

Dublin SERIND Seminar 2014

"Advances in New Technology coupled with the Community Co-operation can deliver local Sustainable Jobs and a healthy environment in which to live"

On 15 November 2014 Green European Foundation (GEF) with the support of Green Foundation Ireland (GFI) hosted a seminar in the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), Bolton Street, Dublin, Ireland. The seminar was part of the pan-European "Socio-Ecological Reindustrialisation" (SERIND) project which is being co-ordinated by GEF and involves seven Green Foundations from seven EU countries with at least one seminar taking place in each participating country. The theme for the Dublin event was *"Rebuilding Communities Through Sustainable Jobs"*.

The Dublin Seminar explored the trends in the manufacturing and supply of goods and services, and looked at how new technologies are shortening the supply chain making a more 'circular' economy and re-localisation of employment possible.

Gerry Farrell (Dean and Director, College of Engineering and Built Environment, DIT) and **Tommy Simpson** (Director, GFI) welcomed participants to the seminar. The **Lord Mayor of Dublin, Christy Burke**, performed the official opening of the seminar and praised the organisers of the event. He stressed the important contribution that the SERIND seminar could make to providing badly needed sustainable employment in Dublin.

Cairín O'Connor (Development Director, Docklands Innovation) made a short presentation outlining the work of Docklands Innovation, their facilities and their programmes to support the development of new SME businesses.

New Technology and Localisation of Work

The first session was chaired by **Cairín O'Connor** (Docklands Innovation), with **David Foden** (Head of Working Conditions and Industrial Relations Unit, Eurofound), **Tony Murphy** (Senior Change Specialist, IDEAS Institute, SIPTU), **Tommy Simpson** (GFI) and **Hilary Wainwright** (British sociologist, political activist and socialist feminist, best known for being editor of *Red Pepper* magazine – she is also co-author of *"The Lucas Plan: A New Trades Unionism in the Making?"*) making up the panel.

David reported on findings from the 5th European Working Conditions Survey. One of the outcomes of the survey was the increasing use and effect of ICT in the workplace. In particular, David highlighted the increasing number of "E-nomads", people who do not work from their employer's premises and who use ICT most of the time. 24% of workers in the EU now work in this way and this figure is as high as 45% in Nordic countries. This way of working provides greater flexibility to employers and workers but can have its downsides too.

Tony highlighted the importance of creating a "participative" culture in the workplace where management and staff can work collectively together to ensure success and longer term sustainability to the benefit of all. Tony explained a model that the IDEAS Institute have developed and are now rolling out in co-operation with many large companies to promote this approach. He expects this model will generate creative energy and innovation in those companies and could be applied to good effect in all workplaces.

Tommy focused on advances in new technology and thinking, and how they were likely to revolutionise the way we work. He reported on how it was becoming easier to hire goods and services without owning them and how 3D printing was making it possible to re-introduce traditional manufacturing activity to places where jobs had been lost to lower cost labour countries.

Hilary explored factors that have influenced working conditions and practices in the past and speculated on how these experiences could improve the work place of the future. In particular, Hilary focused on the pro-active innovative ideas that were generated by workers for securing alternative employment, when faced with potential redundancy.

Solutions Offered by Technology

Nessa Childers (Independent MEP) chaired the second session, with **Ciarán Cuffe** (Lecturer in Planning, DIT), **Sue Duke** (Director of European Public Policy, LinkedIn) and **Roland Stelzer** (Co-Founder and CEO of HappyLab, Austria) comprising the panel.

Ciarán focused on how urban regeneration programmes could deliver sustainable green jobs. He highlighted how new mapping tools can identify urban areas that require "regeneration" and why new technologies in re-use and retro-fitting are cost effective. Ciarán stated that re-use of existing buildings can create economic and social synergies for development.

Sue outlined how companies like LinkedIn use "big data" for economic and labour market planning. She reported on how data storage costs and hardware costs have declined, how greater bandwidth capacity has combined with lower cost usage to create huge growth in on-line traffic and data generation. Sue showed how the resultant data could be organised to connect the skill requirements of individual cities to people who have those attributes.

Roland expanded on the operations of the "HappyLab" in Vienna and how it is supporting the development of local manufacturing enterprises there, through the use of new technologies including 3D printing. The "HappyLab" is part of the international "Maker Movement", which started in the USA, which currently claims to be contributing to 28 million small businesses in the US and that this sector is creating 2 out of every 3 new jobs there. Personal computing operations and personal fabrication manufacturing are leading to the "Democratisation of Information" and the "Democratisation of Production", according to Roland, and he sees both these factors empowering the development of small sustainable and localised business into the future.

Lunchtime Activities

Lunch was served to participants in the Chocolate Factory next door where they also got to experience the operation of a Repair Café that was organised as part of the event. The Repair Café was also open to the public and was busy repairing electrical, computer, clothing, bicycles, etc. A tour of the Rapid Prototyping Lab in DIT Bolton Street, which includes four different 3D printing systems, was also provided for participants during lunch.

Practical Examples of Repair, Recycle and Remake in Dublin

The final session was chaired by **Duncan Stewart** (Environmentalist, Broadcaster and Director of GreenMe), with **Claire Downey** (Sandymount Repair Café), **Sandy Dunlop** (Terenure Initiative) and **Sarah Miller** (CEO, Ballymun Rediscovery Centre) presenting to this session.

Claire outlined the history of and how community Repair Cafés operate. She explained how they use networks, social media and "geek" hangouts to recruit competent "fixers" and to advertise the service to the public. Claire explained that the café setting provided a forum to share experiences, save money and learn new skills. The object of the Repair Café was to re-awaken an ethos of fixing things rather than letting them become obsolete.

Sandy illustrated a model of organised community action which had been developed in Terenure, Dublin to deliver significant business and environmental improvements by engaging the local community. He reported that the project had delivered 10,000 hours of voluntary work to effect desired improvements. Sandy stated that the project, driven by the Terenure community, was delivering real change that was beyond politicians to deliver. He added that the successes already achieved were attracting new funding from the local authority.

Sarah outlined the mission of Ballymun Rediscovery Centre which is to "lead change from waste to resource through re-use, redesign and education". She outlined the history of the initiative and explained how they were able to get community "buy-in" to the project by involving the community in developing the model, which delivers employment and services required by the people of Ballymun. They are now using the skills of the community to provide training for others in using materials that would otherwise have gone to landfill and turning them into restored furniture, recycled paint, recycled fashion, rejuvenated bicycles, etc.

Q & A and Round Table Discussion

Much interesting comment and good ideas were floated during the Question and Answer sessions that took place after each group of speakers had presented. The final session, chaired by Duncan Stewart, evolved into a round table discussion covering the material presented at the seminar. The discussion was wide-ranging and included suggestions that communities need to take charge and co-operate to best build their futures and that of their children. The potential of community co-operatives was explored, as was the issue of whether communities needed to act in a cross political way to maximise the potential to deliver sustainable jobs and a healthy environment in which to live. A number of participants agreed to exchange contact details and committed to try and work together on specific local projects. Many contributors praised the holding of today's seminar and suggested that follow-up seminars should be held to build on the progress made.

Stiofán Nutty

Co-Ordinator, Dublin SERIND Seminar

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Our other event partners included:



DIT / Docklands Innovation



Nessa Childers MEP