

## **“Transdisciplinary and Intercultural Innovation for Sustainable Development”: The 11th American-African-European Summer School, a long-lasting experience between “Lego Serious Play” and the declaration by Robert Schuman**

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The 11<sup>th</sup> AAE Summer School took place in Nancy, France, in September 2017. As in previous years, participants experienced ambitious workshops, presentations and field trips and made new international contacts. Only the host was new: ICN Business School joined the cooperation and organised the Summer School with ARTEM Campus in France as the venue.



Image 1 + 2: Impressions of ARTEM Campus

It felt like the most recent Chemnitzer Wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft (CWG) article in which ICN Business School (ICN) was welcomed as a new host had just been released, when the time arrived to once again join the Summer School 2017, scheduled to be held from 3 - 16 September in Nancy, France. The 11<sup>th</sup> Summer School united South African, French and German mindsets within the motto: “Transdisciplinary and Intercultural Innovation for Sustainable Development”. The French ICN was introduced to the international network as host. In June 2016, the business school concluded an inter-institutional agreement with Chemnitz University of Technology (CUT) to benefit from the Erasmus+ program. As a result, staff members and students from ICN, CUT and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in Durban, South Africa participated in the Summer School thereby enriching academic and intercultural learning. The contribution made by UKZN in particular, was rich presenting a culturally diverse team of participants from South Africa, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Ghana. These international and transdisciplinary backgrounds encouraged various perspectives in workshops, discussions and lectures. Moreover, the fact that lecturers from different countries like Finland, Japan and of course South Africa, Germany and France also joined the Summer School, contributed to the excellence of the experience.

The first 'unofficial meeting' saw Prof. Klaus-Peter Schulz welcoming all participants with pizza in the Hotel Adagio Access Nancy Centre on the day of arrival. This afforded participants to meet and make introductions in an informal atmosphere. The 'official welcome' took place on Monday, the first day of the two-week program. Participants travelled to the ARTEM Campus via an environmentally friendly tram where Prof. Klaus-Peter Schulz and Prof. Kamel Mnisri scheduled an interactive and creative round of introductions. Thereafter, Prof. Guy Deloffre familiarised the attendees with the multifaceted campus showing them all that it encompasses, including ICN, Nancy School of Art and Design and Nancy School of Engineering (Mines Nancy). The schools cooperate closely and dedicate Fridays to interdisciplinary and mutually creative projects. The first day concluded with a sightseeing tour taken on the Le Petit Train. Everyone enjoyed seeing the impressive ancient buildings in the inner part of the city.

The impressions of historical architecture, interdisciplinary research and artistic design laid the foundation for the second day which focused entirely on Lego Serious Play. This method which combines playing and modelling, characterised the activities of the Summer School as a whole. At the start, participants were divided into three groups where ice breakers were presented to provide the opportunity for people to overcome their inhibitions. Latching onto the motto of the Summer School, each group followed a subtheme of working with Lego: Sustainability, Innovation and Creativity. The aim that was set to be achieved was to not only model and interpret the single topic on its own but also to investigate and set up how they interrelate. Firstly, each participant constructed their own grasp of the theme using Lego blocks. In an almost playful manner, the groups pieced together their individual models and proceeded to expand those constructions by incorporating additional factors as external influences. During the remaining period of the Summer School, the groups spent time on refining their models. Furthermore, they discussed and presented the interrelations of the key topics using the models in their group presentations, workshops and case studies.



Image 3: Participants discussing Lego models

For instance, Jonas Worede Tarekegne (ICN) provided insights to the Daimler Innovation Studio and his exciting work in the interplay between creativity, innovativeness and competitiveness. Gernot Kirchner (TUC) outlined the case study of the fatal accident of a Tesla test driver in 2016. He discussed

the interfaces between innovations of intelligent semi-autonomous vehicles and legal challenges and illustrated their importance for a holistic perspective of sustainability. The UKZN lecturers, Dr. Andrisha Beharry-Ramraj and Jayrisha Ramasamy Gurayah, presented master projects of their students and moderated a diversified and profound debate on sustainable South African business models at the end of the week. This holistic approach raised a greater awareness of sustainability, innovation and creativity.

The second week started off on an interdisciplinary footing. Prof. Wendelin Küppers (ICN) demonstrated the approach of embodiment by combining ideas regarding creative design in organizations with physical oriented exercises. Thierry Keuscher (CUT) presented research findings regarding leadership theories and moderated a discussion on connections between sustainability and leadership. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of September the Summer School welcomed Prof. Takaya Kawamura and its students from Osaka City University. Prof. Takaya Kawamura introduced the intention and work of artistic interventions in healthcare management studies undertaken at Osaka City University while simultaneously offering insights into cultural differences. Thereafter, the Finnish Dr. Anna Pässilä of Lappeenranta University of Technology approached the Summer School theme in a new way with her workshop entitled, "Drama Intervention". In both a playful and profound manner she guided participants step by step through working out various aspects and discussing the challenges presented by the individual projects. To this end, she used metaphors, several items and photographs to show how to achieve the desired effects and to gain benefits from the mutual exchanging of experiences.

Two field trips - to more or less equidistant places - offered further cultural and historical impressions while providing a welcome and necessary variety. In the nearby town of Metz, the group visited the impressive cathedral Saint-Étienne, the Centre Pompidou-Metz as well as the museum of Robert Schumann in Scy-Chazelles. On the topic of "Transboundary History and European Unification", participants acquired knowledge regarding European history and the work of Robert Schuman. The insights underlined the great importance of the role that Europe plays in establishing a stable and peaceful post-war system such as the one Robert Schuman once emphasized: "For peace to have a real chance, there must be one Europe first." Nowadays, one would like to add "... there must be a future Europe still."

The second excursion led the Summer School to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. Fortunately, everyone passed through the strict security control without any significant incidents. A guide took the group through the building with its impressive rooms and halls and also the in-house library. Additional presentations illustrated the work of the court very well. Before returning to Nancy, participants enjoyed some leisure time in the city of Luxembourg.





Image 4: Entrance of European Court of Justice

Summer School participants spent the evenings cooking together, exploring the city or visiting the amazing lightshow that illuminated Place Stanislas with great music and astonishing light effects every night. The obligatory program offered a dinner in the local Creperie which resulted in many culinary surprises for the South African guests in particular.

Nearly everyone spent the weekend in Paris. The TGV - France's intercity high-speed rail service - overcomes the distance of 350 kilometres in one and a half hours. Despite the bad weather, the visitors enjoyed the unique atmosphere and French cuisine while taking in all the wonderful sights that Paris has to offer.



Image 5: Evening light show Place Stanislas

The second week of the Summer School concluded with a climax: The 2<sup>nd</sup> ARTEM Organizational Creativity and Sustainability International Conference (ARTEM OCC) at ICN. The conference inspired attendees with scientific and interdisciplinary talks, presentations and panel discussions as well as interactive workshops from 14 - 16 September 2017. Summer School participants presented their own research projects in a special Summer School Track. They benefitted from individual feedback given by experts from diverse backgrounds and made promising contacts. ICN realized its interdisciplinary approach at the ARTEM OCC by offering a creative and multidisciplinary framework program. Attendees could visit art exhibitions, an extraordinary labyrinth in addition to drawing intuitively while enjoying musical accompaniment. Moreover, Summer School participants presented their Lego models, which they constructed based on the topic of “Sustainability, Innovation and Creativity”, to an audience of experts.



Image 6: Participants at the conference’s labyrinth

Attendees of the Summer School gained valuable cultural experiences, scientific ideas and new inspiration as well as individual advancement in interdisciplinary themes. All these outcomes and experiences strengthen the concept of a successful Summer School and support it being extended on a permanent basis – not only regarding the internationalization of individual institutions but also on behalf of global interconnection of students and universities. In this manner, the approach of “Sustainability, Innovation and Creativity” should be understood as being interlinked and shaped by particular cultural influences. The importance and vigour of these themes demands the kind of approach as the one adopted by the Summer School.

The Faculty of Economics and Business Administration continues to pursue internationalization and is pleased to announce the hosting of the 12<sup>th</sup> AAE Summer School 2018 at University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa. At this point, the organizers would like to take the opportunity of thanking all Summer School supporters. In particular the host of 2017, ICN, enhanced the concept with numerous creative inputs while underlining the importance of the role that long-term supporters play in establishing successful cooperation and diversified programs. The 11<sup>th</sup> Summer School was supported by the School of Management, IT and Governance from the University KwaZulu-Natal, the Professorship of Innovation Research and Technology Management (Prof. Hüsigg), the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration and the International Office of Chemnitz University of Technology, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Franco-German University (DFH). Support in recent years has come from the International Office, the University Management, the Student Union Chemnitz and the CWG.

Finally, it is sincerely hoped that sufficient funds will be made available to allow for permanent organization and further development of the Summer School.

For further information please visit the Summer School website: <https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/wirtschaft/summerschool/>.