

More Than Human Histories of Hydro-Electricity on the Rivers Liffey, Lee and Erne



This project is being carried out by Dr Aoife O'Leary McNeice under the mentorship of Dr Kevin O'Sullivan. It is funded by Research Ireland. The project considers the impact of three hydro-electric schemes built on the rivers Liffey, Erne and Lee between 1937 and 1952. The unique assemblage of interdependent living creatures and human economies

that characterised these river landscapes was permanently transformed by these dams. Due to their rare, and threatened ecologies, these riparian landscapes have long been the subject of scientific studies. Yet little has been done to marry this scientific knowledge with the social and environmental history of these dams and the relationships between humans, plants, and animals before and after their construction. This project will address this imbalance. This is a stratigraphic story. I am drawing upon a rich source base, including archives of government departments and energy companies, folklore and oral history, and analysis of landscapes as living archives to produce a stratigraphic methodology for analysing the implications of human interventions on landscapes.

I seek to make visible the layers of animals, humans and organic forces that connected these local landscapes with networks of global industry and commerce. Examining the Liffey, Erne and Lee schemes together provides a unique opportunity to explore a programme of dam building over both a broad time period, and a wide geographic scale (three different landscapes in the south, east and north of the island).

If you have any questions, or would be interested in participating in the oral history element of the project, please get in touch with me at aoife.olearymcneice@universityofgalway.ie