

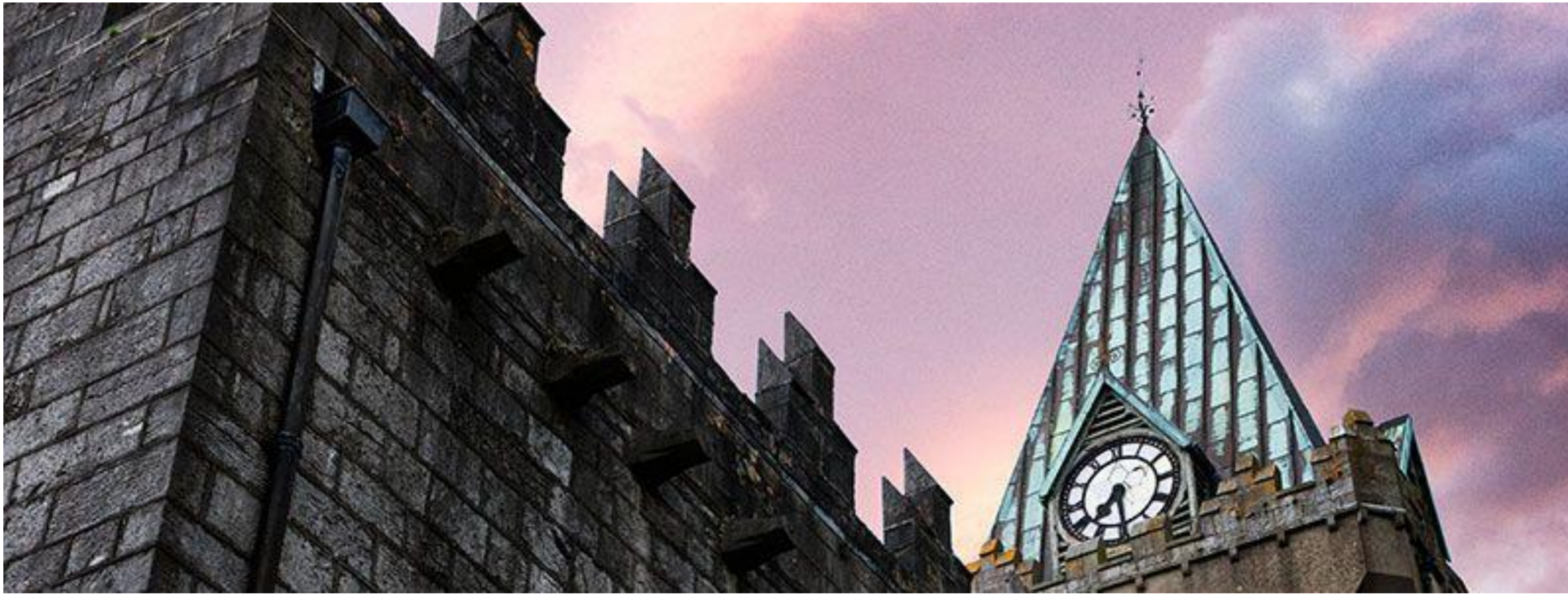
A Study of St Nicholas Street Market in Galway

Mike Hynes¹ & Tony Varley² (Principle Investigators) and the REaL Team

¹ Social Science Research Centre (SSRC), Whitaker Institute, NUI Galway

² Social Science Research Centre (SSRS), Whitaker Institute, NUI Galway

Exploring the St Nicholas's Street Market



Street markets have existed in Irish towns and cities for centuries and have undergone considerable expansion, both in number and in size, in recent decades. In the modern period street markets tend to be viewed as significant assets in promoting sustainable local food production and small-scale artisanal economic activity, as well as making a distinctive contribution to the cultural vibrancy of the urban environment. Street markets can further be regarded as valued social spaces that reflect and contribute to the diversity of urban life in contemporary Ireland. While Irish farmers' markets have attracted some research and attention from social scientists in the past there is still a dearth of research on the more generic types of street markets. Against this backdrop, this research project focuses on St. Nicholas street market, whose origins in the heart of the city date back to medieval times. The primary focus in the first phase of the research - currently under way - is on how the traders themselves perceive the market, their place in it, and how they view the manner the local authority exercises its regulatory responsibilities over the market and the individual traders. A second phase will investigate how the local authority views the recent evolution of the St. Nicholas street market, its current organisation and its further development in the near to medium terms. A third contemplated phase of research will consider the views of consumers who shop in the market, as well as tourists who visit while in the city.



Methodology



A mixed methodological approach is being adopted in the first phase of the research. So as to contextualise how the St. Nicholas street market stands today and to provide a baseline against which to gauge changes over recent decades, an attempt is being made to reconstruct what the market looked like, and how it was organised, thirty years ago at the close of the 1980s. Various archival sources and interviews are being used to construct this baseline. By means of a combination of questionnaires and in-depth interviews the main challenge in the first phase of the research is to discover how the current generation of street traders, along with members of their representative committee, view the contemporary organisation of the market, and their place in it, in terms of its perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.

Phase One Report

A report documenting how the St. Nicholas street market has changed over the past three decades and how the present generation of street traders view the market's current organisation will constitute the key output of the first phase of the research. It is envisaged that as well as being of interest (and value) to the traders themselves, the report covering the first phase of the research will attract a readership among local decision-makers, politicians and members of the general public. The first phase research further lends itself to the preparation of a number of academic papers.

Project Team and Management

This Research is being managed by Dr Mike Hynes and Dr Tony Varley with the assistance of the REaL Project, an initiative of the SSRC which seeks to involve students in practical social scientific research. The REaL Project allows students learn through their own discoveries and experiences, working in collaboration with experienced academic advisers and other students in a research-rich and supportive environment.