Legal Geographies and Social Justice

Place: Geography Junior Lab. Third floor Sciences Building, Main Campus PMB
Date: Tuesday 5th September 2017
Time: 1-2 pm (please feel free to bring your lunch)
Speaker: Louise Sarsfield Collins

Abstract: That space and law are mutually constitutive is now well accepted among scholars (Braverman *et al*., 2014; Delaney 2015). Not only are places where laws take on meaning but the relationships between space, place, law and their intricate interweavings have a significant effect on the production of social space (Delaney, 2010). Thus, for example, laws which deem homosexuality and homosexual acts illegal serve to coercively control particular bodies within space. Not only are particular actions criminalised but such laws seek to eradicate lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans- and queer (LGBTQ) people by making their very 'being in space' unlawful.

In addressing these issues, this paper argues that the lens of legal geographies offers a way into understanding the legal mechanisms that serve to uphold social injustices. I seek to unpack the often hidden processes at work in what Delaney has termed the nomosphere, and explore how activists have sought to trouble space, creating sites of resistance where once there was vulnerability. I will draw on two case studies to illustrate the legal machinery at work: the campaign for reproductive rights in Ireland and current work in progress on LGBTQ activism in South Africa.   This final case study will also touch upon the methodological challenges faced by researchers exploring these themes.

Bio: Louise is a PhD candidate at the Department of Geography, Maynooth University, Ireland. Her research explores the legal geographies of LGBTQ people in postcolonial states and subsequent sites of vulnerability and resistance. Louise is a founding member of the Geographical Society of Ireland Postgraduate Network (GSI-PGN) and a member of Supporting Women in Geography (SWIG), Ireland.