



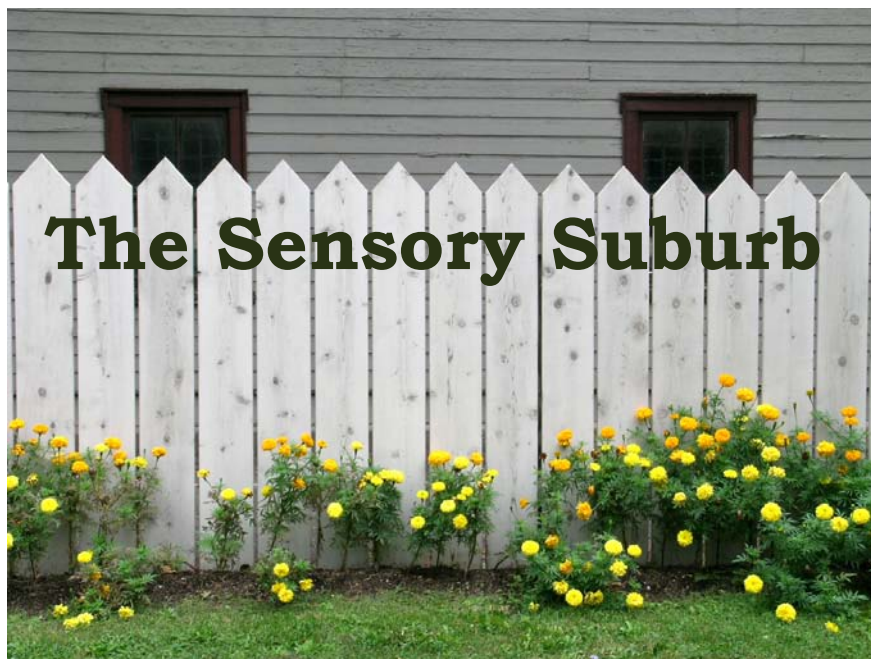
NUI MAYNOOTH

Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad



The Leverhulme Trust

**The Suburban Cultures Interdisciplinary Research Network**  
**Inaugural Symposium**  
**NUI Maynooth**  
**Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011**



The Suburban Cultures Interdisciplinary Research Network aims to further the scholarly, professional and public understanding of the cultures of the modern suburbs through international and interdisciplinary research.

As part of its inaugural meeting, the Suburban Cultures Network will host a one-day symposium on 'The Sensory Suburb' at NUI Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland. Suburbs present us with myriad landscapes, soundscapes, technoscapes and culturescapes, which inform both the social imaginary of creative artists and the everyday lived experience of suburbanites. Through an interdisciplinary lens, this symposium will offer an opportunity to reflect, analyse and respond to the sensory palate of suburbia. Speakers include the award winning writer Roddy Doyle, the distinguished urban sociologist Mark Gottdiener, the writer and scholar Joanne Jacobson and NUIM academics Eamonn Slater and Moynagh Sullivan.

Registration fee for all day attendance to include lunch is €30. Individual sessions may be attended for free but please email to confirm attendance in advance [j.a.sullivan@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:j.a.sullivan@exeter.ac.uk) or [sociology.department@nuim.ie](mailto:sociology.department@nuim.ie)

## SYMPOSIUM PROGRAMME

Venue: NIRSA Conference Room, Second Floor, IONTAS Building, NUI Maynooth, North Campus. Please let us know in advance if you require parking. Email: [j.a.sullivan@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:j.a.sullivan@exeter.ac.uk) .

9:00 Registration and welcome

9:15- 11:15 *The sensory suburbs salon*. (Chair: Chris Niedt, Hofstra University)

Nine short presentations from colleagues around the world on work in progress that connects with the theme of the symposium and the broader mission of the Suburban Cultures network. Each presenter speaks for 10 minutes maximum and may use five powerpoint slides. Followed by discussion.

11:15-11:30 Coffee break

11:30- 12:45- Keynote address: Mark Gottdiener, State University of New York at Buffalo, *Theming and the New Form of Urban Space: Beyond the Suburb/ City Dichotomy*

Abstract:

Applying the Lefebvrian approach to urban space, I argue that America's current stage of political economy- global capitalism - following the previous period of transnational de-industrialization, has produced a new urban form, *the Multi-Centered Metropolitan Region*, which moves us firmly beyond the traditional city-suburb dichotomy. Now multi- centred growth poles of commerce, retailing, air transport and manufacturing create their own inner dynamics ruling the massive metropolitan regions in the U.S. and possibly elsewhere.

Within the new form of space, locational competition has become more acute as multi- centres vie for visitors/clients/customers. The phenomenon of "theming," in turn, has expanded in kind by facilitating the new, prevailing spatial dynamic. New forms of architecture, new uses of existing architectural forms, new spaces of consumption, new ways of consuming space, and other important hybrids of signs attached to the built environment have resulted. Examining these current changes within the context of suburban studies, my presentation provides a new understanding of theming and its more recent variations, including branding and architecture as sign value.

Respondent: Eamonn Slater, NUI Maynooth (Chair Mary Benson, NUIM)

Discussion

12:45- 13:45 lunch provided

13:45-15:15 *Writing the suburbs.* (Chair Joanne Gill, Exeter University)

Joanne Jacobson, Yeshiva University, New York, *Remembering Eden: The American Suburb's Sensory Landscape in Memoir*

This presentation will frame a reading by Joanne Jacobson from her 2007 memoir *Hunger Artist: A Suburban Memoir*—an evocation of the unravelling of one middle class Jewish family's effort to start fresh on suburban ground in the 1950s and 1960s. The memoir will be located in a post-World War II “landscape of hope,” grounded in the optimistic prerogatives of home ownership and the mastery of outdoor space: the sensory textures of lawn, backyard and garden; the world of do-it-yourself. The emotional fate of those expectations of transformation—of upward mobility and material plenty—will also be explored in the context of the author's own process of writing this memoir, and of other memoirs dealing with growing up in U.S. suburbs during this period.

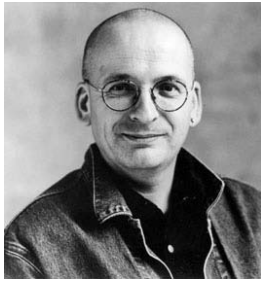
Moynagh Sullivan, NUI Maynooth, *“Looking at being someone”:* *Gender and Class in the poetry of Rita Anne Higgins*

15:15- 15:30 Coffee break

15:30- 16:30 *Reading the suburbs.* Booker prize winning author, Roddy Doyle reads from his work followed by Question and Answer session with the audience (Chair Mary P. Corcoran, NUIM)

16:30 Wrap up of symposium, next steps for research network.

Biographical notes:



Roddy Doyle is the author of nine novels, a collection of stories, and *Rory & Ita*, a memoir of his parents. He has written five books for children and has contributed to a variety of publications including *The New Yorker*, *McSweeney's*, *Metro Eireann* and several anthologies. He won the Booker Prize in 1993, for *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*.

Roddy has written for the stage and his plays include *Brownbread* and *Guess Who's Coming For The Dinner*. He co-adapted with Joe O'Byrne his novel *The Woman who Walked into Doors* and he co-wrote with Bisi Adigun a new version of *The Playboy of the Western World*.

He also wrote the screenplays for *The Snapper*, *The Van*, *Family*, *When Brendan Met Trudy* and he co-wrote the screenplay for *The Commitments*. Roddy Doyle lives and works in Dublin. His version of Nikolai Gogol's satirical comedy, *The Government Inspector* is currently running at Dublin's Abbey Theatre.



Mark Gottdiener holds an MA in Economics from the University of Minnesota and a PhD in Sociology from SUNY Stony Brook. His areas of specialization are urbanism and cultural studies. He is one of the founders of the New Urban Sociology, with a textbook of that title now in its fourth edition (co- author), and of the Socio- Semiotic approach to material culture. He is the author/co-author/editor/co-editor of 16 books and over 100 research papers in these fields. Awarded a Fulbright Research Fellowship in 1985, he has also held visiting professorships in the U.S. and Europe, as well as lecturing in several Latin American countries. In 2010 he was presented with the "Robert and Helen Lynd Award for Distinguished Career Achievement" by the American Sociological Association.



Joanne Jacobson grew up in suburban Chicago (USA), and received her B.A. (from the University of Illinois, Urbana) and her M.A. and Ph.D. (from the University of Iowa)--in American Civilization. Her memoir *Hunger Artist: A Suburban Childhood* (Bottom Dog Press/ Bowling Green Station University) appeared in 2007, and her academic study *Authority and Alliance in the Letters of Henry Adams* was published by the University of Wisconsin Press in 1992. Her critical essays and creative nonfiction have appeared in such publications as *The Nation*, *New England Review*, *Fourth Genre*, *Massachusetts Review* and *Michigan Quarterly Review*. She has taught American studies, American literature and creative writing at the University of Iowa, at the University of Angers, France (as a Fulbright lecturer), at Middlebury College, and at Yeshiva University in New York City, where she is currently Professor of English.

Eamonn Slater is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. He has edited two books with his colleague, Dr. Michel Peillon, *Encounters with Modern Ireland*, (1998) and *Memories of the Present*, (2000). He has published a range of articles on the Political Economy of nineteenth century Ireland, on Irish landscape, and various aspects of the sociology of Irish culture. Recently, his work has taken a 'dialectic turn' in which he has attempted to apply a dialectical framework to understanding the relationship between nature and society. This endeavour has led to a number of publications on the suburban front garden, the 'theming' of nineteenth century landlord estate parks in Ireland and the 'reoccupation' of Irish suburban ghost estates by nature (an exploration into visual sociology). Currently, he is doing research on Marx's conceptualizations of colonialism in nineteenth century Ireland from a dialectical perspective.



Moynagh Sullivan is a University Lecturer with research interests in Psychoanalytic and Gender Theory, Twentieth Century and Contemporary Poetry, Women's Writing, Postmodernism and Popular Culture. She has published a

number of articles in these areas, and she has co-edited two collections of essays on contemporary Irish Culture and Society, *Facing the Other: Interdisciplinary Essays on Race, Gender and Social Justice in Contemporary Ireland*, and *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, as well as a special issue of *The Irish Review* on Irish Feminisms. She lectured in Tokyo and at UCD for a number of years before she came to the English Department at NUI, Maynooth.

Further details and registration forms at

[\*\*http://humanities.exeter.ac.uk/research/networks/suburbs\*\*](http://humanities.exeter.ac.uk/research/networks/suburbs)

For enquiries, please contact Jill Sullivan, Network Research Facilitator at

[j.a.sullivan@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:j.a.sullivan@exeter.ac.uk).