



PhD Position in Sociology:

“Far-Right Contention and Community Responses in Ireland”

Post Title:	PhD Researcher in Sociology
Post Status:	48 months, Full-time
Department / School:	Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy, Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin
Location:	Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin, College Green, Dublin 2, Ireland
Reports to:	Assistant Professor Larissa Meier
Salary:	Maintenance stipend €18,500 per annum plus full tuition fees (EU/non EU). In addition, the Department offers a teaching assistantship as non-stipend pay.
Closing Date:	30th April 2026

Post Summary

Doctoral Researcher in Sociology

The Department of Sociology at Trinity College Dublin recruits a highly motivated and outstanding doctoral researcher for a period of 4 years (48 months).

The person appointed will conduct an innovative PhD project on far-right mobilization and community responses in Ireland. The research consists of systematic case studies of how local communities respond to far-right mobilizations and how different types of responses shape local conflict dynamics and forms of belonging.

The project is structured around two core sub-topics and addresses the following research questions:

- 1. Trajectories and variation in far-right mobilization**
How do responses by different social actors shape far-right mobilization in local communities? Which actors respond—or do not respond—and in what ways? What factors influence whether and how actors engage with far-right mobilization? How do patterns of social response vary across communities?
- 2. Consequences of far-right mobilization for local communities**
What effects does far-right mobilization have on local communities? How does it shape cooperation among local actors (e.g. civil society, media, institutional actors) and community experiences of inclusion, exclusion, and belonging? How do these effects vary across communities?

The successful candidate will be integrated into a PhD project that develops an innovative mixed-methods approach to the study of far-right mobilization and community responses in Ireland. The

project will provide the student with the opportunity to carry out independent case studies of local conflict dynamics, generating new knowledge on how communal and institutional actors respond to the challenges posed by divisive far-right politics, and how these local contestations shape emerging forms of exclusion and belonging. The PhD candidate will be encouraged to develop their own analytical perspective and empirical research strategies, provided these remain within the scope of the planned project. Over the course of the PhD, the candidate will gain skills in collaborative project management, research communication, and community-oriented research practice. The Department of Sociology at Trinity College Dublin will provide logistical, academic, and intellectual support by integrating the PhD candidate into a large and vibrant community of social science doctoral students at Trinity College Dublin.

Major research activities conducted by the PhD candidate will involve (1) reviewing the literature on far right politics and societal responses; (2) developing a comparative qualitative research design for the systematic analysis of local conflict dynamics; (3) designing and implementing qualitative and mixed-methods research instruments including semi-structured interviews, focus groups and social network analysis; (4) engaging in analysing and interpreting results for social science audiences; (5) reaching out and sharing results with civils society and community actors, as well as policy makers; (6) presenting work in front of different audiences at local, national and international level in conferences or networks; and (6) publishing articles arising from the study together with the Principal Investigator.

Standard duties of the post

- Critical, systematic and analytical review of relevant literature for the project;
- Writing academic pieces (journal articles) in English;
- Conducting empirical research using qualitative and mixed-method techniques;
- Actively initiating, writing and submitting research papers for publication and contributing to joint projects or related submissions with the PhD supervisor;
- Organising and attending meetings, workshops and conferences;
- Disseminating academic work to specialised and general audiences;
- 4 hours of teaching a week during the statutory term (facilitating undergraduate tutorials)

Candidate Specification

Qualifications

- MA, MSc or MPhil in Sociology, Political Science or in any cognate fields (thesis should be either defended or submitted)

Essential Research Skills

- Advanced qualitative skills
- Previous experience in conducting interviews and/or working with communities
- Previous knowledge in case-study research designs, preferably with experience in comparative designs
- Previous experience in social network analysis would be an asset
- Advanced knowledge in the field of sociology or political science, preferably with a focus on conflict, social movements or related fields

Other Essential Knowledge and Skills

- Excellent written and verbal communication skills in English
- Willingness to contribute proactively to the development of the project

- Strong motivation to publish in academic journals
- Good organisational skills and ability to meet deadlines
- Ability to work effectively in a team
- Strong interpersonal and relational skills

Informal enquiries are welcome and can be made directly to Dr. Larissa Meier (Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology at Trinity College Dublin; MEIERL@tcd.ie).

Background and Relevance of the Research Project

Far-right politics has shaped contemporary social and political landscapes across Europe. Radical right parties are or have been part of government in many countries (Golder 2016). Beyond elections, reactionary movements, think tanks, and subcultural groups increasingly use protest politics and grassroots activism to mobilize support and spread far-right ideas (Castelli Gattinara and Pirro 2019). Ireland—long considered an exception due to limited electoral success—has seen a marked rise in organized grassroots far-right activism over the past decade, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic (Cannon and Murphy 2024).

A growing body of scholarship examines the rise of far-right politics, yet much of this research remains focused on the electoral arena and adopts far-right actor–centric approaches. While more recent studies have begun to adopt more holistic perspectives, there is still limited understanding of how responses by other societal actors—such as mainstream parties, media practitioners, and civil society—shape the emergence, evolution, and success of far-right mobilization (Brown et al. 2023; De Jonge 2021; Meier et al. 2025). Moreover, existing research continues to privilege the national level of analysis, leaving the dynamics and effects of far-right mobilization at the community level underexplored. This is a significant limitation, given that political experiences are often shaped locally and that far-right actors actively seek to mobilize support and consolidate constituencies within communities. By focusing on local interactions and societal responses, this project directly addresses both gaps.

At a time when far-right actors are likely to maintain or increase their political leverage, and when their mobilization has demonstrably divided communities and deliberately fuelled conflict, research on societal responses to far-right politics is both analytically essential and socially urgent. Developing effective responses—by civil society actors and policymakers—that enable communities to respond constructively to far-right mobilization and to build inclusive forms of belonging requires nuanced, empirically grounded evidence. Systematic research on how different societal responses either counter or unintentionally intensify local divisions is therefore crucial to inform societal responses that strengthen communities’ capacity to address conflict and foster inclusive social relations.

The PhD Program at the Department of Sociology

The candidate will join the PhD programme at the Department of Sociology of Trinity College Dublin, Ireland’s leading university which is located on a historic campus in the heart of Dublin. The Department will provide all logistic, academic and intellectual support and integrate the successful candidate into a vibrant doctoral programme at TCD, while offering additional economic supports to cover fees and basic expenses related to the PhD programme. PhD students at the department are embedded in the interdisciplinary context of the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy which also includes economics, political science, and philosophy. PhD students in Sociology enjoy a wide range of training opportunities. For example, students participate in a research training programme in the department and have the opportunity to join masters level courses (including courses on research methods). Moreover, our PhD students are supported to attend high-quality international workshops and summer schools.

The Department of Sociology

The Department of Sociology is a member of the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy, one of 24 Schools within Trinity College. The Department's principal research clusters are: Migration, Identities and Diversity; Comparative Inequalities, Education and Families; Power, Conflict and Resistance; Digitalisation and Social Networks.

Department staff are highly international, and our research combines sophisticated and diverse qualitative methodologies with advanced quantitative methods. Our research links to several College priority research themes: 'International Integration' centred within Trinity Research in Social Science (TRISS), 'Identities in Transformation' and 'Inclusive Society' within the Trinity Long Room Hub (TLRH) and 'Ageing' within the Longitudinal Study of Ageing (TILDA). The Department has a long-standing collaboration with Ireland's premier research institute, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and has strong links with other disciplines such as Medicine, Psychology, Immunology and Neuroscience.

The Department has an active postgraduate programme. It is home to an MSc in Comparative Social Change delivered jointly with University College Dublin, as well as an MPhil in Race, Ethnicity, Conflict. It has a structured PhD programme combining advanced methodological training with transferable skills workshops. There are around 15 PhD students and our doctoral graduates have positions in academic institutions, non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

Further information on the Department of Sociology is available at: www.tcd.ie/sociology

The School of Social Sciences and Philosophy

The School of Social Sciences and Philosophy was formed in 2005 and comprises the Departments of Economics, Philosophy, Political Science and Sociology, together with the Policy Institute. With over 45 full-time academic staff, the School has an international reputation in research and is committed to the dissemination of its knowledge and expertise to the benefit of the wider community, with the Policy Institute providing an important channel for policy analysis and evaluation. The School is home to the unique undergraduate degree in PPES (Philosophy, Political Science, Economics and Sociology). It also contributes to undergraduate degrees in Business, Economic and Social Studies (this includes Political Science and Sociology), Philosophy, History and Political Science, Philosophy and Political Science, Law and Political Science, Geography and Political Science, Sociology and Social Policy, and European Studies. Over 100 graduate students are conducting research across the four disciplines.

Further information on the School is available at: www.tcd.ie/ssp

Trinity College Dublin

Founded in 1592, Trinity College is at the nexus of tradition and innovation, offering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across 24 schools and three faculties: arts, humanities, and social sciences; engineering, maths and science; and health sciences. Spread across 47 acres in Dublin's city centre, Trinity's more than 20,000 strong student body comes from all 32 counties of Ireland, and 16% of students come from outside the country. Of those, 40% are from outside the European Union, making Trinity's campus cosmopolitan and bustling, with a focus on diversity.

As Ireland's leading university, the pursuit of academic excellence through research and scholarship is at the heart of the Trinity education. Trinity is known for intellectual rigour, excellence, interdisciplinary approach, and research-led teaching. Home to Nobel prize-winners such as scientist Ernest Walton and writer Samuel Beckett, Trinity draws visitors from across the world to its historic campus each year, including to the Book of Kells and Science Gallery which capture the university's

connection to both old and new. Trinity accounts for one-fifth of all spin-out companies from Irish higher education institutions, helping to turn Ireland into an innovation-intensive, high-productivity economy. That culture of innovation and entrepreneurship is a defining characteristic of our campus as we help shape the next generation of job creators.

Equal Opportunities Policy

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to the employment policies, procedures and practices which do not discriminate on grounds such as gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, race, religious belief, sexual orientation or membership of the travelling community.

Application Procedure

Candidates should submit:

- a motivation letter clearly indicating how the applicant's profile and skills fit the requirements of the job position (max. 1 page);
- a full curriculum vitae;
- the names and contact details of 2 referees (with email addresses included);
- at least one example of a written piece (in English and including some empirical data analysis) that shows the analytical and writing skills of the candidate in a social science discipline;
- via email to MEIERL@tcd.ie
- by Thursday 30th April 2026 (23:00 GMT),
- indicating exactly "PhD Application – Community Response Far-Right" in the subject line