



## **Course title: Equity and Sustainability Transitions ENLIGHT Summer School (2023, 2024)**

### **Team leaders / contact persons**

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### **Course summary**

Sustainability transitions are fundamental changes required in socioeconomic and technical systems (such as energy, food or transport systems) to reduce disruptions and enhance opportunities associated with climate change. Sustainability transitions must be advanced in a way to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability to meet the needs of the next generation. Equity refers to fairness and justice in the distribution of resources, opportunities and benefits in these processes. Given the need to implement ambitious environmental and climate objectives, this Summer School explores how sustainable transitions can be advanced with equitable distribution of benefits and burdens.

This interdisciplinary blended course ambitiously covered such themes for up to 30 post-graduate students and ran in 2023 and 2024. It includes a pre-sessional virtual component and a week of intensive in person teaching in Galway, including a one-day field trip. Students learn from lectures, field work, observation, interdisciplinary group work and class discussions. The virtual learning component is focused on discussing and contrasting readings on equity and sustainability transitions. Typically, students have attended from both the Global North and Global South, thus providing an opportunity to learn from different perspectives on how climate change is already adversely affecting different regions and the inherent inequity across population groups. The assessment is based on participation during the Summer School, a final reflective essay, and creative group work.

### **Introduction**

The central focus of the Summer School is centred on what sustainability transitions are and how they occur, with three key learning outcomes, and a fourth added in 2024. While ideas formed around climate justice have become more pronounced in recent years, the Summer School emphasis is on exploring the concrete means by which such aspirations can translate into practices that sustain gains made in the fight for equity over the last centuries and render these compatible with mandates emanating from climate change imperatives.

### **Learning Outcomes**

- Students gain an understanding of the concepts of equity, climate justice and sustainable transitions, and how they are linked.



- Students can review sustainability transition frameworks and their inclusion in policy processes.
- Students outline how civil society, institutions and governments can incorporate equity perspectives into their interventions that relate to climate change ambitions.

### **Educators involved**

The contributing lecturers included 10 academics from three universities and six disciplines.

- *Ghent University*: Dr. Hannah Hook (geography)
- *University of Bordeaux*: Dr. Cécile Cormier (economics)
- *University of Galway*: Dr. Una Murray (international development), Dr. Therese Conway (geography); Dr. Mike Hynes (environmental sociology); Dr. David Styles (Agri-sustainability); Dr. Alexander Stingl, Dr. Stacey Scriver (sociology); Prof Kevin Leyden, (political science); Dr. Hanna-Kaisa Hoppania (political science).

### **How ENLIGHT competences that support innovation and creativity were developed**

Using critical thinking approaches throughout, students are encouraged to integrate all knowledge into their current research thinking and broader processes that they are involved in.

**Group work:** Prior to the virtual session, the coordinators review the students' background. Students are divided into groups of 5 ensuring there is a mix in disciplines and individuals across the participating universities. Each group is given a sustainability topic/theme to focus on. Their task is to produce a creative output on the given topic, based on the lectures and the background readings. Time is allocated during the virtual session and intensive week for reflective thinking and conceptual/visionary planning. Students enhance their interpersonal skills and cultivate social capital via further virtual meetings with their small group before coming to the University of Galway. In 2023, the creative output was a collectively produced report, aimed at a wide audience, with student groups contributing a chapter each. The output was further edited by the coordinators and published as an Open Press publication: [\*Insights on Equity and Sustainability Transitions\*](#)

In 2024, the creative output is a video. Each group designed, narrated and produced a 2–5 minute video on their theme, again aimed at a wider audience. In groups, students distilled the key message they deemed important concerning concepts of equity, climate justice and sustainable transitions. Students were free to decide the focus and style of their video. A compilation of these videos is currently in production, and the link will be provided in July, when fully edited.

**Competences developed: Collaboration, Communication Skills, Intercultural Competences, Digital Competencies, Creativity**

**Lectures and discussions in class:** The series of lectures during the Summer School focused on problems and solutions in sustainability transitions, in contexts such as transport and built environments, planning and participation and measuring

sustainability. Class discussions were cross-disciplinary, as the students represented numerous different backgrounds. (See image1). In 2023 we applied theory to practice by visiting two coastal locations where local communities were mobilised to protect sand dunes through stabilising sand using vegetation and sand accretion. Issues of engagement with communities were covered, including the practices and challenges of participation, along with the issues of funding for community development projects. In 2024, the field trip was to Inis Oírr, a small Island off the coast of Ireland populated by Irish speakers, which serves as an example of a microcosmic instance of issues pertaining to equity and sustainability transitions. Field interviews and discussions demonstrated how community dynamics play out in terms of sustainable living on an Island. Cooperatives have been set up to provide energy and recycling services; with the challenges of sustainable tourism providing a large area for discussion (economic benefits versus the detrimental effects on the natural environment). Students observed and reflected on many key elements such as language, migration, gender, energy, funding and community development.

**Competences developed: Innovation Capacity, Critical Thinking, Problem-Solving**



Image1. Mapping of students' disciplinary backgrounds.

Image 2: Students on a 'city walkability' lecture

### How the course is replicable in the ENLIGHT Community

The Summer School is designed in such a way that it can be replicated in other contexts. It does not rely on the expertise of a particular contributor, as the interdisciplinary starting point is on the different ways we can understand and advance equity and sustainability transitions. The key is to access a network of academics willing to share their knowledge using innovative ways of teaching and learning. The coordinators (Dr Murray and Dr Hoppania) played a major role in curating the process and designing the programme in a logical and sequenced way. The structure of the virtual session, and the intensive week with lectures, group work and a field trip can be adapted to different



locations. The replicability is further enhanced by including the visiting scholars from the other ENLIGHT universities in the running of the Summer School. Dr Hook from Ghent University was present and involved for both years as was the University of Bordeaux, albeit with a different contributor each year. In 2024, Dr Cormier from Bordeaux participated and observed the running of the Summer School, reflecting with the coordinators on progress at the end of each day.

### **Reflection on how learning and teaching is embedded in learning process**

**Reflective essay:** Students produced a final essay on how equity and sustainability transitions applied to the overall theme of their own MA programme or their PhD research. Students were expected to refer to the readings and lectures covered during the Summer School. The essay style was contemplative, whereby students critically reflected on their experience during the Summer School and their educational journey. They outlined how the Summer School impacted their own research themes, and what they plan to do with any new knowledge.

In their reflective essays and module feedback, several students mentioned the significance of having a mix of students participate from both different European countries and from the Global North and South, including students studying for an MA in International Development Practice. Class discussions and group work exposed perspectives and lived experiences not learned from books. The time spent together socially during the fieldtrip and meal times further facilitated such critical exchanges of views.

***Competences developed: Critical Thinking, Personal Competences, Anticipatory Thinking, Intercultural Competences***

### **Innovative approaches to student involvement**

Critical engagement was required throughout the week, with students challenged to unpack concepts, and reflect on their experiences in combination with the new knowledge presented. Innovative approaches were used to ensure engagement—one session focused on how to involve the public for collaborative planning and power relations embedded in such a process. Students engaged in role play, practicing skills in a safe environment, where they had to facilitate, mediate, understand various positions and challenge themselves to think critically and creatively. One role was as an objector to planning, another was a concerned public member and another a local authority. Another session on gender-based violence allowed the students to unravel interlinkages visually between environmental sustainability and gender-based violence, using the 17 sustainable development goals. Quizzes were also used to facilitate concrete experience and reflection prior to gaining new knowledge. Session 13 (see Image 3 below) on Life Cycle Assessment engaged students with a quiz on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from different products. Session 1 facilitated paired worked to provide definitions, prior to providing answers.

Group sessions were used intermittently throughout virtual and in-person sessions. Time was allocated for students to creatively use a *storyboard process* to discuss what they

wish to accomplish, design and draft messages before producing a video on one sustainability theme per group. The goal was to approach their theme inventively and creatively, so their key message had proposed actions for either individuals, civil society, businesses or/and governments.

**ENLIGHT Equity and Sustainability Transitions Summer School - University of Galway**

Monday 20 May	Tuesday 21 May	Wednesday 22 May	Thursday 23 May	Friday 24 May
<b>Coffee &amp; welcome 9-9.30</b> <b>Session 1 9.30-11</b> <b>Introduction &amp; unpacking concepts linked to sustainability (group exercise)</b> Dr Una Murray	<b>Session 5 9.30-11</b> <b>Reflections on the first day.</b> Introduction to Story Board for creative output (learning technologist Aidan O'Callaghan)	<b>FIELD TRIP to Inis Oírr</b> <b>Meet in town for bus to boat 9.15am</b> <b>10.30am Boat departs Ros a Mhíl</b> <b>11.30am Community Development officer meets group</b> <b>12pm Lunch with talk</b> <b>1pm Walk to cooperative, talk with others working with community</b>	<b>Session 9 10.30-11</b> Reflections on the field trip	<b>Session 13 9.30-11</b> <b>Measuring Sustainability: Introduction to the concept of "footprints" with Quiz</b> Dr David Styles
<b>Session 2 11.15-12.45</b> <b>The European Green Deal and policies to advance the green transition</b> Dr Hanna-Kaisa Hoppania	<b>Session 6 11.15-12.45</b> <b>Transport, mobility and Equity</b> Dr Hannah Hook	<b>12pm Lunch with talk</b> <b>1pm Walk to cooperative, talk with others working with community</b>	<b>Session 10 11.15- 12.45</b> <b>Gender based violence and Sustainability</b> Dr Stacey Scriver	<b>Session 14 11.15-12.45</b> <b>The Built Environment and Sustainability</b> Prof Kevin Leyden
<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	- Athchursail arann - Comhar caomhán teo - Comharchumann - Fuinnimh srl maúra - Comhar na nOileáin <b>2pm Arts centre, talk with curator</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Lunch (ENLIGHT)</b>
<b>Session 3 14-15.30</b> <b>Decoloniality, Ecology and Human rights</b> Dr Alex Stingl	<b>Session 7 14-15.30</b> <b>Sustainability and sufficiency-driven transitions for consumers and companies</b> Dr Cécile Cormier	<b>3-4.30pm walk with local historian</b> <b>4.30pm Boat departs</b>	<b>Session 11 14-15.30</b> <b>Planning and Sustainability - planning role play</b> Dr. Therese Conway	<b>Session 15 14-15.30</b> Review of all sessions and recap on what was covered and learnings. Reflections and planning. Dr Una Murray Dr Hanna-Kaisa Hoppania
<b>Session 4 15.45-17.15</b> <b>Walkability (this session includes a walk)</b> Dr Mike Hynes	<b>Session 8 15.45-16.45</b> Introduction to the field trip <i>Pizza night at College bar Sult (ENLIGHT) 6pm</i>		<b>Session 12 15.45-17.</b> <b>Group work for creative output.</b> Support from learning technologist & lecturers.	Students free to explore Galway

Image 3: Timetable of the intensive week of the Summer School.

Session 4 which focused on liveable cities, was in a narrative form, with an autoethnography walk in and through the built urban environment of Galway (see image 2). Students stopped to listen, observe and experience the atmosphere and urban design in different quarters of the city. Lecturers and students engaged informally at break times and during one evening time for pizza, whereby students could further ask questions to the lectures and discuss their interests and research.

**Competences developed: Digital competence, International and intercultural competencies, Creativity and Innovation capacity.**

### Student evaluation

Written, anonymous feedback was gathered at the last day of both Summer Schools. Overall, feedback was excellent and students appreciated, in particular, the variety of viewpoints offered in lectures, insights gained during the field trips and the experience of working together in an international, multidisciplinary group. In 2023 feedback, the main critique was that there was not enough time dedicated to class discussions. Thus, the 2024 iteration of the course was designed with more time for class discussions. Students rated how they considered the Summer School met the learning outcomes with space for feedback for open ended questions (see quotes & screenshots). In 2024, we also asked about the fieldtrip. Reiterating the **Learning Outcomes (LO)** ratings for both years are presented below with some student comments.



### Student feedback on Summer School(s)

LO1. To gain a deeper understanding of concepts of equity, climate justice and sustainable transitions – how they are linked?

LO2. To review how sustainability transition and policies

LO3. To consider how to incorporate equity perspectives into sustainability transitions

### Reaching LOs in 2023

LO1. 24 students out of 25 agreed ‘fully met’

LO2. 15 out of 25 agreed ‘fully met’; 10 out of 25 agreed ‘partially met’

LO3. 21 out of 25 agreed ‘fully met’; 4 out of 25 agreed ‘partially met’

### Reaching LOs in 2024

LO1. 20 students out of 28 agreed 5/5 (fully met) ; 7 agreed 4/5, one agreed 3/5

LO2. 11 out of 28 agreed 5/5 (fully met); 13 agreed 4/5, four agreed 3/5

LO3. 11 out of 28 agreed 5/5 (fully met); 12 agreed 4/5, five agreed 3/5

LO4. (field trip review) 10 out of 28 agreed 5/5 (fully met), 12 agreed 4/5, five agreed 3/5

### Quotes from the written feedback:

What did you find particularly interesting or useful:

- “Every session has been very well connected with the next. It has been really interesting seen how sustainability can be applied to every single research topic”
- “I find the learning by doing aspect of the programme really useful. Every lecturer had an activity which brought to life the topic of discussion. The trip to the island was eye opening. People tend to romanticise islands without thinking of some of the issues they may be struggling with.”

Any other comments or suggestions?

- “Can we start again?”
- “Nice job! Thanks for organising such event in Galway! Suggestion: more time dedicated to group work.”

What did you find particularly interesting or useful?

The participation process in the construction of the sustainability.  
If you see even in the island that we visited, the community support and their participation are key, to make sustainable and develop the actors.