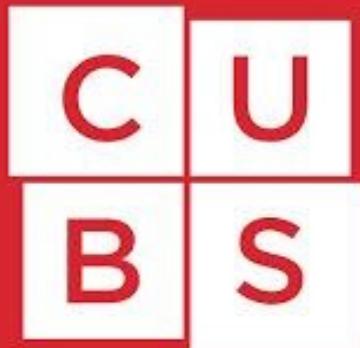




University College Cork, Ireland  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

## MG6825: Applied Research Project

*'How to mainstream sustainable consumption in Skibbereen, using learnings from Cloughjordan eco-village.'*



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## Table of contents

<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Figures.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Section 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1: Background/ context for research .....	5
1.2: Problem to be addressed .....	6
1.3: Research question .....	7
1.4: Proposed methodology .....	7
1.5: Why is this research important? .....	8
<b>Section 2: Methodology .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1: Secondary data.....	8
2.2: Interview with CEV residents.....	8
2.3 Pilot survey in Skibbereen .....	9
<b>Section 3: Secondary data analysis .....</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1: Transitioning to sustainability .....	10
3.2: Marketing and sustainability .....	12
3.3: Cloughjordan eco-village.....	13
<b>Section 4: Primary data analysis.....</b>	<b>15</b>
4.1: Community building and social sustainability .....	15
4.2: Food systems and sustainable agriculture.....	17
4.3: Education, innovation, and experimentation.....	18
4.4: Energy/Housing.....	20
4.5: Challenges/Barriers to mainstreaming sustainable consumption.....	23
4.6: Survey results.....	24
<b>Section 5: Discussion and conclusion.....</b>	<b>28</b>
5.1 Proposed changes to Skibbereen- Food systems.....	29
5.2 Proposed changes to Skibbereen- Energy usage, urban space.....	31
5.3 The role of marketing in the low carbon transition .....	31
<b>Section 6: Recommendations .....</b>	<b>33</b>
6.1 Conclusion .....	33
6.2 Recommendation for future research.....	34
<b>Section 7: Reflection.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Section 8: References and appendices .....</b>	<b>36</b>
8.1: References .....	36
8.2: Appendices .....	39

## **Executive Summary**

This research sets out to answer the question “how to mainstream sustainable consumption in Skibbereen using learnings from Cloughjordan eco-village. This will be done by gathering data from Cloughjordan eco-village through literature and interviewing several residents.

It was discovered that strong community is essential to the eco-village in maintaining sustainable lifestyles. The eco-village’s food system, district heating system and housing are the most important features that have created a resilient community made up of ethical consumers.

The researcher proposes several learnings that can be applied to Skibbereen from the eco-village. They are a community supported agriculture system using a combination of the Skibbereen farmer’s market and an online food hub such as Neighborfood as channels of distribution, creating community gardens or allotments for people to grow their own food as well as using Green Skibbereen’s new centre for sustainability to educate the community on how to grow their own food and on ways to live more sustainably.

This report also refers to the role marketing has in influencing consumer behaviour and that this has been negative as it drives over-consumption. However, the researcher discusses how it can be used to positively influence consumers in making more ethical and sustainable consumption choices. Following on from this report, further research will need to be done on how receptive Skibbereen would be to these proposed changes as well as how these innovations can be integrated into the community.

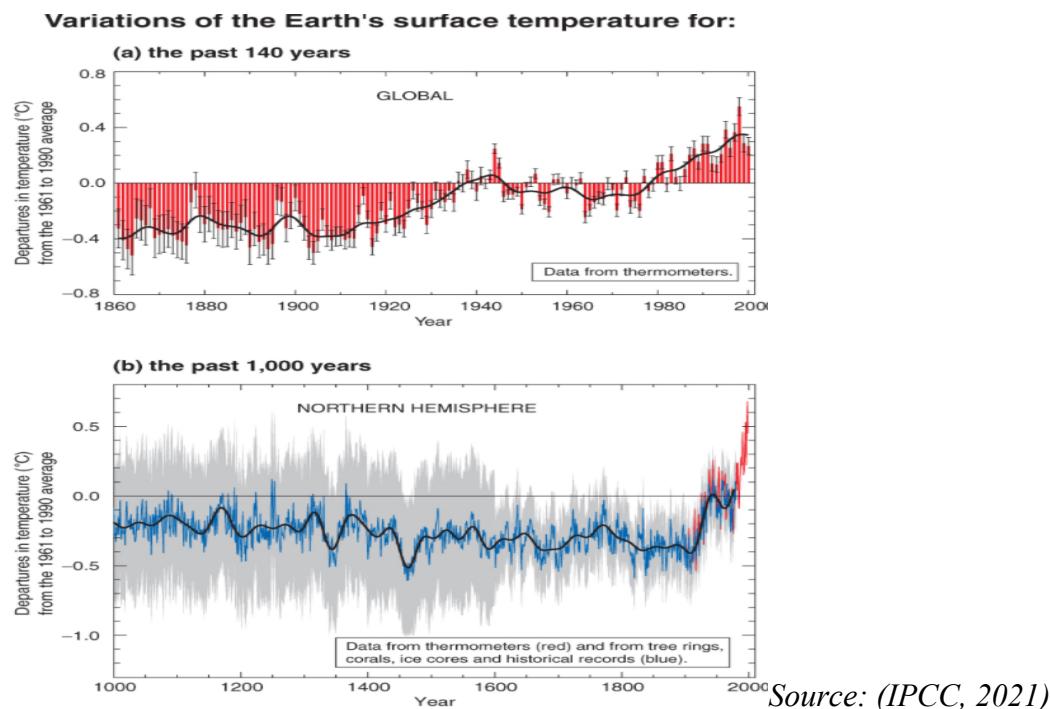
## Figures

<b>Figure 1</b>	Variations of the Earth's surface temperature over the last 140 years and the last millennium (IPCC, 2021)
<b>Figure 2</b>	Estimates of confidence in observed and projected changes in extreme weather and climate events (IPCC, 2021)
<b>Figure 3</b>	Sustainable development goals (United Nations, 2021)
<b>Figure 4</b>	Framework for sustainable marketing (Gordon, et al., 2011)
<b>Figure 5</b>	Information on Cloughjordan community farm (Cloughjordan Community Farm, 2021)
<b>Figure 6</b>	Survey question
<b>Figure 7</b>	Survey question
<b>Figure 8</b>	Survey question
<b>Figure 9</b>	Survey question
<b>Figure 10</b>	Survey question
<b>Figure 11</b>	Survey question
<b>Figure 12</b>	Survey question
<b>Figure 13</b>	Bord-Bia fresh produce report- choice criteria (Bord Bia thinking house, 2020)
<b>Figure 14</b>	Framework for sustainable marketing (Gordon, et al., 2011)

# Section 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background/ context for research

Finding a way to live sustainably on our planet is without question, the most challenging and important problem to be addressed in the Anthropocene. For the first time in history, a report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change (2021) has shown that humans are undoubtedly, responsible for the rapid warming of the climate. This report represents a stark warning for society. Since the industrial revolution, humans have been relentlessly consuming the earth's resources and now, as populations continue to rise, it is more important than ever to lessen the strain on our planet and explore ways to undo the damage that has been done in the last century. Rockström et al (2009) propose nine planetary boundaries within which we must remain to ensure that the planet and its climate do not spiral out of control. If we reach the "tipping points" (p.21), then we risk catastrophic weather events, widespread biodiversity loss and rising seas. Many of these boundaries have already been crossed, for example, the boundaries on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, biodiversity loss and ocean acidification are looming and our current path threatens to destabilise ecosystems and cause untold damage to our planets climate.



However it is not too late. By acting, it is still possible to limit the damage and slow down the greenhouse effect. It is time to explore ways of reducing our consumption of resources and materials and live in a way that is more sustainable and less impactful on the planet.

The sustainable development goals were established to provide a framework within which humanity can work towards achieving sustainability in seventeen different categories (United Nations, 2021). Working towards these goals while also staying within the planetary boundary guidelines (Rockström, et al., 2009) is a clear pathway to restoring order to the

planet. This requires wholesale change to society and much of this change must come from national governing bodies, local and governments and organisations. However, this change must also be introduced from the bottom up. Many communities worldwide have shown that it is possible to move towards sustainability with a bottom-up approach.

These communities are known as eco-villages. The Global Eco-village Network (2021) defines an eco-village as

*“An intentional, traditional or urban community that is consciously designed through locally owned participatory processes in all four dimensions of sustainability (social, culture, ecology and economy) to regenerate social and natural environments.”*

## **1.2 Problem to be addressed**

Eco-villages are living laboratories (Litfin, 2014) that allow for experimentation to find new ways of reducing consumption, waste, our individual carbon footprint and the carbon footprint of a whole community. Eco-villagers can be considered ethical consumers who engage in voluntary simplicity (Shaw & Newholm, 2002). This is the change in attitude and behaviour that has allowed these people to make difficult changes in the way they live. While many eco-villages are withdrawn from society and the residents have decided to distance themselves from mainstream society, there is a growing trend of contemporary eco-villages (Casey, et al., 2016). Contemporary eco-villages and their inhabitants engage with mainstream communities daily, sharing knowledge, ideals and resources. This interaction between ethical consumers (Shaw & Newholm, 2002) and more typical consumers is critically important in introducing change. Eco-village residents can be viewed as role models for society and they can provide a framework for towns and villages around the world to transition to a more sustainable model. Litfin (2014) suggests that it has gone beyond the point of building new eco-villages for the world’s population. Instead it is now crucial for us to learn from eco-villages and be able to transform our own communities with this new knowledge and experiences.

*“Time is far too short to construct ecovillages for seven billion people, but not too short to apply their lessons everywhere, from our individual homes to our imperilled planetary household.” (P.187)*

Marketing is often blamed for over-consumption and is seen as detrimental to sustainable living. However, there is growing academic discourse about how marketing strategies can also be used in promoting sustainable activities. Changing attitudes towards sustainability and transforming that into behavioural change is difficult however there are many consumers who would be willing to make change. These are passive conscious consumers (O’Neil, 2015). The researcher believes that if more sustainable alternative consumption choices are provided for this consumer type, they will adopt the changes contributing to a healthier, more resilient community. This will be discussed further in the recommendations section.

This research is based on Litfin's (2014) belief that communities must learn from eco-villages and integrate these new practices into their existing space, rather than trying to form new communities and urban spaces. This idea will be applied to two existing communities in Ireland to examine how the idea of eco-village learning can be realised and implemented into an existing community. The eco-village in this research is Cloughjordan eco-village (CEV), Co. Tipperary and the community to which the researcher hopes to apply these learnings to is Skibbereen, Co. Cork.

### **1.3 Research question**

The main research question to be answered is 'how to mainstream sustainable consumption in Skibbereen, using learnings from Cloughjordan eco-village'. sustainable consumption is being used as a general term that includes consumption of food, energy, natural resources, products etc.

The research seeks to apply learnings from Cloughjordan eco-village to an existing urban community in Ireland.. The objective of this research is to provide a framework that towns, villages and communities within cities can emulate which is essential in the transition to a low-carbon society (Kirby, 2020).

Cloughjordan eco-village (CEV) was chosen because it is a contemporary eco-village (Casey, et al., 2016). Its communities ecological footprint is significantly lower than the average Irish person. A resident of CEV would require 1.1 earths while an average Irish person needs 3.14 earths (Kirby, 2020).

### **1.4 Proposed methodology**

This research will be carried out in three stages. The first is to conduct an analysis of existing secondary data about Cloughjordan eco-village, transitioning to sustainable practices and sustainability marketing. This data will be critically analysed and will provide context through which, the primary data collected can also be analysed.

The first stage of primary data collection is to interview residents in CEV to gain a rich understanding of how the community operates. By interviewing residents with different areas of expertise and interests, a deeper understanding of both the individual and collective experiences of the residents can be obtained. There is already an abundance of data about CEV but these interviews seek to explore the individual eco-villager in more detail. It will attempt to uncover what motivates their behaviour as well as various opinions these villagers have on a variety of topics.

Once the data has been gathered and interpreted from the interviews. A pilot survey will be designed and put out a small sample of Skibbereen residents. This survey seeks to identify how feasible it would be to use an eco-village model to mainstream sustainable consumption in Skibbereen. It is hoped that it will also highlight potential problems/barriers that will arise with this kind of transition strategy. If the results of this survey are positive then it creates a pathway for researchers and policymakers to further explore how to transition to a low carbon society.

## 1.5 Why is this research important?

Finding an answer to this research question could be of great benefit to many different stakeholders. Residents, local government, businesses and even national policymakers could benefit from this research as it provides a detailed insight into eco-village life and then highlights what is transferable to urban and rural communities.

As the IPCC report (2021) showed, it is essential that climate action starts now. We are dangerously close to going passed the tipping points (Rockström, et al., 2009). Communities can no longer wait for governments to introduce new measures and must instead take matters into their own hands. Eco-villages can be role-models in these unprecedented times and the transition should be made as easy as possible for the average consumer so that much of the population can begin to reduce their carbon footprints.

Confidence in observed changes (latter half of the 20th century)	Changes in Phenomenon	Confidence in projected changes (during the 21st century)
Likely <sup>7</sup>	Higher maximum temperatures and more hot days over nearly all land areas	Very likely <sup>7</sup>
Very likely <sup>7</sup>	Higher minimum temperatures, fewer cold days and frost days over nearly all land areas	Very likely <sup>7</sup>
Very likely <sup>7</sup>	Reduced diurnal temperature range over most land areas	Very likely <sup>7</sup>
Likely <sup>7</sup> , over many areas	Increase of heat index <sup>12</sup> over land areas	Very likely <sup>7</sup> , over most areas
Likely <sup>7</sup> , over many Northern Hemisphere mid- to high latitude land areas	More intense precipitation events <sup>b</sup>	Very likely <sup>7</sup> , over many areas
Likely <sup>7</sup> , in a few areas	Increased summer continental drying and associated risk of drought	Likely <sup>7</sup> , over most mid-latitude continental interiors. (Lack of consistent projections in other areas)
Not observed in the few analyses available	Increase in tropical cyclone peak wind intensities <sup>c</sup>	Likely <sup>7</sup> , over some areas
Insufficient data for assessment	Increase in tropical cyclone mean and peak precipitation intensities <sup>c</sup>	Likely <sup>7</sup> , over some areas

Source: (IPCC, 2021)

## Section 2: Methodology

### 2.1 Secondary Data

Prior to the primary data being gathered. The researcher gathered information from a variety of secondary sources. This was done by analysing literature from several different sources and on different topics including sustainable consumption, sustainability marketing, localization and Cloughjordan eco-village. This secondary data is crucial as it provides context for the research project. It was hoped that when analysing the findings of the primary research, links would appear to the secondary data. This links will be explored in the discussion section of this report.

### 2.2 Primary data collection stage 1- interviews with Cloughjordan residents.

There has been much research done on CEV up to this point and many of the reasons for their low ecological footprint have already been identified. However, this research needs to

understand these processes from the consumers point of view to understand what is of most value to them, what is the most convenient/inconvenient thing about living in the ecovillage. It was hoped that the interviews would provide an insight into the community aspect of the eco-village. How community is built, maintained and improved are all important considerations in this research project. Interviews were the chosen method in the data collection process as they allow for high quality, in-depth insights to be gained. One can get an accurate picture of the respondents compared to a survey. The residents were contacted by email with a brief outline of what the research entailed. The response from the community was overwhelmingly positive and several residents agreed to do an interview. Prior to the interviews taking place, each participant was given a consent form to be read and signed (Appendix 2).

The most important ethical consideration to be considered over the course of this data collection process was maintaining the anonymity of each participant. For that reason, the respondents will not be referred to by name in this report. Due to the ongoing covid-19 pandemic, these interviews were performed online and recorded with the consent of each participant. They lasted between 30 minutes to one hour. The researcher enquired with each participant before the interview to determine if they had interests or areas of expertise in relation to the eco-village. This was done so that the researcher could tailor his questions to be more relevant to the interviewee. After the interviews had been completed, they were transcribed and analysed in the context of the secondary data that had been gathered previously. The full transcripts can be found in appendix 3.

There are several advantages and disadvantages in utilising qualitative research methods. It allows the researcher to understand the data within the social, environmental and economic contexts that occur in CEV and the language used in the interviews makes key words and terms easier to identify. However, the sample size for the interviews is relatively small in relation to the population. This will make it hard to generalise for the wider Cloughjordan community but the availability of previous research on CEV should somewhat make up for this deficiency. Another limitation of this research is bias within the interviews, both on behalf of the interviewer and participant. The researcher must be acutely aware of this at all stages. It is crucial that the data gathered can be analysed objectively using previous research and secondary data to better understand it.

### **2.3 Primary data collection stage 2- Pilot survey with Skibbereen residents**

After the interviews have been analysed and the key findings have been identified, a survey will be designed based on the data. This survey will then be put to a pilot group of the Skibbereen community in order to determine the feasibility of doing a place-based study such as this one. This pilot survey will provide a sense of how the various questions are answered. This pilot survey will cover a variety of topics ranging from food to housing and energy. The aim of this survey is to provide an indication of residents of Skibbereen would respond to changes in their consumption patterns to move towards a more sustainable lifestyle. The respondents will not know Cloughjordan eco-village is being used as a model. This is part of the survey design and is to reduce bias as some respondents may be aware of that project or have some associations with the area. The survey will be done online and will be fully

compliant with all current Covid-19 restrictions. All respondents will remain anonymous at all times and are required to read a form and give consent prior to undertaking the survey.

Based on the results of this pilot survey, the researcher will be providing recommendations on what research could be done in the future and the kinds of data collection techniques that could be employed to gain a more thorough understanding of how sustainable consumption can be encouraged in a community based on the learnings from eco-villagers.

## Section 3: Secondary Data analysis

### 3.1 Transitioning to sustainability

Litfin (2014) conducted a study in which she visited fourteen eco-villages around the world. This study proved what she had been theorising which is “the foundation for ecological sustainability is social sustainability.” (Litfin, 2014, p. 16). She noted that strong community was key to all eco-villages she visited and that values such as sharing, trust and reciprocity were all critically important to the eco-villagers. The value of community can be difficult to measure and is “intangible” (Litfin, 2014, p. 16), however, it was a feature in all her interviews with eco-villagers. This sense of belonging and community is often missing in mainstream society. Capitalist structures have created individualistic societies. A sense of security in the western world comes from owning your own house, car, by having the latest technology or by having a prestigious career title. Eco-villages show that this does not have to be the case, that one can be content and satisfied without getting caught up in the world of heavy consumption, individualism and wealth accumulation. One eco-villager interviewed by Litfin (2014) was quoted as saying

*“Even though I have less money, I feel richer here. There’s so much support.” (p.16).*

One of the major limitations for this research is merging eco-village behaviour and attitudes with those of mainstream western society. How we move away from endless consumption and desire for the latest products to the point it is putting our whole planet at risk is a difficult question to answer but this research aims to provide some frameworks with which this might be possible.

When examining how eco-village ideas could be scaled up, she identified five key points that are necessary for eco-village practices and ideals to be integrated into mainstream society. It was recommended that sustainability be treated as a “core purpose” (Litfin, 2014, p. 189) and that systemic thinking, subsidiarity, sharing, design and the power of yes (Appendix 1) would all be crucial in the success of this movement. All these criteria put forward by Litfin (2014) must be adopted at both local and national level so that the behaviours and attitudes from eco-villagers can be encouraged and integrated in the wider community.

Localizing the sustainable development goals (Global taskforce of local and regional governments, 2017) is an initiative from the UN that aims to

*“Provide a framework for local development policy and to how local and regional governments can support the achievement of the SDGs through action from the bottom up”*  
(P.6).

This process has been divided into five sections; awareness raising, advocacy, implementation, monitoring and where do we go from here (Global taskforce of local and regional governments, 2017). This framework will be beneficial for policymakers and other stakeholders of a community who lack the expertise in integrating sustainability into the everyday.



Source: (United Nations, 2021)

This localization process is key to Litfin’s (2014) proposed idea of subsidiarity in mainstreaming sustainability. This grounds up approach facilitates the democratic process at the roots of society. It empowers communities to improve their environment in relation to the SDGs. As each community focuses on self-improvement, then improvements can be made quicker and in a greater number of communities. Rather than waiting for instruction or policy change from government, communities can make changes specific to their own needs. As each community is different, whether it be rural or urban, the capabilities and expectations may be different. Local government and organisations such as green Skibbereen will have an important role in this localisation process as they can provide expertise, resources and support for each community when localising the SDGs and transforming themselves into sustainable, tightknit and supportive communities who are united by working towards the same objectives.

The importance of community in the low carbon transition has been documented. Aiken (2012) suggests that it is a crucial underpinning of the Transition Towns Network (TTN) and that the transitions in these areas are all community led. All the work in CEV has been community led and if learnings from CEV are to be applied to Skibbereen, then it will need to be community led and everyone will need to be on board with what is happening.

*“Community is the antidote to individualism” (Aiken, 2012, p. 93).*

Litfin (2014) echoes this by calling for a move away from individualistic thinking which is the dominant modus operandum in western society.

### **3.2 Marketing and sustainability**

Marketing and advertising have had a huge role in promoting overconsumption, creating needs where they did not exist before. While many would suggest that marketing contradicts sustainability (Jones, et al., 2008), Gordon et al (2011) argue that it will also be useful for providing information to consumers on how they can reduce their carbon footprint.

Marketing is focused on understanding and changing consumer behaviour (Jones, et al., 2008). Marketers recognise that consumers are key decision makers in the low carbon transition (Jones, et al., 2008). If they boycott certain products or adopt trends that are more environmentally friendly, businesses will have to meet these needs or risk losing their position in the marketplace. Recyclable packaging, locally sourced ingredients, ethically produced goods and many other green consumer trends are quickly emerging. Companies will need to adapt equally fast if they are to survive. However, this brings into question the concept of sustainable consumption (Jackson & Michaelis, 2003). There is ongoing debate about what exactly sustainable consumption is. Is it consuming responsibly, differently or less (Jackson & Michaelis, 2003)? While it is important to consume responsibly, ultimately, the most sustainable type of consumption is to consume as little as possible. The focus should be on making use of what we have as much as possible and only purchasing new items when essential. Eco-villages have deep rooted values in sharing and reusing. Everyone does not have everything they need but by sharing tools, cars and other products with each other, these communities can thrive and significantly reduce levels of consumption.

The slogan ‘reduce, reuse, recycle’ is often promoted by waste management companies. While recycling has its benefits, reducing and reusing should be the priorities. Communities should work towards a circular economy model (Kirchherr, et al., 2017). This poses a problem for marketers and businesses as they need to make profit but real, long-term sustainability may require wholesale changes to current marketing strategies. Businesses need a strong integrated marketing communications strategy to be successful in the modern world (Kitchen & Burgman, 2010).



Source: (Gordon, et al., 2011)

Sustainability marketing (Gordon, et al., 2011) is a growing trend and is a strategy that could be useful in the awareness raising section of the localisation process (Global taskforce of local and regional governments, 2017). Figure 2 shows the sustainability marketing framework (Gordon, et al., 2011) which is a combination of green, social and critical marketing.

### 3.3 Cloughjordan eco-village

The eco-village has been subject to much research already which covers a variety of themes and topics. Kirby (2020) notes that CEV was established to

*“Address global concerns about climate change and how to address them at a local level” (P.290).*

Eco-villages provide space within which experimentation on sustainable living can take place and they allow for a bottom-up approach (Kirby, 2020). He writes that there are three main features that make this a successful eco-village. The first is the ecological building standards which promote the use of non-toxic building materials such as timber-frame, eco-cement and hemp-lime (Kirby, 2020). The district heating system is another feature which supplies heating and hot water to the houses in CEV.

*“The heating plant contains two 500-kilowatt wood-chip boilers backed up by 500 m<sup>2</sup> of solar (thermal) panels. This system is the first of its kind in a private housing development in Ireland and is estimated to save some 113.5 tonnes of carbon emissions annually over what would be emitted by an equivalent size development using conventional heating methods.”* (Kirby, 2020, p. 297).

Finally the food systems are important to its status as an eco-village. The Cloughjordan community farm is largely responsible for supplying fresh vegetables, fruits, eggs and other produce to the villagers. (For more on the farm and the concept of community supported agriculture, see appendix 3). With these three key features, CEV has been “pioneering a range of practices that build resilience and sustainability.” (Kirby, 2020, p. 298).

Papadimitropoulos (2018) found that

*“The Cloughjordan Ecovillage promotes sustainability and resilience through consensus-decision making, renewable energy production, green building, community supported agriculture, biodiversity, organic farming, open-source technologies and social entrepreneurship.” (p.58).*

These findings demonstrate that CEV combines all three aspects of sustainability (environmental, social and economic) in the everyday. This has created a resilient community that was able to survive through the challenges of the financial crash and housing crisis in 2009 as well as extreme weather events like the unexpected snow and ice that hit Ireland in 2018.

Casey et al (2016) identified it as a “contemporary eco-village” (p.2). This research found that CEV highlights the challenges faced by living sustainably in western capitalist society and recommends that policy makers and other stakeholders wishing to “promote sustainability agendas could look to communities such as CJEV in order to find other expressions and responses to, these important issues.” (Casey, et al., 2016, p. 11). Like Kirby (2020), Casey et al (2016) recognise the important of spaces like CEV so that place-based learning and experimentation can take place. This research also highlighted many challenges and obstacles that CEV faces which may also be applicable to Skibbereen when trying to adopt these sustainability initiatives. These challenges include larger CSA membership, reduction of car usage and zero-carbon onsite energy production (Casey, et al., 2016).

The food system in CEV is innovative and relies heavily on the Cloughjordan Community Farm (Kirby, 2020). There are several benefits to both farmer and consumer who participate in a community supported agriculture system. The quality of food is superior to what one would find in a supermarket as everything is grown locally and organically. The farmers do not use chemicals or packaging and the environmental impact of the farms produce is much lower than shop bought vegetables (CSA network Ireland, 2021).

#### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MEMBER OF CLOUGHJORDAN COMMUNITY FARM?

There are so many reasons to get involved in Community Supported Agriculture. If you are in the Cloughjordan area – join us!

Everything that comes off the farm land belongs to the members. Members also have free or low cost access to all of our training and educational events. We host social events, community meals and quarterly meetings where you have the opportunity to meet the producers and other farm members. Our vegetables are grown in healthy, nutrient rich soil and taste amazing, this makes being a part of Cloughjordan Community Farm a unique experience, as you will be directly connected to the source of your food. You'll hear from the people who grow it and can explore the place it came from with weekly harvest reports and farm visits.

- members commit to supporting the farm through the year
- have access to all the farm produce, including seasonal vegetables, salads, herbs and fruits
- the farm produce is delivered to the coach house on Main Street on Monday and Thursday
- collect from the coach house according to your needs
- receive weekly harvest reports, informing you of farm news and member events
- join other members at farm events, celebrations and quarterly meetings

#### OUR VISION IS:

- to grow, distribute and consume food from a local member owned farm
- to provide a wide variety of seasonal vegetables, salads, herbs and fruits to farm members at a local distribution point
- to grow to organic farming standards, without the use of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides or artificial fertilisers.
- to grow heritage varieties, to save our own seeds and to enrich the soil using biodynamic methods
- to provide local employment and include a variety of volunteer effort
- to be an educational and social resource for the local and wider community

*Source: (Cloughjordan Community Farm, 2021)*

## Section 4: Primary Data analysis

### 4.1 Interviews with CEV residents

The interviews with the residents of Cloughjordan produced insightful data on a range of topics. For clarity, the analysis will be divided into five sections; community building and social sustainability, food systems and sustainable agriculture, education, innovation and experimentation, energy and housing systems and challenges / difficulties associated with the low-carbon transition. To maintain anonymity, all participants will be referred to as interviewee. Full transcripts of the interviews can be found in appendix 4.

### 4.2 Community building and social sustainability

One of the most prevalent themes emerging from these interviews is the importance of a strong social support system in building and maintaining sustainable communities. Similar to what was uncovered in the secondary data analysis, all aspects of sustainability are intertwined. A community cannot have environmental sustainability without social sustainability.

One eco-villager, a founding member of the organisation said this in reference to the importance of community.

*“So my focus is about resilient communities. How do we cope and adapt to the changes that are going to be, we're locked into?*

*Wherever the problem community is the answer. So it's like looking at how do we strengthen our social capital?*

*How do we set up easy things like street fests, community gardens, community supported agriculture that starts to provide livelihoods and food security? How do we set up sustainable energy co-ops so we've got energy security? How do we think about livelihoods in a different way? if you had food, energy, good sense of community and meaningful livelihoods, there's going to be plenty of work in the transition that needs to be made.*

*We must show that you can have a real good life locally doing the work it needs to be done with meaning and purpose with others around you and connected to the place you're in. It's actually the good life. It's not a hardship in a sense." (Interviewee 4, 2021)*

It is clear to see that an important aspect of these sustainable communities is being able to create a sense of satisfaction in areas where most westerners may feel are unsatisfactory. There needs to be a shift away from intense consumption and individualism, as this resident also pointed out.

*"There are trillions spent to keep us focused on consumption and individualism. A community supported agriculture project is not great for the economy so we're not going to see it promoted and highlighted, but this is what we need to shorten supply chains and especially vulnerable global supply chains to do more locally, to have a stronger community, and then to be providing a need. As much as possible from a local place in solidarity with other communities and other places all over the world" (Interviewee 4, 2021)*

This echoes the call for localising the SDGs (Global taskforce of local and regional governments, 2017). By creating a network of small, local sustainable communities, you are empowering the people and allowing each community to deal with its own individual needs.

*"I think the biggest challenge we have is moving people from individual consumers that are not connected to their place at all, to more connected to their place, the people around them and the environment around them." (Interviewee 4, 2021)*

This point of view is consistent across all interviews, another eco-villager stated

*"We need to get oxygen and blood flow back to the social economic muscle of our towns and get them pulsing with life" (Interviewee 3, 2021)*

A stark difference between CEV and mainstream towns is the apparent disconnect that appears. Residents spend less time in their own locality, whether it be because of work, recreation or other factors, the level of engagement with ones neighbours and immediate surroundings is vastly different between the two communities. This is evidenced by the level of sharing and interconnectedness that one finds in an eco-village.

*"there's a good feeling around here. If you send an email saying "I need to borrow someone's car, you'll get 10 replies in 10 minutes. We are very connected in that way. We will go to each other's aid and there's a lot of swapping and bartering for tools and stuff like that. there's also a lot of recycling of resources that happened here naturally. Half of the toddlers here are running around in my son's old clothes so there is lovely aspect to that and that sort of solidarity is nice." (Interviewee 2, 2021)*

These interviews suggest that this harmonious co-existence is pivotal in the success of the eco-village. This topic will be explored further in the discussion section.

#### **4.3 Food systems and sustainable agriculture**

Kirby (2020) identified the CEV food system as one of the main reasons for its classification as an ecovillage. Cloughjordan community farm is a community supported agriculture system that provides fresh produce to the villagers who become members of the farm.

Alongside this CSA, many residents grow their own produce in gardens or allotments. Not only does this create food security and resilient system, but it also encourages participation and community interaction which has already been identified as a key component of eco-villages (Litfin, 2014) and (Papadimitropoulos, 2018). The benefits of growing food locally and creating food systems in small geographical areas include reduced air miles, reduced packaging, less preservatives and increased employment opportunities for local businesses

*"If you're able to source your own food in your own locality and shorten all of those supply lines, that's a really key thing to being truly sustainable" (Interviewee 2, 2021)*

Another villager highlighted its importance by saying

*"there's a real education in that as well. People are beginning to realize how much of their food comes from distant places, how much it's grown with all sorts of toxins, as part of it, how much it's packaged in plastic." (Interviewee 1, 2021)*

The strength of this food system was highlighted during a snowstorm several years ago

*"With our community farm, when there was a massive snow fall in March about two and a half years ago, maybe three years ago. A lot of shops were shut and there was the bread panic. We were getting all our food though, delivered up to the coach house as normal from our farm and so we had no problem with food supply and that gave us a good sense of security at that time." (Interviewee 2, 2021)*

The farm can also provide many educational opportunities, allowing people to learn how to grow their own food. If everyone in a community was growing their own food, food for

neighbours or subscribing to a community farm, they are decreasing dependency on supermarkets and imported goods. This will have a positive effect on the carbon footprint and sustainability of a community.

*“I think because it's got land right, as well as buildings that it need to demonstrate. And as some sort of scale regenerative agriculture or horticulture or different approaches to growing our food or restoring ecosystems.” (Interviewee 4, 2021)*

Empowering the people and training them with regenerative agricultural or permaculture techniques is something that is promoted in CEV. Other communities can look to this for inspiration. For example, it will be critical that ‘Green Skibbereen’ establish a training regime in these techniques. If the residents in Skibbereen have the ability to grow their own food, it could have beneficial results for the area.

Cloughjordan also has a café and bakery. The ‘Riot Rye Bakehouse’ provides breads and other baked goods to the community and uses organic or wild ingredients in their products. They fuel their oven with locally sourced wood (Riot Rye, 2021). They also provide breadmaking courses and educational opportunities. Similar to the farm, it is empowering people to take responsibility for their food. These organisations are encouraging self-sufficiency in the community which makes it more resilient (Papadimitropoulos, 2018). It boosts the local economy too and provides employment opportunities for locals. The money put into the farm or the bakery is then given straight back to it as consumers purchase the products. One of the most recent consumer trends is to shop local and choose based on minimal packaging. As one interviewee observed

*“The food system, of course, isn't just growing food for ourselves. I mean, we developed a café on the main street, out of our food system. I mean so many local shops, of course now they're parts of chains and they're locked into them like our Centra shop here. And it has to take 95% of all its goods from Centra. But by us growing food here, farmer's markets and all of these allow for the potential of a verdant alternative food system to emerge.” (Interviewee 1, 2021).*

#### **4.4 Education, innovation and experimentation**

It has been evident throughout the interview process that education has a huge role in Cloughjordan eco-village. All of the residents interviewed were acutely aware of the importance of education, to allow for everyone in the community to be self-sufficient. The innovative ideas and experimentation that takes place here in methods of sustainable agriculture, energy usage and consumption are vital as we search for ways to transition to a low-carbon society.

*“People see in practice what can be done. I mean, I think that's one of the difficulties about, about lecturing in university that it's, it's so doom laden that you feel it can be*

*counterproductive. Whereas when people come here, we can talk about the realities of, of what faces us in terms of climate change, biodiversity loss, et cetera, but we do so then by walking out around the eco village and people can see that here is relatively small community of people can really live sustainably.*

*So just trying to try to educate people in the realities of what the science is telling us does remain very, very important and I always insist here in our educational program, that's why we're showcasing ecovillage we're putting it into a wider global context." (Interviewee 1, 2021)*

This resident explains the approach that the eco-villagers are taking towards sustainability. Through their experimentation and dedication to finding sustainable alternatives, they have become role models for the rest of society.

One of the founders, when asked about why they chose the site they are currently on said

*"With this ambitious project of setting up an eco-village as a sort of destination for learning as a place that people could come and go back to their own communities with some knowledge or some capacity and approaches and methodologies*

*And then in our first few years of talking and thinking and meeting people and going to other places in Europe, we realized that a new village is definitely not what's needed. There's so many towns and villages in decline. Let's join one. Let's identify one that might need that regeneration.*

*We are advocates and activists for this sustainable communities. And for us to walk the talk rather than just talk the talk and Dublin is what we wanted." (Interviewee 4, 2021)*

This echoes Casey et al (2016) who recognised CEV as a contemporary eco-village. This allows for greater interaction with a wider community and it allows the residents to apply their regenerative, sustainable thinking to a real-life situation. If these learnings from this research were to be applied to Skibbereen, then it would follow a similar structure where several innovators in the community pioneer the way for everyone else to follow.

CEV have a lot of courses and educational opportunities for both residents and members of other communities to come and learn.

*"Education is key, but that education isn't just classroom based. So place-based learning where you can take people outside, you can immerse them in nature." (Interviewee 4, 2021)*

This resident went on to describe the advantage of place-based learning in CEV.

*“But I think a lot can be done with very limited resources. So I think that there's the actual practical demonstrations where you can have on the grounds as well as I think now that rethinking work and how we provide meaning and in our livelihoods is going to be a big thing. So our enterprise centre that we run those and enterprise centre is trying to show new ways of working through Cloughjordan and food and agriculture.” (Interviewee 4, 2021)*

*“You can give them tasks. Problem-based learning. We will bring that group in here and give them a scenario of a challenge that they have to meet together. So you're doing learning in a more constructivist way. You're, you're not just transmit knowledge or facilitating learning.” (Interviewee 4, 2021)*

CEV have a community education programme that covers a wide range of topics. They use gardens and polytunnels for agricultural education and they are in the process of renovating their Wecreate workspace which will act as a community building within which further education and experimentation can take place.

*“The main aim from the farm's perspective is to educate people on all of the methods we use for growing, and to make aware of like, no dig, permaculture style, how to do cloches all of that sort of stuff and also the wider related issues like climate change, and sustainable living and sustainable growing. How to grow plants that are more resilient to climate change, extreme weather conditions and also poly tunnel growing things like that. So it's quite specific in one way, but we also have a wider remit because the terms under which we got that building is on farmland, but the terms under which we received the award for that building was to make sure all of that knowledge and all of those kind of related classes, we get out to the local community beyond the eco-village as well and beyond our farm community and beyond our farm members. So that's what we're planning the next phase of now. So we have the educational cabins and polytunnels up and running, we're hoping to run general courses, like things like dry stonewalling, sort of heritage, crafts, and so on and weaving and all of that sort of stuff. As long with our very specific education around, sustainable growing.” (Interviewee 2, 2021)*

#### **4.5 Energy/Housing**

The need to move away from fossil fuels has been well documented (Rockström, et al., 2009) and (IPCC, 2021). Alongside agriculture, energy for heating our homes and transport are big sources of carbon emissions.

*“we're unaware of in the sense that states depend upon fossil fuels far too much for, energy generation, for mobility, for industry and there is a major, major task to try to move away from that.” (Interviewee 1, 2021)*

The CEV residents interviewed in this study were all acutely aware of the problem and described the ways in which they have tried to find solutions in their community.

*“Well, let me start by giving you the three answers that I give whenever I’m asked it. The first one is how do we build our houses. So building regulations now that’s taken care of to some extent by national building regulations, but again, you know, there’s various aspects of that that you could push out. Like one of these is if you’re building an estate, are you going to put land aside to allow a CSA, for example, I mean, why couldn’t that be part of national regulations if you’re building in the estate or are you going to have a district heating system? Why couldn’t that be part of national regulations?” (Interviewee 1, 2021)*

*“So there’s houses that people can see. But even if you’ve not got people living there, you should show the energy performance of a building or renewable energy in some ways should be demonstrated and signed to where they can go to sustainable energy communities or other places that can take this aspect further.” (Interviewee 4, 2021)*

*“We did an audit. As an ecovillage, we always, we collect data on all of our energy usage, our sort of our carbon footprint., we collect data on our heating systems and our water system and energy usage. So we monitor all of that regularly and like every, at the end of every month we put our stats in from our own shared heating system, but we have our own energy usage in our house is reported then back to the heat management group as it were and they are a voluntary group. So they love all those statistics. But we recently got an energy audit done for the whole of CEV” (Interviewee 2, 2021)*

*“Any town can do its own energy audit and avail of the grants available to do that. You can also do it informally, if you like, they could start monitoring their general energy usage and then apply for grants in the basis of their hitting targets that no other towns are hitting. There are many other things. With transport, I mean, obviously this doesn’t really apply to Skibbereen, but if you have a local train line with trying to retain that and upgrade it. There’s lots of stuff around just the way you build new housing as well.” (Interviewee 2, 2021)*

These answers suggest that if consumers are monitoring their energy usage and are more aware of it, then they may reduce it. This opens opportunities of switching to renewable energy such as solar, or carbon neutral heating systems like the one in CEV which uses leftover woodchips from a factory. Different consumers will have different motivations (Kitchen & Burgman, 2010) and it will be important to frame this transition in various ways to appeal to a wide variety of consumers. Some will respond positively to the positive impact they have on their communities carbon footprint, while others may make the switch to renewable energy if it is cheaper than fossil fuel. This is an important issue that must be considered, consumers will be far more likely to switch to sustainable alternatives if they are affordable and make sense. Government and energy companies are responsible for ensuring that this is the case.

Housing was discussed at length in several interviews, more specifically, the focus was on how we can make use of the houses we already have by way of retrofitting. But also, the design process and how effective design of space can contribute to a vibrant and interactive community.

*“But they're embedded in ways in which we build community food systems, carbon, neutral heating. I mean energy systems, generating energy, solar panels, all of these. Now some of those are in the regulations, but we could go much, much farther. We need to put the focus on building community rather than just building estates, even if we're putting the focus now on building the estates and in a sustainable way.” (Interviewee 1, 2021)*

*“we're currently flat out working on a policy for Town Centre first, which is highly relevant to Cloughjordan, there are something like 30 vacant properties in Cloughjordan village. They could all be wonderful housing, multi-generational housing for geezers of my age to young families, get ground floor live, work, activity going on to the streets, and have very interesting design to get the upper floors habitable, complying with universal design standards, that's a big issue, how does someone on the stick or someone who has a bad back or whatever get to the upper floors, yet people of age tend to leave those properties.” (Interviewee 3, 2021)*

*“If you look at France, they have committed 230 million over five years, to revitalizing their towns, Scotland has done similar 90 million, Denmark has done the same, you've got to show me the money to actually overcome the impediments, and to incentivize bringing these wonderful old properties back into use” (Interviewee 3, 2021)*

*“But the key sentence was the street is a muscle. If we need to get oxygen and blood flow back to the social economic muscle of our towns, and get them pulsing with life, if someone of ages is going for milk and paper, they meet Mrs. O'Brien. They sit for a moment and chat. They talk about their kid going to college, they start looking out for each other, they watch where the curtains opened, was the milk taken in. It's the whole social network of the generations. And that can be designed that is the responsibility of governance to reverse the impediments and amplify the incentives to bring a whole street back to life” (Interviewee 3, 2021)*

*“it's too late for ecovillages. Just too late. We now must have a proliferation every village, we must get untidy towns. ecological towns that are quite untidy, like Cuba, growing lettuces on windowsills. Not pretty, necessarily, but alive.” (Interviewee 3, 2021)*

These quotes indicate that the CEV residents have reflected deeply on the problems we face with energy and housing in western society. Many houses have been poorly designed and towns are littered with derelict terraces of houses or ghost estates in dire need of refurbishment. The idea that an estate can be more than just a residential area should be of

great interest to town planners. By having community gardens, allotments, communal composting and other amenities / facilities, it fosters growth and prosperity into a community. When reacting to the IPCC report (2021), Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, Eamonn Ryan stated,

*“The pandemic has shown that we can change our transport systems to return to stronger sense of local community, with the development of “15-minute cities and towns”, where services, facilities and employment are closer to living spaces.” (RTE News, 2021)*

This represents an opportune time for policymakers to examine what is being done in eco-villages and using the expertise that many of the residents possess, to influence their decisions.

#### **4.6 Challenges/Barriers to mainstreaming sustainable consumption**

During these interviews, it became apparent that there were several obstacles that would make the mainstreaming of sustainable practices from eco-villages more difficult.

One interviewee suggested that one's political ideologies may influence how one views climate action.

*“I think that’s what we’ve been grappling with for 20 years. Most people, even if they want change, don’t want to change. Most people aren’t interested in this because they see it as, so that’s for lefties or environmentalist or Greenies is not for me.” (Interviewee 4, 2021)*

Moreover, ones beliefs and attitudes can be deeply rooted and the process of changing these will be difficult and requires strategic thinking. As another participant observed,

*“The paradigm change is equivalent to the conversion of an individual, you know, a conversion experience where an individual changes their whole world view, which can be very painful and I mean, it’s not an easy process.” (Interviewee 1, 2021)*

*“We knew the problem and it was tough to get people to think about the changes. Now we’re acutely aware of the problem, some of the responses, and yet still, I think people are a bit lost on actually, what is useful to do.” (Interviewee 4, 2021)*

There needs to be clear communication to consumers about what they can do to lessen consumption and their carbon footprints. In the current social paradigm of western societies, this guidance should be coming from governing bodies and other authorities. But, as several eco-villagers pointed out, this has been a failure so far from local governments and authorities such as the planning authority. However, this research suggests adopting the eco-village model which is to approach problems from the bottom up through experimentation.

Politicians need votes and if they are under pressure from their constituencies to update policies, then it is more likely to happen.

*"It takes politicians eons to catch up where a lot of people are at. I mean, if you look at any of those citizen assemblies that happened in Ireland, they're the ones that have made real change happen in this country. And the politicians always lag behind the people they serve. So, and then the people they serve are sort of like often to have really good ideas and are much more forward thinking. So hopefully, I'd love to see an increase in those citizens assemblies for deciding on national policy going forward." (Interviewee 2, 2021)*

There needs to be a blend of top down and bottom-up governance structures for long term success. This will be discussed further in the discussion section.

While there are undoubtedly challenges ahead in transitioning to a low carbon society. The public is becoming increasingly aware of how essential change is. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has shown that change can happen if there is willingness and a concerted effort to work towards it. As society emerges from the pandemic, it is at a point where change is possible. As one interviewee put it

*"So I'm raising these issues because we're not talking about changing values in the midst of a very stable system. We're talking about changing values in the midst of what I label in my recent book has a system breakdown.*

*We have a multiple system breakdown, multiple, I mean a multi-dimensional system breakdown, and that opens the doors to change. But of course, what we don't know is the direction that change, will go in. So change is happening. You know, Trump couldn't have been elected in the United States 20 years ago. Why? Because there wasn't a base of support. There wasn't the alienated, sectors of society, who would vote for a guy like him and similarly Brexit couldn't have happened. So that's changed. It's not the sort of change I want to see happening, but it does show that the, the sort of dominant ways of doing things and the dominant values that guide them are breaking up and that opens possibilities for change."*

*(Interviewee 1, 2021)*

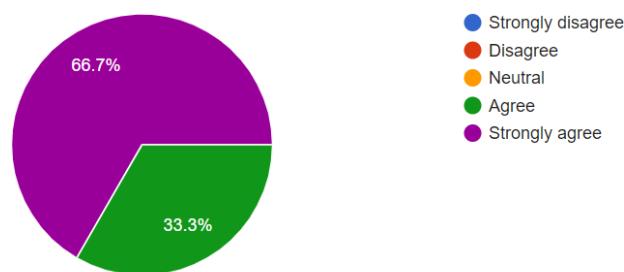
#### **4.7 Pilot survey results**

After interpreting the data from the interviews, a pilot survey was designed and was completed by six participants who live in the Skibbereen area. The survey covers a wide range of topics that emerged from the interviews. This pilot survey was designed as a feasibility test for completing a more in-depth study on the Skibbereen population in future research. The results showed that there were encouraging levels of enthusiasm to consider new innovations such as community supported agriculture, district heating systems and other initiatives that would strengthen the community, make it more resilient while simultaneously lowering the carbon footprint.

The results of this survey have limitations however, and these must be considered when interpreting the data. The small sample size is the largest limitation has it does not accurately reflect the wider Skibbereen community. A second limitation is that all respondents live in rural detached houses. This means that the survey has no input from those living in urban housing estates or terraces. It would have been beneficial to get an insight into how these communities would react to the survey. The researcher will be providing recommendations for future research which will address these limitations.

I would be willing to change my behavior/ habits to become more sustainable/lessen my carbon footprint

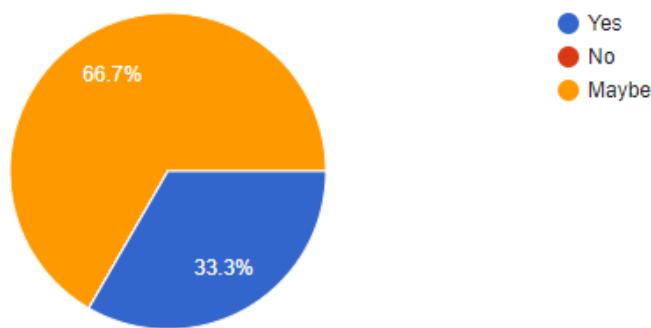
6 responses



The initial results from the pilot survey show that the respondents were positively disposed towards changing their behaviour and integrating more sustainable practices and habits into their daily lives. These conscious consumers or passive conscious consumers (O'Neil, 2015) will be pioneers in their community by being the early adopters of new sustainable innovations. They are crucial to this research as they help bridge the gap between the ethical consumers of an eco-village, and the less conscious consumers with high carbon footprints that will need to undergo a transformation.

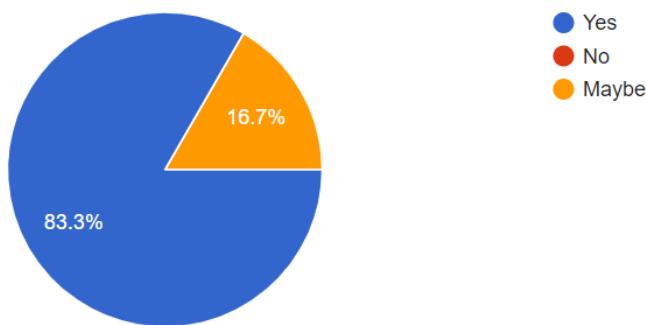
Would you be interested in taking a course to learn how to grow your own food?

6 responses



Community Supported Agriculture is a partnership between a group of people and a farmer. The members receive a share in the CSA when they commit to pay an agreed fee to the farmer for the duration of a season, and in return they get healthy, local food produced in an agroecological\* way. This partnership allows everyone to share both the rewards and also the challenges that our independent farmers face every year. The CSA model is a way to self-organize food distribution systems.(CSA network Ireland, 2021) If there was a CSA opportunity in Skibbereen, would you consider subscribing to it?

6 responses

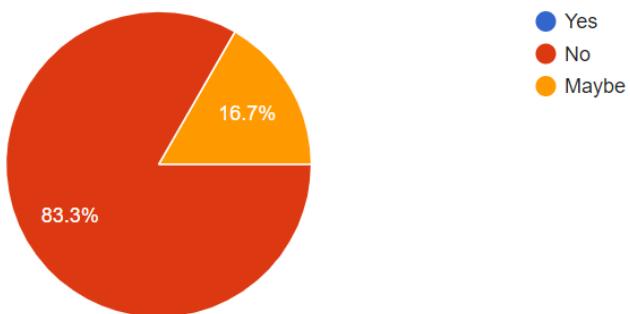


Both questions were posed to understand the desire participants might have to become more self-sufficient and localise their food systems. It shows a slight hesitancy among the sample group to learn how to grow their own food. One explanation for this is a lack of interest however, it can also be explained by the fact that the respondents live rurally and may already grow their own produce. If this is the case then they may deem it unnecessary to take a course. Further research is needed in this area.

The idea of community supported agriculture was received well with 83% of respondents saying they would consider subscribing to the system. Furthermore, Skibbereen already has a well-established farmers market. This provides an ideal distribution centre and point of contact with suppliers.

Do you think that Skibbereen, as a town, is using the buildings/space it has effectively? (for example; consider number of businesses on main street vs empty buildings).

6 responses

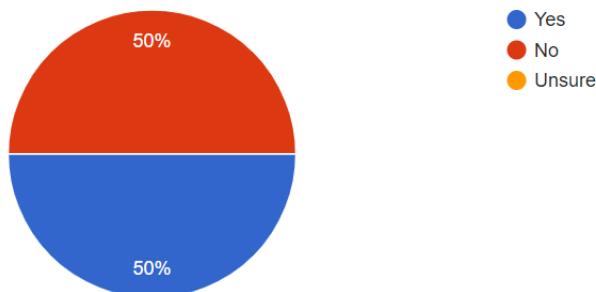


83% of participants stated that they were dissatisfied with the use of space in Skibbereen. This suggests that there needs to be a concerted effort to improve town planning in the area. Many buildings, private and public owned spaces and yards in the town are unused. If the community were given the opportunity by the local authorities to use spaces for initiatives like rewilding, allotments, edible landscapes, composting then it would bring a new dimension of cohesiveness and resilience to the locality.

The buildings can be retrofitted to meet ecological standards and can be used either for private housing, new businesses, accommodation for tourists. The Ludgate hub in Skibbereen is a good example of how old buildings can be retrofitted and will breathe new life into a community. With visionary leadership and facilitators rather than blockers, the town can be revitalised.

Does your house use renewable energy (Solar, wind etc) for heating/ hot water?

6 responses



If no, would you consider using a renewable energy source for your home in the future? If possible, give a reason for your answer

3 responses

Yes however the options available are not easily found i.e they don't have a strong visual marketing presence.

Yes

Yes would consider, as need new heating system

These answers about household energy usage suggest that houses are in the process of transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy. One respondent suggested that it was difficult to get information about what options are available and wrote that these new innovations need a stronger presence to be noticed by the consumer. If the government and energy companies are pushing for consumers to adopt new renewable, sustainable heating systems, then it needs to be easy for them. The concept of the passive conscious consumer (O'Neil, 2015) is important here. The survey results indicate that the attitude of these consumers is ethical and they would be more than happy to switch to sustainable alternatives. But if they have to spend time researching or pay more than what they would for fossil fuel, then they will be much less likely to switch their behaviour. The conversion of sustainable attitude to behaviour is critically important if we are to transition to a low carbon society. Policymakers, marketers and organisations need strong business and marketing strategies to shift public behaviour in the right direction. The sustainable marketing framework (Gordon, et al., 2011) will be discussed as a potential method of doing this in latter sections.

## Section 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The data gathered from the CEV interviews suggests that there are a number of innovations that could be learned from the eco-village. Skibbereen has the resources available to make many changes to move towards the eco-village model. To answer the research question 'how

to mainstream sustainable consumption in Skibbereen, using learnings from Cloughjordan eco-village', a number of considerations need to be made. The importance of strong community cannot be understated. The interviews showed that it is crucial to the success of the community. Without this social sustainability, eco-villages cannot properly function. Litfin (2014) also identified this in her study. Moving towards a culture of sharing, reciprocity and collectivism will improve the resilience of the Skibbereen community. Moreover, it will facilitate the other changes that the researcher believes could feasibly be brought into the community to lower its overall carbon footprint and reduce the consumption levels.

Skibbereen already has a number of advantages over other communities that make these proposed changes much easier to accomplish. The organisation 'Green Skibbereen' can provide the community with expertise and guidance in lowering consumption. They are in the process of refurbishing an old retreat house into a centre for sustainability and their mission is to

*"Address the challenge of moving to low carbon energy through actively engaging, educating and facilitating a whole community approach that is driven by local people, businesses and organisations rather than top down, one size fits all schemes that can struggle to reach rural areas." (Green Skibbereen, 2021)*

The CEV residents believed that the Green Skibbereen centre could be beneficial to the community. They also have community education programmes and shared workspaces. This facilitates the transfer of knowledge and provides educational opportunities, not only for eco-villagers, but also for the wider community. The centre in Skibbereen could occupy a similar position, providing education, support and knowledge to the local rural and urban communities. It would make the mainstreaming of sustainable consumption more feasible. As one interviewee observed

*"If there's a centre in Skibbereen, that can really be a signpost, a place where people can really get grounded in this new approach or new ways of doing things it's going to be so helpful." (Interviewee 4, 2021)*

### **5.1: Proposed changes to Skibbereen- Food systems**

Cloughjordan eco-village rely on a community supported agriculture system for fresh produce. There is also a bakery in CEV where the residents make a conscious effort to buy locally. The recent digital food hub that was established during the pandemic provides alternative distribution channels which opens up possibilities in reaching new consumers who otherwise would not be benefitting from this system.

Skibbereen already have a wide range of local producers in the form of a farmer's market that takes place every Saturday. Not only does this provide the community with fresh, local food and crafts, but it is also an important social event for the community. It represents an ideal platform to integrate CSA. The producers who already sell there would have the opportunity to join this network. The benefits of CSA have already been mentioned, reduced risk for the

farmer, resilient farms, organic and healthy produce and low food miles are several of the benefits. The subscription price would be an important consideration as that is a deciding factor for many consumers when buying fresh produce (Bord Bia thinking house, 2020). A study by Bord Bia in 2020 found what were the most important buying factors for consumers in relation to fresh produce.



Source: (Bord Bia thinking house, 2020)

Avoiding excess waste is an important factor according to this study. CSA allows for zero waste shopping as consumers can bring their own bags and due to the proximity of farms and freshness of the food, producers do not need to use any kind of packaging.

Moving into the digital space has become increasingly popular with businesses and producers since the covid-19 pandemic began. ‘Neighborfood’ is an online food hub for farmers markets in West Cork and could emulate the online food hub that Cloughjordan use for their CSA. The advantage of this system is that producers know in advance exactly how much of each product has been bought. However, according to the CEV residents, a challenge with this system is to get the producers on board. They may be reluctant to adopt the new technology and opt for face-to-face interaction with the consumer instead. It would be advantageous to have both options to appeal to a wide variety of consumers.

Another consideration to make about the food systems in Skibbereen is the ability for residents to grow their own food. During the CEV interviews, it was apparent that many residents have their own gardens in their homes, or else use community gardens and allotments. There are also a number of courses that run to teach people how to grow their own food and even intensive courses on subjects such as permaculture. Dedicating various urban areas as spaces for growing food could have a number of advantages for Skibbereen. It empowers the locals to take responsibility for their own food and it also creates greater social

interaction. Groups would be established and a network of residents passionate about growing their own food and sharing with each other would undoubtedly bring greater social sustainability to the area. The community could even take inspiration from a business located in Cork city ‘the cork rooftop farm’ who have dedicated unused roof space to growing a garden. This business now also uses CSA and have several bigger farms located elsewhere to meet the demand (Cork Rooftop Farm, 2021).

### **5.2: Proposed changes to Skibbereen- Energy usage, urban space.**

The climate action plan created by the Irish government has set ambitious targets in many sectors to move towards carbon neutrality by 2050. One such target is to increase the percentage of energy generated from renewable sources from 30% to 70% by 2030 (Department of the Environment, 2021). These suggests that there will be a national push towards using renewable electricity in our homes. As was suggested in the interviews, a community wide energy audit would be an ideal starting point in this transformation. It would give essential data to energy companies, policymakers and the community about how energy efficient they are and how they might go about reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

CEV have been pioneers in this field in Ireland with their district heating system (DHS). CEV use waste woodchips to produce energy. Apartment blocks, estates and even rural settlements could work towards installing their own DHS. While this may be expensive initially, overtime the cost will be justified as it will greatly reduce the communities reliance on fossil fuels, eventually taking them completely off-grid.

Another West Cork town, Clonakilty, has been pioneering this space and are due to become the first Irish town to go completely off grid (Connolly, 2021). This will be achieved by installing a solar farm that has the potential to power the whole town. Construction is due to start in 2023 and the funds generated by it will be reinvested into the community. This initiative exemplifies the bottom-up approach to the low carbon transition that eco-villages have instigated. Skibbereen and other urban and rural communities can learn from Clonakilty and from CEV. Their energy systems show the benefits of having self-sufficient, renewable energy systems. By both cutting down fossil fuel use and becoming community owned and localised, they will boost the local economy.

### **5.3: The role of marketing in the low carbon transition**

This research is concerned with bringing sustainable behaviour into the mainstream consciousness of society. A question remains as to what the true meaning of sustainable consumption is, whether it is consuming differently, responsibly or less (Jackson & Michaelis, 2003). The author suggests that sustainable consumption can be achieved by combining all three of these strands of thinking. Different levels of consumption apply to different areas of life. For example, in the case of food, an average consumer is not going to consume less food than before but it is feasible for them to consumer food differently, for example by reducing the distance their food travels or by choosing recyclable packaging. However, in the case of luxury goods or new technology, it is more important that less is consumed. Instead of buying the latest smartphone, getting spare parts for your current phone is a more sustainable alternative and feeds into the idea of the circular economy.

Marketing and advertising have been blamed for over-consumption and the unsatiable appetite that many consumers have for buying and consuming products. Consumption has also been attributed to consumer well-being (Jackson & Michaelis, 2003). Society now faces a major challenge in altering behaviour patterns to lessen the amount of consumption that takes place globally. Altering consumer behaviour is an important part of the marketing process. If marketing has been used to drive overconsumption up until this point, then it is worth considering whether it can also be used to promote sustainable consumption and even reduce consumption.

The author proposes that the sustainable marketing framework (Gordon, et al., 2011) could hold the key to using marketing skills to influence consumer behaviour and mainstream sustainable consumption. It is a combination of green, social and critical marketing. the benefits of taking a multifaceted approach like this is that you have diverse innovations coming from a multitude of sources. Whether it be national advertising campaigns promoting the switch to renewable energy, or local businesses and producers highlighting the benefits of community supported agriculture. Marketing has a crucial role to play in mainstreaming sustainable consumption but there also needs to be a reform in how organisations are allowed to market their products and services. Sustainability is a popular buzzword in advertising and marketing and this leaves consumers in danger of being greenwashed. With the huge volume of products being shown as sustainable or eco-friendly, it makes it difficult for the consumer to distinguish between what is truthful and what isn't. There needs to be stricter regulations around sustainable marketing or else consumers will be overloaded with information and may become lost in the sea of advertisements and messages.

While it may be difficult to change the marketing landscape on a global or national level, at a local level, organisations like Green Skibbereen or Cloughjordan community farm can use this sustainable marketing framework to expand their own reach. This will be important in the process of localising the SDGs (Global taskforce of local and regional governments, 2017). SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production) are seen as the “lynchpins” (Global taskforce of local and regional governments, 2017, p. 6) of the localisation process so it is essential that communities and organisations are given every advantage to promote their sustainable practices and ultimately, mainstream sustainable consumption on a large scale. Communities like Cloughjordan eco-village are crucial sources of learning and education for other communities around Ireland and the world.



Source: (Gordon, et al., 2011)

## Section 6: Recommendations and conclusion

### 6.1: Conclusion

This research aimed to answer the question of how to mainstream sustainable consumption in Skibbereen using learnings from Cloughjordan eco-village. An extensive interview process was conducted with residents of the eco-village to gain an insight into their behaviour and attitude towards consumption and sustainability. It is evident that eco-villager's consumption patterns are more ethical than an average person in a western capitalist society. Similar to Litfin's (2014) findings, it was clear that strong social bonds and a sense of belonging in a community is essential to the eco-village. This strong social network facilitates sustainable behaviour through education, experimentation, innovation and support.

Building and maintaining a strong community bond will be essential in Skibbereen. Systemic thinking (Litfin, 2014) needs to take place. By forming groups of like-minded, ethical consumers, the community could begin to apply various learnings from the eco-village to their own town such as community supported agriculture, community gardens, district heating systems for housing blocks and education in permaculture and other regenerative practices.

Green Skibbereen and their planned sustainability centre in Myross retreat house offer a hub within which this learning can take place. This organisation can help mobilise the community in working towards mainstreaming sustainable consumption patterns among the Skibbereen community.

Altering consumers patterns of consumption represents a difficult obstacle in this process however, the framework for sustainable marketing (Gordon, et al., 2011) could provide marketers and businesses with the necessary guidance when developing new marketing strategies. Marketing and sustainability can be seen as contradictory as one is concerned with

lowering consumption and the strain on our natural resources, while the other is creating an insatiable need to consume. This research provides an insight into how the low-carbon transition can begin with the help of eco-villages but this bottom-up approach needs to be combined with wholesale changes from national governments and global corporations if a worldwide climate catastrophe is to be avoided.

## **6.2: Recommendations for future research**

A major limitation to this research is the lack of data gathered from the Skibbereen residents due to the narrow time frame of the research. The small pilot group that was used does not accurately reflect the wider population's feelings. If further research is being conducted based on this work or using different places, then a substantial data collection process will be required in the community to which the learnings are being applied.

Following on from an extensive survey or other method of quantitative data collection, the research problem can begin to be addressed practically. This would perhaps involve working with local council, town planners, community groups and other professional to create plans as to how these learnings can be integrated. For example, how can a housing estate be taken off grid to instead rely on a district heating system using renewable energy.

Further research will need to be undertaken into using the sustainable marketing framework (Gordon, et al., 2011) to influence and change consumption patterns. Marketers must be progressive in their thinking and identify what will drive the market before it begins. The sustainable marketing framework will allow them to promote sustainable practices.

## **Section 7: Reflection**

This applied research project was an invaluable opportunity for me to explore a subject that I am exceptionally passionate about. I have always been interested in combatting climate change, but I have never had the opportunity to examine this problem in an academic context. However, in the second semester of my Master's program I completed University Wide Module UW0005 "Sustainability" sustainability for extra credit. This course was coordinated by Dr. ger Mullaly and UCC Green Campus and drew from a range of different fields to give us a wide understanding of the importance of each sustainable development goal. When the time came to choose the topic for my research project, I knew that I wanted it to be about sustainability and perhaps even be of value to others, not just a requirement for me to complete my degree. With the help of my supervisor, Dr. Joan Buckley, I was able to shape this research project and choose the right angle from which I could approach this problem.

Cloughjordan eco-village was my chosen organisation and the business problem that it and many eco-villages face is how to get their ideas and innovations to be adopted by the wider population. I contacted the eco-village and had a discussion with Peadar Kirby, the research co-ordinator in Cloughjordan and outlined what my objectives were for this research project. Having just finished a masters in marketing, I realised that there were a lot of elements of

marketing theory that could be applied to answering the research problem. In particular, consumer behaviour and the ways in which marketers are able to influence attitudes and beliefs. I thought it was crucial that we understand what motivates people to live/act the way that they do. This idea was received positively and to the best of my knowledge, is an alternative way of approaching this problem that has not been done before. Prof. Kirby agreed to allow me to continue with the research and so I began the process of collecting and interpreting data.

I did this by focusing on the areas that I thought were most relevant. Although we were not specifically required to do a literature review, I felt it was essential to my research to provide conduct. Hence why I included the secondary data section of the research process. The work of Litfin (2014) was especially important in gaining an insight into eco-villages. This permitted me to identify what other areas of literature would add value to the data collection process. I subdivided it into three sections. The quality of the literature that I used was highlighted by the fact that it was highly applicable to the themes emerging from the interviews. I was able to interweave both primary and secondary data in the discussion section to present a rich and well researched report.

This was a crucial decision that I made early in the research process. Before I had finalised the research question, I already knew what research methods I would be using. I chose interviews as the qualitative method as I thought it was necessary to be able to gain an in-depth insights into Cloughjordan eco-village and its residents. I felt that an ethnographic study would not be as effective, nor would a focus group. Depth interviews allow for greater exploration of themes and I designed them so that the interviews would manifest as free flowing informal conversations. This process worked extremely effectively and it allowed me to gather data that I was expecting to get but also, it allowed the residents to discuss things that I hadn't considered prior to starting the research process. I believe that if I had chosen an ethnographic study or focus groups then the data I gathered would not have been as applicable to answering the research question. Another factor influencing my decision was Covid-19 and I believe that online interviews were the best methods to use in this context as it presented no danger of infection and allowed the participants to remain completely anonymous.

During the academic year, I completed several assignments in which I had to analyse and interpret data before presenting the results in a clear, concise and organised manner. This helped me prepare for the applied research project however, due to the much higher volume of data used in this project, it required a much higher level of planning and critical thinking. This project would not have been possible without taking a methodical, systematic approach to the data analysis. I did this by studying the transcriptions and identified several key themes. I was then able to take data from each interview and sort it into the different themes. This left me with a structured representation of data and made it much more straightforward to write the report.

Blending the primary data with the secondary data to produce results and a useful discussion was challenging and extremely rewarding. It greatly improved my ability to apply critical

thinking to a research problem. Sustainability is a far-reaching term that can be approached from many different angles so it was essential that my conclusion was succinct and accurately summarised how the research problem was addressed.

I designed the recommendations for future research by critically analysing my own body of work and identifying where the shortcomings were. I feel that if anyone were to continue this research, then they would have an accurate idea of what gaps needed to be filled by reading my recommendations. Overall, this applied research project greatly improved my academic writing skills and my ability to think critically about a problem. I believe that completing this module will prove to be invaluable in my future career.

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## 8.2: Appendices

### Appendix 1: Considerations for scaling up eco-village sustainability practices *Source* (Litfin, 2014, pp. 189-190)

1. *Systemic thinking* is a key ingredient in ecovillage success stories. Architecture, transportation, and food production, for instance, are structured in ways that promote and amplify the core values of social trust and ecological sustainability. What if we joined together to grow food in our parks and backyards? What if parents, rather than driving their children to school, organized “bike trains”?<sup>1</sup> This integrative approach to E2C2 differs sharply from prevailing piecemeal approaches to city planning, national policy making, and international institutions – but change is afoot.
2. *Subsidiarity*, the idea that social and political decisions should be made at the lowest level practicable, has its roots in democratic theory, Catholic social teaching, and EU international law. An ecological reading of subsidiarity would meet human needs with the lowest possible resource consumption and waste disposal. That means relocalization – a corollary to energy descent. Yet if we wish to sustain a global civilization, then our reading of subsidiarity might be something like, “Export your photons but leave your molecules at home.”<sup>2</sup> On this measure, ecovillagers tend to be model planetary citizens, localizing their material consumption while remaining engaged in world events.
3. *Sharing* is the essence of both ecology and community. Ecovillages offer models for sharing everything from land and cars to self-governance, skills, and life stories. As we scale up, the sharing expands to include schools, parks, roads, waterways, the atmosphere, the biosphere, the internet – anything that sustains us in common and, we might add, anything for which we pay taxes. Full-cost accounting and other policies that protect “the space between” simultaneously foster ecological, social, and economic sustainability. Sharing does not spell the death of the individual but rather her or his coming of age as she or he develops from what Thomas Hübl calls “particle consciousness” into “field consciousness.”
4. *Design* with an eye to the future is a vital element of ecovillages and their scalability. Even with planning, communities at every scale – especially those least responsible for the problems – will face enormous stress from climate change and energy descent; without careful forethought, there is a real possibility of systemic collapse. If we take our cues from ecovillages and downshift today, we greatly enhance our prospects for tomorrow. The key is energy, the master resource. As Ozzie Zeher demonstrates in *Green Illusions*, even with an all-out effort, renewables cannot come close to fueling today’s energy consumption, much less a world of ten billion people hoping to live like the global North. Yet Zeher admits that renewables will eventually supply most of humanity’s energy needs. The catch is that we need to *create* the kind of society that *can* be powered by renewables.<sup>3</sup> That means mirroring an ecovillage design strategy, one that prioritizes quality of relationships over quantity of stuff, at every level.
5. *The power of yes* is greater than the power of no. Focusing on the most practical issues of life, ecovillages embody a kind of hands-on, do-it-yourself politics. They are creating parallel structures for self-governance within the prevailing social order while demonstrating how to live well with less. Ecovillages themselves are scaling up this *power of yes* through Gaia Education and other training programs, but there are countless constructive initiatives sprouting every day. Whether it is one person stringing a backyard

## **Appendix 2: Interview consent forms** *Source: author*



### **Consent form for interview as part of the study ‘how to mainstream sustainable consumption in Skibbereen, using Cloughjordan eco-village as a model.’**

**Purpose of the Study.** As part of the requirements for MSc Management and Marketing at UCC, I have to carry out a research study. The study is concerned with how to mainstream sustainable consumption in Skibbereen, using Cloughjordan eco-village as a model.

**What will the study involve?** The study will involve a one-to-one interview to be conducted online. The interview will last between 30-40 minutes.

**Why have you been asked to take part?** You have been asked because you are a resident of Cloughjordan eco-village, and your insight will be invaluable to this research.

**Do you have to take part?** No. You will be asked to sign a consent form before the interview but even after signing that, you are able to withdraw from the study before, during or up to two weeks after the interview has taken place. If you decide to withdraw from the study, then all your data will be deleted, and you will not be included in the final report.

**Will your participation in the study be kept confidential?** Yes, the data collected and used in the research will be kept anonymous at all times. If anything in the interview could potentially uncover your identity, then it will be excluded from the transcript. Your name will not be used in the final report, any quotes will be presented as ‘interview 1, 2, 3 etc.

**What will happen to the information which you give?** The data will be kept confidential for the duration of the study, available only to me and my research supervisor. The recording of the interview will be deleted as soon as it has been transcribed and the transcription will be securely stored on the UCC OneDrive for business. On completion of the project, they will be retained for minimum of a further ten years and then destroyed.

**What will happen to the results?** The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be seen by my supervisor, a second marker and the external examiner. The thesis may be read by future students on

the course. The study may be published in a research journal, and it will be available on the Cloughjordan research database.

**What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?** I don't envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part as there is no sensitive data being collected and the questions will not be invasive. You will be consulted after the interview to ensure that you are happy with what data has been collected. However, if you feel distressed at any stage during the study you may refer to the next section for guidance on services that can provide support.

**What if there is a problem?** If you subsequently feel distressed, you should contact The Samaritans on 116 123 or your local GP.

**Who has reviewed this study?** This study has to be approved by the Social Research Ethics Committee in UCC and approval must be given by the relevant academic supervisor at UCC before studies like this can take place.

**Any further queries?** If you need any further information, you can contact me:

Naoise Kennedy, 115471058@umail.ucc.ie, 083-4174757

Or my supervisor:

Dr Joan Buckley, [jb@ucc.ie](mailto:jb@ucc.ie)

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form overleaf.

Thank you,

Naoise Kennedy

I.....agree to participate in Naoise Kennedy's research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission for my interview with Naoise Kennedy to be audio-recorded.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

(Please tick one box:)

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

Signed: ..... Date: .....

PRINT NAME: .....

### **Appendix 3: Interview transcripts**

#### **Interview 1**

**Interviewer:** So to start off, how long have you been a part of the Cloughjordan project and what attracted you to get involved in the first place?

**Interviewee:** We have been members since May 2007, and I've lived here since January 2009. This house was being built during 2009. And I took possession of it in December 2009. The original impetus came from my wife. She went to some of those meetings at the beginning, in Dublin in the 1990s where the idea was being conceived and I do remember her coming home, I was down in DCU and we were living in Dublin, she was full of enthusiasm about this project and saying we should join it.

I really hadn't much interest to be honest with you and then it faded off our agenda. I think a second factor that did begin to weigh my mind was that, over that period, my mother was very elderly in cork and she was living on her own and really was very isolated. My two brothers were down in clonakilty, not a million miles away, of course, but just in terms of everyday things, getting shopping done and all that. We were actually building her a house in Clonakilty she died in 1997. So it reinforced for me the sense that I didn't want to get to the point in my life where I was left with no support and was too elderly to do very much about it and I think that's been a factor in my mind.

So anyway, the planning went ahead, we didn't do anything more in the late 1990s about the ecovillage, forgot all about it. I got a sabbatical leave in 2001. We took our daughters to Chile. They were then 11 and seven years of age. Because we had lived in Latin America when we got married first and I have travelled to Latin America virtually every year between

1978 and 2010, both as an academic and as a journalist. So, Latin America, was very much part of our lives and I mentioned that because it was the first time I think that the ecological crisis really began to become a reality for me. We have good friends there, and they were very much into it. We used to go every Monday night to their house and watch videos about the ecological crisis and drink copious quantities of Chilean wine and I must say, I came back from Chile with an awareness of the realities of climate change in a way I never had before.

Also Chile was much more advanced than us. There were things like ecotourism. I'd never heard the term before I went to Chile and a lot of projects that we came across it wasn't just a term. So all of that really challenged me to introduce the challenges of climate change into my teaching. I was in DCU at the time and I really didn't succeed very well in that. So, I mean, the idea of moving to an ecovillage wasn't on our agenda at that point, but I was beginning to become aware of the issues that I suppose subsequently then did weigh heavily in our decision to come. The next point was when my arm was twisted to throw in my hat for a chair that was going in UL.

I remember it was the sixth to January. I remember reading the Irish times late one Saturday evening reading, the supplement, and they had an article on the fact that Cloughjordan ecovillage had, again, opened up sites to sell that all the sites had been sold. I remember saying to my wife the next morning, well, if I were to get the job in Limerick, we could then go and live in the ecovillage, as you know, was always her dream. Because remember when we came back from Chile and she had read somewhere that they bought the land here in Cloughjordan, and I remember her bringing it up again about the fact that we should buy a site there, and again, I felt it was a bit unrealistic. So really that puts it very much on the agenda and we decided that. If I was to go for the job and if I was to get it then we would that we would go and live in the ecovillage and so, I was interviewed in, I think March of 2007, we came to a member's meeting and we liked what we saw. So we decided to join and I got the offer of the job. So, I mean, it was those two things, I think for both of us, so that we were moving towards the final a stage of our life. I retired in 2012, I retired early, but I would have been retiring in 2016. But it was on our horizon retirement and that story about my mother did weigh heavily for me. Then the second thing was, I had been growing evermore frustrated that the issue of climate change wasn't ,that I wasn't succeeding to put it on my agenda in my teaching and it certainly wasn't on the agenda either of DCU or UL at the time I remember giving my inaugural lecture in February, 2008 just before the crash came and it was built around the fact that no student should go through UL without a basic course in the history of the universe that gave them a sense of the reality of climate change and what damage we're doing to the planet, by the way we're living and I mean, I got a standing ovation and the speech I gave was published I have it here but nothing happened. and I sort of grew disillusioned I must say, so the fact of coming to live in the ecovillage was for me very important from, I mean, if I say a career point of view, it wasn't so much in my formal career in UL but from the point of view where my work life was going, that I did want to make climate change much more of a central, feature of my teaching and my writing. So that was a big motivation for me in coming also, I think for my wife, it was more biodiversity like she

loves putting in the garden and planting and all that and this has been a wonderful experience for her. Like, for example, now in the last few weeks she organized three videos, they're going to be on our website. I don't think they're on yet for biodiversity week and getting, eco-villagers to talk about the biodiversity here. They're really wonderful videos and I see a part of her flourishing that can flourish in this sort of a community to say, if we were still living in suburban Dublin, wouldn't, you know, she'd be doing her garden, then that'd be it. So that's a, that's a long-winded story, but that's it.

**Interviewer:** Well, that's very interesting how you both had slightly different principles or reasons for wanting to end up at the ecovillage, but it seems you can both flourish.

**Interviewee:** Yeah, I think that's very true. I mean, I'd never say I'm environmentalist. Most people here are environmentalist in the sense that, you know, I've never been a person to be particularly interested in the natural world and this is opening my eyes. I mean, it is wonderful from that point of view to be living here because it's a big steep education for me. But I suppose the part where I find my role is seeing where projects like this fits into the bigger picture of humanity, having to move towards a low carbon transition. My last two books have been about that. I had a book last December and then in January 2018. So both my research and my teaching have moved much more in that direction and even though I'm retired now from UL, I do continue to do quite a bit of teaching in different universities and of course I do a lot of teaching here in the ecovillage. So that's been a continuation of my work life in a way that's really much more satisfactory and satisfying for the interest of that I was developing and just for showing people what can be done in terms of climate change, doing it here in the eco village is totally different from lecturing in a classroom, in a university.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, it is. It's much more practical, I suppose, because a lot of the discussion now is still quite theoretical. So to see someone like you really trying to apply all the different theories and develop ways of living, I think is really important.

**Interviewee:** Yes, People see in practice what can be done. I mean, I think that's one of the difficulties about, about lecturing in university that it's, it's so doom Laden that you feel it can be counterproductive. Whereas when people come here, you know, we can talk about the realities of, of what faces us in terms of climate change, biodiversity loss, et cetera, but we do so then by walking out around the eco village and people can see that here is relatively small community of people can really live sustainably.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, definitely and I think now, especially in the media as well, the coverage surrounding climate change is almost, not quite scaremongering, but not far off it. I think a lot of it is blaming as well. So I think to focus on the solutions rather than just continue to talk about the problems is definitely important

**Interviewee:** Well, both, I mean, I do, I do think it's very important to talk about the realities because I've been shocked over the years. That just how particularly in Ireland, how ignorant Irish students are now, that's beginning to change and I do a bit of lecturing in Spain. I used to lecture in Iceland. Uh, and I was always struck by just how different it was. I mean, I say I still lecture in Spain and students really are aware of it, the average student in a way that up until recently, I found in Ireland, they weren't at all. I mean, really completely different. I mean, it's very interesting to speculate why that is, but it was shocking. So just trying to try to educate people in the realities of what the science is telling us does remain very, very important and I always insist here in our educational program, that's why we're showcasing ecovillage we're putting it into a wider global context.

**Interviewer:** On your lectures in Spain and then the other universities, what kind of subjects would you be lecturing on or what topics would you cover?

**Interviewee:** Well, I suppose I was a professor of international politics, so I've done a lot of stuff in the past on international development on globalization, I took a particular interest in Latin America. So Latin American politics, uh, would have been a big subject of mine and I've lectured on all of those in Spain and in Latin America and in other places in Europe. Um, but in recent years, it's more focusing in, on the low carbon transition and particularly growing on the work that I would have done over decades about globalization, about international development, about models of development in particular, and applying them to the climate change issue.

So, um, I mean the best way I can illustrate this is by showing you my second last book, because that really helped me to bring these things together.

So I mentioned that because, that's the book and the title of it best illustrates the way in which I have brought the issues of models of development that I would have lectured on for decades and applied them to the, to the low carbon transition. So it's the political economy of the low carbon transition and then even the subtitled pathways beyond techno optimism. So that, I mean, the point there is that I feel so much of the discourse on climate change has been so, technocratic and technological instead of being embedded in social economic and political change, which, which are very complex and yet, the discourse about those and the theoretical work on them is largely missing from the discourse on, on climate change on the low carbon transition. It's beginning to improve a bit, but it's remarkable to me how little it's being faced. So, you know, you have scientists and technology, people who are talking about changing patterns of consumption and changing lifestyle as if that's relatively straightforward, whereas of course that's vastly complex and so for somebody who's worked for decades and looking at the issues of international development, it does seem to me that really has an awful lot of lessons to teach us about the low carbon transition. I mean, after all what was the project of international development, but trying through policy measures to change and transform country's economy and society from being what we used to label underdeveloped to being developed. So, you know, similarly we're trying to do now true policy measures and transformation of societies and economies from being high carbon to being low carbon and

that's one of the centrepieces of this book was to learn the lessons of a 50 years of international development and apply it to the, to the climate change issue.

**Interviewer:** That's a really interesting framework and I hadn't thought about that because I suppose a lot of the focused on developing a country would have been industrial development with, and not necessarily a low carbon transition.

**Interviewee:** well, one of the realities is that had moved many countries into a high carbon trajectory, whereas I have been low carbon, but it's just that, the setting, if you like, that here is here are our governments and international organizations and NGOs and even businesses who are saying they're mounting projects. They are setting up even government ministries and are putting budgets aside to, for the project of development of international development and here are we now trying to do something similar, it's a global project to transform societies and economies. It's at that level. Now the content of some of the, of some of the policies that would have been put in place during that era of international development. Cause I, I mean, I conceive of that era right now as, as having ended. Some of those are policies that we could learn from some of them really have nothing much to do.

And as you, as you're implying, I mean, they really were going in the wrong direction from a sustainability point of view, but that wasn't on the agenda.

**Interviewer:** Um, so, and I read your, your paper transitioning to a low carbon society, and you mentioned the need for a bottom-up approach. Could you maybe just expand on that a little bit? I think maybe it was an introduction to your book. it was available on the Cloughjordan database. So just, you know, because now everything is obviously top-down governance. So what do you think maybe are the advantages of a bottom-up approach or how do you think it can help in working towards sustainability?

**Interviewee:** Absolutely essential. It seems to me, the problem we really need is a partnership between states, not just at a national level, but also at, at local level, you know, and that's where Ireland is just very, very weak., we need municipal government or local government that's really hands-on and has the resources to devote, to facilitating local projects, to learn the lessons of how we can undertake the low carbon transition. I mean, the bottom-up approach is, is the, what happens at grassroots level is experimentation. And that's what we desperately need.

I mean, nobody knows how we're going to get to wherever we're going. Governments will make pledges, et cetera, but like we all know the pledges aren't sufficient and even the chances of meeting all their pledges are also very unlikely. So we desperately need lessons of how local communities can transform themselves.

I mean, that's what we are doing here. But as we always say to groups that come here, it's not so much that we expect people to set up other ecovillages, but there are many lessons of what we do here that in any town, in any city suburb it could be, could be replicated. So, I mean, that's what you're trying to do in Skibbereen, we can come to that and I'd be very happy to talk to you more about that. but it is, it is the level of creative experimentation. That is where I'd put the focus. That's what we need to do. But of course, unless you have governments, public authorities at all levels, that are sympathetic to that, that are then reaping the lesson, they're harvesting the lessons and they're really learning the lessons and putting them into, into account on a bigger scale. Then the creativity at local level is, much less worth. It's not completely worthless, obviously. So that's, that's the model that I see and of course, I mean, I see it working in other parts of the world. I think there's far, far better collaboration between grassroots projects on local levels of governance in countries that I'd be aware of in Britain and in, Spain. So I'm very struck by that factor in the Irish case, that while the national government is now moving into that space, really local government is, is very weak. It's not that it lacks the will, I think, but it just hasn't the policy-making capacity, the, the implementation capacity, it has such fragmented powers. And obviously it's better now that there's some pressure from the national government on local authorities, but it's what they can achieve is going to be very minimal compared to what I see being achieved.

I mean, I remember being invited to speak at a conference organized by the local authority of greater Manchester. There were a number of local authorities and I was really impressed at the, at the buy-in on the hands-on nature of the local authority, both politicians. I thought conference and it struck me like this was light years beyond, where we are at in Ireland.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, it just definitely. With a reference to Cloughjordan, what's your experience been with your local government?

**Interviewee:** the broad experience with Tipperary County Council is that they're sympathetic to what we're doing and they're sort of proud to have us.

However, I think the interaction we have with them illustrates the point I've been making about Irish local authorities have such a marginal role really that if local authorities had a much bigger local development role, then I would imagine that our engagement with Tipperary county council would have been far more robust and that the council would have seen us as doing the sorts of things that I'm talking about giving lessons that then could be replicated throughout their area of responsibility, that they haven't done and I don't blame them for it. It's just that they're not geared up to do that sort of thing. So most of our engagement group to count is about technical issues, at the moment we're meeting with them about planning permissions and about, conditions to do with our original outline planning permission that we haven't fulfilled.

So there's a lot of engagement and by and large, the meetings were very positive and the council staff are very positively disposed towards us, but, you know, they're dealing really with the technical issues that have been very challenging for us and continue to be challenging for us. Um, so yeah, I mean, it's a, it's a relatively good relationship, but one which hasn't moved into what you might want to label as a political engagement. Political in the sense of really seeing ourselves as partners in developing policy approaches towards the low carbon transition, it hasn't and probably, you know, we're light years away from having a county council that would have the capacity to do that.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. I think I could say the exact same for Cork County council as well.

**Interviewee:** And I mean, that raises all sorts of questions that we should be probably more active in that space. People projects, and like ours and like academics like you. I mean, it always occurs to me as a space. That's, you know, find it's everybody who studied politics in Ireland knows well that have major theme is the weakness of Irish local government. in the climate action discourse, it's really still quite marginal. It is recognized that local authorities are important, but the work that needs to be done to, to make them fit for purpose, I don't think is, is really being recognized.

**Interviewer:** In terms of Ireland, apart from maybe the issues with governance, what do you think are some other obstacles that limits the widespread transition to low carbon or to sustainable living?

**Interviewee:** Well, I mean, I think focusing on the Irish one is a very useful discussion. Like the wider global one, we're all aware, we're unaware of in the sense that states depend upon fossil fuels far too much for, energy generation, for mobility, for industry. And there is, there is a major, major task to try to, to move away from that. Our government structures and our political structures. I mean, both of them are distinct features of the way in which we govern ourselves are really You know, when there are major problems, such a, like we can see the way in which our, our political systems are Militate against the sort of visionary leadership getting, enough power to be able to really push things forward. That's probably worse now than it was 20 or 30 years ago. In the Irish case, I think there are specific features. I mean, there aren't an older cases, obviously, but it is worthwhile focusing in on the Irish case.

The feature that I was focusing on, and again, I think there's far, far too little awareness of this is that like effectively what we have done since the late 1950s is to hand over the development of our economy to multinational capital, until we've ended up with this very dualistic economy with a, a dynamic sector in the hands of the multinationals and to which the state Panders again and again, and with a relatively lacklustre domestic sector of the economy, which has never really seriously broken through at a global level.

And which is still relatively small. I mean, there are innovative pockets there, but it's, sort of played second fiddle in terms of public policy always took the role of the multinationals. Now, why do I mention that? Because, and I saw, it mentioned actually by a guy. He said because we have as a country, never really developed the sort of,, capacity to develop ourselves. we've always handed it over to the multinationals then. I mean, he was saying it in the context of the climate action plan, that's while the plan is good, but the actual capacity of the Irish state to deliver on such a transformative plan is weak.

And, you know, so effectively the Irish state since independence has never developed a capacity to Mount a developmental project. And now the kind of action plan is saying, that's what we have to do. So that's the single biggest weakness and that's a massive weakness. And, you know, again, it's, it's not being recognized.

There's been little or no debate over the decades about this as a development strategy. I mean, the only time that has raised its head and now is raising its head, of course in a really stark way is where there was pressure on for both at EU level and now local level for taxing multinationals, Ireland feels it loses its advantage, but that's the consequence of tying we into a model that, really was, was in my view disastrous.

I mean, both because it was a sort of a race to the bottom other countries then began to emulate us. So we were responsible to some extent for the way in which we have developed an international regime of taxing multinational capital, which benefits multinational capital and disadvantages states profoundly and Ireland has been a driver of that. And again, there's no debate about that.

**Interviewer:** And we're so deep into it know it will be very, very difficult to get away from that model now.

**Interviewee:** profoundly. I mean, particularly because we're not even recognizing it has a problem. I mean the one good thing, I'm quite positively disposed to the climate action plan. I think this is really visionary and ambitious and I'm delighted that it's happening. But it's those wider issues that it raises that, we're not facing now we will begin to have to face them.

Uh, and that's one of the good things about climate action bill that it puts in place governance, structures of accountability and of reporting and all that, that really will force the state to, to begin to develop these capacities. I mean, how we're going to develop these three five-year long carbon budgets and what they will entail for things like agriculture and transport.

I mean, energy is, is probably the one sector you could say where we have managed to do something quiet, quite well. But these are things are massive and it will be very, very interesting to watch the way that plays out.

**Interviewer:** Then on a more person to person level, there still seems to be a lot of resistance towards change. And in some cases, almost complete denial that we need to change. Have you had experience in trying to change attitudes towards sustainability and climate change? You mentioned yourself even in the beginning, you weren't that concerned with it. What do you think is involved in changing these attitudes?

**Interviewee:** Changing attitudes and values is just profoundly difficult. I mean, I remember reading Donella Meadows limits to growth report. I quoted her in my last book. She says like the paradigm change is equivalent to the conversion of an individual, you know, a conversion experience where an individual changes their whole world view, which can be very painful and I mean, it's not an easy process. And that highlights just how difficult this is all going to be. So I think I'm, you know, I'm a political scientist. But one of the lessons I've learned is that we're obviously moving. It's pretty clear to most big, we've moved from a period, really since the second world war, the late 1940s up to, well, there's been various phases of breakdown, but certainly in this part of the world up to about 2008, I suppose it's a date you'd put on a where, where you were living effectively in a stable system, predictability and where you have effectively very, a lot of political stability and, well established ways of doing things that people understand and are happy with, and that are predictable and have changed, you know, relatively little. And I suppose the biggest change in the middle of all that was the neoliberal revolution with Thatcher and Reagan that happened rather abruptly in places like the US and the UK. It happened. Somewhat more gently in countries like ours.

But the point I'm getting at really is that when we moved from a period where things are stable and predictable into a period now where things are breaking down all over the place, where things aren't predictable, what are our politics has become very volatile and fragmented. And that's not just in Ireland.

Ireland is relatively benign compared to many other countries. I mean, clearly the, the models of development we've been following are facing real obstacles because of the climate crisis, where the social model has fundamentally broken down, where, you know, the welfare state has become really very threadbare. Where we have, inequality of a gross kind which, I mean in itself is ethically and politically and economically very destructive, but it's also culturally very destructive because it drives attitudes and orientations and values in ways that linked them to really intense consumption, uh, celebrities, et cetera. I mean, all these are factors that we need to take into account. So the cultural changes are very fundamental part of all this. So I'm raising these issues because we're not talking about changing values in the midst of a very stable system. We're talking about changing values in the midst of what I label in my recent book has a system breakdown.

We have a multiple system breakdown, multiple, I mean a multi-dimensional system breakdown, and that opens the doors to change. But of course, what we don't know is the

direction that change, will go in. So change is happening. You know, Trump couldn't have been elected in the United States 20 years ago. Why? Because there wasn't a base of support. There wasn't the alienated, sectors of society, who would vote for a guy like him and similarly Brexit couldn't have happened. So that's changed. It's not the sort of change I want to see happening, but it does show that the, the sort of dominant ways of doing things and the dominant values that guide them are breaking up and that opens possibilities for change.

And that's where people who want to move change in a low carbon way. It opens possibilities for them. And particularly, I think we see that those possibilities beginning to take root among younger people and extinction rebellion to schools strikes. Big strike in Australia last week about, about gas exploitation.

I mean, all of these are we have a younger generation now being socialized into new values. And that's where I have a lot of hope because these are school kids know some of them in university people, these are fundamental formative moments in people's lives, and they're being formed in a way that's politically active. That's radical in its expectations in this orientations, that's really demanding of political power that they get their act together. that is my main source of hope. I think that's a space to watch.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. I agree.

**Interviewee:** So you know what we see happening in, in Columbia these days? Cause I know Columbia I've been there. I have friends in Columbia and always is astonishing. I mean, there's a whole society rising up, but as my Colombian friends say it to me, it isn't easy, you know, it's really scary and it's really difficult, but you know, suddenly the penny has dropped and people are just tired of the same in Chile. The little bits that, that we do here, are a contribution and we see them as a contribution. I'm very committed to the work I do here because I feel that's the little bit that I can do. the more people that do that and the more we're sowing the seeds. And that was one of the things I was very, very critical of in UL. I used to say to my colleagues, we were educating young people for a society that's fast disappearing and we're not giving them the skills that they need as climate change really hits us. The eyes would glaze over and people just weren't that didn't understand what I was saying.

**Interviewer:** That's true. And like you mentioned the importance of social groups there. I think your community is an example of that. Like, if you have some people you can identify with, I think it definitely makes the change easier.

**Interviewee:** I mean the more of our sort of groups to better. I view education as a wonderful privilege of engaging with people of all ages, but I mean, many of them are young people where you have the opportunity of, you know, sharing your life with them. Really. It's

not just technical issues that you're transmitting them, your transmitting values and expectations and, sense of activism and all that. I mean, certainly that's always been central to my teaching and I think that's what all education should be about.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, education is almost like a catalyst in a way for change.

**Interviewee:** It should be, but of course it's become the very opposite. It's become a, you know, it's become a space for, for giving people skills to follow a sort of individualistic, career paths or life paths which really are void very often of any real sense of the wider society.

That's changing. I appear probably as, as an elderly person, scorning younger generations far from it. I mean, I, I have the greatest admiration for young people. Cause I think it's a really difficult world that people of your age are growing up into it. But I have two daughters who are similarly trying to navigate their way.

It's really difficult, very challenging. And I mean, the greatest challenges that my generation have left it to your generation to really face the climate crisis and that's an awful thing to say, it's an awful legacy. If we didn't face up to that, we were really captured by these illusions of grandeur Ireland of the Celtic tiger. You were probably too young, but I mean, I was so alienated in that society because just there was no space for critical thinking. Everybody was cheerleading, this appalling machine of obscene consumption, individualism. You know, so the fact that that broke down was necessary, but at least open the spaces for sure.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, no, that's very true. Really, really interesting. Thank you for that. One of the women yesterday I interviewed mentioned at buyer's group in Cloughjordan, I was wondering, could you give me a bit more information on this?

**Interviewee:** Yeah. The buyer's group is a group of, of residents here who decided to set up a scheme whereby they would buy in bulk. People could order through them from a catalogue. They would buy in bulk and, then distributed to people. We are on the very edges of it. We really don't engage in very much. One of the things we didn't like was that much of the stuff in the catalogue was coming from Britain, basically. That's, that's the buyer's group. I don't know how active it is now, more and more the things people would be sourcing would be you know, ecological products, but of course, more and more of those are available now in supermarkets. And our bookshop here has a section that has a lot of those sorts of products. So we're getting products that previously people might have got through the buyer's club. So it does still exist, I think, but I don't think as many people would be part of it as, as we're part of it when we started here back in, uh, 2009, I mean.

It is trying to pool resources and to buy things there for more cheaply. Obviously it's important for many people's budgets, because I have a good state pension I'm in the luxurious

position of not having to, you know, watch the pennies going out as much as many other people.

I mean, people, there are many people in the ecovillage stuff that do struggle to balance the budget at the end of every month. I'm aware of that.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. I think that's for a lot of people who I speak to anyway, who would be quite resistant to changing a lot of it comes down to money and they view living more sustainably as more expensive almost or more costly.

**Interviewee:** Yeah. Well, you see, I, my answer to that is that it really, you need to change your whole mindset. And again, living here has taught me a lot about that. If you read, did you read Karen Litfin's book?

**Interviewer:** It's on my list to read. I saw you referenced her in the paper I read of yours.

**Interviewee:** Yeah. Um, we did a webinar with her, which is on our website where we interviewed her lovely, lovely woman. But in that, in that book, she says that people, she visited the 14 eco-villages all over the world. And what I found amazing was I was sent the book to review that, you know, she was, she could have been talking about us.

she didn't interview us. she didn't come here. But it showed me just how much we mirror what happens in other eco-villages. But one of the things she said was that in all the ecovillages. She met people who were living well on incomes of well below the poverty line in their societies. And that would be true here. I mean, there are people here who will actually say that that happens because we share so much and the buyer's club is one sort of organized example of that, but at a bigger level, like the number of emails that you'll get or text messages really every day of the week, are you going into Nenagh? Can you deliver something? Can you pick up something for me? We share all the time and in ways that have become second nature to us.

And so, you know, life in non-COVID times here is just so rich. There's so much going on. Like it's all a low budget stuff. And like, you know, you can live a really rich culture, life, social life. On a relatively low income, that's the reality.

there are two sides to the coin. One is that you have to spend more on ecological products and retrofitting your house, et cetera, maybe. But if you do that just as an isolated individual or family, then it ends up more costly. If you do it as part of a community who are doing it together, then, you know, and it's not just retrofitting your house as part of a wider scheme, it's just living your life in the everyday details in an interdependent way, ends up as really being much more affordable, you know, from a monetary point of view because money just isn't at the central things anymore.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. I think that's something that is missing completely from society outside of communities like yours. I would say it's almost. A sign of weakness. Now, if you don't own something yourself, in some, but I think the model you have going there is very important. And I think to some extent COVID has brought that kind of engagement and sharing back a little bit but needs to be brought back a lot more. Have you heard of the cork rooftop farm? So they began growing vegetables on the roof of their building in the middle of cork city. And I just saw now that they've just started a community supported agriculture system like yours. So it's interesting. I'm seeing it become more and more mainstream. So it's encouraging.

**Interviewee:** That's what I tell all the groups who come here because they'll say. do we have to set up an eco-village or some people actually come and say, tell us how to set up an eco-village.

So I say to them, like any, any community in Ireland, including an urban suburb, can have a food system like we have, kind of a sustainable community supported agriculture farm, allotments, even with people's back gardens, you know, and like the value of that, isn't just a food you produce it's that it fosters community people. People started working together to start getting to know each other to start, you know, depending on one another.

So it's yeah, it's fine. I'm delighted to hear about it. I didn't know that, but of course that's true. You know, we have so undervalued smaller spaces, including our rooftops to do things. Now we're beginning to learn on that.

**Interviewer:** And it just takes one or two people with the vision or with the drive, just to start it.

**Interviewee:** Yeah, absolutely. Oh yeah, that's it. Yeah. And that's, I mean, that comes back to the point I was making earlier, you know, it's local experimentation that offers the lessons that then can be replicated. So two guys growing food on their roof. That's a local experiment that can be replicated. That's a classic example of it. You don't need to set up an ecovillage to do that sort of stuff.

**Interviewer:** So the only other question I have really is about applying learnings from yourselves to Skibbereen. But if prefer we could discuss that in person when you're down here, that might be better.

**Interviewee:** Well, let me start by giving you the three answers that I give whenever I'm asked it. And then mull over that maybe have a look around Skibbereen and we could take the conversation further. When I go down, I would be very interested in that. So the three of them are the first one is how do we build our houses. So building regulations now that's taken

care of to some extent by a national building regulations, but again, you know, there's various aspects of that, that you could, um, that you could push out. Like one of the is w if you're building an estate, are you going to put land aside to allow a CSA, for example, I mean, why couldn't that be part of national regulations if you're building in the state or are you going to have a district heating system? Why couldn't that be part of national regulations? Uh, so to start that discussion going, I remember launching Eoin O Broin's, the Sinn Fein TDS book, in Limerick a few years ago, not long before COVID mentioning the district heating system and mentioning, that I don't see why any estate in Ireland shouldn't have that. And I saw him taking notes about it. And then I saw the idea appearing in the program for government. No, I'm not saying it appeared because I happened to mention it on that occasion. But again, these are, you know, these are the sorts of ways in which we should be pushing out the sorts of regulations to ensure that not only in the ways we build our houses.

But they're embedded in ways in which we build community food systems, carbon, neutral heating. I mean, all of these, I mean, energy systems, generating energy, solar panels, all of these. Now some of those are in the regulations, but we could go much, much farther., you know, we need to put the focus on building community rather than just building estates, even if we're putting the focus now on building the states and in a sustainable way.

But it's the community part of it that's really very weak. I think. So that's what I'd say to you. The three things are the way we build their houses, the way we heat. Our communities and then our food system and the food system, of course, isn't just growing food for ourselves. It's also being able to grow food that can, I mean, we developed a cafe on the main street, out of our food system. I mean so many local shops, of course now they're parts of chains and they're locked into them in our Centra shop here. And it has to take 95% of all its goods from Centra. But, um, you know, by us growing food here, farmer's markets and all of these allow for the potential of a Veridian alternative food system to emerge.

And there's a real education in that as well. People are beginning to realize how much of their food comes from distant places, how much it's grown with all sorts of toxins, as part of it, how much it's packaged in plastic. That becomes a real problem, both for us. Cause we ingest some of it. And for the environment, all of these are the, you know, the knock-on issues that come out of all of that.

So I was talking to somebody recently who got on to me for an interview because she's doing a consultancy for buttevant in cork, how could they develop, uh, um, sort of, I mean, she was talking about it as, as an eco-village. And I said, when that isn't the focus, but I was emphasizing, and I think this for Skibbereen also is where I put the emphasis, how do you develop synergies? And that's, I think what's lacking as well. So people can say, well, we'll build our houses or we retrofit our houses, but how do you do it in such a way that you also take into account these other aspects that I'm talking about? So the food system, the energy system. I mean, all of these have to be taken into account and livelihoods emerge out of these as well.

And they have implications for businesses and you're really localizing an economy in doing that. So how can you imagine synergies all the time, looking at the whole, not looking at that it's siloed parts of it, which is the way in which we do things normally. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, it's very true.

**Interviewee:** Yeah. But that's why it's wonderful what you're doing, because I think, and that's why I'd really value a conversation in Skibbereen because, you have to embed this in, in a real community, in a real place with real shops and real businesses and you know, what are the economic drivers of that community?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, exactly. Like exactly what you've mentioned before about place-based research, I think is really important.

**Interviewee:** Absolutely. in place-based responses. Whereas, you know, in the past, our responses were to get in that the idea of bringing in a multinational company, which just, you know, puts things in completely the wrong direction.

It takes all the focus away from developing the capacity and the activism of local people and it made us passive. I mean, it really, it's a big part of our problem.

**Interviewer:** I think, yeah. Again, just about the pandemic. Now I think there's no better time now to push for localization because everyone's aware of it.

**Interviewee:** Yeah, absolutely., how you develop a dynamic where you're, where you're pushing out the boat all the time and seeing new opportunities, you know, a waste system is another one we're moving into this space. Now, how do you develop a local waste system that generates livelihoods and create you can create whole industries?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, I was, I was speaking, it came up in one of the interviews yesterday about the waste system and the new, the pilot project you have going on.

**Interviewee:** So that's, it's wonderful. Cause the guy came, he's not living here. He came on our European solidarity core group who has expertise in this. Like we had been talking about it for quite some time, but we just didn't have anybody here who had the expertise. And now we have somebody, you know, and that's one of the wonderful things about our community that we really are blessed constantly by people coming here. Some of them coming here permanently, some of them coming here for short periods who, bring so many skills and stuff that, that, you know, just have, have contributed so much to us. I mean that's where you need to develop a similar dynamic in any small town like Skibbereen where people begin to see

why there are things happening there. I'm going to live there. I'm going to visit there. you create a sort of a cultural dynamic that makes the place attractive for visionary people to come.

The work you're doing is really interesting. Um, you know, particularly because you come from a marketing background, I find that's very interesting. I suppose I have a kind of preconceived conception of people in marketing and getting into working for a big company, et cetera. But I mean, I appreciate that the marketing is really important. It's a space we're moving into a bit now. I mean, we're being told by people in that space that we really don't have a good message together. And if we want to really get into fundraising in a serious way, we have to. Sorry to knock shape on our message much more. So we're revamping our website, which is one way of doing it. So I'd be interested in talking to you about that.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, I think because we were speaking, we were speaking earlier about attitude and behaviour change. Like I think marketing has a big role to play there.

**Interviewee:** Absolutely. Yeah. If we conceive of some of the skills and marketing, because I mean, I keep thinking to myself one of the big, big things that I think again, I see nobody mentioning, they say is that we have to ban advertising. I mean, advertising has become so destructive. It is fuelling so many artificial wants and a culture of massive consumerism. So how are all these skills that have been honed to develop these really scary levels of, of manipulation of people? How can we turn them to our advantage?

## Interview 2

**Interviewer:** So, I suppose, just to start, could you tell me about the community education program and the kind of services it provides?

**Interviewee:** it's kind of still in development really, but I mean, it's a community education part of our community farm, really. But I managed to get a grant to refurbish an old cabin that was lying idle on the ecovillage land. And it had originally been intended to be an educational building. So I managed to get that a grant to have that refurbished and put on the land. And a colleague, Tony Ryan, and I had already applied for an educational polytunnel. Now the main aim from the farm's perspective is to educate people on all of the methods we use for growing, and to make aware of like, no dig, permaculture style, how to do cloches all of that sort of stuff and also the wider related issues like climate change, and sustainable living and sustainable growing. How to grow plants that are more resilient to climate change, extreme weather conditions and also poly tunnel growing things like that. So it's quite specific in one way, but we also have a wider remit because the terms under which we got that building is on farmland, but the terms under which we received the award for that building was to make sure all of that knowledge and all of those kind of related classes, we get out to the local community beyond the eco-village as well and beyond our farm community and beyond our farm members. So that's what we're planning the next phase of

now. So we have the educational cabins and polytunnels up and running, we're hoping to run general courses, like things like dry stonewalling, sort of heritage, crafts, and so on and weaving and all of that sort of stuff. As long with our very specific education around, sustainable growing and so on but we have a wide range is what we're hoping.

I mean, obviously this all got planned just before the COVID restrictions struck. So we, the buildings all in situ we had the compost loo almost completely built. And then suddenly no groups were allowed to congregate, so it's been slowed down, but it's still getting there. And at the moment we have a whole team of people who are relandscaping the outside. We've had to re landscape a few times over the last couple of years, obviously. And just because of the delay. So we're, we have a team now invested in trying to get a whole creative approach to relandscaping the site. And we now have a little area for watching outdoor cinema screen, with little sails coming up to the top to create a nice sort of communal area.

And we have the bench seating that's kind of graded like cinema seating. So we want to make a really good social community, social space, as well as something that when you go for education that we want, we have a fire pit. So we're hoping to get lots of little community events and gatherings there outside.

And so we, we have it, there's a whole social element and it's also very well-placed in that, the rest of the farm work tends to happen away out of the sight of people it's quite going further and the edge of our land, it's not as accessible to people. So this is kind of like the front of house it'd be like for our community farm, and our community farm is Ireland's first community supported agriculture farm and.

And we're sort of, we're connected in with the CSA network, community support agriculture network of Ireland. We actually led on forming this. So, our farm is kind of a good model for other people to take aspects of where it's grown quite big, quite complex in the sense that we also have a, an ESC program, we have the community education part, and then we have the farm education.

So, and we now have an added food hub, which is an open food hub, which is, basically we applied through the farm to the rethink Ireland grant to sort of support a new enterprise. And a few years back, we'd got, we'd received an award for being an innovative project and they advised that as part of that, we could extend it to, the community via food hub or via box scheme or something like that

So it's another strand to our business if you like. So this open food hub is going to be based in, we create then, so I can tell you,

**Interviewer:** is the food hub operational at the moment or is it still in the development?

**Interviewee:** We're in the development phase. We're getting the word out there. We have we create building as a process of getting renovated and we will have a distribution bay set up in there for distributing food from local producers at the moment, we're at the stage of onboarding those local producers and getting them interested in setting up a profile on the network.

our open food hub is part of the open food network of Ireland, which is part of a bigger global movement, which you may or may not have heard. It's similar to things like neighbour food and so on, but it's,

**Interviewer:** I was just about to say a neighbour food is in my area and it's been really successful.

**Interviewee:** Yeah, it's really good. I mean, I think the whole thing is really persuading producers that it's worth the effort, all getting their profiles up there online, but it it's a really, really good tool. It's another way to route to market for producers. That's guaranteed. Cause you're only basically only supplying what you've already sold.

Everybody loves a farmer's market because of the social nature of it as face to face. And hopefully nothing will ever replace that in a way completely, but it's, a farmer can go to that. or a producer can go to that and spend the whole day hoping to sell produce that they might not sell, whereas at least this way they, they sort of, they provide the goods that they've already pre-sold online.

They're not wasting any time and you don't have this lingering about all day wasting your own time. So it's another alternative to sort of, to, to, to get into market and another route,

**Interviewer:** wider scope, I suppose as well, because I know I was able to order from like the Kinsale farmer's market because our Skibbereen farmer's market, they went completely onto Neighborfood. But it gives, I think people the option to go to other producers from other towns and have a look at their products without actually driving to the town.

**Interviewee:** Well, that's it. I mean, and the idea is that you are, definitely you're trying to highlight smaller businesses that find it harder to reach the public.

And you're trying to get all of those producers to congregate together. And so they have all of the best quality food in your region available. And it could also extend that obviously into crafts, artisan crafts or whatever else, it doesn't have to be purely food.

this digital hub. I think the future is big for it really. It's just, it might take a little while for the word of mouth to really get out there. And the thing about it is though that when, when. You,

that to have an entities like Amazon and so on are starting to click and collect food yet you realize that no, we have to do this we want, we need to promote our end because our end is going to be more ethical than that.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. And I think, I think more and more people are looking to support local and to shop ethically. So I think in that regard it could be really successful. And I know a lot of people like to use technology whenever they can. So if it's made easy for them, that's what I do. If it's made easy for people, people will do it. So it's just another step in that direction.

**Interviewee:** consumers and customers, especially during COVID and during the, the fact that the people have had to go online more during the pandemic. I mean, we all have mothers and grannies and so on here now doing click and shop, and they've never done it before in their lives.

So yeah. my mom has got very au fait with the click and shop, although she's delighted to get back into the shops recently, , so there is that there is that, but for that generation, , even they've been exposed to it. So I think this is the time for this, for this kind of opportunity, like for a producer, As I say, producers themselves can be a bit reluctant because their, their interest is in growing vegetables.

They don't really like technology. It's, it's trying to get them on board. The good thing about hubs is that you can often have one person who will offer to actually put their profiles up for them. So that's a useful thing. But consumers seem to be quite into the click and collect idea and they seem to be, they seem to enjoy that idea that they have a good variety on there and they can have a look and see what everything is then. And get that done. But it's, it's, it's really persuading. The producers, I think, is the key, that it's worth, it's worth their time and their investment of their time.

, it's giving them access to this professional service without them having to be experts in that field.

**Interviewer:** I know when in cork, now there's a rooftop farm. I don't know if you've heard about this, but it's been really successful. So some guy guys just had to close for COVID. So they decided to start growing veg up on their roof. And now it's become really successful. They've had to buy another poly tunnel outside of the city to keep up the demand. And now they've started a CSA. but they have a big online presence and they really grew through Instagram. I think, people started to see it, so it shows the power of that. I think.

**Interviewee:** yeah, I think we just had a training last night and we had Joanne Kavanagh from the open food network, a newsletter, and she does the communications and the national level global food network.

And we had another woman, Kay Reed from the UK open food network and she does a commerce for them. And they both had great ideas around all of that on the online presentation and Instagram stories and Twitter feeds and so on so. You do need a social media person who's, in your hub, who's sort of like keen to do that.

And it's, it is one of those things, but like it's, it's, if you grade it properly, you can make a lot of impact with not too much input.

**Interviewer:** And then in terms of the, the Cloughjordan farm, if that's going on the food hub, is it a treated as one farm or are there different growers within the Cloughjordan farm to support the community agricultural system?

**Interviewee:** Yeah. Well, it's, it's one farm. It's one community as support agriculture farm that we have on our, on eco-village land here. And we rent the land from sustainable projects Ireland, which is sort of overseeing all the. A sustainable project Ireland runs a whole eco-village. And then, so we have a long-term license from them to farm on the land here.

So it's one farm, but there are lots of regional producers, in terms of like all their other, obviously food producers. But people like the night orchard who produce apple juice and those people like riot rye, who produce really well-known bread right here. Those are the kinds of producers that we'd be promoting here regionally in Cloughjordan.

We did a sort of a mapping exercise a few years back to see who the regional food producers in the area. And we also have a cookery school down the road, which is at Cloughjordan House. So we have all of these people to network and tie in with, in one way or another and try and promote each other's work.

you have to be careful with this online market, not to be sort of taking livelihoods from other people. And the intent is to sort of work together and just do different aspects of each other's work and promote whatever, whatever works online, as opposed to trying to replace anything that already exists.

, it's very important for us to do that, because everybody's trying to make a living and that we have a community cafe, obviously they had to shut down during COVID and is only sporadically open. And again, we could promote their catering or whatever else.

Really high quality, very local producers here in Cloughjordan, and really, the whole made in Cloughjordan brand is something I think is just so waiting to be really fully promoted here, Because the place is so associated with the ecovillage, we could be making a lot more of that.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, it's really interesting. And I think I could see, I definitely see it growing in the next couple of years. Yeah, I think COVID is really halted the progress of a lot of initiatives like that. And I think for the transition towards sustainability, it's had a pretty bad effect.

**Interviewee:** It has, in some ways, in other ways you could look at it as an opportunity because people are, we've been more focused in there because they're not distracted by going out to work and going out to meetings and social socializing outside and stuff. We've been more attention has been paid to this kind of issue.

I think, and people have realized that there are options out there for taking on and finding out, hard to get good quality food and all that. I think it's an opportunity as well And I think it has definitely slowed down projects, like my own the, the community education area, like having actual groups in and visiting and so on is obviously taking longer.

But, but we're developing our online trainings as a result. That's our attempt at the moment, even with the open food hub training that we've been doing, we have a lot of online resources now that we could do a lot of online zoom classes. so that's what we're hoping to do a lot of digital courses.

**Interviewer:** It's pretty clear that from listening to you that sustainability goes way beyond just reducing CO2 emissions, like from what, from talking to people in Cloughjordan, it seems that the social side of things is a huge aspect. And so, yeah, I just wanted to get your opinion on how having a community around you and like a social support system makes it easier, or does it make it easier to transition towards a more sustainable life?

**Interviewee:** Well, yeah, I think so. In some ways it does. I mean, there's a few things that happened in the last couple of years that sort of made me realize, yeah, it's easier and it's harder in some ways, but like the easier part would be that, for example, with our community farm, whenever there's a massive snow fall in March about two and a half years ago, maybe three years ago. And a lot of shops were shut and people where there was like the bread panic. So it, we were getting all our food though, delivered up to the coach house as normal from our farm, which is just like on the road, what I mean? And so we had no problem with food supply and that gives us a good sense of security at that time.

this is the point is that we're not relying on the shops in Nenagh, we're not relying on the shops elsewhere. And the community cafe was still serving food to customers during that time as well and still had a supply from the community farm.

So yeah, there are things like that that you realize that really works very well. I mean, I think what we're just to be negative for a second. What we're really lacking here is a shared community building. And that was because we ran out of money during the creation of the

ecovillage. So if we had that shared community building, I think it would create an even greater sense of solidarity. But yeah, I mean, there's a good feeling around here. Like we ask, if you sent her an email saying, I need to borrow some of this car and you'll get 10 replies in 10 minutes, what I mean? So it's like, we are very connected in that way. We will go to each other's aid and there's a lot of swapping and, bartering for two of those and stuff like that.

And so there's a lot of, there's a lot of recycling of resources and stuff like that, that happened here just naturally. And like half, half the toddlers on here, I'm running around in my son's old clothes and stuff, what I mean? So there is lovely aspect to that and that sort of solidarity is nice.

But to be very honest with you, very Frank, during COVID I think everybody felt very isolated because we'd no shared community building. We were isolated in our own home. So, I mean, I felt like I could have been living anywhere at points during this COVID crisis, and there's some community events that were happening kept things ticking along nicely.

Like there was a group of older residents who kept up a daily Tai Chi, in the market square every morning. It was lovely to see that. And there were other efforts as well for people to sort of get together and maybe get together outdoors for a glass of wine at six and things like that.

So that was nice. I was looking at urban areas and thinking they were more solidarity with sort of street parties. I'm not sure what that was, whether we were just sort of like, yes, well of course there's a crisis, so we're just taking it in our stride or whether it was a case that we like everybody else were just a little bit like knocked back and stayed in our own houses.

, it's, it's hard to tell. But yeah, the, the fundamental things kept going and we managed to get our farm through the COVID crisis. So many, so many awful things happened. Our farmer had a heart attack he had, and then he got COVID and, we had, we had to replace farmers. There's lots of equipment and mechanization of broke down that we couldn't get repaired during COVID all of that. But we saw the farm through all of those crises. So there is a good community feeling here and a lot of solidarity around that,

**Interviewer:** and resilience?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, there is resilience.

And I think like for, for absolute resilience, I mean, we still rely on the farm on the ESE program, which is young volunteers, European program. It's a European solidarity Corps. We used to be the EVs. And we do take those on and, and sort of it's great education for them. And it's good to have their energy and life about the place.

And they do help with some of the production as well. But to be truly sustainable. Our farm needs to be just taking on organic interns eventually, so that we're still a little bit reliant on the ESC grant money to be very, very viable. So yeah, everything we do, we're sort of moving towards what's true sustainability, from half sustainable to full sustainability as far as possible. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And hopefully I think it's the rest of the country kind of catches up. It might become a lot easier too, because so far I think you've been outliers. Like you'd been up by yourselves and you've been pioneering as I suppose.

**Interviewee:** Well, this is it. We have been pioneering for the last 20 years and our buildings and still one other people are definitely catching up on sort of like on technological advances to make housing much more much less energy wasteful and sort of like to airtight and all that sort of stuff, so, and using less heating and all of that.

So like building regs and all that sort of stuff, we're catching up. In other ways, we still sort of feel like we really have to fight to get heard by state bodies for any funding, for new ideas and so on. And that's always been an uphill struggle in a way. And yet we feel that things are starting to hit a tipping point and suddenly will be seeing this not alternative, but as the way to go mainstream.

But it always does take, it takes politicians eons to catch up where a lot of people are at. I mean, if you look at any of those citizen assemblies that happened in Ireland, they're the ones that have made real change happen in this country. And the politicians always lag behind the people they serve.

So, and then the people they serve are sort of like often to have really good ideas and are much more forward thinking. So hopefully, I'd love to see an increase in those citizens assemblies for deciding on national policy going forward.

**Interviewer:** I think if there's enough pressure put on the positions that hopefully get on board, but yeah, that's what I'm hoping that my project will provide some kind of a framework with the learnings from CEV can be applied to a town. There's a lot of towns similar in size to us around the country. So yeah. Yeah, maybe on that note do you, is there anything that stands out to you in Cloughjordan that could be applied to a town like Skibbereen?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, well, I mean, CEV in general, like we did an audit. As an ecovillage, we always, we collect data on all of our energy usage. our sort of our carbon footprint., we collect data on our heating systems and our water system and energy usage. So we monitor all of that regularly and like every, at the end of every month we put our stats in from our

own shared heating system, but we have our own energy usage in our house is reported then back to the heat management group as it were and they are a voluntary group. So they love all those statistics. But we recently got an energy audit done for the whole of CEV and through SCA I, and there's a woman who led on that here.

And as a result, there's a lot of, there's a whole program for sort of retrofitting houses and trying to, so there's a good few houses available, the retrofitting scheme, and got grants to do. So we also had some solar, we had some kind of bargain struck with a solar power provider. He did a good few houses who had the money up front.

We unfortunately didn't at the time, but people were able to invest in that. Got a really good deal for solar panels for their house for boosting their electric usage or whatever. So yeah, there's sort of a few things that come up like that, that can be applied to any town. Any town can do its own energy audit. And avail of the grants available to do that in terms of, and you can also like informally, if you like, they could start monitoring their general energy usage and then apply for grants in the basis of their hitting targets that no other towns are hitting. There are many other things. I think. With transport, I mean, obviously this doesn't really apply to Skibbereen, but if you have a local train line with trying to retain that and upgrade it, there's lots of stuff around just the way you build new housing as well.

, to make sure that all of that's hitting its energy targets as well. And there's a, there's a few things you can take from here as well as that people have their own allotments. Or they joined the farm, and to have a, like a local farm and become a CSA farm nearby is, is a very useful thing to them.

If you're able to source your own food in your own locality and shorten all of those supply lines, that's a really a key thing to being truly sustainable and as far as possible, so there's that

**Interviewer:** I already have a, we have a brilliant farmer's market, so I don't think it would take much to incorporate CSA.

**Interviewee:** Yeah, exactly. And it is, it's a great model because it just means, they have people invested in the local farm, they have a relationship with it and all that sort of stuff, I mean, the benefits are so obvious and then you're helping provide jobs for local producers as well.

So, yeah. So, I mean, I think of other examples of things that you can take on board that are fairly generic, but again, it's, my emphasis would be ongoing growing food sustainably and distributing. It's a real key area. It's obviously area I'm most interested in, but I think it's really fundamental to being a sustainable society.

**Interviewer:** And I also, like, I know you, you said it earlier as well about kind of the, the older people wanted him to get back to the shops as a social outlet as well. That's what the farmer's market in Skibbereen is. It's like, the highlight of people's week is that's where you meet everyone, you do your shopping and you talk to everyone.

**Interviewee:** And that's the social aspect of it. I mean, with our own open food hub, we're hoping to have like a monthly market, as well as like an actual physical market where you can meet your producers and so on. And you have that social aspect to it as well as COVID regs lighten up again so yeah, that we intend to do that because we don't want it to be this faceless online experience.

And also that's why we'll hopefully have. Maybe live broadcasts as well, every so often from some producers all those digital tools to make it as personable as possible, and people telling their stories and the stories behind the products and all of that.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, no, that could be, I hope it works out. It's a really good idea. And I think adding that kind of yeah, face behind the screen is really important for them.]]

**Interviewee:** Completely. And obviously we have little video links whenever people put up there, their profile. That's the idea.

Also, yeah, just keeping in touch in that kind of human way is really important

I just have one more question for you. And that's about it. I'm sure you've come across people that I have plenty of people who are very resistant to change or, in some states, some that, some cases just to complete denial that we need to change that.

**Interviewer:** Have you had any experience trying to, I suppose, change their minds or encourage an attitude or behaviour change or do you have any ideas?

**Interviewee:** Well, it's interesting just when we were discussing politicians earlier, I'm still a bit shocked at the number of politicians who come to the door of a house of the ecovillage to campaign for their, their candidate and climate change is an afterthought. I think that the fault really is the lack of focus on it from our leaders really. But I think once people start to realize and recognize the statistics and when they see our, because we had I managed to get I think it was a double page spread in the Irish examiner at one point, on climate change. And before COVID struck, obviously was much more focused on it. And some of the statistics and those articles were pretty terrifying, and I know that people will have read those over the breakfast

and go, oh, hang on a second. And so. Getting people to be aware of a climate emergency, you have to sort of take it in bite size pieces.

So I always pick on something that I think might, they might be able to relate to like how we grow our food and, and all of that sort of stuff. Like, so from the angle that I have in is just sort of like healthier foods that kind of thing that in itself sort of can make people sort of be a wee bit more aware, and that is happening in terms of the bigger picture and climate change and, and what, just talk to people about, even if you're talking to farmers about the way it's impossible to grow hay anymore, you have to go silage

even that small change has also to do with climate change, and so on. Yeah. It's, I don't know. The small, small person to person conversations is one way to go. Sure. But I think we could do be doing a much better job as well of lobbying government and I'm a member of extinction rebellion, which I forgot to say as well.

And like, I know two years ago it was in front of the Dáil and getting shifted by guards and all sorts of stuff, get moved by cops. It's sort of weird. It lifted off the road and really lifted then running back to take up the same position from the Dáil and stuff like that.

It's all quite felt like something was happening, but unfortunately, I think that time has come and gone and the people are, see extinction rebellion as something that just exists there. So I don't know. I have to be honest, I'm not really sure how you get the message across in a way, cause they're terrified, that they're just overwhelmed and not even terrified, but they are so overwhelmed.

They don't really want to know the absolute truth because they really don't want to have to change their habits. Again, maybe COVID is an opportunity.

**Interviewer:** I think, we have, we're being overloaded with this doom and gloom all the time. And a lot of the blame is being put on us, put on us as individuals as well. And so it's totally unfair. I think the way, like you were talking earlier, I think positive encouragement, not talking about what we're doing wrong, but how we can improve and make things.

**Interviewee:** I absolutely agree. And I, I personally signed up to a lot of things which tell me about a lot of technological innovations and a lot of projects that are going on that are actually dealing with cleaning up the seas, dealing with, how to deal with them, rehumidifying desert areas.

And actually, maybe fertilizing deserts, all that sort of stuff. I think good news and positive news is a way through because you're right. We're bombarded by disaster doom and gloom all of the time. And extinction rebellion was doing that also because they felt nobody was

paying attention. But I think that time has passed on, I think it's time to go onto like the positive messages.

Here's what you can do to help. That's definitely what we do with, promoting the, the food hub or with the farm.

**Interviewer:** Well, even with your dark skies, I think your dark skies is showing like, look, if we reduce our light pollution, this is what we have access. Yeah, and it's not telling it, and it's not just saying turn off your lights they're bad.

**Interviewee:** You're absolutely right. I think positive, positive messaging. And this is why you can attract your people to online markets and so on the positive message by doing this, you're helping to support X, Y, and Zed and 80% of the 80 to 90% of all the money that you give to us are through their purchase. Yeah. 90% of the money through your purchase will go directly to the budget. I mean, that's a good message.

**Interviewer:** We saw, we saw how effective, like the whole shop local campaign and staycation were last year. So yeah,

Interviewee: I mean, possibly partly because people have no choice.

Well, people are generally, I mean maybe quite self-seeking and like, I can treat myself in that, but like they will always do the easiest thing, and then that's that, that is something we do have to overcome. But, but I think positive messaging really helps the people feel they can click a button and do something positive.

### Interview 3

**Interviewee:** Well, I know quite a few of the people there and they're moving down to that new premises. They're getting a license to Myross. So after that provocative opening, I am open to your lead here. What I want to talk about is the fact that even at the eco village when you look at Dr Vincent Carragher's pie charts, this is based on a very rigorous piece of marketing research. He finds that the villagers would need to stop flying. Too many are flying around the world to save the world. We have to get out of our cars. There are too many big cars driving around Cloughjordan. We need to change our food habits from being mixed carnivorous. There are a lot of carnivores in the Eco village of Cloughjordan.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, it really surprised me. Actually.

**Interviewee:** I'm a vegetarian for 50 years now I'm not claiming any greeny points. I was carnivorous until I was 21 now at 71. So but I do passionately believe in vegetarianism as an

even evolutionary step, and getting I've gotten out of my car more or less I drive the absolute minimum, I have stopped flying unless I absolutely have to. If you look at my CV, you've seen that I've flown around the entire world from China, India, Australia, you know, I've done a lot of flying around the planet to save the planet at a certain point. Zoom is actually fantastic. I don't know if you're involved in the exponential change movement. They are using zoom and a new media now very effectively. And I hope that as we come out from under the cosh of COVID, that we will all stop flying, you know, we won't stop, we can drastically reduce flying.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, I think so. And even in terms of, you know, commuting to work, now, people have realized that you can quite easily do the majority of jobs from home.

**Interviewee:** Yes, yes. Yeah. And ironically, for geezers of my age, the whole zoom world has reconnected us in ways where we just couldn't be bothered flying or going to another conference. If it's interesting. We can tap in it takes one hour you done and dusted. And out of there. Now, we have to acknowledge and I'll shut up with this remark. That ICT is now equal to aviation in terms of greenhouse gas or carbon equivalent, you have to think about that. I mean, even sending an attachment like I just sent you it was a small one. Let's say it was a three Mb picture. And that goes on the cloud. And that's in a data centre forever unless I decide to delete it or whatever. And so this is a chain reaction of data equal to aviation.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. And with the rise of cryptocurrency now as well, like data mining, things like that are becoming a big issue because you think Bitcoin is it uses more energy than Argentina?

**Interviewee:** There you go. So what is your drift? What do you need to hear from me? I'm an architect Ecotect. I don't use the term architect.

**Interviewer:** I was just looking at the Gaia international page today, kind of trying to get a sense of what you're about. So if it was okay with you, I think it would be good to focus on housing, I have a couple of questions prepared. So maybe if I just asked a few of them, we could get started that way. Perfect. maybe to start off with you tell me just about ecotecture and the core ecological architecture principles?

**Interviewee:** Well, I mean, I think that eco texture is spiritual. That's what the Bauhaus in Weimar was all about, there was a genius called Johannes Witten. And he devised the basic course. And it wasn't published in English, I think until 1963. And it's well worth getting. It's called design and form. But this is answering your question, the wellspring, the wellspring of all design, whether it's housing or other forms, but housing is terribly important. It is the most important actually must spring from some kind of spiritual insights and preoccupation. Because when you face the questions of birth and dying, there is no explanation. And anyway, but the only way to cope with the eternal questions is spiritually and so all pivotal

values turn on spiritual insights. So I say that dwelling is not a noun, it's a verb. And so, making habitation for the act of dwelling is what we mean by the rather banal term housing, you know, and so I'm very involved at the moment in the Green Party, and we have been refreshing and working at implementing the program from government. And my thing is housing. Now filed a new policy on housing itself on homelessness and on supported housing, and we're currently flat out working on a policy for Town Centre first, which is highly relevant to Cloughjordan, there are something like 30 vacant properties in Cloughjordan village. They could all be wonderful housing, multi-generational housing for geezers of my age to young families, get ground floor live, work, activity going on to the streets, and have very interesting design to get the upper floors habitable, complying with universal design standards, that's a big issue, how does someone on the stick or someone who has a bad back or whatever get to the upper floors, yet people of age tend to leave those properties. So my current preoccupation, and I'm doing a lot of work pro bono on this is working with the interdepartmental group, which is based in the department of the Taoiseach, there are two strands to it. One is of civil servants, the other is of political elected people. And this month, they are going to produce a report, which I'm hoping will not be diluted by the civil service mentality by the permanent government. But the Green Party is going to insist on getting serious money delivered to revitalizing our towns. And the whole model that we have been following for my adult lifetime is crazy, you know, eight to the acre, monoculture suburbia, you know it, you know, and in Ireland there is a terrible tendency. And I'll finish with this, to talk for Ireland, if reports were progress, we would have no problems. We're piled higher, and deeper with reports PhDs piled higher and deeper. And the action is appalling, the lack of action. If you look at France, they have committed 230 million over five years, to revitalizing their towns, Scotland has done similar 90 million, Denmark has done the same, you've got to show me the money to actually overcome the impediments, and to incentivize bringing these wonderful old properties back into use. And then you have intergenerational living, we know how-to live-in Ireland, from the original Clahad, to the sraidaile to a beautiful town like Cloughjordan which is the design town with that labels round space down by the centre and the middle country cafe. That's an outdoor living room. You know, it was the market space. And it is encouraging how many properties are actually now occupied and coming back to life, but it needs very serious help, at local level, and a standout headline factor to finish with is that Ireland spends only 1/3 at local authority level, the typical spend in all the other EU states. That is shocking. 1/3. How can you revitalize a town when the local elected officials have no access to their own funds collected through rates and local property tax and so on? We've got to get over this.

**Interviewer:** There was no there was a lot of interesting things to take from that. And yeah, I agree completely that the local council needs to have a lot more input. I know in Skibbereen, there are numerous housing estates, and even in the middle of the town, there's vacant properties. They've been vacant for 30 or 40 years just rotting away rotting away.

**Interviewee:** Why do you think why do you think the spend is only 1/3?

**Interviewer:** I don't really have an answer. But to me, it seems that the local councils in Ireland are there to stop things happening rather than to facilitate anything.

**Interviewee:** So let me make a couple of remarks. The first is, if you look at the history behind the 1954 Act was set up county managers, it did so because of corruption at local authority level. And from that date forward from 54, forward, we really have only had local administration, not local government. managers were autocrats. They were tzars, and they had far too much power, reporting back to the department. And the second important point is that in 1977, the Charlie Haughey and co the Fianna Fail government, and excuse me, that's slander on Haughey, it was jack Lynch, and Martin Donahue took away owing rates, they dis-established domestic rates on the got a landslide victory. And that was appalling because local authorities no longer got any income for the services that were expected to provide. So when you put those two things together, and the final point is that in 1922, when the stage was founded, 98% of the British civil service people stayed at their desks. And so did the Imperial attitude and it persists today, we still live in a post-colonial authority frame of mind in so we shouldn't have a planning authority, we should have a planning service as they do in other countries. So and my very final remark is in Irish planning that you have three things about forward planning, which is brilliant, people like Niall Cussen in the office of the planning regulator, high end, brilliant thinkers, really get it if you look at their documentation, it's visionary. The middle layer is what you're talking about. It's the naysayers, blockers, people who are unqualified for the job, they're doing it mostly statistics, statistician, geographers and are not planners. And they are there to block you. There's a presupposition that the subject that is you cannot be allowed to follow their will. Because it doesn't exercise the authority of the state in the way that the Imperial palimpsest expects. And then the final part of planning is enforcement, which is pathetic. You have people getting away with blue murder, we have buildings that are utterly unsafe, not built-in accordance with the approved designs, we have a complicit system of putting in for retention, putting in from garages that turn out to be new dwellings and everyone turns a blind eye. So that we really need very deep reform in planning before housing can actually come to fruition the way it ought to. You can see that you wind me up and let me go.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, no. And like, I'm by no means an expert. So I apologize if I seem a bit basic, and some of my responses or my questions.

**Interviewee:** Not at all, I think, you know, I admire what you're doing.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. And so like, so like, my research isn't going to change the world. But I'm very interested in how people can make small changes. And so I'm sure in your career, and in your life, you've had a lot of experience with people who are very resistant to changing towards an eco-friendlier, frame of mind, so have you had experience in changing their attitudes? And if so, how do you accomplish this?

**Interviewee:** Okay, well, I could go into a 10-minute rant about all the negative people. Okay, so I won't do that. We'll take that as read given the earlier rants, and your own experience with the kayaking business. I'd like to mention a few outstanding people that I have met. There's an architect planner in county Mayo. Katie O'Malley, and very sadly, she retired but she has Parkinson's I understand. She was absolutely outstanding. She saw what we were coming up with, which most planners would say yet. She said I love this. She called her colleagues in from the adjoining rooms. She told me this anecdotally or someone else did, actually. And she said Look at this. And in the absolute minimum time she granted permission. And you'll find that on our website under the mayo live work. The second person I'd mention is a planner called Niall Maher, who is an architect planner. In categories. They're an integral way Before his time was the proper form of power. He had the vision he had the education. He was modest in his manner. He encouraged tremendous improvements in Kildare. He restored the Old Market house in the centre of several towns turned them into arts facilities. He introduced colour schemes. You know, there's a wonderful Irish expression Féin mhuinín, restored self-respect to the to the communities that he was serving. And he would sit down with people and talk through what they had in their minds. And he would help to nudge it this way and that way and improve it in the process and generally grant. he hadn't this dreadful inbuilt negativity. The person who succeeded him I won't name him was just appalling. The word No, it was the first impulse that he had, and they are legion through the system. It's partly they get off on having a badge and a hat, they get satisfaction, it can be traced back to a slightly sadistic streak through the educational system and so on. And that imprint is followed through in certain teaching professionals and anyone in authority in Ireland, give them give them half a chance. And they start to clone the abusers in their own earlier experience. And, and I'll finish with a third outstanding example, is Billy Houlihan. Billy Houlihan was an architect planner is living still is retired, he's still doing good pro bono work. And is the best example you will know what well it's clonakilty. He was the town architect. He was also the county planner. But he was also the town architect for clon. And he basically sat down with communities and said, I'm here as your professional servant. I've got a few skills. I've done the hard yards in acquiring skills over eight years. Let's work together. And he got them working with shopfront refurbishment, colour schemes. He turned on derelict buildings down the back into a library, into credit union and so on. He transformed Clonakilty it's now a cliche of how to get Irish towns going. Clonakilty and Westport would be the outstanding examples very often quoted as positive. So generically, I find the whole system clunky, negative, self-contradictory, you know, what a fire officer says, will contradict the heritage officer, and the planning officer, and what the Sustainable Energy authority of Ireland will say will contradict all of those. So what is happening now? And what is the reason for hope is that these town centre advocate officers, maybe something like 250 of them are going to be appointed, and they will be in a town a bit like Billy Houlihan or Neil Maher and have a one stop shop in a derelict building.

I personally think green Skibbereen is not wise to go down to myross, you know, it's a bit of an ivory tower. I'd prefer to see them in main streetscape in a derelict units and use citizen science that people can come in and have a cup of tea. Look at maps on the wall. Talk about what are the impediments blocking the renewal of the properties you refer to.

**Interviewer:** That's a good point. I think with something like green Skibbereen you want it to be as accessible as possible. And that does worry me that it could easily become elitist. And people might start to think oh, well, I couldn't ever mix with them. And, yeah, I know they have plans to put in an educational unit. I think in the in myross house.

**Interviewee:** I won't knock it. I've been in the meetings online and I basically said more or less. Like, I don't like to destroy your wheel. I prefer to put my shoulder to the wheel and then cut the spokes. You know if they're decent people trying to get that going. I will say Gaia speed. I hope something good comes up instead of planners blocking. one aspect that I would like to mention is that I am currently fascinated and doing some actual research on eco initiatives which happened 25-30 years ago. cheek by jowl with the conventional town. So there are about 10 great examples in Ireland Cloughjordan 2,000, the millennial 2000 eco-village and Cloughjordan 1608, the settler planter town. That's an example. Now if you look at the interface, the research is the interface between these two events by between the initiative and its receiving environment, social, cultural, blah, blah, blah. The other few are random. one of them is near you. The hollies in Enniskeane/Ballineen. you should definitely look at the Hollies stuff. Okay, it was started by Rob Hopkins.. And it's going I don't know, probably 25 years. It's an eco-village. Oh, and Rob Hopkins started the transition towns movement. A party is a spinoff from there in Kinsale. You probably know about that transition towns movement. And then the net point there is that poor Rob had to run out of Ireland because they burnt down his house. He was building a cob house beauty, all his life savings he and his wife built is she is john Seymour's daughter, john Seymour was one of the pioneers of ecological thinking. But the point was, it was just about to finish they had windows and doors in, they were just about to move in very presently, and it was burned down by xenophobic lads. it was appalling. And when all the damage was done, then people were writing to rob saying, Oh, dear, that's really terrible. How can we help, but they didn't support him when he was trying to get it done? So there's a whole very, very interesting story there. And if you're just switching, I'll finish with this one. If you go to laytown County Meath. I was very involved in a back in the day in the late 80s. I prepared a structure plan. And if you look it up online, you'll find a lot of information about it. so it is within 500 meters of the rail station in, in laytown. And there's a lot of work done there. That is really rewarding. And my point and to finish is if you if you are really interested in marketing and shifting the Zeitgeist of the plain people of Ireland the gnath daoine, what do they need to get it and really change. Look at the interface between these pioneer efforts, you know, you have the Pioneer moment, then you have the settler phase. And then you have cultural creatives, you are a cultural creative, you are examining now in an analytical, bright, young mind, you know, looking afresh at all this stuff, that very, very important work, and it could be pivotal to a new future. So, you know, I would really want to encourage you.

**Interviewer:** Looking at Skibbereen in a practical sense, if, say, we had a great planner in the area, and we were allowed to go and retrofit all these houses, what are some of the key things

that should be included when redesigning a house like? So these are all you know, very simple, terraced houses.

**Interviewee:** Yes. And my response to that is to look at the work that has been done. You and I have paid 100,000 euro to have a pilot study carried out to answer the question you just raised. It's called the synthesis report. And it was prepared, I'll send you a link after this conversation. And they look in detail at six Irish Times for housing agency. And it was prepared by space engagers. And that is really interesting because it was very clever. Orla Murphy and Philip Crowe and others are behind that there are professors in UCD in the centre for Irish Towns, which is just in its infancy, and you should look at that it will spin off this thing, because they were sort of reporting. it is highly complex, the number of design issues that have to be considered. And what can be called in short, tired property. property is sitting there sometimes with the roof off to avoid rates, which is appalling. You know, they should give rates remission, instead of leaving people perceived, no other option than to take the roof off a few of them here in Goleen village, which is shocking. And it was, it was an act, a deliberate act to remove the roof so that it wouldn't have any reasonable valuation. So that nonsense has to stop. There's a whole a whole plethora of fiscal instruments that governance at local and national level can introduce by way of tax remission, tax concession derogations from conflicting requirements, that's why having a single person in a town as the town centre advocates and can study a particular problem property in say Skibbereen and say, okay, what's the background, you have people inherited this property, they don't want to sell it because of inheritance tax will come down on top of them. Or you have someone very elderly who won't pass it to a son or daughter for that reason, because that capital gains tax will immediately come in and they lose the property. So there's a kind of paralysis coming in because of tax and other provisions preventing progress. And your design is if you look at Vauban in Freiburg. it was the French military quarter of very ugly barrack buildings, but very typical of buildings of the 40s 50s and 60s, we have lots of them. And they have been utterly transformed in ecological design, providing universal access fire safety, they both of those are crucially important in answer to your question. And then that frees the ground floor for us serving the streets. And there was a marvellous sentence in riot Sligo reimagining of times, you should look it up actually. It was only held a few weeks ago. But the key sentence was **the street is a muscle**. If we need to get oxygen and blood flow back to the social economic muscle of our towns, and get them pulsing with life, if someone of ages is going for milk and paper, they meet Mrs. O'Brien. They sit for a moment and chat. They talk about their kid going to college, they start looking out for each other, they watch where the curtains opened, was the milk taken in. It's the whole social network of the generations. And that can be designed that is the responsibility of governance to reverse the impediments and amplify the incentives to bring a whole street back to life but the synthesis report deals with that and there's a second report. The second report is on impediments and impediments report, I'll send you the links afterwards. And they really studied these to interchange, they're interchangeable in their complimentary report, right. So when you see the links, you will see what I mean. But the, the basic point is that they studied everything that has happened in France, Denmark and Scotland, which are generally ahead of us, they are analogous to our

situation. And the learnings from it. They are some of the facts 230 million in France, 90 million in Scotland and something similar in Denmark, that's where that information is coming from. And they look at specific worked examples, like the island of morso In Denmark, they examine what happened, what was the intervention, how many street properties came back into use? Was the experience of doing so what to do cost who paid? What was the ratio between grants and loans? And it really the bottom line is it needs to be 90%, Grant 10% loan, you can't just hand out money from the Exchequer, there have to be very strict criteria, and there has to be a close administration. And that does touch on the problem of corruption. Like the cash for ash nonsense up north, it is too easy for a cash rich incentive scheme to be ripped off by a cynical showman and then say, oh, this is great, we can just get the money and then we won't actually do what the money is supposed to do. So that's where a good professional on the ground administration kicks in.

**Interviewer:** Very interesting. I really like the phrase 'the street is a muscle' And, you know, one of the overarching themes so far that I've got from everyone Cloughjordan is how important the social community aspect of sustainability is. But I never thought about that you could design it as so. That's a very interesting, and I'm going to keep that in mind. And I'm looking forward to reading what you've given me now.

**Interviewee:** Okay, well, my parting remark is it's too late for ecovillages. Just too late. We now must have a proliferation every village, we must get untidy towns. ecological towns that are quite untidy, like Cuba, growing lettuces on windowsills. Not pretty necessarily, but alive.

#### Interview 4

**Interviewer:** How long have you been with Cloughjordan eco-village and what attracted you there in the first place?

**Speaker:** Well, I'm one of the founding groups. So I got involved in the late nineties. I was studying as a mature student anthropology and got into sustainability and met people like Richard Bouthwaite, the economists that worked on sustainable economies and beyond growth sort of strategies.

And. And at that time, there was a few things going on faster than the sustainable economics foundation just started the year before the ecovillage started. And then 99, we put together a proposal and did a launch meeting and invited for about a year and every month we would invite people to join us.

With this ambitious project of setting up an eco-village as a sort of destination for learning as a place that people could come and go back to their own communities with some knowledge or some capacity and approaches and methodologies. So we really saw the initial call. You

know, a lot of us were activists a lot as we're stopping things and saying no, and we were wanting to be proactive.

We want to say yes. And we found this model of ecovillages and thought this would be the most powerful thing to, for people to really see sustainable community, not just you know, Look at PowerPoints. To come and visit and touch and feel and walk around and be immersed in that place would be more powerful to sort of normalize and mainstream the concept of sustainability and these ideas.

So we started in 99. We found the loans in 2003. We bought the land in 2004. The first house, these were occupied by 2009. Took a long time.

**Interviewer:** So that's why is that why you decided to settle in, in the town? Because you know, traditionally ecovillages are quite withdrawn, so that idea is make it accessible.

**Speaker:** Original idea when we launched though, was we were going to buy a hundred-acre farm and set up a new village. And then in our first few years of talking and thinking and meeting people and going to other places in Europe, we realized that a new village is definitely not what's needed. There's so many towns and villages in decline. Let's join one. Let's identify one that might need that regeneration. And for us, we knew then after visiting some eco villages, that wasn't really what we wanted. We actually wanted the connection, the services and the tradition of a town or village and Irish town. So it was a much better proposal. And early on it emerged as the way that we were going.

**Interviewer:** I thought it was a brilliant idea when I first came across it so different, but so useful, I think for learning. And so could you tell me about cultivate?

**Speaker:** Well, cultivate really came out of well, first, we call it cultivate because we used to run a centre in Dublin called the cultivate living and learning centre. But our real name is the sustainable Ireland cooperative. We set up in 2000. So the year after the eco village set up, so the village is sustainable projects, Ireland we're sustainable Ireland.

Co-operative okay. Another objective with a worker's cooperatives for people that want to self-direct their work in this field of sustainability and committee. And so we get contracts and little projects through sustainable Ireland. And, and then, so we started out just hosting a big weeklong festival called convergence and temple bar wants to be a cultural festival.

So we did it for 10 years in temple bar. And then two years into that annual event. And it was quite a big event, lots and lots going on. Temple bar said, look, we've got a vacant property,

the old Viking Museum, massive building. Why don't you just do what you do in that week, all year round. So we then set up the sustainable living and learning centre, cultivate and start trading as cultivate.

And so for seven years in that building run our living and learning centre. Then we moved to the enfo building, which is the, was the old governments and environmental centre that when John Gormley was the minister for environment decided it was just run by civil servants wasn't doing anything, but she'd just get rid of this.

It's useless. And then, but realized there was a, there was a lease on the, for the government on the building. So he got some NGOs, us and eco UNESCO to run that building as our centre for sustainability, we called it the greenhouse run that for two years, and then we decided to do we're moving the whole co-op to Cloughjordan when it was going.

And so 2010, we started moving down here until all of us moved down here. It was quite an important for us because we. We are advocates and activists for this sustainable communities. And for us to walk the talk rather than just talk the talk and Dublin is what we wanted. So we're all here now. And now we run another centre the Wecreate workspace in in the eco village.

**Interviewer:** I think that that's kind of leads onto the next question. So I mentioned about the plans for sustainability centre near Skibbereen. What do you think is important? What's the most important things to, to have in the centre? So let me just see, I have some of the plans they have, you know, things like a training and research hub. They have a business hub information hub, but yeah. What do you think is key to make us successful?

**Speaker:** Well, I think because it's got land right, as well as buildings that it need to demonstrate. And as some sort of scale regenerative agriculture or horticulture or different approaches to growing our food or restoring ecosystems.

So you can do that practically where the land, someone that people can see. And so when you come to the ecovillage, we've got sensory gardens research gardens Woodlands biodiversity trails. Now we've got lots of work to do, you know, though. Two decades. Now there's so much work to do. And so many challenges when you're trying to do this with no resources and no funding.

But I think a lot can be done with very limited resources. So I think that there's the actual practical demonstrations where you can have on the grounds as well as I think now that rethinking work and how we provide meaning and in our livelihoods is going to be a big thing. So our enterprise centre that we run those and enterprise centre is trying to show new ways of working through Cloughjordan and food and agriculture.

And we have a, we have a digital fabrication lab, but through FabLab there in the centre, which I think is going to be something that helps us move to the circular economy or be able to share plans and blueprints and make things locally. So feeds into the sustainability agenda a lot. And there's obviously for, for somewhere like the ecovillages we're living as well.

So there's houses that people can see. But even if you've not got people living there, you should show the energy performance of a building or renewable energy in some ways should be demonstrated and signed to where they can go to sustainable energy communities or other places that can take this aspect further.

So enterprise, I think is going to be big. I mean, we've got co-workspace, which is really useful. So people, especially if they've got project around sustainability might take a bit of space in the centre and education is key, but that education isn't just classroom based. So place-based learning where you can take people outside, you can immerse them in nature.

You can give them tasks. Problem-based learning. We will bring that group in here and give them a scenario of a challenge that they have to meet together. So you're doing learning in a more constructivist way. You're, you're not just transmit knowledge or facilitating learning, and especially if you've got a place like it was planned, it could be a really nice place to immerse a learner or a group of learners in building that knowledge together.

I think celebration is important and having places for a little learning festivals or are, are Celtic festivals at the time of year or something that could just be a nice way to bring people in, to celebrate. I think we have to celebrate our place each other our communities and build a sort of sense and pride of that place.

So we have things like our harvest apple festival, which celebrates. Thousands of apple trees planted here. So celebrates the apple will have apple pressing, but we'll actually still have pretty hefty sessions on sustainable living as well. You know, so it's merging that sort of deep dive into some subject with a celebration or music or arts or, or something that is key. Performance. We've got an amphitheatre here and outdoor amphitheatre is really useful. Use as an outdoor classroom, but it's also, a centre that's important to the community, has it had to have a number of functions, obviously the type of classes and workshops you hold.

So things like permaculture is a key one I think is just ecological design introductions to, or we hold a full 10-day permaculture design course. It's fully booked for this year. Again, 25 people face-to-face this year. And did it last year, the same luckily between the lockdowns. So these are sort of things that some of them are obvious.

Some are visible things. You can show renewable energy systems, you can show energy efficiency, you can show and biodiversity and pollinator plants. There are other non-tangible things like the learning there, or the You know, building that sense of community is

nontangible, but something that you can still facilitate through what you put in or how you frame the centre.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. It sounds very positive, you know, and it's nice to focus on the positive side because I think people get very bogged down with the, the negatives of climate change and the need for sustainability.

**Speaker:** Yeah. I don't tend to focus too much on, although I put in my workshops, I'll use the ecological and climate emergency as the context.

It's not what I'm focused on. I don't think, I mean, everyone.

Well, I think there is a focus, but it's just how we focus. So my focus is about resilient communities. How do we cope and adapt to the changes that are going to be, we're locked into? We're not going to wait from, you know, we're going to have more droughts.

We're going to have more floods. We're going to have hotter and drier and colder weather. It's going to be disruptive. How do we cope with that disruption? I think for me, it's about saying. Like wherever the problem community is the answer. So it's like looking at how do we strengthen our social capital?

How do we set up easy things like street fests to community gardens, to community support agriculture that actually starts to provide a livelihoods and food security? How do we set up sustainable energy? Co-ops so we've got energy security and you know, how do we think about livelihoods in a different way, if you had, if you had food, energy, good sense of community and the meaningful livelihoods, where there's going to be plenty of work in the transition that needs to be made.

And if people have that. I think we could cope it's when, where we think when we locked into the assumptions that we are currently. Whether economy and society into what we should be earning and what size our car should be at this time of life. You know, that's where I think that we have to challenge.

we must show that you can have a real good life locally doing the work it needs to be done with meaning and purpose with others around you and connected to the place you're in. It's actually the good life. It's not a hardship in a sense. Yeah. there is trillion spent to, to keep us focused on consumption and individualism, you know, a CSA, a community supported agriculture projects, not great for the economy.

So we're not going to see it promoted and highlighted, but this is what we need to shorten supply chains and especially vulnerable global supply chains to do more locally, to have a stronger community, and then to be providing a need. As much as possible from a local place

in solidarity with other communities and other places all over the world, you know, it's not like turning on her back. We're okay. Down here in Skibbereen.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, no, I agree completely. And yeah, like you said, I think the society or the ideology around capitalism and consumption is creating kind of a hole that we need to fill. So if we could move away from that, it would be great.

**Speaker:** And it's hard to, it's hard to talk about moving away from that without sounding like a radical lefty or something, but there's a lot now with Kate Raworth doughnut economics or prosperity without growth, the people are challenging and showing the limitations of a growth based extractive economy. And once we start once we start understanding that we're going to design everything, different.

I think the biggest challenge we have is moving people from individual consumers that are not connected to their place at all, to more connected to their place, the people around them and the environment around them. We just have to work on that. Then everything we do starts to be more from a systemic and holistic viewpoint worldview.

So a lot of my work is about the shift from I to we culture, you know, or this very individualistic our housing estates now are dormitories where we sleep and watch television. We do everything else somewhere else. How do we start reversing that? But in a way that people see that this is good for them, you know that this is good working for the something beyond yourself is actually good for you.

And that sort of ecological worldview, which is about seeing connections and relationships, it was missing in the way that we've been educated and cultured into reductionist world view. Everything's reduced as parts and we suffer from silos and atomisation and we're at the mercy of the market.

So there's, I mean, I'm jumping around a little bit. I'm just trying to show you that a centre, like where you're planning in Skibbereen, a green centre, isn't just talking about renewable energy and organics. There's something. Fundamental. That's trying to tease out the power of community and stronger social capital deeper connections, more meaning more purpose is a wellbeing.

That's maybe a better framework. We need a well-being economy. And, and when we talk about our community's wellbeing and our own wellbeing, or the way I talk about our community's resilience or our own resilience, to be able to weather the shocks to cope with the changes. I think that we're going to be mentally healthier.

We're going to be physically healthier and our communities and local economies will be stronger. So there's something that the centre needs to really show this localizing agenda without being seen as turning our backs on everyone else.

**Interviewer:** So there are plenty of people that I would call kind of ethical consumers who want to make the change and are willing to sacrifice, but there's also plenty of people who have no interest in it.

So have you had experience with these kinds of people and have? Trying to change that attitude towards sustainability and the need for change.

**Speaker:** Yeah, I think that's what we've been grappling with for 20 years. Most people, even if they want change, don't want to change. Most people aren't interested in this because they see it as, so that's for lefties or environmentalist or Greenies is not for me.

What we're seeing now though, is the times have changed and are changing rapidly. So a lot of the stuff that we talked about in the establishment of the eco village are now pretty mainstream conversation. Or actions, you know, to think about renewable energy or energy efficiency in your home for, for farmers or even horticulturalists to think about biodiversity or soil health, these are now pretty mainstream.

So I think times are catching up with us, but still there's a lot of virtue signalling where people go, oh, I'm fairly green. I recycle, you know, that's recycling is doing nothing to me as we should be going upstream and stop and no single use plastic ever been made. And so people, but that's where we have to start with people.

And not penalized them or ridiculed on for, for virtue signalling, but seeing that as a first step in a transition that it could be brought into and it can be deepened. I think you're going to see though, eh, within a few years now a scramble for options and things to do. So if there's a centre in Skibbereen, that can really be a signpost, a place where people can really get grounded in this new approach or new ways of doing things it's going to be so helpful. You know, we're, we're well, beyond this is in the nineties, we knew the problem and it was tough to get people to think about the changes. Now we're acutely aware of the problem, some of the responses, and yet still, I think people are a bit lost on actually, what is useful to do..

**Interviewer:** I think we know all about the problems and what's wrong, but we've so far had very little solutions. There is a lot of the literature, even around sustainability is, you know, we should do this or we could do this, but there's not how this can be.

**Speaker:** I do think that starts by building stronger communities and especially in the just transition. We really need to think about the marginal or excluded because in my work was a transition towns or, or more progressive communities. It's the usual suspects and we need to reach out and bring in the not so usual suspects.

Make this meaningful for everyone, you know, that this is healthy for us all, you know, and I'm really realizing that personal benefits of going for a walk-in nature or, you know, putting your hands in the soil. And, you know, we've got an epidemic of loneliness because of the lack of community because of the fragmentation of community.

So that's what we need to focus on is a rebuilding community. And in that we become more sustained. Or we have the ability to provide a means in a different way, in a more cooperative for place-based collaborative way.

The other signposts on make, is that the things that I think if I regenerative culture, that's what we really need now. Even our sustainable culture is not good enough. We need a regenerative, so that's not just in our soils and our right agriculture when our communities in our circular economies and our local economies.

So there's a lot here that we need to regenerate. And there's a big gap between the work that's been done in regenerative culture in permaculture. Which is 50 years old, ecological design process in ecovillages and transition towns. There's that community led approach is not known widely and needs to be built upon and mainstream.

So I'm part of ecolease which is a meta network of networks across Europe that are community. Actions for sustainability and climate and their action program, ecolease.eu as the web for that. But their main action program is communities for future. And the purpose of the naming of that community for future is to tap into the emerging climate activists that we're seeing with Fridays for future and extinction rebellion.

But a lot of the time. They're going to miss the pathway to this regenerative culture that's been experimented with and has been out there for so long that we're, we either reinvent the wheel, but there's no time for it. Or we just demand change from the government, which we have to do. We need systems change and yes, we need to demand change, but we need a lot more.

We need more participation at the local level. We need more engagement in this transition and we need more. Vehicles and ways for us to get involved in it. And I think that's the work. So look out for that communities for future ecolease and transition towns as part of that network, of course, great resources it'd be useful for the centre.

## **Appendix 4: Survey questions**

### **Building sustainable communities in Skibbereen.**

**Purpose of the Study:** As part of the requirements for MSc Management and Marketing at UCC, I have to carry out a research study. The study is about how to mainstream sustainable consumption in Skibbereen, using Cloughjordan eco-village as a model. This study hopes to provide a framework with which policies and new sustainable initiatives could be implemented in Skibbereen.

**What will the study involve?** The study will involve answering survey questions online so that your responses can be analysed and incorporated into the final report. The survey will take no longer than 10 minutes.

**Why have you been asked to take part?** You have been asked because you visit Skibbereen frequently or consider it your nearest town.

Please read the following text before agreeing to take part in this survey.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. All answers you provide will be entirely anonymous and confidential and data will be treated according to UCC's Code of Research Conduct and GDPR legislation. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

However, please note that once you have completed the study and submitted your answers, it will not be possible to withdraw your data as it will be anonymised.

**Any further queries?** If you need any further information, you can contact me:

Naoise Kennedy, 115471058@umail.ucc.ie, 083-4174757

Or my supervisor:

Dr Joan Buckley, jb@ucc.ie

Thank you,

Naoise

### **Questions**

1. By clicking the button below, I indicate that I understand what the study involves and I agree to take part.
  - i. I agree
  - ii. I disagree
  
2. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Climate change is a big problem facing society today.
  - i. Strongly disagree
  - ii. Disagree
  - iii. Neutral
  - iv. Agree
  - v. Strongly Agree

3. I would be willing to change my behaviour/ habits to become more sustainable/lessen my carbon footprint
- i. Strongly disagree
  - ii. Disagree
  - iii. Neutral
  - iv. Agree
  - v. Strongly Agree
4. I have faith in local and national government to make decisions that will reduce Irelands carbon footprint and make our lives more eco-friendly
- i. Strongly disagree
  - ii. Disagree
  - iii. Neutral
  - iv. Agree
  - v. Strongly Agree
5. What best describes the area you live in?
- i. An estate in town.
  - ii. An estate outside of town.
  - iii. Fully detached rural house.
  - iv. Semi-detached rural house.
  - v. Semi-detached urban house.
6. How familiar are you with your neighbours?
- i. 1(I barely know them.)-10(We are close friends.)
7. Do you have space at home where you could grow your own food?
- i. Yes
  - ii. No
  - iii. Maybe
8. If the street/estate/ neighbourhood you lived in had a community garden or allotments. How likely would you be to use them to grow food?
- i. Yes
  - ii. No
  - iii. Maybe

9. Would you be interested in taking a course to learn how to grow your own food?

- i. Yes
- ii. No
- iii. Maybe

10. Community Supported Agriculture is a partnership between a group of people and a farmer. The members receive a share in the CSA when they commit to pay an agreed fee to the farmer for the duration of a season, and in return they get healthy, local food produced in an agroecological\* way. This partnership allows everyone to share both the rewards and also the challenges that our independent farmers face every year. The CSA model is a way to self-organize food distribution systems. (CSA network Ireland, 2021) If there was a CSA opportunity in Skibbereen, would you consider subscribing to it?

- i. Yes
- ii. No
- iii. Maybe

11. If no, why not?

12. Would you be willing to take part in an energy audit to see how energy efficient Skibbereen is as a community?

- i. Yes
- ii. No
- iii. Maybe

13. Does your house use renewable energy (Solar, wind etc) for heating/ hot water?

- i. Yes
- ii. No
- iii. Unsure

14. If no, would you consider using a renewable energy source for your home in the future? If possible, give a reason for your answer

15. How satisfied are you with the amount of amenities/ community events that are currently in Skibbereen?

- i. 1(Not at all satisfied)- 5(Extremely satisfied)
16. How likely would you be to share/borrow items (Tools, appliances, bicycles etc) from your neighbours instead of buying them new?
- i. 1(Very unlikely)- 5(Very likely)
17. What was the reason for your answer?
18. When buying something in a shop, which of these do you take into consideration?  
(Tick all that apply)
- i. Amount of packaging
  - ii. Type of packaging (recyclable, non-recyclable etc)
  - iii. Price
  - iv. How far it has travelled to reach the shelf
  - v. The brand
19. If there was more public transport (new bus routes, local shuttles, bike rentals etc), Would you use them instead of a car?
- i. Yes
  - ii. No
  - iii. Maybe
20. Do you think that Skibbereen, as a town, is using the buildings/space it has effectively? (For example; consider number of businesses on main street vs empty buildings).
- i. Yes
  - ii. No
  - iii. Maybe
21. How do you separate your waste at home?
- i. I don't separate my waste
  - ii. I have general waste and recycling bins
  - iii. I have general waste, recycling and food waste bins
  - iv. I have general waste, a bin for paper/plastic/different types of recyclables and a food waste bin/compost bin
22. if there was a communal compost heap/bin or recycling bins in your area, would you be more likely to separate your waste?

- i. Yes
- ii. No
- iii. Maybe

23. Is there anything else you would like to say in relation to any of the questions asked, or about the transitioning to low carbon lifestyles in general?