

Narrative Report

Graduate Travel-Research Fellowships on the European Union,
European Integration or EU-Canada Relations 2013

Chantal Clément

PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science
Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada

With the generous help of the Graduate Travel-Research Fellowship on the European Union, I was able to complete my field work in Todmorden, UK as well as conduct preliminary research in the university library of Paris-Sorbonne in France. The goal of my dissertation is to understand the governance mechanisms to support the development of locally-based sustainable food systems (SFS). I am doing so comparing four municipal case studies in the EU and Canada, each of which are supporting the development of SFSs.

During my time in the UK, I was able to interview two of the founding members of Incredible Edible (IE)– the community group who brought the idea of sustainable food to Todmorden; local farmers; the manager of Incredible Farm – a social enterprise connected to IE; and a member of the Bear Cafe and Grocer – a grocery store providing the town with locally procured food. I was also able to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Todmorden Agricultural Society, the local farmers market, and tour the Todmorden “Green Route” with a member of IE, which was set up as an educational walk to give adults and children an opportunity to learn about food and farming.

This field work allowed me to gain a better understanding of the dynamics currently supporting sustainable food Todmorden, and to get a first-hand look at some of the collaborative partnership between community, businesses and the municipal government to support the local food economy. My trip also gave me a more concrete picture of local demographics, geography, and overall culture in regards to food and agriculture; such dynamics can only truly be experienced in person.

Being there also allowed me to more candidly engage with members of the community who often gave me more personal perspective on the town’s efforts; being able to have these informal conversations gave me insights into some of the strengths and tensions within the system that might not otherwise have been shared. Lastly, it allowed me to obtain interviews that would have been harder to have over the phone, especially through spontaneous connections or with more rurally situated producers.

During my time in Paris, I was able to spend a few days at the Clignancourt library of Paris-Sorbonne. There, I found primary and secondary materials on sustainable agriculture in France in preparation for my second case study which I am conducting in Correns, France. Many of these materials are not as readily available in Ottawa.

My trip provided me with invaluable insights into community dynamics and how new forms of SFS governance are developing on the ground in Todmorden. I could not have gotten as good a sense of this without being there in person. I would like to thank the Centre for European Studies for helping me fund this opportunity to gain a first-hand understanding of the sustainable food initiatives being developed in Todmorden and get a head start on my research for my case study in France.