

Fox International 2013-2014 Yale University

This report provides a summary of my work at Yale as a Fox International Fellow from August 2013 to June 2014.

During my stay at Yale, I primarily worked on my PhD research project and expanded my professional and academic network. Moreover, I was a regular participant of the MacMillan Workshop for International Relations during the fall semester 2013. I also attended a lot of public lectures by visiting scholars and renowned Yale-based academics throughout the year. The quality of my dissertation chapters improved a lot from the helpful feedback given by several academics and graduate students at Yale including Fox Fellowship Director Prof. Ben Cashore and my dissertation committee member from the Political Science Department. The various academic seminars, social engagements, and cultural activities involving all the Fox fellows were all contributive to my worthwhile experience living in the United States.

Living in New Haven is ideal for studying and academic networking. New Haven is small enough to easily connect with other students and colleagues, but also big enough to cater to one's recreation and leisure needs. Besides, New Haven is less than two hours away by train from New York City. Indeed, New Haven has a wide variety of restaurants and bars that one can enjoy – something that many German or continental European university towns do not have. Transportation is quite easy because one can use a bike or call a Yale “door-to-door” transportation service during nighttime. Like many other cities in the US, income inequality is very pronounced in New Haven, and there is a very big difference between those from Yale and local residents. Unlike northern European towns, New Haven could be quite unsafe especially at night. Because of that, Yale has been keen on responding to the security needs of its community members, ranging from transportation service to private security roaming the streets of New Haven.

Being trained in the German system, I first addressed Yale senior academics with their formal academic titles – but realized eventually that this was not the norm in the United States. During my first weeks at Yale, I met and addressed one of the senior academics with her formal academic title during a research meeting. She kindly responded to just call her by first name, thereby dropping instead the formal professorial title. Notably, she commented that one of the reasons why American universities are very successful is because they strive to set aside hierarchy. Instead, American universities, according to her, focus on egalitarian intellectual exchange and the quality of the arguments – rather than on the social/academic standing of the person who espouses those arguments. Consequently, I cannot help myself but agree to her comments (at least I agreed privately). Such dynamic of “academic egalitarianism”, it seems to me, also applies in terms of inter-racial relations. The Yale community's racial composition is very much diverse compared to a typical German university. Asians/Asian-Americans and whites, however, comprise the majority of the student and academic staff population. In the US, I am fortunate to realize that racial difference is celebrated, and perhaps attributed to the success of intellectual diversity within the American university system. In terms of racial diversity in the academia, perhaps German universities still have so much to learn from their counterparts in the US. It appears to me that, when German universities (and perhaps the broader society) promote multiculturalism, they mean “integration”. In the US, it seems that

multiculturalism really means a celebration of “differences”. In the US, problems in racial discrimination are seriously being discussed – ranging from daily experiences of discrimination to broader macro-political problems. In the other side of the Atlantic, it appears to me that the issue of discrimination at the micro-level has yet to be taken seriously at the broader public sphere. After my stay in the US, I am more inclined to say that the American model is much more preferable.

The Fox Fellowship is an excellent academic program for academically exceptional graduate students but also to those who are committed in using their talents in the service of the community, especially in promoting international understanding. On that regard, I learned a lot about leadership, camaraderie, and multicultural understanding during my fellowship. Starting from my accommodation, I lived in a five-room apartment with other Fox fellows from India, South Africa, Russia, and Israel. Together with the other Fox fellows, my flat mates and I spent a lot of time in a lot of social activities, ranging from intellectually stimulating conversations, concerts, film watching, parties and field trips. Together with the other Fox Fellows, I participated in a one-day team-building activity called the Adam Krieger Adventure Program, which was scheduled during the first few days of our arrival in the United States. We also visited the United Nations headquarters in New York City. The Fox Fellowship coordinator, Julia Muravnik, who was very helpful to all the fellows, organized the aforementioned activities. Indeed, American academic support staff members are accommodating, sympathetic, and committed to international scholars and students.

Finally, as a Fox Fellow, I enjoyed a lot of opportunities in which I received helpful feedback about my research. In fact, I was invited by the Fox family to give a talk at the Whitney Center in Hamden, Connecticut. During this event in the Whitney Center, I gave a presentation about my academic and social experiences in the United States and in Germany, as well as a preview of my PhD research. In addition, there were numerous professional networking opportunities with other Yale graduate students, alumni, visiting scholars, and academics. Notably, I attended a very productive and inspiring two-day workshop on professional success hosted by the Alumni of Yale Association. Moreover, I also benefitted from attending many sessions of the Yale Graduate School’s Dissertation Boot Camp, where I was able to write my dissertation without interruption. My PhD project also benefitted from valuable and helpful feedback from fellow graduate students and faculty both within and beyond Yale. In terms of resources for my research, the Yale University Library is an excellent resource center. The empirical chapters of my dissertation benefitted a lot from a wide range of primary and secondary materials from the Yale University Library – something that, I believe, no other German university can match. Notably, the University Library scanned parts of books that I found in their online catalog, and in turn, their staff sent the scanned file in my email. Aside from the seminars and graduate students workshops held at Yale, I also presented my work at the International Studies Association General Meeting in Toronto, Canada as well as its Northeast Meeting in Providence, Rhode Island – in which my participation was generously funded by the Fox Fellowship.