pressure and release (PAR) model deals with disaster risk reduction. While earthquakes cannot be predicted, the PAR model helps analyse the probabilities. It is used to understand interconnected and complex factors used in disaster risk and management. It explains the causes and dynamics of disasters and analyses events. Pressure refers to the pressures, or factors, that contribute to disaster by increasing vulnerability. Release refers to how these factors can be released, or changed, to reduce the impact of hazards by increasing safety.

The pressure side of the model, seen in Figure 2, calculates the risk of a disaster using root causes, dynamic pressures, and unsafe conditions, using the formula $R=HXV$ where R equals risk, H equals hazard and V equals vulnerabilities.

According to Blaikie et al. (2005), the “‘underlying factors’ and root causes embedded in everyday life give rise to ‘dynamic pressures’ affecting particular groups, leading to specifically ‘unsafe conditions’”. These pressures are the underlying root causes of disasters. Some examples are poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. It is a socio-cultural product with socio vulnerabilities.

The pressure model includes the pressures/factors that increase vulnerabilities in society. Vulnerabilities are conditions/factors that cause people and communities to be susceptible to disasters. These conditions/factors are determined by physical, social, economic, or environmental.

Vulnerabilities examine the links and interactions between humans and their social and physical surroundings. They help identify the root causes that make people or structures susceptible to hazards. Examples of vulnerabilities include poor infrastructure and lack of preparedness and resources. The national disaster in Turkey and Syria had a link to social vulnerabilities.

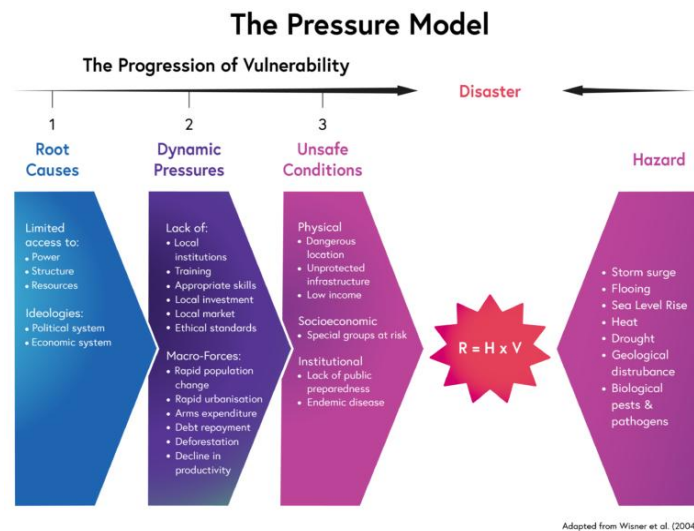


Figure 2: The Pressure model. Source: Wisner et al. (2004)

Root causes are an interrelated set of widespread and general processes affecting society and the world economy. According to Awal (2015), they indicate that the “underlying are the most remote influences”. Root causes contain social, economic, political, demographic, and environmental factors. These include limited access to power, structure, resources, and political and economic ideologies (Wisner et al., 2004). Root causes reflect the “distribution of power in a society” (Blaikie et al, 2005).

The root cause of the Turkey-Syria earthquake disaster can be determined as the lack of resources for improving infrastructure and buildings and the support for the ongoing crises.

Dynamic pressures are the processes/activities that translate the effects of root causes temporarily and spatially into unsafe conditions. These pressures “channel the root causes into a particular form of insecurity” that are considered “hazards facing vulnerable people” (Awal, 2015). Dynamic pressure factors include ongoing societal factors, rapid population growth, urban development, land use changes, environmental degradation, governance, employment, and economy. These include rapid population change, urbanization, deforestation, lack of local investment, institutions and markets, ethical standards, and training.

The dynamic pressures of the Turkey-Syria earthquake disaster can be determined as the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria, the fragile public health system, the buildings that were constructed very close to each other, low-rise brick structures, the severe economic crisis in Turkey, discrimination in Syria, healthcare attacks, and the displacement of the population (Mavrouli et al., 2023; Naddaf, 2023; Cinar et al., 2023).

Unsafe conditions are the vulnerability of the population expressed in time and space. Unsafe conditions contain physical, social, health, economic, and political factors. These include dangerous locations, unprotected infrastructure, low income, special groups at risk, and lack of preparedness.

The unsafe conditions of the Turkey-Syria earthquake disaster can be determined by the fact that Turkey and Syria are situated on a tectonic plate, resulting in the location of an active earthquake zone. They have had multiple earthquakes before, which has led to very poor infrastructure being damaged by shaking (Cinar et al., 2023; Naddaf, 2023). It has also been exposed that there were inadequacies in construction practices and a widespread lack of compliance with building regulations.

The release side of the model, seen in Figure 3 deals with the reduction of disaster risk. It includes the factors that can be released/changed to reduce the impact of a hazard, therefore leading to an increase in safety. It proposes that building capacities are necessary to reduce disaster risk and increase resilience.

According to UNDRR (2015), disaster risk is the likelihood of loss of life, injury or destruction, and damage from a disaster in a given time. It is the consequence of a hazard and exposure and vulnerability characteristics (Prevention Web, 2021). Disaster risk increases due to “current global patterns” of increasing exposure, inequality, urban development, and environmental degradation (Prevention Web, 2021).

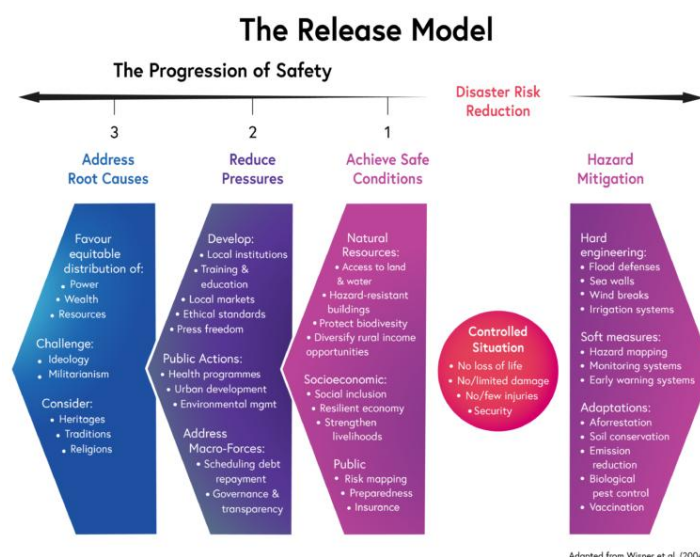


Figure 3: The Release model. Source: Wisner et al. (2004)

Blaikie et al. (2005) state that the release model incorporates disaster reduction, and the reduction of the impact of a hazard and pressure can lead to reduced vulnerability. The model shows the progression of safety through achieving safe conditions, reducing pressures, and addressing the root causes. Disasters are remotely and indirectly rendered possible by the power system in a society. Therefore, mitigating a hazard and addressing the root causes has a higher tendency to reverse the disaster.

Using the release side of the model when looking at the Turkey-Syria earthquake disaster, many different factors contribute to the “potential measures to release pressure from a disaster” (Awal, 2015). The measures needed to protect from further disasters all stem from the root cause, which is to provide more resources to improve infrastructure and buildings. To combat this, the government needs to put more stress on better and more structured resources.

The advantages of the PAR model being used in this earthquake disaster include inclusivity, sustainability, adaptability, and communication. Communities are stakeholders in disaster risk reduction. The PAR model acknowledges the community's capacity for building resilience and the value of local knowledge. The model can identify the root causes of vulnerability and disaster risk to propose long-term solutions to reduce vulnerability and sustain development goals. An example is to make buildings more likely to survive another earthquake event. It has also adapted to different communities and disasters across various scales. The disaster risk reduction stakeholders have a shared terminology and framework language.

To this day, hundreds and thousands of people are still being affected by displacement in Turkey and Syria. This is due to the homeless people living in shelters or tents, most of the buildings remaining flattened and in despair, and many people living in “container cities” (The Guardian, 2024; Schlein, 2024). There was also promise for the construction of hundreds and thousands of new homes to be built, however, “only a fraction has been constructed” (Schlein, 2024). This has led to rubble remaining where it has fallen (Schlein, 2024). This earthquake disaster has also led to psychological trauma for the survivors, as this has been the largest and deadliest earthquake that has hit Turkey since 1999.

In conclusion, the PAR model is an excellent source of information to be used to prevent future deadly impacts from an earthquake disaster in Turkey and Syria. The PAR model framework is also successful in identifying the hazard perturbation and the stressors of this disaster.

It is successful in identifying the root causes, dynamic pressures, and unsafe conditions that factored into the impact of the 2023 earthquake. All the information from the PAR model links back to the root causes, which were identified as a lack of resources for better infrastructure and building and support for the ongoing crises. To address these root causes, resources should be favoured, crises should be challenged, and funding must be increased. The dynamic pressures identified were the health system, buildings that were poorly structured, economic crisis, and population displacement. To reduce these pressures, the economic crisis should be addressed, the healthcare system should be better developed, and urban development should be taken into public action. The unsafe conditions were identified as the location, as it is an active earthquake zone and damage to buildings due to the movement of the earthquake. To achieve safe conditions, there should be hazard-resistant buildings put in place, risk mapping, and prioritise disaster preparedness when it comes to further protection from an earthquake disaster (Uwishema, 2023). While there is no definite way of preventing and predicting further earthquakes from happening in Turkey and Syria, using the PAR model to combat the challenges to prevent deadly impacts can help more people and the countries in general.

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SCENES FROM PAST MAYNOOTH GEOGRAPHY GRADUATIONS













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A BOOMING CHRISTMAS GRAVITAS: ANSWERS

 <p>1. Dr Carla Mateus</p>	 <p>6. Dr Stephen McCarron</p>
 <p>2. Dr Louise Sarsfield Collins</p>	 <p>7. Prof Karen Till</p>
 <p>3. Isaac Mensah</p>	 <p>8. Dr Abdul Aziz Mohibbi</p>
 <p>4. Dr Kevin Credit</p>	 <p>9. Neasa Hogan</p>
 <p>5. Prof Conor Murphy</p>	 <p>10. Prof Mark Boyle</p>

How did you score, out of a possible ten points?

0-1/10 Lost in the Landscape: Don't worry, all Geographers wander. Just say you're away on fieldwork.

2 – 4 /10 Muddled Mapper: Okay! You may confuse East with West but at least you're on the road.

5 – 7 /10 Savvy Surveyor: Good! The respectable middle latitudes; watch that temperate.

8 – 9 /10 Topographic Topper: Great! You clearly have a detailed legend.

10 out of 10 Erudite Cartographosaurus: Congratulations! You have achieved geographical gravitas. That's even better than a GPS with charisma

BIOLOGICAL & GEOGRAPHICAL SCIENCE UNDERGRADUATE FIELDTRIP TO NORTHWEST IRELAND, MARCH 2025

Trevor Allen, Helen Brown, Nicolas Chiriac, Sadbh Cox, Dr Michelle Curran, Dr John Devaney, Dr Tara Dirilgen, Daire Doyle, Gabriella Dirksen, Faye Hughes, Caitlyn Kinsella, Jessic Maguire, Daan Mathijssen, Oisín McConnell, Samuel McDermott, Dervla McNicholas, Blathnaid Murphy, Aideen O'Rourke, Molly O'Sullivan, Cathal Ryan, Erica Roche, Erica De La Torre, Linda Zemene.

On 19th March 2025, nineteen GY308A and BI320 undergraduate students, and three staff members, swapped the March madness for five days of fieldwork under the unseasonably (but much appreciated!) blue skies of Northwest Ireland. We visited varied landscapes in Donegal, Sligo, Cavan and Fermanagh where the students developed their geographical, biological, and critical thinking skills, and learned about Ireland's rich geologic and ecologic past and present. This was a demanding, rewarding, and extremely enjoyable week, with students commenting that they learnt a lot more than they ever imagined!



Figure 1: Department of Geography Northwest Ireland Fieldtrip Participants, 19 - 22 March 2025

Each day, students were assigned to different groups; in the evening we gathered to reflect on the day's activities and the students presented their observations. Their presentations included a Haiku and an "Image of the Day," which were used to explore and describe the days specific fieldwork activities. These tasks, which quickly became one of the highlights of the week, enhanced the students' soft skills including: public speaking, writing, observation, and staying fully engaged in the field, while also fostered teamwork and communication skills. Crucially, the activities reinforced core fieldwork skills

such as photography, mapping, sketching, and note taking in the field, ensuring that observations were systematically documented and could be used as credible research data. Each staff member also contributed by writing and presenting their own Haiku of the Day. A selection of our daily Haikus and images are featured here.

18th March

All is cyclical,
Swash Dune salt marsh ebb and flow,
Their future? Who knows.

With hazy blue skies,
Glacial past, unknown futures,
I feel ill at ease.

Ben Bulbin looms large,
Students look cold on Streedagh,
Warmer days ahead.

19th March (Marble Arch Caves, Co. Fermanagh and Cavan Burren Park, Co. Cavan)

Permeable rock,
Nestled in a heart of stone,
Caverns end unknown.

Down into the cave,
Calcite and rocks aplenty,
The dark is scary.

The sun is shining bright,
The cave is looming overhead,
We all stand in awe.

I love Maggie's dress,
The giant missed the gorge,
Will be back again.

Cave exploration,
Protruding Biology,
Confusion and angst.

Chilly morning sun,
Sunny blue sky afternoon,
My heart is happy.



20th March (Sheskinmore, Co. Donegal)



Machair, sea and sand,
Peat displaying ancient past,
Beauty all around.

The cows graze on dunes,
The bog is wet and muddy,
Sheskinmore is fab!

Our feet are soaked,
The cows are having some fun,
Days ahead look bright.

Coring in the bog,
Hiking across the sand dunes,
Head scratch like this bug.

Boggy soggy brown,
Hills filled with creatures and sand,
Wild free and freaky.

Muddy brown bog cores,
Towering yellow sand dunes,
I'm full of wonder.



21st March (Union Woods, Co. Sligo)

Yellow flowers up,
Glistening in the sun ray,
More life to come soon.

Is it a granite?
Maybe granodiorite?
Lichens block my view!

Light comes through the trees,
Rhododendron out competes,
Fear for native plants.

Sunny woods, bird song,
Then rain comes in from the west,
Signalling the end.

Trees high in the sky,
Tree sap all over our hands,
Union woods is fab!

Sun is shiny bright,
Rhododendron everywhere,
Trip comes to an end.

Striking greens and browns,
Bird songs, sunshine, mossy rocks,
Prioritise life!

Walking in the grass,
Spiders crawling all around,
Our final haiku.



GETTING TO KNOW DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF THE GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT

Compiled by Shirley Howe

Catherine (Cathy) O'Driscoll

Cathy is an Executive Assistant with the Department of Geography.

Tea or coffee? Tea.

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? A pop star or a vet.

Did you ever fall asleep in class? No.

Are there any companion animals in your life? No.

What (other than human) animal would you like to be and why? A bear, then I can sleep for part of the year!

What book are you reading at the moment? I'm reading two at the moment. The first one is "Prisoners of Geography" by Tim Marshall and the second one is "Oh Miriam!" by Miriam Margolyes. I read her first book, "This Much is True" - very funny.



What's the last film or play you went out to see?
The last film was Wicked.

Do you play any musical instruments? No.

What is your favourite holiday/travel memory?
Sandy Bay, Cornwall, with my mum and dad.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be? Tasmania.

What is the weirdest item in your home? My husband!

What song do you sing in the shower? The Carpenters, "Close to You".

If you had a time machine, which era would you visit first? The '80s (for the music and fashion, obviously).

What is your go-to "comfort food"? Crisps, and homemade Rice Pudding with golden syrup on top.

Which dessert are you most like? Tiramisu - many layers ...

If you had to choose just one of these superpowers—fly, become invisible, teleport or x-ray vision—which would it be? Teleport.

And what's the very first thing you'd do then? I'd go back to spend more time with my mum and dad and those who meant so much to me, and only now that I appreciate them so much now that they are gone.

If you could immediately change one thing in society, what would it be? Help genuine people who have no money.

What brings you the most joy? Doing things for others and seeing their joy.

What's at the top of your "bucket list"? To go on a nice holiday with my family and make some memories - before I get dementia!

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Ashly Uthaman

Ashly is a PhD researcher with ICARUS, Department of Geography.

Tea or coffee? Coffee.

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? When I was a child, I wanted to be a primary school teacher. I still remember how I used to "teach" trees and plants after school — I'd line them up like students and pretend I was taking a class! I even used to playfully mark kids' magazines as if they were my students' work. Looking back, it's quite funny, but it was something I genuinely enjoyed. I also remember my teachers encouraging me during school seminars, often saying I had a bright future as a teacher.

Did you ever fall asleep in class? Yes, I did — especially during the afternoon classes! Something about a full stomach and a warm classroom made it almost impossible to stay awake at times.

Are there any companion animals in your life? Yes, I have a dog named Tittu, back home.

What (other than human) animal would you like to be and why? A house cat — they live comfortably, sleep a lot, and still manage to be the boss of the house.

What book are you reading at the moment? "Orbital" by Samantha Harvey.

What's the last film or play you went out to see? I watched a South Indian film called Ullozhukk when I visited home last year. It was a story about a family's struggles and emotions during a difficult time. The movie was slow and serious, but very touching.

Do you play any musical instruments? No.

What is your favourite holiday/travel memory? Since I live far from home, every visit back since 2021 has been special to me. But my favourite memory is when I surprised my family by showing up for my brother's wedding. I had told them I wouldn't be able to come, so they weren't expecting me at all. When they saw me, they were completely shocked — my parents stood still for a moment, then burst into tears. It's a moment I'll never forget.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be? If I could live anywhere in the world, it would be my birthplace, Kottayam, Kerala— where my whole family is. For me, the best place in the world is wherever my family is.

What is the weirdest item in your home? The weirdest item in my home is not in home now. That's me! Sometimes I feel like I don't have any traits from my parents at all. My brother is almost a copy of my mom and also shares some of my dad's characteristics. But me? I honestly don't know

whose personality I inherited! In our family, we have this funny saying — the elder one tells the younger, “You were brought from the market!”



What song do you sing in the shower? I am a great singer in the shower — at least I think so! I sing a lot of songs while showering, but recently, one South Indian song called "Vavavo Vave", an improvised version sung by Hanan Shaah, has really stuck with me. That's the one I've been singing on repeat these days.

If you had a time machine, which era would you visit first? I'm not really sure which era I would choose, but maybe somewhere peaceful, where life was simple, and people lived close to nature.

What is your go-to "comfort food"? My go-to comfort food is biriyani. It's a rich and aromatic rice dish layered with spices and meat, and it always brings me joy — even in the worst situations. I remember one time when I flew home, my husband's whole family was down with a high fever. I was sure I'd catch it too. The next day, while we went for his check-up, I stopped at a restaurant just to have biriyani — knowing I'd probably fall sick and wouldn't get another chance to enjoy

it, since my visit was only for a week. And yes, the very next day, I was admitted with a high fever. I still remember my husband just sitting near me, watching me eat it — no sympathy, just silent judgment! But honestly, I had no regrets. That's the power of biriyani for me.

Which dessert are you most like? I'd say I'm most like payasam — warm, traditional, and filled with comfort. Payasam is a dessert that's always present at special moments and brings people together, just like I try to be in my own life. It may seem simple, but it holds a lot of love and meaning — especially in a South Indian home. That's the kind of person I am too: someone who values tradition, connection, and the little things that bring joy.

If you had to choose just one of these superpowers—fly, become invisible, teleport or x-ray vision—which would it be? Fly.

And what's the very first thing you'd do then? The very first thing I'd do is take off and travel freely — no airport lines, no security checks, and no expensive flight tickets! I could attend conferences and meetings around the world without wasting time. Plus, it's environment-friendly — no fuel, no emissions, just clean travel. And the best part? I could fly back home on weekends and spend time with my family.

If you could immediately change one thing in society, what would it be? If I could change one thing in society, I would make everyone treat PhDs as real jobs. PhDs are not just students — we work full-time, write endlessly, stress professionally, and still are called “just researchers”. And yes, I would officially bring down rent prices for all PhD students — because if our pay is academic, our rent should be too!

What brings you the most joy? Honestly, the small things — a warm cup of tea, an unexpected message from a loved one, a quiet evening walk, or even the smell of home-cooked food. I find joy in little moments that often go unnoticed but make life feel full and meaningful.

What's at the top of your "bucket list"? At the top of my bucket list is to hold a koala in my arms, let it nap on my lap, and just stay there as long as it wants. I love koalas — they're so calm, cuddly, and adorable.

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Dr Conchúr Ó Maonaigh

Conchúr is a Postdoctoral Researcher with the Department of Geography.

Tea or coffee? Coffee.

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? A professional footballer. There is still hope...

Did you ever fall asleep in class? I've had some of the best sleeps of my life in lecture halls.

Are there any companion animals in your life? A little Yorkshire Terrier called Síog. I would die for that dog.

What (other than human) animal would you like to be and why? I would love to be a seal— lazing about all day with my pod.

What book are you reading at the moment? "Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City" by Matthew Desmond. Ten-page chapters, right up my street.

What's the last film or play you went out to see? A Complete Unknown. The film is 50 per cent Timothee Chalamet smoking cigarettes but still very good.

Do you play any musical instruments? I learned three chords on the Guitar to impress people in secondary school. It didn't work.

What is your favourite holiday/travel memory? Hiking in Vinales, Cuba with cartons of rum was some craic.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be? Porto would be unreal for the food and wine.

What is the weirdest item in your home? I have a collection of Beano comics going back to the 1970s...

What song do you sing in the shower? Paolo Nutini, "Candy" (I do his accent and everything).

If you had a time machine, which era would you visit first? I would go back to the 1990s-2000s Ireland (getting rich off the Celtic Tiger).

What is your go-to "comfort food"? I have to go with Pizza with a tub of garlic sauce (basic).



Which dessert are you most like? I am like a rich chocolate cake. Okay in small doses, too much of it... bleh.

If you had to choose just one of these superpowers—fly, become invisible, teleport or x-ray vision—which would it be? Teleport.

And what's the very first thing you'd do then? I wouldn't use the powers for good. I would do little things to drive people insane: teleport into their offices and slightly move the furniture around; into their kitchens and open the bread so it goes stale; into their cars and replace the change with foreign currency. Sick stuff.

If you could immediately change one thing in society, what would it be? This new obsession with how Guinness should be poured and drank: 'poured to perfection'; 'splitting the g'; 'the head on that'. Shut up and drink your pints.

What brings you the most joy? Dinner in the sun.

What's at the top of your "bucket list"? I would love to go see Ireland one day compete in the World Cup.

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Dr Nannan Li

Nannan is a Postdoctoral Researcher with ICARUS / Department of Geography.



Tea or coffee? Tea.

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? A teacher.

Did you ever fall asleep in class? Yes...

Are there any companion animals in your life? I had a dog when I was around 12.

What (other than human) animal would you like to be and why? I would choose to be a bird, with wings being able to soar above the world, explore new places from the sky, and experience a completely different perspective on life.

What book are you reading at the moment?

I'm currently reading "The Temple of Earth and Me" by Shi Tiesheng. It's a reflective and thought-provoking book that explores deep philosophical themes and the human experience. I'm really enjoying the way the author captures emotion and introspection.

What's the last film or play you went out to see? Iron Man.

Do you play any musical instruments? I used to play the harmonica.

What is your favourite holiday/travel memory? My stay in Aix-en-Provence, in southern France. The weather was absolutely perfect—warm, sunny, and relaxing. The atmosphere there was charming, and I really enjoyed the beautiful scenery, the food, and the peaceful pace of life.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be? I would love to stay in Xiamen, China. It's a beautiful coastal city with a relaxing atmosphere, mild climate, and a great mix of modern life and traditional culture.

What is the weirdest item in your home? The weirdest items in my home are probably the collection of stones and pieces of peach tree wood. As an earth scientist, I naturally love collecting interesting rocks. But the peach tree wood? That's for a more ... supernatural reason. I keep it around to scare away ghosts—just in case!

What song do you sing in the shower? “Do You Want to Dance?”

If you had a time machine, which era would you visit first? Ancient Egypt.

What is your go-to "comfort food"? My go-to comfort food is a Soup of Wheat Flour from my Hometown only. It's the kind of dish that instantly makes me feel warm and relaxed, especially after a long day.

Which dessert are you most like? Cheesecake!

If you had to choose just one of these superpowers—fly, become invisible, teleport or x-ray vision—which would it be? Fly.

And what's the very first thing you'd do then? Fly across the world.

If you could immediately change one thing in society, what would it be? If I could immediately change one thing in society, it would be to make respect for one another a fundamental rule. I believe that if everyone treated each other with kindness and understanding, the world would be a much more peaceful and harmonious place.

What brings you the most joy? A mix of my work and family time. As part of my job, I get to travel to different landscapes, which constantly inspires me and connects me with nature. And nothing compares to the happiness of gathering with my family—sharing meals, laughs, and just being together.

What's at the top of your “bucket list”? To get a permanent job and be able to stay close to my family. Having stability in my career and spending time with the people I love most would truly make me feel fulfilled.

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Dr Alistair Fraser

Alistair is a Lecturer with the Department of Geography.

Tea or coffee? Coffee.

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? Taller.

Did you ever fall asleep in class? No.

Are there any companion animals in your life? Nope.

What (other than human) animal would you like to be and why? A tick, so I can continue to irritate people.

What book are you reading at the moment? “100 Ways to Avoid Taking Responsibility for Inaction.”

What's the last film or play you went out to see? Black Panther.



Do you play any musical instruments? Nope.

What is your favourite holiday/travel memory? Flying from Buenos Aires to Montevideo and looking down on the Rio de la Plata as it emptied out into the Atlantic.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be? Nairn, northern Scotland.

What is the weirdest item in your home? No idea.

What song do you sing in the shower? I don't.

If you had a time machine, which era would you visit first? The year 3000.

What is your go-to "comfort food"? Korean rib eye noodles with steamed pak choi.

Which dessert are you most like? No idea.

If you had to choose just one of these superpowers—fly, become invisible, teleport or x-ray vision—which would it be? Teleport.

And what's the very first thing you'd do then? Go to the golf course.

If you could immediately change one thing in society, what would it be? Urban design so cars are banished, and everyone needs to move by public transport or by bike / walking. I hate cars, not to mention car drivers.

What brings you the most joy? My sons. Or seeing Rangers lose.

What's at the top of your "bucket list"? Visiting the onsen (hot springs) in Kyushu, Japan.

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Dr Michelle Curran

Michelle is a Technical Officer with ICARUS / Department of Geography.

Tea or coffee? Tea.

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? All the things: Architect, teacher, nurse, oceanographer (although I didn't know the name at the time!), and a mechanic!

Did you ever fall asleep in class? Of course not!

Are there any companion animals in your life? I have a furry friend called Phyllis who has a keen interest in Geography; sometimes joining us on fieldtrips.

What (other than human) animal would you like to be and why? I'd probably be an elephant; they are wise, compassionate, and incredibly strong. They also have an amazing memory, which I do not, so I could use some help!

What book are you reading at the moment? “A Million Little Pieces” by James Frey.

What’s the last film or play you went out to see? The Ferryman – an excellent play, I would highly recommend it.

Do you play any musical instruments? I play the guitar (badly) and I'm learning to play the piano at the moment.

What is your favourite holiday/travel memory? Trekking through the Namibian desert for a week; camping under the stars - magic!

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be? Hmm, tricky, I love Ireland but some place warm by the sea would be nice!

What is the weirdest item in your home? An ostrich egg.

What song do you sing in the shower? “Somewhere Over the Rainbow”.

If you had a time machine, which era would you visit first? Ancient Egypt, or the 1960s—a time of revolution and excellent music.

What is your go-to "comfort food"? Potatoes - any kind.

Which dessert are you most like? An Eton mess - a sweet (hopefully), delightful mess that always brings a surprise!

If you had to choose just one of these superpowers—fly, become invisible, teleport or x-ray vision—which would it be? Fly.

And what’s the very first thing you'd do then? Check out my new skills!

If you could immediately change one thing in society, what would it be? I would make the environment, and the challenges associated with climate change, our number one priority. It is the key challenge we are facing and not enough is being done to tackle it.

What brings you the most joy? Being out in nature.

What’s at the top of your “bucket list”? To go to Antarctica.



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Prof Jennie C Stephens

Michelle is a Technical Officer with ICARUS / Department of Geography.

Tea or coffee? Tea.

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I wanted to be an airline steward - a flight attendant.

Did you ever fall asleep in class? No, but when I was pregnant as a PhD student in California, I did throw up in the middle of an earth system science class.

Are there any companion animals in your life? Yes - my 25-year-old daughter Cecelia has a dog named Elsa that we adopted during COVID when we were all living together. Cecelia and Elsa now live outside of Boston, so I don't get to see them every day anymore. But Elsa is still a part of my life, and whenever I do see Elsa, it is very exciting for both of us.

What (other than human) animal would you like to be and why? A tortoise - because they move slowly, they depend on the sun, and they get to sleep a lot.

What book are you reading at the moment? I usually always have both a fiction and a non-fiction book that I am reading at the same time. Right now, the fiction book that I am reading is "The Dream Hotel" by Laila Lalami. The non-fiction book that I am reading is "The End of This World: Climate Justice in So-Called Canada" which is co-authored by six authors including one of my collaborators - Emily Eaton from Saskatchewan.

What's the last film or play you went out to see? I'm Still Here at the Lighthouse Cinema in Dublin.



Do you play any musical instruments? Piano/keyboard but I don't play often anymore.

What is your favourite holiday/travel memory? Hiking in the High Tatras Mountains in Slovakia.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be? Dublin 7.

What is the weirdest item in your home? A labyrinth ornament thing.

What song do you sing in the shower? "Big Yellow Taxi" by Joni Mitchell.

If you had a time machine, which era would you visit first? 2075, the Future.

What is your go-to "comfort food"? Garlicky Spinach.

Which dessert are you most like? Squares of dark chocolate.

If you had to choose just one of these superpowers—fly, become invisible, teleport or x-ray vision—which would it be? Fly.

And what's the very first thing you'd do then? Get a bird's eye view of what is happening in the world.

If you could immediately change one thing in society, what would it be? Universal basic services for all.

What brings you the most joy? Serendipitous connections.

What's at the top of your "bucket list"? Spend time in an Irish speaking community.

CRITIQUING THE CONCEPT OF THE RURAL IDYLL

Darragh Wafer, Year 2

The Rural Idyll concept in Ireland is, and is often considered a myth, but it depends on how this concept influences you. The rural Idyll is generally referred to as a romanticised view of the countryside as a peaceful, simple and harmonious place untouched by the problems of urban life. This abstract image often includes beautiful landscapes, close-knit communities, traditional lifestyles, and a slower pace of life. In this essay, I will discuss developed arguments on both sides of whether the Rural Idyll is a myth or not.

Element of truth to the myth of the Rural idyll

The preserved landscape and community ties are central to romanticised rural living. Preserved landscapes and their connection to nature are typically characterised by their natural beauty- the vision of open fields, forests, mountains, rivers and unspoilt farmlands. This connection to nature unspoilt by human exploitation is a significant reason many people find the rural idyll appealing. Rolling green hills and rugged coastlines symbolise rural life in the unspoilt countryside in Ireland, Great Britain and New Zealand (Shucksmith,2018).

Agricultural heritage and its connection to the preserved landscape play an additional role in the rural idyll, a landscape shaped by centuries of farming and agriculture. It maintains a balance between human activity and the nature it holds. Stone walls, fields, hedgerows, traditional farm sheds, and dwellings are embedded into the cultural landscape.

The preserved landscape of the rural idyll often becomes a key attraction for prospective tourists, as visitors are drawn to these areas to experience the scenic beauty and experience a slower pace of life. This tourism can support the local economy but also put pressure on the landscape if large volumes of tourists are drawn to the area, destroying it for the local inhabitants and tourists, creating the phenomenon of over-tourism (Dodds, 2019).

Close-knit communities are one of the most enduring aspects related to the rural idyll as a sense of robust community ties. In the rural hinterlands, people are often seen as more connected. This closeness is seen as a contradiction to the anonymity and isolation that portray life in large urban towns and cities (O Sullivan,2020).

Rural communities are often seen as more supportive, evident when difficult times arise. This is essential in areas where vital services are scarce; This close support network reinforces a sense of solidarity and togetherness (Wegner, 2008).

Some aspects of the rural idyll do exist. The natural rural beauty of the rolling plains of County Kildare and Meath, the rugged mountainous counties of Wicklow and Kerry, the sense of heritage throughout the island, and the sense of community ties are still present in many places. For some, the landscape and perceived slower pace of life can indeed be appealing, and many people cherish this natural connection to the traditional Irish culture that rural living offers.

Living in the countryside often means experiencing nature's cycle with a closer natural feel, changes in the seasons, weather and wildlife. These patterns can provide a deeper sense of connectivity to the natural and undisturbed world and a slower, more mindful pace of life (Mormont,1987).

One big draw to rural living is the slower more relaxing, slow pace compared to living in a busy urban area. The less noisy environment allows people to harmonise with the sounds of nature and focus on what's important to them. This relaxing offering affords people the space and time to reflect and enjoy solitude or seek personal interests. This simplicity of rurality affords people an escape from city life. This simplicity can lead to a more content and fulfilling lifestyle for many (Sepp, 2018).

Reasons the rural idyll is considered a myth

Rural areas are often, at times, very isolating in both geographical and social aspects. There is a scarcity of regular public transport and up-to-date digital infrastructure to connect those separated by this isolation. This lack of a regular daily bus service can leave many young and elderly without the ability to drive needing to rely on the working-age population to facilitate their need to get to essential services such as GP appointments (Velga, 2012).

An example is my area of Ballygarrett in North County Wexford. A bus that runs on Wednesday and Saturday mornings brings people from my local area and other surrounding hinterlands to Wexford town. On weekdays (Mon-Fri), a private rural bus runs a loop out to my local village and other remotely connected areas in the morning, mid-afternoon and evening and returns to the town of Gorey. Outside of these connections, everyone else uses their cars to get around. This reliance on the working population can put a strain on them; as they see it, they often have to assist the elderly as when they were young, they relied on the now elderly when they were at their working age.

As a child, the only way to the village or any friends that lived nearby was to cycle my bike and cycling the landscape around me was exhausting on a younger me, with rolling hills and valleys.

Economic and social challenges.

In rural Ireland, there are lots of economic and social problems due to a lack of essential services including healthcare and education, and other factors such as limited jobs and a declining population.

According to the Central Statistics Office (2019), at least 35.3% of people in 'Cities' had obtained at least an undergraduate degree in comparison to 'Satellite urban towns' at 31.7%, and the lowest proportion of undergraduate degrees being 24.6% of students in 'Highly rural/remote' areas. This shows us that students in rural areas possibly don't have equal access to third-level education as students in cities and towns do. In rural areas, there is a lack of schools. Many students living in rural places must be transported to larger towns to attend school (CSO, 2019).

Many rural areas throughout the country have a lack of healthcare services, such as General Practitioners and Health Centres. Lots of the rural population must travel into larger and more urban towns and cities to attend an appointment, which could put a strain on public transport and lengthen waiting lists.

There are limited jobs in many rural areas, as there are often not enough consumers to support the businesses. Lots of rural villages only have seasonal work available due to a lack of sales and income during the winter months, despite a busy summer with tourism, for example, hotels, summer shops and cafés. As a result, many young people cannot find part-time work without a commute. The lack of public transport in these areas, as mentioned above, hugely increases the difficulty of the commute. According to McIntosh (2023), there is a shortage of teachers in both primary and secondary schools in rural areas for several reasons, including limited bus routes, accommodation shortages and a low number of substitute teachers in local areas.

As a result of the above factors, there is a declining population in rural areas. Many people move into larger urban areas and cities for several reasons, including attending third-level education and because people need better job opportunities that rural Ireland is missing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the rural idyll can be seen as a myth and a reality, existing in part, but is often oversimplified and romanticised. While there is an undeniable charm to rural life in Ireland. This depends on each person's perception of rural at large. As mentioned throughout the course of this essay, I illustrated the aspects of the rural idyll that support and deny the myth. I can conclude that the rural idyll is down to each individual's idea of rural living and their personal needs and wants.

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HOW MEMORYSCAPES SHAPED BY THE TROUBLES (1968-98) HAVE IMPACTS WITHIN TOURISM, POLICY AND THE MEMORIAL CULTURES OF MURALS.

Emma Brady Reid, Final Year/Year 3 (Double Major)

This essay will examine how memoryscapes shaped by The Troubles (1968-98) have impacts within tourism, policy and the memorial cultures of murals. This paper will discuss how The Troubles have impacted these things by referencing Sara Dybris McQuaid's 2022 'explosive aftermaths...', Greg Ironside and Kieran James' 'selling loyalist and republican memories...' and Marie Migeon's 'peace and conflict in public space'. Memoryscapes allow an area to be its own place while also allowing it to experience details of its past. They can be associated with Belfast city as their murals from both republican and unionist artists allow the memory of The Troubles to live in the present. As seen in Belfast today, murals are an important part of culture in Northern Ireland. They have become popular with tourists, with many companies offering walking tours to see the artwork on the streets of Belfast. In relation to this paper, the background of The Troubles, policymaking, murals, and tourism will be discussed.

The Troubles were a definitive part of Irish history. Focusing mainly on Northern Ireland, particularly Belfast. The Troubles were political conflicts between those who opposed British rule and those who agreed with it (Edwards & McGrattan, 2010). The conflict lasted thirty years from the 1960s until the late 1990s. according to Edwards and McGrattan (2010), between 1966 and 2003, 3,703 lives were lost because of the Northern Ireland Conflict. The Troubles also gave republicans a severe distrust in the government as the DUP was run by the Unionists for the Unionists, leaving no room for republicans to voice their opinion on how their state was run. Many historians believe that the end of The Troubles was brought upon by the 'Good Friday Agreement' of 1998 (Edwards & McGrattan, 2010), as it allowed both sides to work towards making Northern Ireland a safer place by ending the violence. The Good Friday Agreement also stated that all armed groups were to dispose of their weapons to prevent further violence and that presence of the British army should be scaled back and eventually removed.

Policymaking in Northern Ireland was extremely difficult due to the stark differences of the political parties. The UK labelled the IRA (Irish Republican Army) as a terrorist organisation during this time as they had committed several bombings in the UK and Ireland. By having this label, it was now Northern Ireland's top priority to deal with the IRA and to stop any future attacks from happening. Before the agreement, neither side had any solid way of dealing with the provisional IRA (McQuaid, 2024). The IRA's 'terror' was publicized by both British and Irish media, which had put more pressure on the Northern Irish government to fix the issue at hand. When diplomatic relationships between the UK and Libya fell during the 1980s, the IRA took this opportunity to form a relationship with the Libyan leader, Gaddafi (McQuaid, 2024). Gaddafi supplied the IRA with weaponry and Semtex to make the bombs which were used in attacks in Manchester, Brighton, Belfast and Lisburn. This resulted in the UK freezing any Libyan assets brought into the country in an attempt to stop the ongoing conflict. As a result, Northern Ireland attempted to do something similar with the IRA, which had led to talks that created the Good Friday Agreement (McQuaid, 2024).

How these bombings are presented in media also have an effect on how the event is perceived in memory. In regard to the British media, The Troubles were discussed yet were not seen as a British issue. Even though Northern Ireland was considered to be part of the UK, there was a clear disconnect between the mainland and Northern Ireland (McQuaid, 2024). By connecting Gaddafi and the IRA to bombings in Belfast, Lisburn, Canary Wharf and Brighton, the British government were suddenly

taking the actions of the IRA seriously. The Semtex issue allowed the UK and Northern Ireland to share the ‘experience’ of terrorism (McQuaid, 2024). Memorials were set up where these bombings had taken place to remind the public of the tragedy at hand. By reminding the public of these events, they can sway the government when it comes to policy making. The UK government sought compensation for the crimes committed by Gaddafi’s regime after much pressure by other nations who suffered the same attacks. Although the UK did not advocate for compensation for victims in Northern Ireland (McQuaid, 2024). This shows how policymaking is shaped by how the public and government remember the attacks caused by the Irish Republican Army.

Memoryscapes also have an effect how murals are created in Northern Ireland, particularly in Belfast. Murals have been used throughout both unionist and republican neighbourhoods to make political statements and to promote peace between communities (Migeon, 2024). They also shape the urban geography of Belfast city center. Murals are important to the memoryscapes of the public for a multitude of reasons, but most importantly, to remember The Troubles. Migeon (2024) examined both republican and unionist murals for their article. There are a wide variety of subject matters for republican murals, but the majority of them contain women. In these murals, women are seen as the victims of violence who need to be protected. Some also depict ‘Mother Ireland’ as seen on the 1994 Brompton Park mural (Migeon, 2024). Murals that are seen everyday by locals are the ones that often stick out when remembering The Troubles. Depending on the neighbourhood, the murals remembering The Troubles can vary. As a result, how the communities view The Troubles also changes. Murals have often been changed or repainted over the years. This shows that the relationship between each community and The Troubles are changing over time.

By not including women in murals until recently, it has left women behind. Women had important roles in the community during these times. According to Migeon (2024), 30% of the provisional IRA were women. By past murals illustrating women as helpless victims, it erases all the work women have done for the Republic. The 1996 Hawthorn Street mural in Belfast puts women front and centre as leaders and activists. This mural is dedicated to women of many organisations such as Cumann na mBan, Oglagh na hEireann, and Sinn Féin. Its importance to the community was evident as it gives women recognition for their efforts. This had also possibly changed how The Troubles were remembered by the residents. This mural, in particular, has since been repainted and now portrays the Irish duo ‘KNEECAP’ (Migeon, 2024). This mural in particular displays how the relationship between Belfast residents and The Troubles can change over time. It also shows that it is possible for a community to recognise the place that The Troubles has in the history while also trying to move on and look for peace.

Memorials are a big part of the aftermath of The Troubles. It is the easiest way that anyone can remember what had happened at a particular place and time, while also honouring the victims. In relation to the memorials for the Omagh and the Enniskillen bombings, they all have different ways of remembering the victims. The memorial for the 1998 Omagh Bombing (BBC, 2018) has a Bible verse written on it. The Bible verse is an interesting choice as the bombing was a result of sectarian violence at the hands of the IRA. This could also be seen as a way to remember the bombing as an act of religious violence. The 1987 Enniskillen bombing particularly resonates with the loyalist residents of the North as it was detonated at a Poppy Day memorial service (McQuaid, 2024). A new memorial has taken its place remembering the ‘11 innocent victims killed by the IRA’ (McQuaid, 2024). However, it was removed due to the memorial being placed on the grounds of a catholic church without permission. This event also shows the contested areas of Belfast and how politics has a place throughout Northern Ireland.

Tourism in Northern Ireland is particularly focused around The Troubles and the aftermath of partition. Because of the dark nature of The Troubles, this often leads to a rise in ‘dark tourism’ across the North (Ironside & James, 2024). The fascination behind The Troubles in Northern Ireland could be seen as

another way to memorialise the events that have happened to ensure that such violence would never happen again. Both loyalists and Republicans have embraced ‘dark tourism’, and each offer their own perspective of The Troubles on their tours. This allows tourists to form their own opinion on The Troubles while also immersing themselves in the experience. According to Ironside and James (2024), the majority of tourists that are interested in The Troubles are from mainland Britain and Ireland. They also discovered that the majority of the tourists ‘sided’ with the loyalists when it came to the history of The Troubles. This is no surprise as a high number of tourists come from Britain. These tours enable each side to form their own narrative of The Troubles, which is what the tourists will remember the most from the trip.

The ‘dark’ side of tourism in Northern Ireland are tourists wanting to visit sites of violence and tragedy. Ironside and James (2024) both state that they do not believe that dark tourism itself glorifies the events that had occurred yet serve as a reminder of the tragedies caused by the IRA and the British Army. As stated previously, the tours serve as a way to memorialise the violence in a way that will never be repeated again. People on both sides of the political spectrum in the North agree with this type of tourism. It is also believed that sharing their experiences with each other and tourists can strengthen their bond and reinforce the importance of peace (Ironside & James, 2024). It is important that both sides speak out about how The Troubles have affected them and their everyday lives. Like murals, these tours allow Northern Ireland to acknowledge its past while also existing in the present. The tours also allow many tourists to learn about The Troubles as they are rarely taught in schools outside of Ireland.

In conclusion, the memory of The Troubles are most definitely affected by policymaking, murals and tourism. In policymaking, the Semtex issue involving the IRA and the Libyan government was a highly contested issue in British policymaking in the 1990s. It was important for the UK to get justice for the victims of multiple bombings at the hand of these groups. How the bombings were portrayed in the media had an impact on how they were remembered by both the public and the government. This influenced how the Good Friday Agreement was structured which ultimately led to peace talks in Northern Ireland. Murals are an important part of the history of The Troubles. It is a way for communities to honour the victims of violence and to advocate for peace. How murals are presented are an important way of how The Troubles are memorised by those who see them. Memorials are also structured in a similar way. Tourism in particular has an important role for how The Troubles are remembered in the wider world. They also allow both sides to tell their story while advocating for peace at the same time.

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MODERN DISPOSABILITY WAS INVENTED – AN ANALYSIS OF THE FEMCARE INDUSTRY

Sadbh Cox, Year 3 Biological & Geographical Sciences

Introduction

An estimated 1.8 billion people menstruate every month (Mouhanna, Simms-Cendan and Pastor-Carvajal, 2023). Disposable menstrual products, such as sanitary pads and tampons, are harmful for the environment. The current methods of disposal are collection in trash receptacles, as any other disposable item, from which they are then transported to landfill (Hait and Powers, 2019). It was estimated that in 2018 0.1% of all municipal solid waste in the US was discarded menstrual products (Fourcassier et al., 2022). This large scale disposal of single use plastic has an undeniable effect on the environment. Liboiron (2015) stated that “Modern disposability was invented. The truism that humans are inherently wasteful came into being at a particular time and place, by design”. This essay seeks to prove this statement using the current industry for menstrual hygiene products. To accurately tackle this argument the essay is broken into two sections; ‘the history of menstrual products’ will discuss the “particular place and time” that this became true for the femcare industry and ‘environmental impact of modern menstrual hygiene products’ goes into the details of the disposability of the varying iterations of menstrual products. Through investigation of the past and present for feminine hygiene products this essay will analyse whether humans are truly inherently wasteful.

History of Menstrual Hygiene Products

Liboiron’s argument that “modern disposability was invented” is shown in the history of menstrual products, from their beginnings with homemade renewable cloth to their modern single use plastic. In interviews conducted by Freidenfelds with women from varying generations it was noted that prior to the popularisation of disposable pads and tampons that we are most familiar with today women would fashion their own pads out of whatever fabric was to hand and these makeshift pieces were often handwashed and re-worn. This is a practice which continues in many developing countries today where ready access to disposable alternatives is limited (Peberdy, Jones and Green, 2019). This renewable origin promotes the idea that humans are not inherently wasteful as disposability was not a point of interest at the inception of menstrual hygiene solutions.

It is impossible to discuss the way in which modern disposable sanitary products have developed without discussing the culture and taboo that has long surrounded menstruation. It has long been painted as inherently unclean and something to be ashamed of (Peberdy, Jones and Green, 2019). This idea is furthered by the tampon not becoming popular for years prior to the addition of the applicator as it was seen as an act of “self-touching” on the woman’s part. The applicator is the most environmentally damaging part of the modern tampon yet was seen as a necessary addition. This attitude of menstruation as something that needs to be hidden and which is inherently unclean is what has allowed the “femcare” industry to get away with environmental damage for decades now whilst

most other industries has experienced some level of public interest and call for change (Hait and Powers, 2019). According to Peberdy, Jones and Green (2019) “it is this taboo that creates a difficult arena for discussion of more sustainable alternatives.”

Menstrual Hygiene in Developing Countries

The mere existence of menstrual cups prior to disposable pads is a blow to the argument of man’s inherent wastefulness. The need to profit off of something as frequent and guaranteed as a woman’s period is what pushed for disposability. Companies can make more money selling disposable products monthly than the alternative menstrual cup which can last for years (Peberdy, Jones and Green, 2019). The existence of sanitary products has become so tied to the money made that there is a name for the phenomenon where a large portion of women simply cannot afford to menstruate - “period poverty”. Alugnoa et al (2022) define period poverty as “ a scarcity of access to menstrual products, hygiene education, or adequate sanitation supplies”. It affects roughly 500 million women, a number which has been on the rise since the covid-19 pandemic (Alugnoa, Cousins and Sato, 2022). For example, 70% of women in India can’t afford pads during their period. This can lead to complications ranging from social and educational costs, such as absence from school and the workplace during menstruation, to health dangers, such as reproductive tract infections. Many women use cotton cloths during their cycle (Peberdy, Jones and Green, 2019).

Difference in cultural beliefs and practices regarding menstruation also affect environmental impact. Research done showed that in India a portion of the rural population hold the belief that sanitary pads must be buried following use. However when this practice is done using disposable sanitary pads which have a deodorised aspect they can inadvertently cause chemicals to leach into the soil, killing useful bacteria and microflora. Similarly the widespread opinion that menstruation is “unclean” means that in urban areas public toilets have no bin for sanitary pads. Instead women flush them down the toilet, which leads to sanitation issues due to clogged pipes and water pollution. All of this is due to poor education on menstruation but causes undeniable long term harm to both individuals and the environment (Kaur, Kaur and Kaur, 2018).



Figure 1: A disposable tampon, disposable pad and menstrual cup laid out to show the layers of each product which generate waste in the manufacturing process and when they are disposed of

Environmental Impact of Modern Menstrual Hygiene Products

Sanitary Pads

The first disposable sanitary pad was invented in 1888 by Johnson & Johnson, followed by the popularization of tampons in 1933. The use of these products is more widespread today than ever. In 2018 the US saw 39 million women use 174 million boxes of tampons and 61.3 million using 396 million boxes of sanitary pads (Hait and Powers, 2019). All of this invariably disposed of in trash receptacles before ending up in landfill or, in some cases, the ocean. This is a large issue of plastic pollution as the non-organic pads which dominate the market are believed to be 90% plastic (Fourcassier et al., 2022). This cannot be known for certain however as many companies keep the exact contents of their pads secret, often labelling the contents as “super absorbent polymer” or “smart gel” (Peberdy, Jones and Green, 2019). Assuming this estimation is correct each pad disposed of is equivalent to a staggering four plastic bags (Fourcassier et al., 2022).

Studies believe for a regular non-organic pad (the most commonly used disposable menstrual product) takes roughly 500-800 years to break down and their main component, plastic, will never truly biodegrade. This is because the microorganisms which are responsible for so much of the biodegradation that occurs on Earth do not recognise the plastic as edible. The process of photodegradation would allow for the plastic to be broken down to smaller polymers is more efficient however this would require sunlight and most female sanitary products end up buried in darkness in landfill. Those that avoid the landfill end up in oceans where they add to the growing numbers of single use plastics plaguing the ecosystems and habitats of our earths marine life (Peberdy, Jones and Green, 2019). Disposed of pads in landfill can also leach phosphorus, which has been found to cause an influx of phosphorus to freshwater ecosystems. In these regions, where it is typically a limiting nutrient, the sudden rise can lead to increased algal blooms. This can be dangerous as these affect the oxygen levels and so wildlife can be catastrophically affected (Hait and Powers, 2019).

Disposable organic pads are also being marketed as more environmentally friendly due to their composition of roughly 80% cotton supplemented by biopolymer and rayon making for a lower amount of plastic used compared to traditional production. However they have been found to be more harmful than the non-organic alternative as studies have shown impacts on ecotoxicity, acidification, eutrophication and carcinogenicity (Fourcassier et al., 2022). There are attempts being made by sanitary pad companies to rebrand their products as more environmentally friendly through the use of bamboo pulp in place of plastic for the absorbent part of the pad filling. The use of this component has been proven to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with production however the problem of waste creation in pad production isn't solved, with large amount of water use, ecotoxicity and acidification still being side effects, it also causes a problem in an area where people aren't going to see. While the company gets increased sales for its more environmentally friendly approach, the bleaching process increases the toxicity of the production as dioxin is generated. Dioxin is a carcinogen and high levels have caused discontinuation of menstrual products in the past due to health concerns. The release of dioxin into the atmosphere to be inhaled by unsuspecting individuals is incredibly dangerous (Hait and Powers, 2019).

Tampons

Tampons are primarily made from organic cotton, boasting a plastic content of only 6%. This is a large improvement on their sanitary pad counterparts however their plastic wrap, as well as growing trends among brands to include plastic in the absorbent shell, means that they are just as unlikely to biodegrade in landfill (Peberdy, Jones and Green, 2019). Alongside this the majority of tampons purchased today include a 100% plastic applicator which adds an additional 2-3g of plastic to the environment per tampon (Fourcassier et al., 2022). As well, similar to pads, they pose a threat to marine

life with the Marine Conservation Society reporting nine plastic applicators per km on UK beaches in 2017. These are dangerous as they can be fatal when ingested by seabirds (Peberdy, Jones and Green, 2019).

The Menstrual Cup

Amidst all the discussions of plastic straws, reusable shopping bags and sorting bins no one has considered the sheer amount of waste generated monthly by the current disposability of feminine hygiene products. Female hygiene products generate more waste than diapers, the closest item on the market in terms of production and disposability. Roughly 5 billion more female menstruation products are consumed in the US each year compared to diapers, with a much larger portion of the population using menstrual products. However arguments have been made for more reusable alternatives to diapers being developed, and no such public push has been made for the already existing menstrual cup. Comparing waste issues of pads, tampons and menstrual cups, the menstrual cup is by far the most environmentally friendly. The menstrual cup has been around, in some form, since 1860, even earlier than the first Johnson & Johnson disposable pads (Hait and Powers, 2019). And yet most women have never tried one, nor seen it readily available on the supermarket shelves alongside its successors. Its uptake did not begin to increase in popularity until the 1930s due in large part to its manual insertion going against social norms, much like the problems with the tampon previously discussed (Fourcassier et al., 2022).

The menstrual cup, as explained by Mouhanna, Simms-Cendan and Pastor-Carvajal (2023) is “a typically reusable, flexible, self-retaining intravaginal menstrual fluid collection device”. The most current iteration makes use of medical grade silicone allowing for it to be sanitized and reused making it a far more environmentally friendly long term solution to disposability of menstrual products (Hait and Powers, 2019). In fact Hait and Powers (2019) showed that using a year’s use of disposable non-organic tampons accounts for a global-warming potential of 5.2kg of CO₂ as opposed to below 0.1kg of CO₂ following use of a menstrual cup for a year.

Life Cycle Comparison

Fourcassier et al. (2022) conducted a life cycle assessment of numerous period products across three countries using eight environmental indicators. They explained a life cycle assessment as “a widely used methodology to conduct such environmental assessments, by quantifying both the consumption of resources and the emissions to the environment for the entire life cycle of the considered system”. They used France, India and the USA as their studied locations to account for a wide range in consumer habits across the globe due to differing societal incomes, attitudes towards menstruation and environmental awareness. The results of this showed that, even when taking into account the varying consumer habits of the three countries, menstrual cups scored 99% lower than non-organic tampons, giving them the lowest score across all indicators. The second most environmentally friendly option was menstrual underwear followed by reusable pads in third. Regardless of whether they were organic or not sanitary pads scored the highest across all categories but one; water use (Fourcassier et al., 2022).

This study also found that disposable pads made from organic materials scored higher than their non-organic competitors among most of the indicators. The results for reusable pads, period friendly underwear and menstrual cups generally scored considerably lower across all indicators except water use. This is due to the water needed to wash the pads and underwear between uses as well as the smaller amount of water used in the sterilizing process for the menstrual cup (Fourcassier et al., 2022). The menstrual cup has less than 1.5% the impact of disposable products when used for a year (Hait and Powers, 2019). This study showed the performative eco-friendliness of the organic pads and tampons that are being marketed by companies. It also strengthened the argument for the menstrual cup as the

least environmentally harmful option currently on the market. Overall, it is studies like this which are needed in order to best inform consumers, as companies will continue to market more eco-conscious options (which are not actually any better than their alternatives) unless more information is available so consumers can make the most well educated choices. It is not humans inherent wastefulness at play here but rather lack of widespread information on the options available.

Conclusion

The case put forth in this essay seeks to prove humans are not inherently wasteful, and the rise of “ecofeminism” and “menstrual activism” means that there is an increasing number of women aiming to reduce the environmental impact of their menstrual cycle. This movements existence defies the notion that humans are inherently wasteful as many women attempt to inform themselves so they can consciously choose the best possible product with the least possible environmental harm. The wastefulness associated with disposable feminine hygiene products came into place at a particular time and place due to a combination of greed at the ability to capitalise on a bodily function, the popularisation of disposability in the 1900s with the rise of single use plastics and the centuries long taboos surrounding menstruation meaning that the femcare industry goes unchecked even in today’s more environmentally conscious society. None of this is a side effect of man’s inherent wastefulness but rather a more complex overlapping of corporate greed and a patriarchal society. The case made for the menstrual cup in the essay also works as a counterargument to man’s inherent wastefulness as its existence predates any of its disposable successors. In conclusion, Liboiron’s statement that “Modern disposability was invented. The truism that humans are inherently wasteful came into being at a particular time and place, by design” is accurate for the femcare industry today.

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Fourth Year Biological and Geographical Science students doing fieldwork in Bushy Park with Dr. Clair McDonald. Source: Maynooth Geography X/Twitter account.

ISLAND BIOGEOGRAPHY

ISLAND SETTLEMENTS: THE ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE.

Eve Sheerin, Year 2 Biological & Geographical Sciences

Islands have bewildered scientists and scholars alike for centuries due to their interesting biogeographic features, leading to the discovery and development of new theories and ideas. Alfred Wallace and Charles Darwin formed many of their opinions on natural selection and evolution surrounding island biogeography. Research can easily be conducted on islands as they allow the relationships between evolution, extinction, and ecology to be studied in depth (Matthews and Triantis, 2021). Islands provide a unique opportunity for researchers since biodiversity within islands are exceptionally high in comparison to the land size it occupies. They also support endemism; this is where species are found nowhere else on the planet. Through dispersal, only species that have passed through the environmental screening arrive on the islands. This means that islands contain a unique subset of the mainland biodiversity, this subset is often “unbalanced” as many species of mammals or reptiles cannot survive the passage to travel to the island (Matthews and Triantis, 2021). Another reason as to why islands pique the interest of many researchers is “island syndromes”. This term encompasses many peculiar occurrences such as the loss of flight within some bird species. This also applies to “Foster’s Rule” how many mainland species often grow in body size once settled on islands, seen particularly in rodent species. This leaves many of these species more vulnerable to extinction (Bao, 2011).

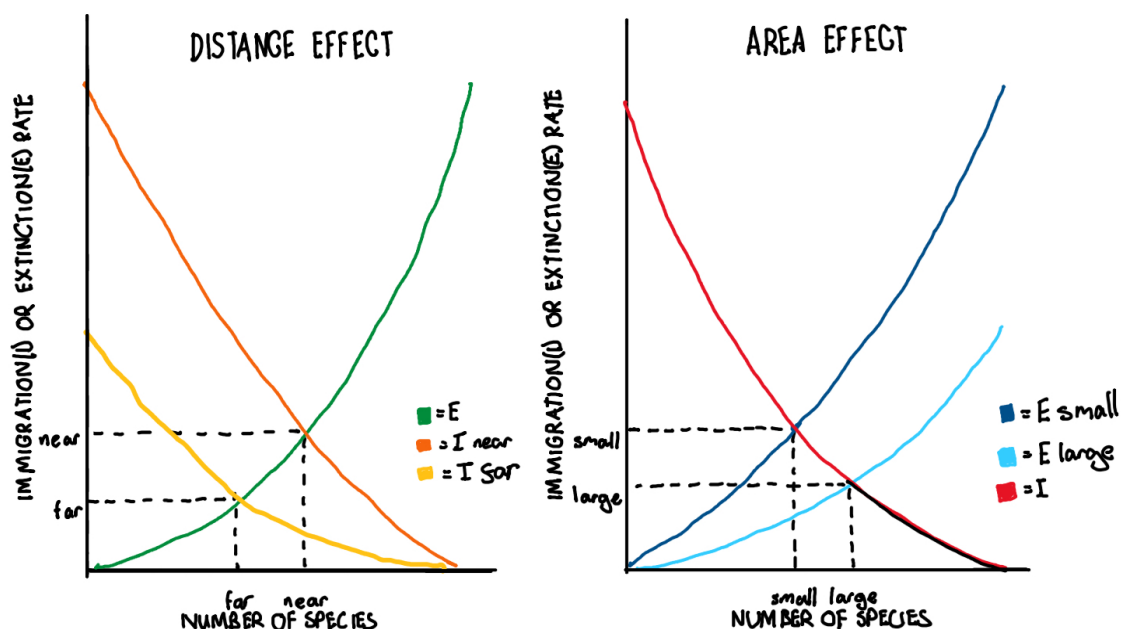


Figure 1. Island biodiversity is in equilibrium between the extinction of species and the immigration of species. On the left graph, the distance effect shows the near island has a higher immigration and also extinction rate. On the right graph, the area effect shows that the larger island has a higher number of species and smaller immigration or extinction rate (Simberloff, 1974).

MacArthur and Wilson first proposed the Equilibrium Theory of Island Biogeography in 1967. This theory describes the relationship between immigration and extinction on islands (Losos, 2010). They proposed that immigration minus extinction is the biodiversity of the island. Immigration correlates positively to the closeness of the island to the mainland source, and the actual size of the island. This theory is explained in part by the species-area relationship, which is that with a greater landmass, there is also a greater potential for diversity of species. MacArthur and Wilson originally proposed their idea with the example of Papua New Guinea where there is a correlation between diversity of bird species and total surface area. This relationship is not only seen in island habitats but most natural territories around the world (Losos, 2010). In 1969, Wilson and Simberloff trialled the theory proposed by MacArthur and Wilson. This was done through fumigating two different isolated mangrove islands; one positioned near the coast and the other further away. The island closest to the main source recovered and repopulated more quickly in comparison to the distant island, which, after 400 days failed to recover from the fumigation and couldn't recover its former biodiversity (Simberloff, 1974). This can be seen in Figure 1. In habitats with low biodiversity, extinction tends to be low whilst the successful immigration is high. These habitats have subpar species diversity in comparison to its resources. On the other hand, habitats with high biodiversity, successful immigration tends to be lower, and extinction is also higher. These habitats have an optimal species diversity in comparison to the resources. In general, due to the processes of extinction and immigration, the biodiversity in a certain area tends to be in flux. Dispersal ability, chance, and competitive strength enables the arrival, foundation and death of a species (Losos, 2010).

Whilst MacArthur and Wilson's Theory of Island Biogeography revolutionised the field, there were a few drawbacks. The way that the island changes throughout time isn't accounted for within this theory and the theory showcases a linear pattern of events within an island. This is relevant particularly with islands that have formed from volcanic activity. This life cycle includes the birth of new islands and is dynamic. Sea levels that are rising and falling should be included in talks surrounding the importance of recognising the dynamics of islands (Bao, 2011). Sea level rise can completely wipe out islands, entirely disrupting the biodiversity. Sea level falling can lead to the formation of new land like Ireland. Sea level falling/rising can also have an extreme effect on the size of islands. With immigration being closely tied to the size on an island, rising sea levels are an issue.

With the importance of island biogeography, conservation efforts are needed in today's world. Human's impact is far-reaching and significant. In Hawaii, over 90% of endemic snail species have been wiped out due to human disturbance. In habitats with human disturbance, the ecosystem is often times in a state of flux, the natural species are not as adapted to these conditions. Hunting is a major concern; many endemic island species have been completely eradicated by human island populations. Habitat loss is another way that humans have a negative impact (Bao, 2011). Habitat destruction is the biggest driver of extinction worldwide, many areas completely wiped out for agricultural or timber purposes. When humans are introduced to new lands, they can act as a vector of disease for diseases such as malaria. This can be detrimental to natural populations and resources. Climate change is another problem caused by humans, with the release of harmful greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and in turn global warming. This creates unprecedented weather patterns and a rise in sea levels. Conservation of natural islands are vital for humans due to the major ecological importance they hold.

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Prize winning students from the Maynooth Geography Prizes Evening (8 October 2024)

“DEMOCRACY IS THE ONLY SYSTEM THAT PERSISTS IN ASKING THE POWERS THAT BE WHETHER THEY ARE THE POWERS THAT OUGHT TO BE”: LEARNING JOURNALS FOR THE GY347 CLASS’S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION ASSIGNMENT

**Tania Staunton, Dylan Connolly, Stan Ryan, Cian Ward and Tadhg McAuley
(GY347 Electoral Geography class, 2024-25)**

Introduction: Adrian Kavanagh

Since the module ran for the first time in 2016, the main assessment work for the GY347 Electoral Geography involves the class members getting to run their own election campaign in a *simulated electoral learning environment* (which is not at all a *makey-up election* in any way). Each year’s campaign brings about different stories and different approaches from the students/teams, as politics is personal, and the different campaigns reflect the different personalities of different GY347 class members, as well as the places that shaped them. The size of the class also poses different challenges and requires a different approach at my end. The class (23 students) in 2022-23 was the smallest to date, which meant that one of the two parties ended up at a serious disadvantage in the general election when a few of their team was not posting/engaging as much as others. By contrast, the class (60 students) in 2023-24 was the largest ever, posing greater challenges to me as a lecturer to try and keep everyone engaged as the elections process progressed, as well as increasing the marking demands (I graded 1,596 individual campaign forum posts that year). Ahead of the start of this year’s class, it looked as if the class would be around the 30-student mark and planning for this I decided to try “something different” this year. The class would be all in the one party for the primary elections (Harp Party). Most of the class would remain with the Harp Party for the general election phase (supporting the party candidates, Pat Paterson and Tiernan Blackwing), but roughly one third of the class, a large number of whom had not posted a lot in the primary elections, would defect to the Shamrock Party, of which I would also be an active party member, and support their candidates, the legendary Larry Downey, along with Mary Murphy-McElligott. Mindful of the 2022-23 experience, I wanted to ensure that a smaller party would not be left at an insurmountable disadvantage in the general election, as well as to encourage students who had struggled in the first few weeks to improve their engagement levels. As it transpired, 44 students ended up in the class, so the fears of “another 2022-23” were probably ultimately unfounded, but the opportunity to take on the skilled Harp Party posters in my different guises as Eurovision legend and cat-lover, Martina Linden, and “totally unbiased academic”, Dr. Aidan Kennedy, added an extra level of *frisson* to the general election contest, as well as forcing me into occasional ignominious retreats from different contests, such as the Offaly contest when I quickly realised that there was no earthly way in which I was ever going to beat Dylan (“Tiernan”) there. Various controversies erupted over the following few weeks and peaked at a heated and feisty “Big Debate” where the ethical dimensions of two years olds helping themselves to the pick and mix at Disney World (and various cameos from “Danald Tramp”, “Charvet Hockey” and “Moggie Thatchem”) added fuel to an already pretty heated fire. The fun (and there is a fun element here, I promise!) ultimately fell back on the different ways that different personalities approached the election campaign task, as well as the growing desire for victory that peaked near the end of the task where we got to a point in which “getting the win” became almost more important than “getting the marks”, and the election contests in counties such as Mayo, Tipperary, Wexford, Meath and Fingal took on an extra level of importance.

But the main *raison d'être* of the presidential elections task to illustrate to the students that elections are also rooted in geography, and this is something the students did (I hope) learn about as they navigated their way through the different stages of this year's "contest", as can be seen in the following learning journal entries from some of this year's class, including Tania, Stan, Dylan, Cian and Tadhg.

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Tania Staunton ("Elana Gilbert")

Introduction:

As a student of the GY347 Electoral module, I found this assignment to be very a challenging but rewarding experience. I'm not looking for extra marks, but I have to say, this module is my favourite, and I love to attend, and this is coming from someone who has no previous knowledge of elections or politics. I enjoy it so much and this is because of the continuous assessments over the semester. It is a way to gain marks through working consistently across the semester and takes the pressure off students over the year and I feel like I've learnt so much more than any other modules. For this type of work, you need to be very creative, work well in a team and be always in that mindset to critically think of ways to improve your posts each week and do better to win. By completing these tasks, I have been able to take a dip into a politician's life and understand how much effort, momentum and money is put into each campaign and aspect of the election process. There is a geographical approach and one of the biggest takeaways is how important place is in shaping political campaigns. The following section of this journal will reflect on the role that I played in the GY347 Primary and General Election, the reasoning of chosen identity for my "fake TD" character that I created and the strategies that our team used to win widespread votes for the Shamrock Party across Ireland.

Primary Election:

Working alongside Grainne, Poppy and Megan as part of a mini-team for the primary elections was a great experience, and we have learnt so much from one another and helped each other over the semester. It was a safe and inviting environment to work in, which made doing this work so much easier knowing there is so much support from other classmates and Adrian our lecturer. This was our min group, and we were given the lovely Keera Fitzpatrick who was a local TD from Laois. After competing as a candidate for the primary elections, she suspended her campaign and moved to campaigning on behalf of the Harps Party presidential candidate, Pat Paterson (little did we know we would change to the WINNING party later, thank God!). In our group we created a strategic plan that was going to guarantee us votes in the primary election contest. We decided to divide the areas up across Limerick and Laois and give each person an area to campaign in and focus on specific issues. We created a person whose identity meant so much to her and her job as a TD, as she was a passionate advocate for Pat Paterson in the Primary Elections. We wanted her to be someone who could connect with the people of Laois and Limerick and show them that the Harp Party truly cares for their concerns and wants to create real change. Our plan was to have each person of the team speak on the different struggles and problems in Laois and Limerick. For example, some of my first post were related to the

housing crisis and aftermath clean-up of Storm Éowyn and I mentioned what our candidate did to help the community.



Plate 1: Tania (Staunton) and Conor Doyle ask the hard questions at the Big Debate

General Election:

For the general election our mini team was subsumed into the new, and smaller, Shamrock Party. For this part of the process, I created the persona of Elana Gilbert, a fictional local TD, in her late 20s who has lived in Tallaght for all her life. I chose to focus my campaign efforts on the Tallaght and the Dublin City area as I, myself, am from Tallaght and have been living here all my life, I have inside knowledge of the challenges that my family, neighbours and the residents of Tallaght face daily. This allows me to connect with people in a way that an outsider might not be able to. It is from real experience is how you will engage and catch your audience/voters. As a mother of two, I wanted Elana to come across as a trustworthy, motherly figure who deeply empathises with the concerns of local families. I chose to portray her as someone who could offer a genuine, caring perspective. There is often a perception that women are more nurturing and empathetic than men, and I felt that this would resonate well with the voters when addressing their everyday struggles. As most politicians are male too, it is nice to see that a woman is just as capable (if not more capable) of creating change for a country. I wanted people to see that she wasn't just running for office to win or for the big pay out, that she was running because she genuinely cares for the people of Ireland. This type of campaign tactic that I used is an Empathy Based Campaign, and it works on getting the votes in, as this is the type of personality that I would

look for in a candidate if I was to vote in real life. Elana's campaigns, on behalf of the Shamrock Party and their candidate, Larry Downey, focused on a wide range of concerns throughout the campaign, making sure to listen to people's voices, whether it's through interviews on the radio, meeting people face to face and joining community groups or projects. She was present and took real action and that's what matters the most in a campaign.

Strategies for Planning Campaigns and Debate:

As a team, I have to say that we all really worked well together, and it would not be possible without the amount of effort that Adrian has put into this election. He had everything prepared for us, gave us examples to show us the standard of posts that was expected, and made us laugh at his impersonations of different people when he is explaining things about the campaign. This is how college should be. The key to receiving votes is consistency, so I set myself a goal for at least one post each evening and I feel this helped me to improve my overall result. Our Shamrock Party created a WhatsApp group, and this just helped us keep in touch and share updates of who was doing what and where we were in terms of winning the election.

When writing campaign posts, we made sure to have clear and informative information to put out to the public, for example “#VoteGreen” or “#LarryDowneyNo.1” and having chants made by voters. These types of hashtags and chants make our campaigns more memorable and effective. Including images and visuals will also allow for clear messages and help build your story up more and make it more believable. By focusing on the key issues that affect families it will also help voters to engage with your campaigns and vote for you. Using personal experiences will also make it more relatable and if they see you “a candidate” that has suffered with something similar they will believe that you want to create real change not just for their country but for themselves. Promoting the Shamrock Party was also crucial and telling people about their values and what actions they are going to take towards these problems people are facing. It is most important to include the message of “creating real change” in each post as that is what the Shamrock Party cares the most for.

When preparing for the big debate, my role was to ask the Shamrock and Harp Party questions on what they are planning to do if they win the election. There were also Dark Secrets “leaked” to us about the opposing candidates, and this helped us target him in the debate, showing the nation that he would not be a suitable leader for our country after the things he has done in the past. It was a really fun and engaging way to learn, and I am happy that I participated. Before this we had a quick rehearsal and went through what questions would be most suitable to ask. This shows clear dedication to winning the campaign and shows how professional we were about it. We did not point our fingers; we answered each question with honesty and gave it our all.

Learning Outcomes:

Taking part in this election task allowed me to gain a better understanding of the role that geography plays in political campaigns. Using geography looks at the connections between people, place and space. Geography plays a vital role in shaping electoral outcomes because where people live influences how they vote and what they care about. For example, not everyone in rural areas will express the same concerns as those who live in built up urban areas. When writing campaign posts, you need to be cautious of your audience and include all people and their local issues. For me, writing these

campaign posts allows you to become a new persona, and it became so natural to me the more times I posted on the forum. I feel that my passion for winning became increasingly evident throughout my latter pieces.

Another important aspect to take into consideration is being strategic about what area or county to post in as they may be votes considered *surplus* votes (where we are almost certain to win is a specific “safe” county) or *wasted* votes (counties where our candidate has no chance of winning) and *effective* votes (which help to influence the election result in close/“swing” counties). By knowing this information, it can help a candidate target the right areas and she/he does not waste time getting votes in places where these will prove to be either surplus or wasted votes, and not effective votes.

Conclusion:

Overall, participating in the GY347 Electoral Campaigns has been such a fantastic and enjoyable experience. Not only did it improve my understanding of politics and electoral systems but has also developed my skills working within a team, boosted my creativity and allowed me to think in very strategic ways. I enjoyed taking the role of campaigning like a real TD, as it allowed me to engage more with the issues that matter to the residents of Tallaght, and across Dublin city. I now have a greater appreciation for those who participate in elections as I have now witnessed the time, effort and skill that is needed to pull a win off. I am now not scared to engage in a conversation about politics as I understand electoral systems much more now! So, thank you Adrian!



Plate 2: Audience in rapt attention as the “Big Debate” starts to get “a little feisty”

Stan Ryan (“Caoimhe Downey”)

The Primary Elections

This learning journal will delve into why we chose our candidate, and the strategies used in the primary elections. Furthermore, it will discuss the effectiveness and pitfalls of these strategies and how I used what I had learned from the primary elections to campaign more effectively in the general elections.

The election task was a brutal, ruthless, bloodbath, ruled by aggression and backstabbing, and I enjoyed every moment. The beginning was the group forming. I know Conor Strickland from First Year History and Sean (Reynolds) and Eoin (Connell Gallagher) were already on the team, so it all worked out perfectly. We chose a female candidate as we felt that would help us stand out and give us some more support in regard to voter preference. Furthermore, we believed that Sheila McNearney was the perfect age (thirty-nine) to appeal to the masses; old enough to resonate with middle-aged and older voters, but not so much older that she would be considered ‘out of touch’ for younger voters. Furthermore, from her profile description, it was clear that she was moving her way up the political ladder. Although a jump to becoming the Harp Party presidential election candidate might be a bit of a leap from her current position, we thought she was the woman for the job.

There was not too much importance placed by my team on the ‘pre-election events’. Leitrim quickly became a hotly contested warzone, one that we decided it was best not to enter intensively. Instead, Leitrim was used to make our candidate relatable. From reading Manning et al (2017), I learned just how important it is for politicians to be seen as relatable and ‘with the times.’ Firstly, after reading Kavanagh, Durkan & D’Arcy (2021), I quickly understood the huge importance of the friends and neighbours’ effect in how the Irish population votes. I began by writing that my persona and Sheila spent our summers in Sheila’s grandmother’s house in Drumshambo and attended the Fontenoy Festival every year. The purpose of this was to both make use of the friends and neighbours effect, while also making our candidate seem relatable to the public. I also posted a Tweet saying Sheila had ‘split the G,’ drinking an Irish drink at an Irish festival. The inspiration for this was Trump at the Iowa Fair in 2023, where he was a spectacle and portrayed an image of being a common American citizen, increasing his publicity and relatability to the people of Iowa and America (Vakil, 2023).

These Leitrim posts were aimed at increasing public knowledge and opinion of Sheila’s primary election campaign and to use the friends and neighbours effect to generate momentum for Louth, as Leitrim was never the primary election we were focusing on. Instead, we were simply using it to raise momentum in the polls, as momentum is vital in primary election contests (Barnfield, 2023). We understood that votes in Leitrim were too contested, and Louth would allow us to get much more effective votes. Once I felt I had built enough momentum in Leitrim, I stopped posting there to limit the amount of wasted votes we received there. We saw how Louth (47) had far more delegates than Leitrim (11) and we made the decision to focus on Louth due to the proportional delegate allocation rule that was in play for those two counties. We figured instead of splitting the two counties and getting a lot of wasted votes in each, we would be better off going all out on Louth and maximising our effective votes. Even if we didn’t win, we would still probably get more delegates than we would if we focused on splitting our efforts. In Louth, our mini team focused on the main urban hubs in the county, Dundalk and Drogheda, and had only a few posts relating to rural Louth and farming, as we felt that Louth’s urban population distribution meant that more urban campaigning would lead to more votes. This strategy worked out very well since we did in the end win Louth and earned nine delegates for our work. This strategy worked out wonderfully as it left us in joint third place in the delegate count

after the first two primaries. We had the second-best votes-to-delegates ratio, only coming behind the Novak team.

After we had won Louth, we now had considerable momentum for the rest of the primary election process. Momentum we decided to pour into a very brave decision. We understood just how influential Laois was for this election. Seeing that it was the only winner-takes-all primary, we knew that if we went for Laois, we were going to either win or lose the election process. I said to my mini team that I was going for Laois and that I would need their support if we had any hope, to which they agreed to the strategy. In Laois, I focused mainly on urban areas but posted much more in rural areas. I also pretended that my persona had grown up in Abbyelex. Abbyelex was chosen as it was a mix of being both urban and rural and as it was located rather centrally in Laois, again the strategy here was to exploit the large effect that the friends and neighbour effect has on Irish voting trends (Kavanagh, Durkan & D’Arcy, 2021). In the final opinion poll for Laois, we were winning by a decent amount but hours after the poll were released, the Pat Paterson mini team posted dozens of times, and unfortunately, although I did respond, my teammates failed to do the same. Our team leader, Connor (who was Sheila for the campaign) was at a chess tournament and so had limited time to post that weekend, and all he posted was about chess, which eventually became known as “Chessgate”. As Von Sikorski (2018) wrote, scandals can destroy political careers and ruin election campaigns, something Chessgate did in the case of Sheila McEneaney. Her main party rivals, Tiernan Blackwing and Pat Paterson accused Sheila of ignoring Laois for chess and used this against us and at that stage, the writing was on the wall. I personally did ten posts for Laois alone that added up to 3,060 words. In comparison, my three other teammates wrote eight posts totalling just over 2,000 words. Laois was there to be won, but Chessgate made Sheila a candidate who appeared to be out of touch, and a lack of cohesion and posting within the team doomed our chances not only at the Laois primary but also for the primary elections, as a whole. Once Pat Paterson had won Laois, it was impossible to win the primaries, his momentum was far too strong. Since we were still considered front runners in the polls, we decided not to suspend our campaign until after the Limerick contest.

My Sheila McNearney team had great potential to win the primary election, but in the end, we lacked cohesion and our leader's posts were easily interpreted as being ‘out of touch’ and that hurt us massively. However, I do not regret dying on the winner-takes-all hill that was Laois. As Adrian Kavanagh said himself in the lecture, when he announced the results for Laois, our strategy itself was solid, but our execution was not. However, I feel my personal strategy going into this election task was to get the highest grade possible. Using an effective strategy was consistently mentioned as a factor in earning extra marks for posting, so I posted accordingly, as I have shown above.

The General Election

When it came to the general election task, from reading Venturino & Seddone (2022) I understood the importance of party cohesion after the primary elections, so I immediately spoke about how I respected and admired both Pat Paterson and Tiernan Blackwing in an attempt to show unity within the Harp Party. I focused on posting mainly in counties I had the most knowledge about for the first week of the general election, ignoring swing counties and considerations about effective, wasted or surplus votes. As the general election continued, I began posting solely in hotly contested counties, focusing on Meath, Mayo, Westmeath, Dublin City, and Cork City. All of which were key swing counties in the election. I also posted in Laois, Kildare and Longford due to having prior knowledge of some of these

counties from the primary election campaigning. Even though I knew these posts would not influence the election results, I knew they would increase my academic result in this assignment.

My main goal during these posts was to push a positive Harp Party agenda and help my party win this election, run under majoritarian/first past the post electoral rules. Learning from the primary elections, I chased effective votes as much as possible and ignored posting where my posts would only earn wasted or simply surplus votes. My strategy in the swing counties was to focus on appealing to the largest class demographic in each county. This approach was centred on the Lipset-Rokkan electoral cleavage theory (1967) and research conducted by D’Hooge, Achterberg, and Reeskens (2018).

Though the thought behind my posting was empirical, the widespread nature of my posting meant that I helped each constituency I posted in a little, but not a lot. So, although this did help the Harp Party to win Mayo and Westmeath, consistent posting in Meath, Cork City or Dublin would have likely been a more effective strategy in increasing our chances of winning more electoral college votes in the general election. However, since the Harps only won Mayo and Westmeath by very small margins, it’s very possible that without my posts in those counties, we may have lost there as well.

Conclusion

To conclude, throughout the primary elections, my mini team's strategy was solid as seen in Louth and Laois. However, the execution of our strategy was poor, and team cohesion was lacking. Furthermore, some of the posts we did make, such as “Chessgate” posts, made our candidate seem ‘out of touch’ and smart campaigning and chastisement by the Blackwing and Paterson mini teams exposed these flaws in our strategy and campaigning, ultimately leading to us losing Laois, and in turn the primary elections. In the general election, my posting was likely too widespread and I should have focused more on one or two counties, not six or seven. However, throughout the campaigning process, I still feel my campaigning was largely effective. From utilising the friends and neighbours effect, to creating a relatable candidate and focusing on demographics while posting all seem to have aided me in this “simulated electoral geography environment”. I felt I chased effective votes much more than I did surplus or wasted votes and I think that is reflected by the effects my posting had on both elections.

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Dylan Connolly (“Tiernan Blackwing”)

I looked forward to the Presidential Election task. It was presented as a unique assessment, which I had never seen before. Initially, I was disheartened as I knew nobody in the class, and when I put out a request on Moodle to join a mini team (having missed the two classes in which the mini teams were formed), my request was ignored. I decided to try the task independently, picking a candidate and seeking to complete the task as part of a mini team comprised of just myself. Despite the obvious drawbacks of completing the task alone, I feel like this helped drive my early motivation during the primary campaign process. My candidate, Tiernan Blackwing, was the only major candidate where only one student was behind the team. I watched as the other teams, campaigns, and rivals posted what seemed like much more than me. This obviously was because they had multiple people working on the campaign. However, I was on my own. I chose Blackwing because he felt like the only candidate who was starkly different from the other candidates. He came from a more left-wing background, and I felt this would be an advantage in the primary, as it would give voters a clear choice. The primary turned out to be like that of the 2020 Democratic presidential primaries, where Bernie Sanders stood out in a field filled with moderates in the early contests, but as more moderates began to suspend their campaigns, Sanders was eclipsed by a growing level of party unity around the leading moderate, Joe Biden. This was reflected toward the end of the primary race, when Paterson gained many endorsements from the other candidates, and surged away from Blackwing.

Determined to do well, I posted many lengthy posts, compared to other students. Initially, I experimented with different posting formats, such as radio interviews, news articles, and social media posts. In the early days, I wasn't sure how the grading system worked, whether it was an average of posts, or a cumulative mark. I remember my first post in the Limerick Primary was during the heat of campaigning in Leitrim and Louth, so the pressure wasn't on Limerick yet, so I posted a short Facebook message to launch my campaign in Limerick. This method got lower marks than my regular longer posts, so at that point I decided to ignore doing short posts, particularly social media posts. While I wasn't focused on which students were posting, I was focused on the positive feedback I was receiving,

in class emails and with my post marks. This early encouragement helped me keep up the motivation throughout the primary campaign, especially when opinion polls picked up a rise in support for the Blackwing campaign.

While Blackwing didn't win a single primary election battle, he finished second in a number of these and finished second overall to Pat Paterson. I focused more so on the proportional result primaries and did not give a lot of emphasis to Laois. Firstly, this was because I could chase as many effective votes, and my efforts would not go to waste, as I'd just win more delegates by finishing in second or third place in these counties, rather than none if I didn't win outright in Laois. Secondly, the polls from Laois showed a huge lead for Paterson, and I felt like a huge effort in Laois by Blackwing would likely still be unsuccessful. This allowed me to ignore the obvious wasted votes in Laois and focus more on the Limerick primary toward the end, which helped Blackwing finish second overall. Finally, I spent more time on the proportional contests because it allowed a greater sense of momentum. In Laois, Blackwing never led, so it was hard to portray a sense of the tide turning in his favour, whereas in Louth and Leitrim, a simple upward trend for Blackwing was enough to claim momentum.

My initial strategy in the early counties of Leitrim and Louth was to adopt a blitz strategy. I focused many of my early posts in those counties, rather than posting in Limerick, Laois or Longford before those first two primary contests were held. I made use of the famous Leitrim Fontenoys Festival, with the festival playing an important role in my strategy, especially toward polling day. Additionally, Blackwing's allies, Missy Murphy and Geraldine MacAdaim, allowed me to campaign in various places at once, especially as MacAdaim was from Louth. I could post as Blackwing and Murphy in Leitrim, and post as MacAdaim in his home turf of Louth. While being on my own, this unique opportunity allowed me to build up a sense of momentum in the early contests and then be seen as a front-runner in the later contests of Limerick and Longford. If I had been in a team with other students, I would have felt more obligated to share the workload, which may have reduced my independent ability to create momentum for the Blackwing campaign, especially in these early contests. In the four proportional contests, Blackwing finished second in Leitrim, Limerick and Longford, and third in Louth, as well as third in Laois, to finish second overall to Pat Paterson. I believe the early wave of momentum was hugely significant in Blackwing doing well in these contests.

I was motivated by the second-place result, and then even more motivated in a way, by the introduction of the "Dylan rule" (to try and prevent students from posting "too much"), as it was referred to in class, for the general election battle. I learned I had posted nearly twice as many posts as anyone else in the class for the primary process. I was also encouraged when Blackwing was made the Vice Presidential candidate for the Harp Party in the general election. This showed me that by working by myself for the primary contest had paid off, and that the freedom I had with my strategy was a valuable asset that individual members of other teams didn't have. This helped me to maintain my motivation going into the general election campaign, as it meant my posts would play an important role for the general election process.

Through the general election process, due to the implementation of the 'Dylan Rule', I couldn't post as much as I did during the primary elections, but this allowed me to work on securing marks through higher quality posts. I attempted to secure higher marks by trying out different formats for my posts and seeing which was more favourable in terms of marking. One key feature I identified immediately

was that when writing a news article blog post, it seemed like I was able to pick up extra points for adding photos which were relevant to the news article. The constraints of the ‘Dylan Rule’ seemed to pay off in encouraging a higher quality of posting, as my posts maintained a high marking, and outperformed my primary posts. I continued to be encouraged as the updated marks for the blog posts showed I was on course to achieve a very high result.

Following the patriotically motivated break in posting over the St. Patrick’s Day reading week, my level of posting began to fall. I feel like this was due to a number of reasons; falling out of the habit of posting during the break, as well as my maintaining of a high result in the regularly updated marks document on Moodle. However, I did keep up posting and effort levels. As the student with the highest marks, I felt less pressure to post as everyone else, so I decided to offer assistance in other ways. With the regular posting of updated opinion polls, I created an Excel file which was designed to help our team. I posted this file to the Harp Party teams page, and notified our team WhatsApp, and updated both when new polls were released. The Excel file included various pieces of information, primarily the margin between the Harps and Shamrocks in the latest polls. I graded these counties on whether they could be considered important for posting, or not, by deeming them safe, leaning, etc. Upon the release of the second set of opinion polls, I created a poll tracker for all the counties, where we could see where we had gained ground, or lost ground, over the previous week, and overall shifts since the beginning of the general election. I felt encouraged when I saw members of the Harp Party viewing my file in class during the general election campaign. While I created the Excel file for use as a team, of course I used it to guide my own campaigning. In the first week of the general election, I focused on battles which were close in the first set of opinion polls, including Wexford (0.2%), Offaly, (3.4%), Westmeath (1.8%), Carlow (1.0%), Kilkenny (2.6%), Laois (2.0%) and Lucan (0.6%). In Week 2, I focused on the contests which were close, but where we were also gaining or losing ground, as we could track this on my Excel sheet, including Offaly (-0.2%), where we had gained 3.2% in the first week, Kildare(-1.0%), where we gained 7.4% across that first week, both of which had a sense of momentum, as well as Mayo (+3.8%), where we dropped 3.8% in one week. In Week 3, I didn’t post much, but I focused on Carlow (-1.8%) and Wexford (+1.6%), where the Harps had seen a massive fall in support over one week, down by 3.4% and 6.8% respectively in these counties, taking away from the momentum we had built up. In the final week, after a disastrous set of opinion polls, I focused on holding what we had where we were ahead in counties that we had previously been behind in, such as Offaly (+8.8%) and Kildare (+7.0%), but also trying to get some contests over the line, like Meath (-2.0%) and Longford (-2.8%).

On a personal level, as an Offalyman, I was keen to deliver Offaly for the Harps, which I’m proud we did and particularly since we couldn’t deliver Donegal, where Tiernan Blackwing was from, due to the Shamrocks maintaining such a huge lead there for the whole campaign, so campaigning in Blackwing’s home county would have resulted simply in more wasted votes. My general strategy for the general election was to primarily campaign in counties which we were either 5% ahead, or behind, in, rather than spend time in counties where we were had a great number of surplus votes, like Wicklow, or counties where I felt all the Harp votes would be wasted votes, like Kerry. I felt like chasing surplus or wasted votes would not be a viable electoral strategy. For example, in the first opinion polls, the Harps were 2.0% behind in Laois. That week, I campaigned in Laois. The next set of polls had the Harps 13.8% behind in Laois. I decided to no longer campaign there, because momentum was shifting

away from the Harps in Laois, and I thought it would be a classic example of chasing wasted votes, which it turned out to be true, as we lost heavily in Laois.



Plate 3: The Harp Party at the “Big Debate” start to sense that debate moderator, “Dr. Aidan Kennedy”, may not necessarily be a “totally unbiased academic” – from left to right – Cian Ward (question from the floor), Cillian Caulfield-Duffy, Conor Neville, Dylan Connolly and Tadhg McCauley.

As the person playing the Vice Presidential candidate, I took part in the big debate against the Shamrock team. I enjoyed this process, as it was different from anything I had done in my time in Maynooth. While nervous speaking, it was great fun. Once we got into the discussion, the nerves went, and I felt comfortable speaking to the audience. Even though, and I may be biased here, I felt we won the debate, I was discouraged by the massive electoral college vote swing to the Shamrocks in the opinion polls just before the debate, and the momentum was clearly in their favour. I made a rallying attempt on the final day, in some key counties for the Harps to hold, but ultimately it wasn’t enough, and the Shamrocks were, unfortunately, the winners.

If there would be one thing I would do differently if I had to do the task again, I would seek to create more engagement across the wider Harp Party team during the election campaign. I feel like the majority of the members were not as engaged with the strategic elements of the task, and this may explain why some members campaigned in contests which had been deemed as effectively already won or lost, simply by the sheer margin we were leading, or behind, in the polls. While we had good engagement from some key members, other members of the party did not seem as engaged with the more strategic dimension. This lack of structure in our overall team strategy likely contributed to us narrowly losing key contests, such as Meath, Fingal and Wexford.

The results of the election, and the task in general, gave a first-hand display of the material we learned in class. In the primary election, we engaged directly with the difference between first past the post elections, as with the Laois primary, and proportional electoral contests in Limerick, Louth, Laois and Longford. We then saw again the importance of doing well in first past the post elections throughout the general election, with vote management strategies focusing on the importance of winning effective votes, which was key in many contests, but additionally on how to not chase wasted votes or surplus votes.

The task also showed the importance of momentum. This was evident in my primary campaign, where I worked hard on my own to make sure Blackwing didn't fall behind, and achieved strong results in early counties, allowing him to be considered a front runner in the later contests. Finally, in the results, we could see firsthand in the bias of first past the post in delivering results. The Shamrocks won the popular vote by a 51.5%-48.5% margin but won 66% of the Electoral College votes. The importance of momentum was also critical in the general election. In the first set of polls, the Harps were losing Kildare (-8.4%), Tipperary (-14%) and Offaly (-3.4%), but a wave of momentum for the Harps in these counties delivered wins in all three contests, with double-digit shifts of support to the Harps in all three contests from the first poll to the final result; Kildare shifted 26.0%, Tipperary 16.0% and Offaly 13.2% respectively, all in favour of the Harps. By contrast, it was easy to also see the damage caused by a shift of momentum away from a candidate, as was seen in Cork City (+12.8%), Cork County (+5.6%) and Galway County (+5.8%), all counties that the Harps led in the first opinion poll, but counties the Harps lost badly in with heavy double-digit swings against the Harps during the course of the campaign, of -21%, -34% and -19.2% respectively.

However, even though we lost, I really enjoyed the task, and it can say with absolute certainty that it was the best activity I have taken part in over the course of my undergraduate degree. I had so much fun playing Tiernan Blackwing, that my tallied word count across all my posts came to just over 36,000 words. On an academic level, the task gave first-hand experience to students of the theory behind what we were learned in the module, and that made it just as engaging.

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Cian Ward (“Betty Tyrell”)

Starting off...

On the inaugural day of the presidential task, myself along with my fellow classmates Sara Bohan and Micheal O'Toole teamed up and carefully selected presidential Candidate Betty Tyrell. We chose Betty Tyrell as we believed her status as a former Minister for Education and deputy leader of the Labour party could give her a platform to become a competitive candidate. Her wealth of experience and her formidable team consisting of former leader of the Labour party Backana Ivchik and social media personality Mick Mulcahy was a key factor in our selection. We were especially captivated by Mick Mulcahy who is better known as the “The Seer” as his strong online platform could become useful throughout the campaign. His large audience could attract much needed media attention for Betty

Tyrell's campaign and allow her to gain votes in various primaries. In relation to our campaign strategy, we would each choose a character and begin to post on the campaign forum from their perspective. I would pose as "Betty Tyrell," while Micheal and Sara would pose as "The Seer" and "Backana Ivchik" respectively.

Primary Elections

As the first opinion polls were released it was clear to see that we were strong in counties Limerick and Louth. As a team we should have delegated what counties each of us would cover but also making a conscious effort to include Leitrim as it was one first primary election to be held. Unfortunately, as the first week of posting commenced, collectively we were lacking any forward movement. It took us a prolonged period of time to release good quality posts which allowed other candidates to gain vital ground on team Tyrell. I fell victim to the "no makey up endorsements rule", which further hindered our progress as posts were understandably receiving poor marks. As election day in county Leitrim and Louth loomed, our mediocre performance in the initial few days of the election task showed in the final opinion polls. Our rivals benefited from "Mo Mo": "Mo Mo" stands for money and momentum and as a number of other teams started the campaign with a bang, they were ahead in the polls by some margin and continued to improve and gain momentum. We stepped up our campaign efforts in Leitrim on the eve of the election however it was a case of too little too late. This reflected in our result as we only managed to win 530 votes. This was a tough start to our campaign, but we were given a fighting chance from the Louth primary. As we stepped up our campaign effort in the Wee County, plus our high level of support in the initial opinion poll, it allowed us to gain over 1300 first preference votes. This was a real eye opener for Team Tyrell as we now knew the importance of a strong start during an election campaign,

Our attention then turned to counties Laois and Longford. Our strategy here was to focus primarily on the Longford primary as our standing in the Laois opinion poll was extremely poor and could arguably say that campaigning here would have been a waste of valuable time and campaign efforts given that it was a "winner takes all" contest. We upped the consistency of our posts but once again it was too little avail. Our results (270 votes in Laois, 1,077 in Longford) proved a killer blow for Betty Tyrell's election hopes. Collectively we decided it was time to suspend our campaign before the final primary election contest in Limerick. We chose to endorse now primary election winner Pat Paterson. We chose Paterson as not only was he polling extremely well, but he had also managed to win 52 delegates at that point. That coupled up with him being the Taoiseach, Team Tyrell believed he was in with the best chance to win the election. Our posts now focused on endorsing Paterson and telling our supporters why he was the best individual for the job. We were one of the first mini teams to support Paterson, which allowed us to build a strong relationship with the members of Team Paterson. This partnership benefited me personally as down the line I was able to effectively help with in class election activities such as the "Big Debate" and being a "dust buster."

Overall, the primary elections were incredibly eye opening for Sara, Micheal and I. It taught us valuable lessons such as the importance of a strong start and how "Mo Mo" can make or break a campaign. I was proud of our response to our poor results as we remained calm and continued to work hard. If we were to complete this task again there are several aspects, I would change. On a personal

level, I would have refrained from the use of “makey uppy endorsements.” This had zero contribution to the team and allowed other teams to capitalise on my mistakes. As a collective, I would have advised our team to split the workload. We would designate a single county to each team member, and they would solely focus on producing high quality posts in said county. This could have allowed us to make significant gains and poll better in all counties. I would have also put a major emphasis on the Leitrim Fontenoy's Festival. By releasing campaign posts related to this event it would have given us a strong platform to increase our chances of winning delegates.

General Election

As the general election kicked off shortly after the primaries, it gave Team Tyrell a much-needed fresh start. We came together and discussed the changes we will make to operate our campaign in a more efficient manner. We outlined our shortcomings in the primaries, and this allowed us to learn from our mistakes. Furthermore, a group chat was created with fellow classmates who were now supporting Pat Paterson. This much needed form of communication allowed us to carefully plan the campaign. I chose to campaign in Kildare, and Meath. Since I am from Kilcock, which lies on the Kildare-Meath border, I felt that my local background would help my posts relate better to the people there and allow the campaign to run more effectively. I also chose Dublin City as, although Betty Tyrell is from the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown local authority area, she could avail of the friends and neighbour's effect (Kavanagh, Durkan, D'Arcy, 2021). Plus, the fact she had been a sitting TD and a former cabinet minister, she has spent a large amount of time in Dail Eireann and Dublin City. This could allow her to gain momentum for Paterson and the Harps as she would be a friendly face in the city. These areas were also all showing strong support for the Shamrock party in the early polls, so it was important that I chose areas where I could swing support to the Harps and allow us to reach the vital 270 electoral college votes.

As the weeks went by in the election campaign, I upped the numbers and the standard of my posts considerably. I refrained from short statements and Tweets, and focused on releasing newspaper articles, radio interviews and large-scale statements. These would relate to ongoing real-world issues in the various counties. For example, I made a conscious effort to discuss the issues individuals were having in Dublin City relating to safety. I discussed the Harps plan to increase Garda numbers and pump more funding into improving their equipment and training. These posts gained high marks and allowed the Harp Party to gain some ground in the capital city. I also did some background work for the Paterson campaign by being a member of the “Dust Busters.” Our task was to protect Pat Paterson and minimise the effect that his “dirty secrets” would have on the campaign. We worked effectively and efficiently and were able to conduct this task correctly. Unfortunately, we began to lose ground in several constituencies, and it looked like the Shamrocks were destined to win. However, the mid election break from the 16th to the 20th of March allowed us to take a step back and put a new plan in place. It gave us vital time to highlight the areas in which we needed to improve in. Personally, the time off allowed me to brainstorm new and innovative ideas for new posts. I also learned from my previous mistake in the primaries where we started slowly and ensured as soon as the break concluded, I was back to regular posting and campaign activity.

Towards the end of the campaign, it was now time for Team Paterson to focus on the “Big Debate” that would be held in Week 3. This would be vitally important towards our election campaign as it would allow us to highlight all the wrong doings the Shamrocks have committed. I teamed up with fellow classmate Rian Teehan, and together we planned several questions that would be directed towards the senior members of the Shamrock party. We ensured that these questions would be difficult to answer and that they outlined all the negative information gathered from Larry Downey's dark secret. The “Big Debate” was incredibly entertaining and was excellently fought out by both groups of students. Following the “Big Debate” we entered the final week of the general election campaign. This was vitally important as the Harp party was again falling slightly behind. I had regular communication behind the scenes with my fellow classmates on the WhatsApp group and we highlighted the fact that the counties of Mayo, Meath and Tipperary were closely contested and that we should focus our posts on these forums. Unfortunately, it was not to be for Pat Paterson and the Harp Party as the Shamrocks came out on top in a close contest.

Overview

Although it was disappointing not to win either the primaries or the general election, these two tasks have been some of the most interesting and fun assignments I have completed throughout my third level education. The experience gave me a real insight into the strategy and challenges behind running a political campaign. I learned so much from the importance of a strong start and momentum (the “Mo Mo” effect) to the power of the “friends and neighbours” effect in gaining support within certain constituencies. I also came to understand the value of planning ahead, consistency in campaign messaging and adapting quickly when things do not go your way.

One of the biggest lessons I took from this experience was how vital it is to work as a team and split responsibilities effectively. In the primaries, our slow start and lack of direction set us back, but we learned from our mistakes and approached the general election with a more strategic approach. The use of high-quality posts and stronger communication helped us improve significantly. Even though we did not win, I gained practical skills in leadership, political communication, and teamwork that I will carry with me going forward. Overall, it was challenging but an incredibly rewarding experience.

References

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Tadhg McAuley (“Pat Paterson”)

Section 1: The beginning.

When I was first informed of this task I was rather intrigued by it I felt it was a perfect opportunity for me to showcase multiple skills and strengths that I possess as both a person and a student. This election task, based on my reading of the assignment description, would involve the practical use of many skills not typically used in standard university assessments; for instance, with essays we are instructed to write what to write about and these are, in theory, clear cut. While I have enjoyed many of these essays, as they are often on interesting topics, they can be repetitive. From reading the assignment’s description, I gathered that skills such as leadership, strategy, critical analysis, public speaking, and persuasive writing/speech would be of great use among others during this task. I was motivated to win which is also something not as clear in the other forms of assessment. This presidential election campaign would have a winner and I wanted it to be me for both the grades and the pride. I’m an extremely competitive person so I felt this task was tailor made for me in some ways. Not everyone can lead people, but from being in leadership roles in both my work and social life I knew I could get a team to work together to achieve the desired result.

Section 1.1 – Team Pat Paterson

One negative was that I only knew one person in the module on a first name basis and we would need groups of 4 to partake in this assignment (except, in hindsight, for Dylan Connolly, who is a machine and disproved this thinking) So I had to start somewhere as the teams were set to be decided in a class on Wednesday the 12th of February. I messaged Cillian Duffy, the only person I knew in the module, the night beforehand asking if he would like to be in a group with me and he agreed. We planned to meet up a few hours before the class to assess which of the candidates provided in the document we thought would be the best suited to us as a team. We had a slight bias towards Kildare-based candidates as we are both from Kildare, however we made pros and cons on most candidates, discarding a couple for various reasons. We did a continued process of elimination before we knew it an hour before class we were down to two potential candidates Sheila McEneaney of Kildare and Pat Paterson of Cork. As mentioned above, we knew a Kildare candidate would suit us as we have a knowledge of the county far superior to that of other counties. However after discussion we found Pat to be the pick of the bunch. I feel I should mention included in these pros and cons were the team members associated with each candidate. I had gathered from making use of Adrian Kavanagh’s offices hours the previous day that the team members were of equal importance to the candidate, a concept we grasped, I believe, before the rest of the class did. We knew each of the three characters associated with the named candidate had positives and negatives. Below are some bullet points I had written on Wednesday the 12th of February as to why, or why not, we should’ve chosen Pat and his team.

Positives

- Has been Taoiseach, also Fianna Fáil party leader before amalgamation of the Harp Party
- Good posting/campaigning potential

- Detractors saying compromise as a weakness can be reworked to presenting him as open minded and respectful view to other policies/ideas. Can also compromise with opposition party if elected, perhaps leading to him winning more votes from voters who are “on the fence”.
- Very diverse team: Ndidi- cultural diversity, Kevin: values sport and community, has huge backing due to GAA fanbase, Jim- like Pat has plenty of experience, vital for the new political system
- Puts Ireland first: running out of duty to Ireland, not to serve his ego.

Negatives

- People could say too old for new generation of Irish politics
- Perhaps when stubbornness is needed public may be of the same view of his detractors
- People can blame him for current negatives as he was Taoiseach.

1.2 – Forming Teams

You can see myself and Cillian put a clear priority on experience, electability and having a group of strong, and diverse, team members. With that decided before class, we then headed to the TSI. At the end of the class Adrian announced for everyone to team up if they had not already done so. By chance and I will say lucky chance Craig Murphy and Rian Teehan were sat at the same table as us and they joined our team. We then quickly rushed up to Adrian to select Pat Paterson as our candidate before anyone else did so. Before the class ended we had a quick discussion and we decided amongst ourselves who each of us would become in this task. I volunteered myself as Pat, explaining that later down the line if we were successful there would be a presidential debate and I had no issue speaking in front of the class. In fact weirdly enough I felt confident at the time that we would do well. Cillian said due to his strong GAA background he would like to be Kevin. Craig mentioned that through his other studies he had spoken about diversity in Ireland which suited Ndidi perfectly and Rian was happy to be Jim. So with that sorted before leaving class we setup a Snapchat group which would be strictly for Pats campaign.

We were very fortunate to be seated in close proximity with Rian and Craig as they were absolutely crucial to Pat’s campaign. The Snapchat group worked brilliantly; it allowed for quick and clear communication which we used in the primaries to great effect. This team had a good balance with each of us bringing something to the table, a great example of this would be our Pat Paterson poster. While I had a vision for the poster and a slogan in mind, I’m not adept with graphic design, but Craig is and we worked together to make the poster that we plastered all over Ireland (or rather the Moodle forum).

1.4 – The Primary Election

The key aspects of the primary, we knew, was going to be strategy, consistency, momentum, winning effective votes and encouraging high voter turnout. We knew to win the elections we had to implement what Adrian was teaching us. The first thing we put a very heavy emphasis on was momentum, so I came up with an election strategy with this in mind. The strategy did change as we progressed due to

the thoughts of my teammates and current election environment; we did as a team work towards winning the Harp Party primary election. We agreed to put all of our time into posting in both Louth and Leitrim for the first few days. One negative to this plan was that initially we had both valued equally which, as we approached election day, we realised was the incorrect way to approach it as Louth was significantly more valuable with 47 delegates in comparison to Leitrim's 11. We coordinated our posts with this value in mind as it drew closer to election day and we decided to put about 85-90% of our efforts into some last minute posts in Louth. These posts were large detailed posts; we coordinated plans for activities, locations and interviews. We could tell that other teams were individually working on posts and we felt our coordinated effort gave us an edge as it was more realistic. We posted about the same events and all used the poster to portray a united campaign team and we hoped this was effective in the voting process. We also knew while Leitrim did not hold as many votes as Louth it was still crucial to attend the Leitrim Fontenoys festival as Adrian explained that this was important in order to show the voters that you were 'relatable'. To seem 'relatable' we hosted a Eurovision themed karaoke in a local bar after the festival showcasing this relatability. Craig and I would take charge of these "events" throughout the election with Rian focusing on the issues of the counties while Cillian had equal focus on both. The first results came and they were great we had emerged as a front runner in the elections winning Leitrim and coming second in Louth. In our minds the momentum was flowing to us and Team Pat were on a roll.

Laois and Longford were next up and I would describe these as the 'war phase'. I was working the weekend of the 22nd and 23rd of February so I went into work the morning of the 22nd "happy as Larry" with the previous day's results. I left work to see in our group chat that our presidential campaign HQ in uproar there had been an attack on Pat and everything he stood for. Scratch that, there had been attacks! It was in this moment I genuinely became Pat Patterson. I got home from work at 7 o'clock and in defence of myself...er Pat I worked straight till 3am; this was personal now. On a side note I did not think I would ever be this offended by anything in this task. The attacker was the one and only Tiernan Blackwing; no team, no support, just Tiernan (Dylan) and by God he meant business.

We knew we had to put everything into Laois, Longford was irrelevant in the grand scheme of the election as in our minds the winner of Laois had it in the bag as it was "winner takes all". We used the fact that voter turnout in an age category is much higher for the older age groups we also knew Pat was one of the more privileged of Ireland's politicians and this would also help with votes. With our recognised advantage and our momentum we felt poised for victory, however Sheila McEneaney was polling ahead of us in Laois by a large margin. Then came the best thing we could have wished for – Sheila disappeared to the DCU chess open and it was our golden ticket. So to summarise at this stage, considering the posting activity, it felt like a three horse race between Pat, Sheila and Tiernan. Team Pat were working as hard as possible in a coordinated manner and with good quality information and realistic strategy regarding our candidates location. Tiernan, while a threat and doing everything correctly, was simply outnumbered – his only other flaw his slight tendency to leave himself open to be discredited (for instance, the Portarlinton train times). Sheila had a strong team, good momentum and the polls in Laois were in her favour; Laois seemed to be her's to loose. With this massive advantage she then said she was playing a chess open in DCU. Like I'm sorry, this was brilliant for us, how did Conor ever think this would help his case? We pounced. We agreed in the group to all go and accuse Sheila of not caring about the people of Laois and Longford, and this came with unlimited

ammunition. Then to top it off in the closing stages Stan, I'm sure annoyed with his teammate, made claims that Sheila was with his character Caoimhe Downey in these places all along. Once again we pounced as a group. This was a prime example of why communication was key. Once again we got to results day. We had given everything for Laois. I was nervous. I deeply wanted to win and wanted to see Tiernan Blackwing fail. We had guessed that it was between us. Even though the final poll showed Sheila in first place, we knew after "Chessgate" that she had no hope and in our minds it was now Tiernan or Pat. Pure bliss we won! We were wearing smiles of real pride in that class, as embarrassing as it is to say. That was definitely a semester high for me. We felt that this was the primaries in the bag, delegates wise - 35 to Pat, 0 to the rest, pure bliss!

Then came the search for endorsements. Craig and I went around the class asking for endorsements. Many joined as their candidates "suspended their campaigns" and we made a WhatsApp group and instructed our new supporters to well simply support Pat and use his poster and, well paint Blackwing as a liar! All that remained was Limerick and, while it held significant value, our army of supporter meant that we simply could not be beaten. I must confess for me I took a break for Limerick. I put in a few posts but not to the extent of the effort put in for the first four primaries. (I had amassed a Word document file over one weekend of around 9,000 words.) I felt like the king of the castle and the mood of both the larger Pat support group and our smaller team of four reflected that. Victory!! We won Limerick and Tiernan battled to a valiant second place, but in the end it wasn't close.

Positives from the Primary election

- Communication and posting as a team
- Researched each county to portray ourselves as being more authentic
- Used our characters' strengths (Kevin secured the pub and other things)
- Attention to detail (gave us the edge over Tiernan in certain battles)
- Momentum
- Strategy (focusing on Laois due to it being winner takes all)
- Time management

Negatives from the Primary election

- We learnt not to post about fundraisers
- Lost Louth (stopped the grand slam)
- Not paying enough attention to the number of delegates to be won in these

2 – The General Election

This learning journal is heavily weighted towards the primary election, as I was very busy during the general election phase, however funnily enough I learnt more in the general election phase about elections. The Harp Party united and we crushed the beef with Tiernan who was no longer an enemy

and now a friend. Dylan, as he will be referred to from now, was the key during the general election for the Harp Party. As mentioned, I was too busy to post much, however as a background member I was still very active trying to coordinate the party. They looked to me for everything which felt weird because they are my peers. I guess they felt the line of power had transitioned to reality outside of the Moodle forum. With this I set up a Harp party WhatsApp group and Adrian helped with setting up a Teams page. I had great intentions for the Teams page to be our main form of contact with sub chats for each Moodle forum created in hopes of party members, as Team Pat did during the primaries, coordinating our votes to minimize the amount of ineffective votes, whether chasing surplus votes or chasing hopeless situations and merely adding to our number of wasted votes. However, many people were busy and these sub-chats were not used, with the WhatsApp being a convenient commonly used app for my fellow party and this seemed to get much more interaction and better responses. Also due to the lack of communication, we as a party won many ineffective votes especially in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown and Wicklow. Look I get it, some people didn't care about the result, they just wanted marks. We lost the election and we had the two biggest winning margins in the contest in Wicklow and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, which shows my fears came to pass.



Plate 4: Shamrock Party debate team – Daron Harten, Sophie Doran, Poppy Conroy, Caitlin Meenehan

For me the main event of the General election was the Big Debate which I thought would have massive implications for the result. I gave it my best shot. I thought on my feet, answered effectively, and made Pat sound like a good candidate, as my quickly put together team discredited Larry Downey. The dark secret of Larry's was big ammunition however mine was of no use to the Shamrocks due to the excellent work of the dustbusters I asked to work together. I made sure to incorporate Irish in my speech as it's our national language. I was terribly nervous beforehand but tried not to show it. One negative of the debate was my misunderstanding of the question segment. I thought it would be

questions themed to discredit Larry as I'm sure was seen and heard during the debate. However when shown that I would also have to answer the same question, I quickly adjusted my answers and it turned into a positive. For me anyway it felt like a good win in the debate. The only loss we took was when a point was made that that I was a Cork-based candidate and was not polling well in Cork.

3 – Review

Honestly I could talk way more about the elections, I feel I've got so much more to say, but there is a word limit. I loved this task. I learnt and applied so many skill, politically, geographically and personally. I've gained valuable experience and I feel like I have learned a great deal more than I would have from writing an essay. The key points used and concepts applied during the election were wide and varied in depth and importance. Momentum, as mentioned earlier, was massive. Applying the geographical knowledge of whether we were in urban or rural areas was important as people in different areas tend to vote differently. Voter turnout was also on our minds as Pat, being older, was in a position to better relate with the age groups associated with high voter turnouts. The significance of immigrant populations was not forgotten with our Team Pat member, Ndidi Bala, in mind. We examined the polls and posting rates in Moodle to determine where to manage our efforts in hopes of increasing out numbers of effective votes.

Pat was a big part of my life for a while and so was this module (and it will be until I finish the exam of course). The presidential election task was definitely the most memorable of all my college assignments. While ultimately Pat Paterson lost, I'll end this journal feeling like a winner.

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FROM THE *MILIEU* ARCHIVES (1980):

THE RELEVANCE OF CENTRAL PLACE THEORY TO MODERN URBAN GEOGRAPHY

Gerard Toal, First Arts (1979-80)

Central place theory was first proposed by Walter Christaller, a German geographer, in 1933. The main aim of the theory was to explain the spatial organisation of settlements and hinterlands, with reference to their relative location and size. Since 1966, when Christaller's work was first translated, it has become standard teaching material in English speaking universities and schools. Embraced by the scientific "revolution" in geography in the 1960s, Christaller's model along with other similar models came to be regarded as geography's solution to its lack of precision as a science. Models such as Christaller's placed greater emphasis on spatial order and location than the traditional location or site factors used to explain the spatial distribution of settlements. However, with increasing use of models in geography, many have begun to ask fundamental questions about their use and relevance in the modern world. What I hope to do in this essay is to examine the relevance of Christaller's Central Place theory as a model in modern urban geography. To do so, I will examine the theory under three areas:

- i. Its realism as a model
- ii. Its merits as a model
- iii. Its use and contribution to modern geography and modern urban planning

In this way I hope to show that Christaller's theory, although not the panacea to spatial organisation in the world, however, very relevant to modern urban geography.

All good models are a balance between simplicity and reality. Often it is the case that the more one modifies the original assumptions of the model, the more complex it becomes. Christaller's model is based on three sets of assumptions that simplify reality. The "isotropic plain" assumes even population, equal purchasing power and transport costs proportional to distance. Clearly, this is not a case in reality. However, in places, where almost ideal conditions existed (Mid-West America in 1850) Christaller's pattern was seen to be substantiated, thus proving that his settlement pattern can be regarded as an ideal beginning after which the geographer can begin to consider "modifying" factors. Other principles which underlie the model are the principles of perfect competition and economic rationality. Again, compromise between simplicity and rationality sacrificed the model's direct applicability to modern society. However, Christaller never meant his model to be the sole explanation for spatial organisation of central place. He recognises certain deficiencies in his system and qualifies them whenever he deems necessary. In his book, "Central Place in Southern Germany", he writes

"the scheme only approximates reality; therefore, we should study the factors under whose influence it undergoes change..."

In an attempt to show how other factors influence and modify his system. Christaller proposed two variants on his original K3 or "marketing principle" model. The first is the K4 or transport system model constructed on the principle of the least travel distance between centres. His second variant is the K7 or administration principle in which he saw the primary function of the central place as administrative. These two variants not only illustrate Christaller's view of the models' use but also serve to show that deductive models are relevant only as approximates to reality, and in this role can be very relevant.

In assessing the relative advantages and disadvantages of Christaller's model, it is useful to remember that no model can be totally accurate or can attempt to explain everything scientifically. In discussing the merits of any model, it is best to examine it under two headings; firstly, does the model fit the facts, and secondly, are its assumptions incomplete or unrealistic?

Christaller's model, when applied to the general world, is found to suffer from two main disabilities. Firstly, most towns are more than service towns; for instance, Manchester owes its location mainly to the fact that industry needed the coal for its developing industries and was thus located next to the Staffordshire coalmines. A second factor modifying Christaller's organisation of central places can be collectively termed historical factors. Trim, for instance, derives its present day status from original settlers who established it as a defensive site guarding invasions up the Boyne river. However, it must be remembered that Christaller based his model on the principles relating to market location and not on defensive principles. A point in favour of Christaller's theory is that present evidence seems to suggest that the more centrally placed a town is the more likely it is to develop in modern society. Thus, Drogheda's growth can be explained more in terms of its place within the complete urban network than the traditional approach of explaining its growth with reference to its site as the lowest bridging point on the river Boyne. In this way, Christaller's model has as much merit to it as the traditional approach.

The task of trying to improve Christaller's model by altering the basic assumptions without affecting its simplicity was unsuccessfully tackled by Losch (1939). Although his theory claims to be much more complete (it is comprised of over 150 "K" systems superimposed on each other), the simplicity of the model is lost. However, his work is a valuable extension of central place theory. Losch's model is perhaps better suited to manufacturing industry while Christaller's is more applicable to service retailing. Both are relevant as they provide an idealistic pattern of spatial organisation. Christaller's model is especially applicable to non-industrial or rural regions while Losch's central place theory is more likely to be observed in industrial areas, because it takes account of specialist functions.

The contribution of central place theory to modern geography can never be assessed fully. Since the Second World War when Governments leaned heavily on university Geography Departments to reconstruct a shattered Europe, a scientific understanding and approach has been available to all planners, multinational corporations and advertising agencies. Their use (to fit their own needs) and understanding of the Geographical models helped put Europe back on its feet. Among this the models of Von Thunen, Christaller and Weber were used in the designing of hierarchies of shopping and service centres (even in locating a new capital city for countries). Increasing use nowadays is being made of Christaller's hierarchical concepts in the design of key service sectors like hospital systems and government headquarters. Thus, in a very practical sense Central Place theory is relevant and useful.

From a geographical viewpoint, like high ideals of utopian existence, the theory is relevant because reality can be compared with them; where theory and reality diverge an area of research can be pinpointed to discover the reason for the divergence. The main contribution of Central Place Theory to settlement geography has been its identification of order (in what often appears chaos) in the integrated system of central places and market places. Before Losch and Christaller's work, the town and its hinterland were usually treated as separate entities. They were regarded as isolated from other towns and hinterlands. Certainly the hierarchical spatial organisation of marketing has not been observed. However, with the new awareness of a town's place in the complete urban hierarchy coupled with geography's previous awareness of unique, individual factors influencing a town's location, one is able to get a more complete picture of the geography of settlement. Central Place theory has become a core part of geographical study. Its greatest relevance and greatest use is helping one understand the world around us. As a new angle of perspective, it is invaluable to modern urban geography.

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CENTRAL PLACE THEORY was first proposed by Walter Christaller, a German geographer in 1933. The main aim of the theory was to explain the spatial organisation of settlements and hinterlands, with reference to their relative location and size. Since 1966, when Christaller's work was first translated, it has become standard teaching material in English speaking universities and schools. Embraced by the scientific "revolution" in geography in the 1960s, Christaller's model along with other similar models came to be regarded as geography's solution to its lack of precision as a science. Models such as Christaller's placed greater emphasis on spatial order and location than the traditional location or site factors used to explain the spatial distribution of settlements. However, with increasing use of models in geography, many have begun to ask fundamental questions about their use and relevance in the modern world. What I hope to do in this essay is to examine the relevance of Christaller's Central Place Theory as a model in modern urban geography. To do so, I will examine the theory under three areas:

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- (ii) Its merits as a model
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Christaller's model, when applied to the general world, is found to suffer from two main disabilities. Firstly, most towns are more than service towns; for instance, Manchester owes its location mainly to the fact that industry needed the coal for its developing industries and was thus located next to the Staffordshire coalmines. A second factor modifying Christaller's organization of central places can be collectively termed historical factors. Trim, for instance, derives its present day status from original settlers who established it as a defensive site guarding invasions up the Boyne river. However, it must be remembered that Christaller based his model on the principles relating to market location and not on defensive principles. A point in favour of Christaller's theory is that present evidence seems to suggest that the more centrally placed a town is the more likely it is to develop in modern society. Thus Drogheda's growth can be explained

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The task of trying to improve Christaller's model by altering the basic assumptions without affecting its simplicity was unsuccessfully tackled by Losch (1939). Although his theory claims to be much more complete (it is composed of over 150 "K" systems superimposed on each other), the simplicity of the model is lost. However, his work is a valuable extension of central place theory. Losch's model is perhaps better suited to manufacturing industry while Christaller's is more applicable to service retailing. Both are relevant as they provide an idealistic pattern of spatial organization. Christaller's model is especially applicable to non-industrial or rural regions while Losch's central place theory is more likely to be observed in industrial areas because it takes account of specialist functions.

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Gerard Toal – First Arts

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Plate 1: Gerard Toal's (Gearóid Ó Tuathail's) article as it appeared in the 1980 edition of *Milieu*.

FAVOURITE MEMORIES OF MAYNOOTH GEOGRAPHY

Final Year Geography Class (2024-25)

Sara Bohan:

My favourite memory of Maynooth Geography without a doubt must be the friends I made through GY201. I was placed in a group with three strangers and now they are three of my best friends; we meet regularly and have such a good laugh. They are some of the best people I have ever met, and we will definitely be staying friends post college. I'm very grateful that being a Geography student gave me the opportunity to meet my now best friends!

Louis Brady:

Alastair Fraser doing a giveaway of a box of tea cakes in first year geography, was both a funny and unusual way to start off college life. I didn't win :(

My favourite moment is taking part in GY202 and making friends that I will carry forward for life.

Ryan Brady:

Inishbofin trip in March 2024 was the best moment of my college undergrad; made so many great memories and friends in the class and on the trip, great fun, no explanation needed :)

Hannah Brennan:

My favourite memories as a geography student at MU would have to be the GY201 classes in 2nd Year. I have gained lifelong friends from the group I was placed in and hope to continue these friendships post-graduation

Erin Cassidy:

My favourite memory was having the laughs with all the girls in my GY310B group Everyone was friendly, and kind and it was nice to have a full group full of girls; we could all relate to each other!

Oran Clancy:

Inishbofin trip in second year. No explanation needed.

Aoife Coughlan:

Over the past three years studying Geography at Maynooth University my favourite memories come from 2nd year during GY201/GY202 with Caoilfhionn D'Arcy. Throughout this class I learned many

new skills such as GIS, SSPS, google earth, and analysing data. Caoilfhionn was a very helpful teacher, and she made the class very enjoyable and fun to learn. I also made many new friends throughout this module.

Another favourite memory comes from the GY305 Approaches to human geography class and GY222 Urban Geography with Mark Boyle and Adrian Kavanagh. Mark and Adrian made each class very entertaining and enjoyable and inspired us to work harder each week!

Ciaran Clarges:

Some of my favourite moments in geography in my three years in Maynooth were on the Second Year fieldtrip to Inishbofin Island, Co. Galway. We spent a few days there performing fieldwork across the island with Dr McCarron and Shirley Howe. We learned a lot about the island's formation, and we got to speak with locals who told us about island life. I found it to be one of my most enjoyable and informative experiences with the Department of Geography in Maynooth as I got to learn on the go while exploring the island and by speaking with locals.

Everyone who went had great fun and I would highly recommend picking this module for anyone planning to study Geography in Maynooth.

Cormoc Cronin:

My favourite moment was with Alistair in first year, where he let us make paper snowballs with definitions of a topic in them, and throw them at him, it was great craic.

Amber-Lily Dunne Maher:

I enjoyed my First Year modules for Geography as a student who took double geography. they were fun and kept me interested in keeping Geography to study for my two other years as an undergraduate Arts student

Alisha Finnegan:

My favourite memory of my time as an undergraduate student with the department of geography in Maynooth University was getting the chance to study Geography and making lots of new friends and interacting with them. I loved getting the opportunity to go on the geography field trip as a day out with my friends and classmates. I really will miss my time here in Maynooth.

Sarah Finnegan:

The rap battle between Adrian and Mark during Semester 1

Amy Fitzpatrick:

Mark and Adrian's GY305 lectures last semester. They kept up the good entertainment all semester.

Eoin Connell Gallagher:

The funniest moment may have been to me was when I misread an GY305 assignment from Adrian Kavanagh and accidentally wrote a large section on why cats are an inferior choice of pet to dogs. Adrian then would angrily hiss at me when he later made a tonne of cat themed memes before the Christmas break. Didn't realise people could be so sensitive about being wrong /s. (*The Milieu Editor adds: Cats rule, dogs drool...*)

Jokes aside it was certainly ironic to write an insulting page of cat people slander in an exercise designed to make sure we didn't misread the exam paper, due to misreading the question and hastily dumping thoughts on the page.

Áine Ghríofa:

Inishbofin!!! And the Third Year modules in planning.

Jack Gorman:

I enjoyed learning more about the environment and how the agriculture sector can impact the environment. I also enjoyed working in groups meeting new people and making new friends.

Maebh Grant:

Some of my favourite memories have just been spending time with the friends I made in the course, whether it was working on projects together, stressing over deadlines, or just having a laugh in between classes. It made the whole experience way more enjoyable.

Alannah Grufferty:

The trip to Inishbofin with great people, it was a great way to make friends whilst learning.

Ruth Kelly:

I can honestly say my three top memories of Geography stay with me daily.

My first one has to be from Social and Cultural Geography in Semester One of Second Year. This module was taught in groups, and our groups were formed through answering a personality form....as we still say, it was like answering questions for a dating app and getting matched with five others who are similar to us. My group clicked instantly and still to this day we are all super close, I found my best friend in the group and some lifelong friends.

My second favourite memory has to be Prof. Mark Boyle's Urban Geography class in Semester Two of Second Year. Just everything about this module was great. Mark is brilliant in every way and always made us laugh, he was so articulate and really cares for each student. His thick Scottish accent definitely woke us up at 9am when we were all bleary eyed. Something that sticks out most has got to be his singing, I will never forget the day he sang to us.....what a great class it was.

My third favourite memory is from Semester One of Third Year, Approaches to Human geography, taught by two of the wackiest lecturers the Geography Department has, Dr. Adrian Kavanagh and Prof. Mark Boyle, two men who bounce off each other like a house on fire but also insult one another in the funniest way. Adrian brining Mark coffee for his 9am lecture and always pulling faces behind Mark's back always made us laugh, as well as them jumping in on each other and discussing their differing opinions, generally on what sport was best or what team. Some of the biggest highlights of all was the brilliant emails we received throughout the course, always so funny or the assignment we had where Adrian and Mark had made themselves into detectives and wrote a whole murder mystery.... probably the best one was the proposed rap battle between the two, the argument of who would win was brilliant.

Alannah McAuley:

Learning Geography in Maynooth has been very enjoyable experience, all the lecturers have their own unique personalities that make for interactive learning. Especially Mark and Adrian, their module was one of the most enjoyable from their very first class where they used funny comparisons for their personalities to their rap battle.

Charlie McCormack:

Funniest moment was when the Cheltenham races was on and when I was in a lecture and nearly everyone was watching the races and making noises, obviously either a horse won or lost.

Lauren McGarry:

Fieldwork in Lanzarote and Inishbofin, great experience. Thank you for the opportunity for fieldwork as I would never have volunteered for Inishbofin, but I was willing stepped up for Lanzarote from experiencing the Inishbofin trip. I grasped a great concept of geography by these trips, which I employed into my other modules.

Damien Metcalfe:

I enjoyed the back and forth between Mark and Adrian during class in the first semester of year 3.

Alistair's use of tea cakes as a reward.

Steve McCarron's approach to people talking and causing disruption in classes in the first year was brilliant 🙌

Holly Mullen:

My funniest memory has to be the legendary rap battle between Adrian Kavanagh and Mark Boyle during our 'Approaches to Human Geography' module', this was an unforgettable highlight of my time studying Geography at Maynooth!

Luke Murphy:

The sheer heart put into modules that were overseen by that of Mark Boyle and Adrian Kavanagh, both were extremely approachable providing us with an enjoyable teaching experience which led to taking away something each and every week. Having this enjoyable and fun learning environment only improved the input in which I myself and I'm sure other students put into these modules.

Elliott Murtagh:

My favourite memory from my past three years studying college was the GY305 class that I took for the first semester of first year. Every class that we had was entertaining with both Mark Boyle and Adrian Kavanagh. The two lecturers together created a great atmosphere for the class and it was my favourite module of my degree in Maynooth.

Conor Neville:

The debate in Electoral Geography this year was great fun to participate in. Trying not to giggle and attempting to keep a straight face was the biggest challenge.

In Social and Cultural Geography in the second year, I particularly enjoyed the group activities, this being the same in First Year's GY152 module.

Cormac Ó Raghallaigh:

My favourite moment of being an undergraduate student with the Department of Geography here in Maynooth University has got to be during the First Semester of 3rd Year in Approaches to Human Geography (with Adrian Kavanagh and Mark Boyle) when it came to our assignment we had a few choices of how to go about it. I choose the option of doing my assignment as a skit/short drama, which was then published on YouTube. This was a lot of fun writing the script and getting my family and friends to help act. It was the first time I ever had fun doing an assignment whilst also educating myself and others at the same time.

Patrick O'Connell:

My favourite funniest memories within Geography over the last three years would have to be group work modules. Learning and working as a team but also given the freedom to enjoy it and have a laugh. Really enjoyed all of the lectures also as they were very rarely boring or uninteresting. Overall Geography as a whole in college has been my favourite subject to study and I really enjoyed the last three years.

Danielle O'Reilly:

My favourite memory was computer class in 2nd Year. (GY201 and GY202). I had so much fun learning about GIS (Geographic Information Systems). At first, I didn't know much about it, but once we started using the software, I found it fascinating. We learned how to map data and explore how geography and technology work together. It felt like discovering a new way to see the world. Working in groups made the experience even better. I made new friends as we helped each other figure out how to use the tools and complete our projects. We shared lots of laughs and supported one another when things got tricky. Learning together made the class feel exciting and fun.

Another enjoyable module in Geography was working climate change and working with Met Éireann on weather sheets. We used real weather maps to make new more understandable weather maps and understand forecasts. It was so interesting to see how weather is tracked and predicted. The project made me realise how important weather information is and how it affects people's lives. After that, I started thinking about weather and GIS as something I'd love to do in the future. It showed me how much I enjoy using technology to understand the world—and maybe even help others through it one day.

Laura O'Sullivan:

Definitely would have to be Mark Boyle and Adrian Kavanagh's GY305 lectures last semester. They kept the fun and entertainment going no doubt which made the module very engaging.

Sinead Raffry:

Geography work placement with Carlow County Council; I learned so much and met so many people that I gained lots of knowledge from. Prepared me for my Final Year of college as I gained an insight into a real working environment that uses Geography skills.

Doing Political Geography module in 2nd Year with Adrian Kavanagh and we created a poster of a cartoon about countries. It was funny and creative

As well as GY201 and GY202 with Caoilfhionn D'Arcy, I found the module difficult and very challenging at times, but it was so rewarding being able to create maps and using different applications.

Leah Reilly:

A collection of funny moments were had in the Approaches to Human Geography class with Adrian Kavanagh and Mark Boyle bickering and bouncing off each other constantly.

Christopher Woods:

Mark Boyle and Adrian Kavanagh's constant bickering over the topic of Irn Bru and who's a better singer!



GEOGRAPHY SOCIETY 2024-25

Darragh Wafer and the GeogSoc Committee

The Committee

President: Darragh Wafer
Treasurer: Immen Maallem
Events Officer: Miles Martin
First Year Rep: Grace Burke

Secretary: Rachel Nutty
PRO: Mark Corcoran
OCM: Daniel Nolan

We are delighted to have this piece entered into the 50th edition of the Milieu Magazine. It has been a tough but mostly exciting year for the Geography Society. We had a brand new committee with new ideas and strong passions. We worked together to overcome the challenge of low turnouts at society events and organise fun and engaging activities for our members.

As students, we know ourselves how stressful college life can be between busy schedules and many assignment deadlines looming closer. It was important for us to create a calm environment where students could come together and relax. Mindful Mondays was created to be that relaxing space. This was created in collaboration with the Environmental Society and St. Vincent de Paul Society. We met on Monday afternoons to enjoy a peaceful nature walk along the beautiful South Campus gardens. Afterwards, we would head to the Rye Spaces and treat ourselves to some tea, coffee, and biscuits, as well as an opportunity to chat and get to know each other. We faced bad weather and low turnouts where some had to be called off, we persevered and came out on top with a successful, enjoyable event for all.

Here at the Geography Society, we value community. We were happy to be included in a big STEM quiz with the science societies to raise much-needed funds for MSF – Doctors Without Borders. This is an important cause, and it had a huge turnout. We helped run the event and submitted 10 Geography-themed questions for our quiz section. In total, this quiz raised €391 for MSF. It was brilliant night with many donated and sponsored prizes that were won. We hosted bi-weekly movie nights where we enjoyed a range of movies from geography-related to general action! Members were able to come and sit down to enjoy a movie after a long day of lectures.

We want to wish the best of luck to next year's Committee and we look forward to the further development of Maynooth's Geography Society.

A final thank you needs to be given to:

- All the members who joined us throughout the year, I hope you all had fun.
- Neasa and Catherine, the Department administration team, who have helped, promoted and supported the Society from Day One.
- Dr Adrian Kavanagh, who has been the Society's link to the Department for years.
- The societies that collaborated with us and helped us to make our events possible and bring new members, we couldn't have done it without you.

Enjoy the *Milieu*,

GeogSoc 2025



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