



# SAI Annual Conference: Ireland on the Edge

**Sociological Association of  
Ireland. 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**

8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Institute of Technology Sligo

Keynote speakers TBA

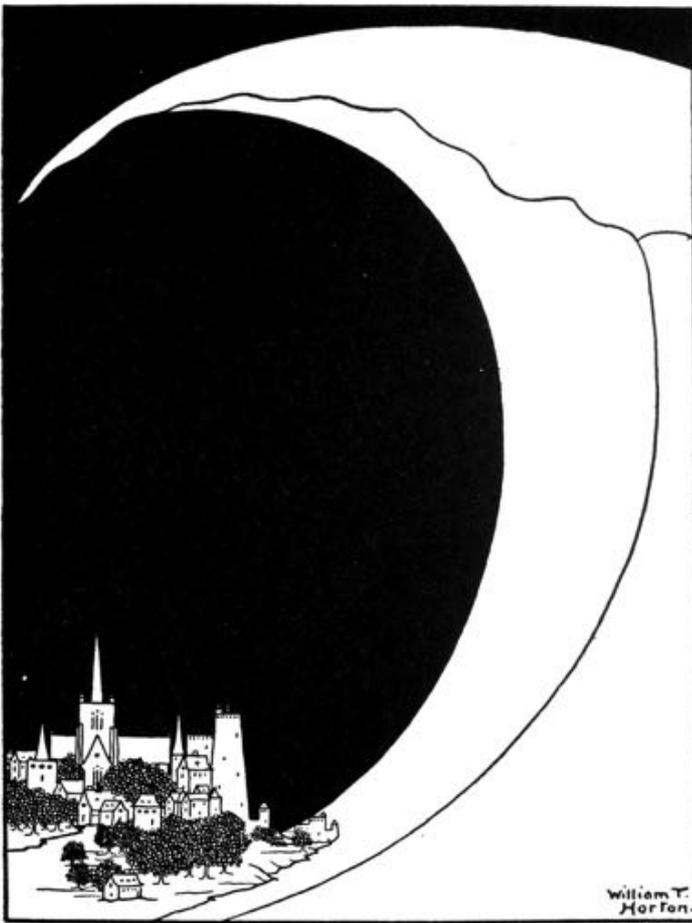
**[www.sociology.ie](http://www.sociology.ie)**

Abstracts please by January 31<sup>st</sup>  
2020, to [sociology.ie@gmail.com](mailto:sociology.ie@gmail.com)

The SAI 2020 Annual Conference 'Ireland on the Edge' will be held in Sligo – a place of edges; on the edge of the island on the edge of Europe and the world; - a surfer's paradise where people playfully balance on the unstable, dynamic limit, in a sport that is a perfect metaphor for our liminal, anomic, precarious and liquid times. It provides us with the perfect backdrop for reflecting on the theme of edges and Irish society – for papers on themes that are the essence of sociology, such as marginality, exclusion, peripherality, transgression, border maintenance, deviance, liminality, progress, regress and transition. Indeed a Century ago, Sligo's poet William Butler Yeats gave us the quintessential metaphor of modernity's relationship to the slippery slopes that we are tripping on the edge of: "Things fall apart/ the centre cannot hold; mere anarchy is loosed upon the world..."

The SAI Annual Conference welcomes papers / posters / panels / or other creative suggestions on topics related to 'Ireland on the Edge', welcoming all topics concerning social boundaries, thresholds, peripheries and marginality.

Hosted by Institute of Technology Sligo, the conference aims to bring together a wide range of social researchers from Ireland and internationally, addressing the theme. We look forward to seeing you there!



## Call for Papers

The theme of the conference this year is 'Ireland on the Edge'. Our theme is of particular relevance as Irish society is poised on various edges. It is on the edge of UK-Exit, Northern Ireland is on the edge of an uncertain future. We feel on edge about a myriad of pressing social issues. Environmentally we are on the edge of disaster. In addition to the sense of approaching a cliff edge, Ireland is in other ways at the leading edge, as the poster-child of austerity and neoliberalism; a fresh-faced model of progressive liberal cultural reforms on issues of gender and sexuality. At the same time we are backward laggards, on the edge of disgrace, far behind on climate change; slow to welcome migrants and asylum seekers; dragging our heels on global tax reform.

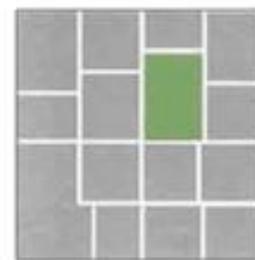
Being on the edge means marginalisation as much as dangerous games. Our venue, Sligo, speaks to this. It is an every-town of the Northwest, having large parts of their hinterlands, cut off by partition, retarding their development. Now Brexit threatens history repeating itself. Today Sligo is a 'Gateway', like nine other urban centres: a portal through which global capital and state support is supposed to flow. But like other major regional towns it struggles to develop the gravitational pull to become a true centre, as the various cores Hoover up investment, raising the possibility of an Irish populist protest movement, of the edge reasserting itself against the centre.

Indeed, the margins have long spoken back to the centre. In one way this is as a place of nightmares. The film *Calvary* is set in Easkey, and several Sebastian Barry novels are set in Sligo town, dealing with the repressed and silenced but malignant trauma of the past. But in another way it is a place of dreams. It was two Sligonian dynasties – the Yeats and Gore-Booth families that set the gender and class politics, aesthetic and lyrical sense of modern Ireland. Their contribution was an ability and willingness to cross borders imaginatively and socially, perhaps providing us with a utopian memory for the present regarding the power of edges.

The 2020 conference will open up opportunities to debate, discuss and share research regarding Irish society and its edges. Furthermore it will offer a chance to discuss the position of sociology in higher education, its role in policy formation and engaging with publics.

## Themes

- Being on the edge of a new age - progress, regress, utopias and dystopias; of peace, sustainability or disaster
- On the edge of a new Ireland - secular, multicultural, or not
- Accelerating leading edges - technological revolution and creative destruction
- The edges speaking back to the centre - protest, social movements, public sociology
- Peripherality - Ireland's international position, marginal areas, borderlands
- Marginalisation - groups and individuals on the fringes
- Precarity and being on the brink
- Depicting the edge - representations of marginality and peripheries
- Borders and bordering - political borders, social boundary-keeping, community divisions
- New spatial edges - suburbanisation, rurbanisation and gentrification
- Exclusionary practices - stigma and discrimination
- Edgework - leisure, danger and risk-taking
- People on edge - stress, anxiety, mental health
- Transgression, deviance and abnormality



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