

What happens in the Institute for Lifecourse and Society (ILAS)?

Always wondered what was in some of these new buildings? What does ILAS mean? Meet the people inside one of the campus' newest buildings. And don't be shy; come visit, enter, stay for a while, come to an event. This building is for you!



Dr Crystal Tremblay visits ILAS

By Niel Slevin

On Wednesday 30 September ILAS had the pleasure of the touring Dr Crystal Tremblay from the University of British Columbia, Canada, who attended to present the methodology and initial findings of the study she conducted using participatory video-based research entitled, 'Participatory Water Governance in Urban Africa: Building Citizenship through Participatory Video.'

Dr Tremblay focused more specifically on how the communities of informal settlements in Cape Town, South Africa and Accra, Ghana access use water, in addition to their water sanitation, whilst also reflecting on similar research she conducted with recycling cooperatives in Canada and Brazil.

Dr Tremblay, who has also recently visited the University of Bristol and the University of Brighton to give a similar talk, and to promote her new book, *Strengthening Community University Research Partnerships: Global Perspectives*, co-edited with Dr Budd Hall and Dr Rajesh Tandon - to which ILAS's very own Lorraine McIlrath has contributed an entire chapter - also alluded to people's relationship with water; the idea of people actually "being water", on top of water being an essential human right.

Dr Tremblay's talk was particularly topical, given the ongoing controversy and debate surrounding

Irish Water nationwide, but also a reality check of sorts, given the revelation that many of the poorer citizens of Ghana are forced to pay the equivalent of almost half of their annual salary just to obtain unreliably sourced and sanitised water.

Tremblay was ably supported on the day by Maeve Lydon from the University of Victoria, Canada, who, like Tremblay, specialises in arts-based engagement as a tool for policy, also works as the Coordinator for Community-Based Research Canadian.

The event was attended by a mixture of Irish academics and ILAS-based researchers engaging in knowledge exchange; and Tremblay's presentation stimulated much discussion and friendly debate amongst those present, as well as offering them various helpful techniques and strategies to implement when engaging in research utilising the participatory video framework.

Notable examples include the use of B-roll footage (footage of what a speaker is talking about while the A camera zooms in on screen), the importance of filming for audience and purpose, and the need for all parties of the project to meet in advance of filming to agree and ensure a shared vision for its final outcome.

Tremblay concluded her talk by launching the aforementioned *Strengthening Community University Research Partnerships: Global Perspectives*, a book that looks at how the structures of community

research partnerships materialise and work, and the people who then work together to give voices to those who often go unvoiced.

Lorraine McIlrath's chapter is entitled "Community-University Research and Partnerships in Ireland: Confronting the Crossroads".

In it, she explores "the mechanisms and environments for embedding community-based research and research partnerships through mission, practice, policy and legislation, resources allocation and infrastructure in Ireland at institutional and national levels with a view towards the roads to be taken," suggesting overall that Irish policies are emerging, but are not yet fully Referring back to the participatory video itself, which Tremblay later played and briefly analysed with all present.

One of the immediate outcomes it had was to offer those who participated within it another means of employment: several of Tremblay's initially amateur film crew would later receive and take up offers of similar work within their local community, giving others the chance to share their story in the same way they had theirs.

Overall, perhaps the day's main message was that, despite the modernised digital age we live where attention spans are short and content is key, storytelling is still the main way in which we move people and effect change, regardless of the medium through which we tell it.

What is ILAS all about?

The Institute for Lifecourse and Society (ILAS) is a newly-designated research institute for the applied social sciences at NUI Galway.

The Institute represents a significant and innovative development in that for the first time it brings together the fields of children, youth, older people and disability into one domain of research, teaching and policy.

It will provide greater focus, coherence and direction to applied social science research at the University. Its core function is to achieve international excellence in social policy and practice development through the pursuit of interdisciplinary research in the social sciences by creatively integrating the rich and diverse intellectual resources from within the University and beyond.

Established in part on the commitment, expertise and track record of its three constituent research Centres in NUI Galway: UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (CFRC), Irish Centre for Social Gerontology (ICSG) and Centre for Disability Law and Policy (CDLP).

Apart from earlier achievements of its forming members over the last decade, and in the main supported by the Atlantic Philanthropies Ireland, a recent emergent flagship programme called the Project Lifecourse initiative represents a key formational aspect of the Institute in that it models accruing staff and expertise from among constituent research centre members of the incoming Institute.

Project Lifecourse is a multidisciplinary project with research, policy, practice, and education strands that aims to make a positive contribution to public policy development by improving scientific and practical awareness of human capacities and capabilities across the lifecourse.

Additional research communities committed to joining the Institute include the Irish Centre for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Research (ICAN), Health Economics and Policy Analysis (HEPA) and Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI).

Additionally, a range of stakeholders, including research centres, research clusters, community demonstration projects and individual academics drawn from an impressive range of Colleges, Schools, and Disciplines (including health, law, economics and sociology) within NUI Galway have formally expressed an interest in joining the Institute.

The Institutes focus will be on supporting applied research that informs policy development and practice that makes a positive difference to people's lives. Its initial focus will be to bring together existing work in relation to targeted populations, such as older persons, children and families, and persons with disabilities. This baseline is set to expand.

Initially, but not exclusively, the Institute has four broadly conceived thematic interests:

1. Life Transitions and Human Flourishing
2. Intergenerational Relations
3. Social Health and Wellbeing
4. Civic Engagement and Participation

For more information, visit www.nuigalway.ie/ilas.

Touchstone celebrated by the ILAS

By Neil Slevin

To coincide with the local and national launch of Touchstone, on Wednesday 16 September 2015, the ILAS staged a speaker series and forum fair consisting of over 30 different local and national organisations to celebrate Touchstone's ongoing work with people aged 55 and over, using this unique opportunity to develop awareness about the organisation's activities and to recruit volunteers through discussion and showcase of similar organisations' work.

Touchstone is a national programme aiming to develop the skills and knowledge of people aged 55 and over who wish to play a part in helping to make their communities more age-friendly. It promotes and supports civic engagement, and was developed by a team based at the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, NUI Galway, in partnership with Active Retirement Ireland, Age & Opportunity and Third Age.

A particular focus for the day was the first 50 participants of the Touchstone programme, partici-

pants who had just completed the aforementioned programme in Galway and received their awards at the Celebration Event, the day's unique selling point being that it was the members of the first successfully participating cohort that featured during the speaker series to share their experiences first-hand. Presentations included Ger Hassett's *Views on the Over-55s' Fitness Classes in Headford*, Carmel Geoghegan's *Living with Dementia in the West of Ireland*, and *The Need for Pre-retirement Planning* by Tony Finnerty.

The event was opened by Professor Tom Scharf, Professor of Social Gerontology and Director of the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology at NUI Galway, Ireland responsible for and directly involved in leading the first Touchstone programme, and attended by a further 150 people aged 55 and over interested in becoming engaged in civic activities attended the Celebration Event, along with national and local stakeholders interested in promoting and supporting civic engagement activities in Galway city and county.

Now reflecting on the event, standing out quite

prominently throughout the day was the enthusiastic approach and dynamism shown towards what the day itself stood for - what Touchstone stands for - regardless of age and/or outlook, and this was reflected by the hub and buzz of interaction that was the forum fair following the speaker series, with interactive displays ranging from SAGE to Rock Against Dementia Galway 2015, and so many more.

It was also interesting to note, both from conversation with Dr Kieran Walsh, co-author of *Ageing Through Austerity* by Walsh, Carney and Ni Léime, and with Touchstone members present who do not wish to be named, that ageing is not something that has been affected as dramatically as one might think by Ireland's recent period of relevant austerity; in reality, our ageing population faces challenges and issues very similar to those of previous generations - namely maintaining activity levels, interacting with a different and rapidly-developing world, and remaining involved socially within the local community - all challenges and issues that Touchstone and events like this strive to tackle head-on.

Long may they continue to do so.