



UCD School of Geography Seminar Series

Supported Living, Care and Disability: Challenging non-normative modes of home making

Prof Andrew Power

Date: Thursday, 29th of February

Time: 15:00 – 16:00

Format: Hybrid

In-person: E003 Newman Building

Online: <https://ucd-ie.zoom.us/j/69306778948?pwd=cW1GUzJWaTJUbnTVJVY9zODUrMzhlUT09>

‘Feeling at home’ is a phrase that refers to the deeply personal, private, affective bond that people can develop with a space, typically where they live. Yet, creating and sustaining a sense of feeling at home is often framed in normative assumptions about the level of people’s privacy, autonomy, control, and power in shaping the home environment. For adults with learning disabilities living in ‘group homes’, comprising shared housing with support, the experience of feeling at home is one where these personal resources are limited, yet where home making nonetheless occurs. Based on a study in England involving photovoice with adults with learning disabilities and interviews with staff and family members, our findings reveal how home making is co-constituted through power relations between different actors and institutions responsible for care work including quality monitoring and oversight (e.g. support staff, care quality inspectors, housing associations, local authorities). We identify four cross-cutting areas which reflect how this co-constitution with care work operates. Care is taken in the relational meaning-making of home, e.g. with staff attending to the construction of a ‘house mate’ or ‘tenant’ identity with adults with learning disabilities. Care creates a material imprint in the form of paperwork, signage, staff rotas, locked cabinets, and rules about the placing of personal possessions, which in turn reconstitute how home is experienced and felt. Care work also shapes the temporal dynamics of the home in the form of anticipating risk assessments and inspections or holding out for repairs. Each area reinforces how home making is practiced and how a sense of feeling at home is experienced as a mutually evolving and distributed phenomenon. It emerges for the home and between the people who occupy it.



Biography

Andrew Power is a Professor of Human Geography at University of Southampton. His research interests lie in the geographies of social care and disability. His latest research draws on a recent National Institute for Health Research funded project 'Feeling at Home', where he has worked with researchers at King's College London and the Care Quality Commission to create a checklist for disabled people to feel more at home in supported living settings. He also has an allied interest in the relational geographies of the voluntary sector, where he has examined how forms of support for disabled people have evolved across the community in the wake of day service closures, with funding from the Economic and Social Research Council. Beyond his own research projects, he serves as a member of the Geographies of Health and Wellbeing Research Group (formerly Chair, 2016-2020) of the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute for British Geographers).