

Intercultural Comparison of Societal/Social Innovation and Ecological Impact using Relevant Modelling Tools

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As part of the Summer School on “Societal Energy” organised by Styrian Academy/ESEIA in 2012, we made contact with a number of researchers and developers from different European countries and institutions. Among these researchers we came across the research of Gerard Mullally from the Department of Sociology at University College Cork (UCC) on “Energy and Society”.

After the Summer School we forged links with the aim of working on intercultural comparisons and deepen the exchange between the universities of Cork and Graz. This resulted in an internship undertaken to UCC by Stephan Maier, supported by a Leonardo-scholarship. This was organised in a very short period of time, without undue complication with the support of the Alumni Uni Graz Leonardo and University College Cork.

The core of the exchange work centred on the study of different political issues and their impacts on sustainable development/societal behaviour and ultimately on energy/the natural environment/ society on macro and micro bases, while considering literature based models. This basic collection of interdisciplinary thoughts and personal connections achieved through the internship provides the foundation for an “Intercultural comparison of Societal/Social Innovation of Ireland and Austria, with the potential to include Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium” and an expanded exchange network and improved collaboration between European Universities of various departments of European Universities.

As part of the internship, Stephan Maier attended a number of various postgraduate sociology classes at UCC, providing him with a better understanding and more comprehensive knowledge around sociological approaches. He also attended and presented at an “Adult Continuing Education Seminar Series” on “Sustainability and Modern Society” at UCC, which provided the opportunity for transdisciplinary and public discussion and reflection which served to underline the need for broader/more complex views on environmental issues and sustainable development. Additionally he attended the “Environmental Research Day”, “Postgraduate Information Day” and an English Language Course at the English College Cork.

Together with the process- and chemical engineering department of UCC he co-supervised a final year masters research project on “Carbon Moratorium” which enabled the interlinking of modelling tools from UCC, the Technical University of Graz’ Chemical- and Process Engineering and Karl-Franzens-University’s techniques.

During the whole internship he made extensive contacts across departments throughout UCC through formal and informal meetings. Furthermore he participated in initial meetings regarding the structure and organisation of this transdisciplinary conference.

After having begun this closer cooperation between the Universities in Cork/Ireland and Graz/Austria the authors see the further collaborative work as an integrative and sustainable way to work across disciplines and on a broader trans-European scale. The collective common knowledge should not only be a basic catalyst but it should also present opportunities to help find the better solutions for future generations more easily. This paper will present some of the work and ideas emanating from this collaboration.