

The Southern Capital is looking lovely as ever in the clear autumn sunshine, and the trees on campus are turning slowly in the dry weather - making our fieldwork so much more pleasant....

This week I will be doing another site visit for the first main assignment of our main 'Place, Neighbourhood and Urban Design' project, which is a place analysis, requiring us to do various analysis sketches of a given area, as well as assessing its suitability for development by looking at sub-regional and development plan policies. This is an interesting, if challenging, class as it's usually a lecture followed by a group workshop in which we often get to do a quick analysis, concept and sketch design and then present it to the class, so we get to put into practice the main concepts of what we have just learned. Last week we talked about the important of context in place analysis and design, and looked at numerous examples here in the city, while this week we did a Greenfield housing sketch design...

In other classes, we are currently looking at the development plan (as part of Planning Skills and Practice) and at the areas of planning enforcement and planning appeals (Advanced Legal Concepts). Our module on Economics, Property Growth and Enterprise is another interesting module where we are learning about the relevance of economics to planning. Our Rural Planning and Development class continues to introduce interesting concepts and ideas, many of which are almost completely new to me. Even though growing up in a rural area makes many of us familiar with local and some county-wide issues, it's interesting to learn about the wider rural development and planning issues in Ireland as a whole.

It's also a busy time off campus, with many conferences, talks and training events taking place this month.... last week the IPI Cork Branch hosted an excellent talk by ecologist Paul Scott, on the rigorous standards of Appropriate Assessment. It was good to hear an experienced ecologist's perspective on this, especially as this is an area where both planners and ecologists may have the opportunity to work together. For us students it is always good to be reminded of the multi-disciplinary aspect to planning. And as a fan of Ian McHarg's Design by Nature, I was glad to be reminded of the value of incorporating ecological considerations into planning.

Other interesting events for this month include the Tipperary Institute's 'Ceiliuradh 2009: Creating Resilient Rural Communities', which should link in well with the Rural Planning and Development module, an IPI CPD event in Limerick later this week, while the IPI Autumn Conference will take place in November. It's true that making time for all these may be difficult, but overall it's a good sign that there is so much happening out there.....

Finally, a few of us in the class have also been discussing making a quick trip on the recently re-opened railway line to Midleton.... We discussed it while reading and analysing CASP last year, so it would be good to finally experience the reality for ourselves!