

Collaborative Sustainable Innovation

co-designing small-scale fisheries governance approaches



CO-SUSTAIN (2018-2020) is an interdisciplinary research project, focused on the four island groups of Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Cork on the Irish west coast, which aims to find inclusive ways of sustainably managing small-scale fisheries that allow island communities to flourish while at the same time ensuring that the marine environment and its resources are conserved for future generations. This project, led by Dr Ruth Brennan and hosted by the Trinity Centre for Environmental Humanities, is a participatory research project which involves working with the Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation (IIMRO) to co-design and test innovative governance approaches that promote good governance, foster marine stewardship and contribute to sustainability goals, while meeting the needs of fisheries-dependent coastal communities.

In the last five years, the inshore fisheries sector has become increasingly visible in the Irish marine policy environment. A 2014 Oireachtas joint sub-committee on fisheries put forward 29 recommendations to promote sustainable rural coastal and island communities. 2014 also saw the establishment by the Irish Government of the National Inshore Fisheries Forum and the Regional Inshore Fisheries Forums to implement an industry-led approach to inshore fisheries. The grassroots Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation was also established in 2014. More recently, January 2019 saw the launch of a Charter for Fishers, Coastal Communities and the Islands by Liadh Ní Riada MEP. The Strategy for the Irish Inshore Fisheries Sector 2019-2023 was launched by the Irish Government in February 2019. These developments sit within the wider national context of Ireland's developing National Marine Planning Framework.

About Ruth



Dr Ruth Brennan is a marine social scientist specialising in ethnographies of coastal communities, small-scale fisheries and environmental governance at the arts-science-policy interface. Her research offers insights into different ways marine and coastal spaces are conceptualised by users, managers and human-environment interactions, how this relates to natural resource governance challenges and what it means for community engagement. Email: ruth.brennan@tcd.ie

To learn more about this project and the research team, please visit the CO-SUSTAIN website at www.belongingtothesea.com.



Marie Skłodowska-Curie
Actions

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CO-SUSTAIN is well-positioned to inform the themes, objectives and key issues in the recently launched Strategy for the Irish Inshore Fisheries Sector 2019-2023. Issues highlighted by the Strategy include, for example:

- *The poorly defined profile of the inshore sector:* CO-SUSTAIN will identify the profiles and needs of the four island groups in the context of fisheries management;
- *The need to strengthen existing representative structures:* CO-SUSTAIN's governance analysis will think critically about issues of representation, island narratives, struggles over authority and how they manifest around the nexus of state agencies and government departments;
- *The need to recognise women's roles in the sector:* CO-SUSTAIN aims to examine the roles of island women in inshore fisheries.
- *The need to improve connectivity and communications between fisheries and markets:* Governance initiatives that are co-designed and developed within the CO-SUSTAIN project could provide useful pilots for the Strategy's objective on this topic.

CO-SUSTAIN: Goals

- Propose sustainable small-scale fisheries governance models for the islands based on co-designed small-scale fisheries governance initiatives;
- Use the proposed initiatives to provide practical governance insights into the institutional dynamics and processes that seek to define small-scale fisheries governance in Ireland;
- Align initiatives, processes and approaches with national and European policies and conservation obligations;
- Make more visible the roles of island women in Irish small-scale fisheries.

CO-SUSTAIN: Core Activities

- Fieldwork: data collection via group and individual interviews on the islands and in the policy environment, including island-based focus groups in collaboration with IIMRO (Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation).
- Literature review of the political ecology and critical geographies literatures on how power operates to shape societies, cultures, knowledges and ecologies at the nature-society nexus, linked to an environmental history of small-scale fisheries in the Irish islands.
- Gender-sensitive analysis of small-scale fisheries governance practices and processes.

CO-SUSTAIN: Planned Outputs

- Policy: a series of policy briefings/a policy report with recommendations for Irish inshore fisheries governance, providing insights into opportunities for transformation within the Irish inshore fisheries sector and whether these are/are not being facilitated by the State and the EU.
- Academic: Three articles in peer-reviewed journals and two peer-reviewed book chapters on Irish small-scale fisheries governance practices and processes; conference and seminar presentations.