DIMETIC PhD Summer School

By Donatus Ayitei and Sergey Filippov

On October 9-20, UNU-MERIT hosted the DIMETIC PhD Summer School 2006. It was organised by the DIME Network (Dynamics of Institutions and Markets in Europe), a network of excellence of social scientists in Europe, working on the economic and social consequences of increasing globalisation and the rise of the knowledge economy. UNU-MERIT is part of the DIME network and Prof. Dr. Robin Cowan, head of the PhD programme at UNU-MERIT, is one of the coordinators of the network.

The DIMETIC Session in Maastricht focused on regional innovation systems, clusters and dynamics as well as history, theory and empirics.

Ten days were full of intensive lectures given by renowned scholars from Universities of Aalborg, Eindhoven, Jena, Maastricht, Pisa, Leuven, London, Pécs, Strasbourg and Toronto, among others.

Apart from the lectures, participants made presentations of their PhD projects. About twenty PhD students from various European universities arrived in Maastricht to gain knowledge, exchange ideas and build a network for further interaction. UNU-MERIT’s second-year PhD researchers Sergey Filippov (Russia) and Donatus Kosi Ayitey (Ghana) participated in the course.

Three issues particularly stood out for Donatus:

- The desire of the participants from various universities in Europe not only to learn about their own fields of study but to find out more about other fields and areas of research was quite remarkable! Presentations were made on various projects
touching on many issues across the globe. They were particularly keen to address common problems ranging from poverty to factors behind the growth of cities. Though studying in Europe, some students were of African, Asian and Latin American background creating a perfect environment for various perspectives on region-specific problems. As an African, being part of an international network of researchers who are so focused on using their knowledge to making a difference in a world riddled with problems of various degrees of complexity gives me a renewed hope for a better future.

- Lectures for this course centred on clusters formation and growth, innovation systems, entrepreneurship and institutional environment, evolutionary economic geography and geography of innovation and growth among others. The insights I gained on these aspects were particularly profound because of the thought provoking manner in which they were delivered. However, answers to some questions such as “could technology revolution had occurred without patents?” remain rather speculative. Researchers were also encouraged to approach their research problems with time and space in mind in order to paint a holistic picture of issues being investigated.

- Creating a network of researchers and students determined to identify and find solutions to problems confronting the world today is quite timely. The accumulated experience from many disciplines was particularly effective in addressing issues from different angles and helping the participants to engage with new topics and ways of thinking. The city of Maastricht also provided a fine environment for relaxation after a hard-day’s work. The word “Summer” in the name of the DIMETIC Session was rightly justified. The city of Maastricht was sunny, warm and friendly! The participants were appreciative of the impeccable organization of the Maastricht session by Ms. Silvana de Sanctis.

The final session on Friday (October 20), chaired by Prof. Dr. Robin Cowan, was an open and constructive exchange of ideas and thoughts about experiences gained during the Summer School. It stimulated the participants to elaborate more on academic topics such as “philosophy of science” and “the right level of analysis”.