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Looking forward to 2023 and the 50th Anniversary of the SAI.

2023 is the 50th Anniversary of the SAI. It looks forward to this milestone in a position of considerable strength, but with this raising questions of what more it could offer as an association to achieve its mission of promoting the development of sociology in Ireland; seeking and maintaining high standards of scholarship and responsibility in research; encouraging publication, discussion and debate on issues of interest to the discipline of sociology; and acting as a professional association.

Membership has increased from 120 to 164 to 200 in 2020, 2021 and 2022 respectively. The association is in a financially healthy position, with assets rising from €23,000 in 2020 to €33,000 in 2022, with roughly €16,500 in income and €13,000 in expenses in the previous year. The Irish Journal of Sociology has no shortage of submissions or proposals for special issues. The Annual Conference and Postgraduate Conference provide fora for sharing research, with 120 and 40 attending these respectively, with both grateful for the excellent keynotes that anchored them and very strong papers submitted.. There are six active Study Groups. A range of initiatives have been put in place to support early career researchers, students and teachers of Politics and Society on the Leaving Certificate. Sociology Departments and multidisciplinary Schools with sociology as an element of their programmes have been generous in offering financial support to the Association.

All of this has created an Association that has the capacity to increase the scope and meaningfulness of its activities. We are conscious of the unproductiveness of having significant assets and consistent income, and not using this underwrite projects which would benefit members. One of the SAI's greatest challenges is also its strength: that it is a professional association run entirely by volunteers, none of whom take expenses. The advances made are thus vulnerable, as they have been achieved primarily through individuals who have freely given their time, and who only have limited terms on the committee. There is a continual need for more volunteers with the time and ideas to keep moving the association forward. Thus, a goal for the next year is to expand the number of roles on the Executive Committee to reflect the increased activity of the association. Another goal is the development of a strategic plan, so that the work of the committee can be focused on a vision and solid steps to realise this. The SAI will also have a complete rebrand for 2023, with a new logo, design elements and website to improve its presentation. As we look forward to

the 50th Anniversary of the association, the overriding feeling is that the association is stable, if not in rude health from an organisational standpoint, and this raises the question of what now, as we look forward.

I would like to express gratitude on the behalf of all SAI members to all who have given their time and energy to the association, and who have brought their interest to it. The members of the SAI committee keep the show on the road. Head of departments have been generous in providing support to the association. Members support the infrastructure that the SAI seeks to put in place to support the discipline through their fees and participation in events. Hosts of the conferences and events are generous in providing access to their facilities and the staff there make the events possible. Thanks to all, and we look forward to 2023 and beyond with much enthusiasm and optimism.

Motions at AGM

Amend the SAI Constitution to add the following positions. *Proposer – John O'Brien.*

- Communications Secretary
- Study Group Secretary
- Conference/Events Secretary

Openings in the Executive Committee

We are seeking nominations for Second-Level Sociology Secretary.

We are seeking nominations for Postgraduate Representative. The candidate should be a current PhD student.

John O'Brien has presented motions, which, if approved by the membership will require additions to the committee

- Communications Secretary
- Study Group Secretary
- Conference/Events Secretary

Officers' Reports

President's Report

The SAI branding will be redone for 2023. A designer has created a new logo and design suite, which will be implemented in a new website. The current branding is jaded, and we are no longer in possession of original files, and lack any design material outside of the logo. The SAI website was also produced in a craft manner by committee members, and while it is adequate for its purpose is not as usable as we desire. Thus, to improve the presentation of the SAI and ease of accessing information about it the redesign will be put in place for late 2022. The cost is in the region of €5000.

The SAI Study Groups have been successful in providing forums for research and networking on subject-specific areas. They have been a success in organising high quality panels for the annual conference. One of the benefits offered to the groups is a €500 subsidy to assist them in organising events. This has never been availed of in the 2 years of their existence. Thus we should reconsider this for 2022/3 to think of how to better offer support for activities of research networks.

The SAI Salon, which was a very successful addition to the SAI calendar in 2019 and 2020 has fallen into abeyance. How to revive this for 2023 will be looked into.

A number of prizes have been created as a way of shining recognition on excellent work done from early career to established to renowned sociologists. The Young Sociologist for Leaving Certificate students studying Politics and Society, the IJS PhD Prize, recognising early career researchers, the Distinguished

Member award recognising lifetime contributions to sociology and the SAI and the Honourary Member award, recognising non-academics who have made a great contribution to society.

A communications role is badly needed for the association. Attempts are made to maintain positive and meaningful communication with the membership and beyond. The association tweets regularly to its 2300 followers about its activities. Regular circulars go to members about matters likely to be of interest to them. A YouTube channel has been created with talks at SAI events posted on. The SAI podcase, Irish Society has 1000 downloads, though no new episodes have been created in the previous year due the time-consuming nature of producing episodes. The Sociological Observer has continued as a magazine showcasing long-form articles on current issues. 2021-2 saw issues on Black Lives Matter, the Biographical Narrative Method, Unemployment and Welfare, with the next focused on the Pedagogy of Sociology in Professional Practice. Looking forward the goal will be to move the magazine from a focus on public issues to issues within sociology, so that it operates more as a community building institution, highlighting the challenges and opportunities the discipline faces and showcasing positive stories about researchers and activities.

The high points in the SAI calendar are the Annual Conference and the Postgraduate Conference. These were on the themes of 'Home' and 'New Realities', and were anchored by Lorcan Byrne and Melissa Meyer and Lisa Moran of the SAI Committee.

Vice President's Report

The main output from the VP role from May 2021 to May 2022 was setting up a mentoring scheme for the SAI. Lisa Moran co-ordinated with John O'Brien, Aimie Brennan and Bernadine Brady (NUI Galway) on this mentoring initiative. We enlisted the help of Dr Anna Bussu (Edge Hill University, UK) who ran several sessions for mentors and mentees. This pilot was a huge success in terms of numbers and engagement, and it is envisaged we will run the scheme again in 2022/2023. The various institutions across Ireland were well represented in the scheme as mentors and mentees, including SETU, UCC, MIE, NUI Galway, DCU, UCD, and TCD. This bodes well for extending the scheme into the future. The scheme had a mix of early career, late career and mid-career researchers as mentors and mentees on the programme. This has also spawned a small-scale research project on mentoring.

Membership Officer's Report

Hazel O' Brien has been the Membership Secretary since 2019

We have had a good year regarding membership. Our current membership stands at 200. This compares to 164 in Apr 2021 and 120 members at Apr 2020. Renewals appear to have bounced back post-Covid, no doubt helped by the return of in-person conferencing. Approximately 50% of our members are reduced price memberships often held by postgraduates or those in precarious employment. In efforts to encourage senior academics/researchers to join the SAI, we have completed a membership drive. This involved emailing 60 established sociologists and/or social scientists from NUIG, UL, TCD, and UoU to make them aware of the work underway within the SAI, the benefits of membership, and the importance of maintaining a strong community for sociology in Ireland. These are universities from which we have fewer SAI members, and in the next academic year a 2nd membership drive will be undertaken with other universities and TUs. We are hopeful for the next year that we can continue to build on the relationships we have been developing with members to improve membership figures further in the future.

A practical measure in this regard that has been very effective has been making contact with members during our 'busiest' membership months of Nov, Feb, March, April and May to remind them that their membership is expiring and to encourage them to renew. This has been very successful in gaining us renewals which perhaps people may have overlooked otherwise. Feedback from members has been that reminder emails are appreciated as members won't always be keeping up with their renewal date.

Treasurer's Report (Summary) – The Annual Accounts are attached separately

In 2021 income was € 16,405 and costs stood at € 12,992, giving a surplus of € 3,413. The SAI had assets of €33,211

- Significant expenses not currently shown in the accounts due to their recent occurrence. These include the annual conference (circa €7000) and website and branding upgrade (circa €5000).
- Significant income is not reflected in the accounts either, including income from the annual conference (€8000) and increase in IJS income – (an addition €1500).

IJS Representative's Report

Lisa Smyth has been the IJS Representative since 2020.

The Editorial Team welcomes [full paper submissions](#) and [proposals for Special Issues](#). Debate and Book Review contributions are by invitation only. Contact the Editors with suggestions: irishjsoc@qub.ac.uk

Forthcoming Special Issues and Debate Fora

- Vol 30, 2022: Debate Forum: *Ideas Lying Around – An SAI Salon*. Lynne Layton (Harvard) and Nidesh Lawtoo (Leuven) interviewed by Kieran Keohane and Maggie O'Neill
- Vol 30, 2022: Special Issue: *Walking Methodologies: Sociological Research on the Move* Guest Editors: Maggie O'Neill, Claire Edwards, Caitríona Ní Laoire, Mastoureh Fathi and Ger Mullally - UCC and UCD
- Vol 31, 2023: Special Issue: *Decolonizing Academia* Guest Editors: Su-Ming Khoo (Galway), Epifania Amoo-Adare (Bonn), Sayan Dey (Witwatersrand), and Bhargabi Das (Maynooth).

IJS Prizes

- The Postgraduate Prize 2022 was awarded to Matteo Moraschini (University College Cork) for the essay 'The "Disappearance" of Politics from the Horizon of Choices: An Exercise in Sociological Reading.'
- The IJS Distinguished Article Award 2021 Volume 29 was awarded to: Joe Whelan (2021) Work and thrive or claim and skive: Experiencing the 'toxic symbiosis' of worklessness and welfare reciprocity in Ireland. *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 29(1):3-31.

Second Level Sociology Officer's Report

The major targets of this office for 2021/2022 were achieved from May 2021 to May 2022. The points below summarise the main achievements during this period.

- Co-organised a face-to-face conference with Dr John O'Brien and Dr Aimie Brennan (MIE) on *Sociology in Schools*, which was the major output for the role for 2021/2022. This capitalised on the collaborative relationship with Aimie Brennan.
- Aimie, John and Lisa also led a small-scale funding bid to the Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning for €2500 to fund the *Sociology in Schools* conference.
- Lisa, Aimie and John are also leading on a co-edited special issue of a journal based on the findings of the *Sociology in Schools* conference.
- Lisa also co-ordinated on some of the organisation of the Young Sociologist of the Year Essay competition with UCD and other SAI colleagues (Egle Gusciute, John O'Brien). The judging, which was led by John and Egle in collaboration with UCD colleagues, took place in May and the final results were released on the UCD and SAI website.

Postgraduate Representative Report

A [dedicated webpage for the postgraduate members](#) was set up, which has been useful for both marketing and sharing important information, particularly the [sub-page for the SAI Postgraduate conference](#), as well as a gmail account (sai.postgrad@gmail.com)

The postgraduate conference was held virtually this year. We had 25 presentations, with 2 keynotes - Prof Kieran Keohane and Prof Nick Fox, a workshop on publishing by Brian Conway, and a panel on postgraduate performance and pitfalls by Ebon Joseph, John O'Brien, Perry Share, and Egle Gusciute. There was great feedback on the conference, particularly on the publishing workshop and panel and the diversity and quality of presentations.

Furthermore, as we didn't have expenses such as venue hire, catering, and accommodation because the conference was virtual, we decided to make the conference fee a donation of choice (we had no indication of who donated what). The SAI also donated to this and in total we raised €500 for Focus Ireland.

Conferences

- **SAI Postgraduate Conference** was held in February.
- The **SAI Annual Conference**. The theme for 2022 was *Home*, and elicited an extraordinary response. The keynotes were Mary Corcoran, Rory Hearn, Helen Russell and Les Back. The conference was oversubscribed. 119 conference tickets were sold. We were happy to be in a position to support the attendance of a small number of displaced scholars also. We would note the opportunity to create a more enduring intellectual contribution from the conference in the form of an edited volume, though this would require planning and volunteers to take on the project.

Best wishes,
John O'Brien,
SAI President.