

## **Sektionsvorschlag Anglistentag 2023**

### **Irish Communities in a Glocal Context: Literary and Cultural Narratives**

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When thinking about community and Ireland, one of the first ideas that comes to mind may be the stereotype of the rural community. The notion of communities is, however, manifold and multi-layered. In terms of space and place, local, regional, national and transnational layers can be considered, while there are also multiple religious, economic or social constructivist conceptions, such as Benedict Anderson's "imagined community" (1983). These concepts provide opportunities to reflect on Irish, Northern Irish as well as diaspora communities.

From the stereotypical regional and religious small-town community of colonial times, for instance evoked in Maria Edgeworth's *The Absentee* (1812) and Jane Barlow's *Irish Idylls* (1892), or criticised in George Moore's *Untilled Field* (1903), Ireland has gradually transformed into a 'modern' society since its independence. The Republic's entry into the EEC and the later ensuing Celtic Tiger period, as a cultural signifier for newness (Buchanan, 2009), firmly placed Ireland in a globalised world, despite the 2008 collapse of the economy. Communities thus need to be considered in a global – or rather glocal – context as well today because they are shaped by the interconnectedness of global and local spheres and considerations, which also reciprocally influence one another.

Literature and culture play an important role in this regard, as they can deal with questions of identity, feelings of belonging and citizenship, engage in the transnational turn and can represent a progressive impetus or a backlash to globalisation, to name only some themes that proliferate today – not only but particularly since Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. Revisiting the classic narrative of community as defined by Sandra Zagarell in the 1980s provides a point of departure for reflection on Irish communities in a glocal context today and in the past. According to Zagarell, the genre of the "narrative of community" presents "the contrast between community life and the modern world directly through participant/observer narrators" (1988, 503). While contemporary literary and cultural narratives of community may not follow the narrow characteristics outlined by Zagarell more than 30 years ago, they still provide ideas about the creation and maintenance of communities or about how communities fall apart due to political, economic and social developments. Such narratives can construct microcosms to address pressing issues in politics and culture (e.g. Donal Ryan's *The Spinning Heart*, 2012), they can engage in the construction of communities across time and space (e.g. Emma Donoghue's hybrid fiction in *Astray*, 2012), they can present counter discourses or draw attention to exclusionary practices of separation and division (e.g. in Northern Irish Troubles fiction, border narratives or contemporary fiction by Afro-Irish writers), or highlight the role of storytelling for the maintenance of communities.

A revisiting of the narrative of community, regardless of its concern with 'new' or 'old' communities, with formation or dissection, allows for a discussion of in- and exclusion with regard to Ireland's colonial and postcolonial past, the cultural narratives of the Celtic Tiger

and the economic crash in 2008, as well as transnational literature. Such narratives focus attention on forms of "cultural production that take place in the liminal space between real and imagined borders" (Jay 2010, 1) and place "Irish identity in dialogue with other cultural, national, or ethnic affiliations" (Tucker and Casey 2014, 2). Furthermore, a particular focus on migration can direct attention to the tensions between local and global levels of community life and to questions of belonging, similarities, alterity or difference. The critical discussion of cultural and literary representations does not only emphasise the polyphony potentially created by different voices but also highlights how diverse forms of cultural production open up spaces for reframing communities beyond geographical and imagined borders or limiting understandings of national identities. Such an engagement with cultural and literary narratives renders visible conflicts rooted in essentialist understandings of identities. It opens possibilities for a reframing in light of 'glocalisation' – asking how shared experiences can proliferate over the perceived need for borders and exclusion, inviting a focus on communal, or even universal, themes and prompting a renegotiation of identities based on alterity.

We invite contributions (20-minute papers plus 10-minute discussions) that address the following or related topics:

- Irish and/or Northern Irish communities as imagined communities
- constructions of transnational and glocal communities: Irish-British, Irish-Scottish and Irish-Welsh communities, European communities, transatlantic communities
- the impact of globalisation and communities in a glocal context
- Irish colonial and postcolonial communities and their political and cultural constituents, e.g., the penal laws and absenteeism and their effects on division and community building in Ireland and Britain, Famine communities, the Irish diaspora in Britain and worldwide
- migration and community building: Ireland from emigration to immigration country
- new communities or voices that break open the canon or ideas of homogeneity (e.g., Afro-Irish writers, queer communities, activists for disabled people)
- solidarity and austerity communities, e.g., during the Great Famine, the Eurozone crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine
- 'The Troubles' as constructions of separation and community
- the Irish Border, division, and border communities then and now
- Brexit as a challenge to and intensification of feelings of transnational community
- the relationship between national or grand narratives and the more local narratives communities tell about themselves; collective identity and memory
- literary strategies to convey community, e.g., aesthetics of community, narrative, lyrical and dramatic techniques, genre constituents, intertextuality, canonisation
- possible tensions between community and individuality in and through narratives of community

We also welcome proposals that approach the topics listed above from a gender perspective or an intersectional lens.

Please send your abstract (300-400 words) and a short bio to the section organizers: [boller@anglistik.uni-siegen.de](mailto:boller@anglistik.uni-siegen.de) and [sara.strauss@uni-paderborn.de](mailto:sara.strauss@uni-paderborn.de) by 15 January 2023.