

**GEOGRAPHY &  
INTERDISCIPLINARITY:  
TWO CASE STUDIES FROM  
IRELAND**

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# Interdisciplinarity:

- Implicit: Epistemological & philosophical arguments
- Explicit: Practical needs as required by modern society & market
- Contrasting case studies of courses & programs in which I am involved

# Contrasting case studies:

- **Case study 1:**

Geography & Sustainable Development – implicitl interdisciplinaryT&L processes 1Y BEd. & BA students.

- **Case study 2:**

Geography & Humnaitarian Action - explicitly interdisciplinary, inter-team delivery & inter-university PG program training for work in HA field, international organizations & NGOs

# Case Study 1: Sustainable Development & Geography

- 1Y students follow field-based course
- Geography & its sub-disciplines
- Moodle-based fieldtrip site
- SD & Geography: conceptual framework
- Ecology, economy & socio-cultural needs
- Technology & institutions
- Good governance framework & citizenship

# Fieldtrip Samples

**5 fieldtrips offered 2007:**

- **Hi-tech Dublin**
- **Urban - Dublin: Diversity**
- **Rural - Glendalough & Wicklow**
- **Reading Boyne Valley Landscape**
- **Wicklow: soils, forestry, farming & tourism**

# Case Study 1: Some Conclusions

- Holistic approach using geography
- Conceptual frameworks
- Specialisms of FT leaders, but liaising with colleagues in geography & in other disciplines (e.g., Urban & Planning Studies, Rural Development, Tourism etc.)
- Moodle / IT training
- Education & employability

# Interdisciplinarity: Geography & Humanitarian Action (HA)

- What's HA?
- ECHO (EC Humanitarian Office) fostered inter-university & interdisciplinary Network on Humanitarian Action (NOHA)
- 7 Universities in EU & associated Erasmus Mundus institutions e.g., Columbia, NY, Indonesia, RSA etc.

# Masters in HA

- MSc(Agr)/MAgrSc/Higher Dip. in HA - taught masters offered by the School of Biology & Environmental Science, at UCD, Dublin.
- Core modules e.g., Geopolitics, Public Health, Anthropology, Law, Management.
- Specialisms e.g., Rural dev. & food.
- Internship (in-field & organisations) & parallel thesis.

# Aims of HA Masters

- **Develop interdisciplinary understanding & analysis of emergency situations**
- **Assess ways of intervention used by HA agencies**
- **Assess consequences of international intervention & programs of reconstruction**
- **Organize / plan HA relief operations**
- **Awareness of impact of HA on beneficiaries**
- **React / take decisions in operational setting**
- **Use appropriate evaluation methods and techniques**

# Sample of student profiles (1)

F. Irish. Medical doctor; Afghanistan, Iraq etc. Goal NGOs. Strong lobbying & advocacy experience.

F. Italian & British. Languages & Int.l Communications; UNCTD/OHCHR; Translator

M. Irish. Science & Dev. Studies; Trading; Refugee doc. center

# Sample of student profiles (2)

- F. USA/Brazil. Radio/TV/film; Production coordinator; Worked in tsunami disaster area.
- M. Ugandan. Medicine; Worked in N-Uganda
- F. Irish. Psychology; Women & Israel / Palestine; Educated outside Rol

# Geopolitics strand

- Vulnerability & (under)development
- Geographical approaches, tools & skills
- Geopolitical approaches to: (i) global issues, (ii) humanitarian risk & (iii) aid
- HA emergencies: society & culture
- Student in-depth case study presentations
- Env. & Migration: refugees & migration.

## **Case Study 2: Some Conclusions**

- HA Program is inter-university, inter-faculty/school, inter-language & culture
- HA Program was requested & backed by ECHO & associated bodies via NOHA
- Student body comes from varied educational, cultural & work-experience backgrounds
- Syllabus driven by student needs

# Overall conclusions (1)

- Interdisciplinary now driven by the requirements of modern society & market
- This reinforces the old epistemological & philosophical rationale when arguments are put in a non-academic discourse
- It cannot become a '*pot pourri*' = undermining student's real depth of knowledge & skills, & the integrity & proven validity of the vast majority of academic disciplines including geography

# Overall conclusions (2)

- **Case studies illustrate practical interdisciplinarity in education - methodology, syllabi & content driven by requirements of society & market.**
- **Case Study 1, Geography & SD, the future studies & career paths of 1Y UG students is presented & contrasted with:**
- **Case Study 2, PG program in HA.**
- **Both ends of the spectrum are presented**
- **Examples of works in progress & interdisciplinary experiences.**