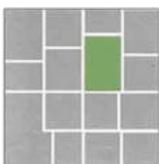


SAI Postgraduate Conference: Approaching the Edge

**Sociological
Association of Ireland
PG Conference**

Call for Papers

22nd February 2020
National University of
Ireland, Galway
www.sociology.ie



**Sociological
Association of
Ireland**

This annual conference provides a forum for student researchers to present their work to peers and receive feedback, to meet other postgrads and academics from other institutions, take part in workshops, share stories and advice, and help to build a broad and inclusive community of researchers.

The theme of the SAI Postgraduate 2020 Conference is 'Approaching the Edge', which captures the journey and practice of professional sociologists in training. Postgraduate identity is one of liminality, and the postgraduate journey is to a threshold, beyond which is a job, career, status, a significant contribution to a pressing question. It has its perils however, with a risk of 'falling over the edge', 'being on edge', or needing to 'take the edge off' regularly, and being 'on the edge of one's seat' in the examination process. It is a

biographical moment where one becomes part of a band of sisters and brothers on a shared quest, but also one where there is increasing pressure 'to have the edge on others' in the scramble of the jobs market. From the perspective of the ethics of our profession, sociologists have to learn to use sharp things, with 'edge' etymologically referring to the sharpened side of a blade. This reminds us of Bourdieu's description of sociology as a combat sport, where we must learn to stand up effectively, to not attack unfairly, but to act forcibly in the defence of our question and constituents. **Abstract submissions (200 words) by 19/01/2020 to: sociology.ie@gmail.com**



**NUI Galway
O'É Gaillimh**

When we approach an edge we are moving towards the outside limit, but also a meeting point. Sociologists are the professionals who are most concerned with edges, frequently focusing on marginality, peripherality, transgression, deviance, liminality and transition; indeed 'the margins can tell us something about normality' (Creswell 1996, p.9). The discipline itself is on the edge with various turfs (the education system, criminal justice, social welfare) increasingly owned by old or new interdisciplines such as criminology tied to established disciplines such as law that provide the structure and language of the central institutions of society. Thus, sociology can find itself on the edge, searching to be heard. However, this has its advantages, as it provides a nimbleness to push toward new frontiers of knowing and communication across disciplinary boundaries. For example, a radical democratic imaginary as proposed by O' Neill (2012) is an aspirational model to be utilised across the humanities that by its very characteristics encourages interdisciplinarity, crucial for future researchers. Such practices open up a space for 'the circulation, radicalisation and institutionalisation of democratic discourse' (Smith 1998, p.7) and 'knowledges of resistance' (Walters 2003, p.166).

Edges provide vantage points that we must move towards, where the mist of the taken-for-granted, the ideological and the constant flux and which characterises the contemporary world can be seen

past, so that we can try to negotiate a way through, to gain new understandings. 'To move edgeways' is a nautical term, for advancing slowly, and like mariners, we too become explorers seeking the potentialities of the edge, beyond the horizon. What unites us in the process of navigation is our hope for a better world; however, our utopian hopes are more often than not made cynical by the reality of manifestly dystopian trends. Nonetheless, edges are imaginative spaces for conceiving of something new, offering us the possibility of re-imagining, and considering that, maybe the future is not a fait accompli. As Ruth Levitas (2013) and Frederic Jameson (2010) demonstrates, utopia is a method rather than a goal, and this non-place on the horizon might be one way of re-imagining, as utopia 'entails holistic thinking about the connections between economic, social, existential and ecological processes in an integrated way'. Indeed, re-imagining the edge as a space that pushes back on its own limits, where transgression can take place, moreover as a place for resistance, protest and escape, renders defunct the pre-conceived notion that nearing the edge implies an impending doom. In the context of gloominess that we have already gone too far and have crossed an event horizon there is no coming back from, we can also think of the opportunity to utilise dystopia as a method as we are reminded of Beck's (1986) notion of 'emancipatory catastrophism' more specifically as Beck describes looking at the 'positive side effects of bads' in as much as the future can now be anticipated and acted upon (Domingo 2018).

In that vein we welcome papers utilising the theme and concept of the edge as innovatively as so desired. The edge is open to many interpretations, usages and points of reference we welcome all, creative, cultural, conceptual, corporeal, qualitative, quantitative, theoretical and historical.

The theme is offered as a stimulus and starting point and potential topics run the gamut. Suggested broad thematics (list is not exhaustive) are:

- Writing from the edge
- Polemics
- Academia as a site of resistance
- Precarity
- Borders and bridges
- Edgework
- Exploring contemporary/historical transgressive imaginations

- Cultural(both historical and contemporary) representations of groups on the edge
- Living on the edge for e.g. Homeless crisis; ethnic minorities; asylum seekers
- Making room for the margins
- Social movements :Hong Kong Protests; Yellow vests Paris; Cultural moment of Repeal Campaign
- Frontiers
- Cities, Mobilities, Space and Place
- Voices from the edge
- New and previously suppressed identities
- Resilience on the edge
- Utopian Visions
- Dystopian Imaginings