

Final Report: Junior Research Stay at The University of British Columbia

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September 1 – October 8, 2017

The opportunity to visit the UBC for a junior research stay was beneficial for my PhD project on the role of International Public Administrations in the global climate and biodiversity regimes and also gave me the opportunity for many personal experiences that I value highly. My goal for the research stay was to discuss and cooperate with UBC researchers with regards to the research agenda on multilateral climate change and biodiversity negotiations, which comprises crucial aspects of sustainability governance and, at the same time, necessitates an inter-disciplinary approach.

I was invited by Kurt Hübner of the Institute for European Studies, who welcomed me at UBC and facilitated many fruitful exchanges. The Institute of European Studies has its home on the C.K. Choi Building, which combines architectural symbols of Asian culture and is a benchmark in sustainable design, being one of the first building of the campus adhering to strict sustainability standards in building. These aspects were a great curtain raiser for my stay at UBC. While at the time of my arrival in Vancouver, the air was thick with smoke from the severe forest fires of the summer, strolling around the C.K. Choi Building, which is surrounded by tall evergreen trees, set the tone for some very enjoyable weeks on this impressive campus. Over the course of my stay, I experienced the IES as an excellent environment for inter-disciplinary learning and collaboration on topics connected to public policy, sustainability governance and the study of regimes as well the development of innovative research methods to study these phenomena.

Discussing different aspects of my PhD project with Kurt was helpful in the current phase of finalizing my dissertation. For example, we discussed methodological challenges of measuring influence in global governance settings and theoretical approaches to capture and understand processes related to overlapping, competing or complementary policy regimes for different issue areas. But Kurt also shared many insights on advancing an academic career, comparing the German and Canadian contexts and giving me advice for the post-doc phase.

I was lucky enough to be given a shared office at the Centre for Interactive Research on Sustainability (CIRS), which is also based in a building famous for showcasing sustainable design, passive design strategies and sustainable technologies. As the UBC's sustainability flagship, it hosts many of UBC's researchers, planners and policymakers that I had hoped to meet. Many of them generously shared their views and insights regarding their research projects and work routines with me. This enabled me to constantly learn about the UBC and its sustainability strategy, but of course also about Vancouver's and British Columbia's people, policies and politics impacting the latest developments in this area. For example, Sara Muir-Owen shared her experiences as UBC's focal point for the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions (PICS) with me. As I am interested in learning how researchers who work on sustainability can make their work relevant to policy processes, I was thrilled to learn that PICS partners with governments, the private sector, researchers and citizens to conduct and communicate research on climate change mitigation and adaptation solutions. Later in the year, I met Sara again at the UNFCCC Climate Change Conference in Bonn, where we took up our conversation about this topic and discussed the opportunity of the climate change regime for a science-policy interface.

At CIRS, many other researchers, managers and administrators spared their time for me to discuss my research project or tell me about their own work, especially Marko Pantelic, Angelique Pilon, Tim Herron and Victoria Smith. During this time, I was able to significantly advance the research article "Administrative styles in the UNFCCC: Careful choreography for global cooperation", taking into account the feedback I received. These colleagues at CIRS also facilitated exchange with researchers at other departments, such as David Tindall of the Department of Sociology, George Hoberg of the Department of Political Science and fellow PhD students pursuing their degree at the Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability, who could also share insights as PICS fellows. George and David encouraged me to pursue a research topic that I have envisaged for a phase after completing my dissertation conjointly with UBC researchers. They indicated that a discussion on climate policy integration, that is, the degree to which national climate policies can have transformative impacts on other sectors of the economy, is highly relevant from a Canadian/ British-Columbian stand point. In this sense, we discussed opportunities to collaborate and other opportunities at UBC, such the Liu Institute Visiting Fellows Program. This exchange has certainly impacted the way I view my career after completing my dissertation. I would indeed be very happy to cooperate with UBC scholars in the future.

Finally, I was very impressed by the UBC campus as a whole and the learning opportunities that were apparent virtually everywhere. Apart from obvious highlights, such as the excellent museums (anthropology, biodiversity) and the botanical gardens, countless informational, cultural and art exhibitions about the role and legacy of the First Nations make the campus a space that educates not only students, but anybody just walking across it. This is also true for sustainability, such as through the self-guided Sustainability Walk. I can encourage researchers, students and administrative university to staff to visit this inspiring campus and am happy to provide more information for those interested.