

**Jean Monnet EU-Canada Network Internship**  
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This report provides a summary of my experience, in the summer of 2019, in a position of a research internship facilitated through the Jean Monnet Canada-EU Network Internship at the University of Antwerp between June and July 2019.

### **Progress on Research**

This internship provided a great opportunity to further develop my Major Research Paper. While I interned with the University of Antwerp, I worked under the supervision of Dr. Dirk De Bièvre. Dirk met me in my first week in Antwerp and helped me settle in to the new environment. He connected me with several other scholars at the University and offered to make introduction to a wider network of EU scholars. He also met with me about halfway through the internship to go over the state of my research and to work through some major theoretical questions. Dirk's speciality is EU trade policy so he was an ideal mentor for my research on EU investment policy. We also bonded well over a shared interest in theory.

In our second meeting, Dirk was kind enough to make himself available for a discussion lasting a full three hours. This discussion was pivotal for my research. He asked me questions about my methodology and theory and, together, we were able to isolate several remaining areas for improvement in the paper. Specifically, he helped me realize that my theoretical framework was far too complex for the purposes of an MRP. He also urged me to simplify my research design by removing extra variables. Furthermore, he advised me of the risks of confirmation bias. I have often thought back to his advice when considering key aspects of my research design.

I also was fortunate to form a close relationship with a one other PHD student studying in the University of Antwerp who happened to sit next to me in our common work area. We were both able to benefit from collaboration because our research endeavors overlapped on research methodology. He was applying a discourse analysis framework to understand Iranian foreign policy and I was applying a discourse analysis method to EU Commission communications on China. He challenged me to gain a deeper understanding of the original sources of the theory. He also provided me with early drafts of his excellent research and read over my research methodology section.

### **Experience in General**

This was my first time traveling to Europe, and furthermore, my first time traveling alone. Most of my previous travel experience had been in East Asia and with large groups. I found this to be challenging but very rewarding. Antwerp overall was an extremely easy place for English speaking travelers to navigate.

Prior to arriving in Antwerp, I met with Christina Caouette, who had previously held the same internship position. As a side note, Christina wrote an extremely detailed and thorough guide to her experience that would be very helpful to future students. Christina advised me that renting

an Air BnB was the most realistic option for housing. And through the service I was able to rent a place for two months for around \$800 CAD per month. This price was reasonable. However, I absolutely regretted getting a place so far away from the University. It was about a 40 minute transit to the centrally located university.

This internship provided a good mix of freedom and resources. I had the option of working at the shared office space with other PhD students and visiting scholars, or working from other locations at my choice. I generally traveled to the shared office space at around 10 and spent a few hours there, taking advantage of the free coffee and gorgeous lighting in the room. This also allowed me to collaborate with some of the other PhD students. After this, I would bike home to a café close to my Air BnB for another few hours of work. On nice days I would visit the beautiful park across the road from my Air BnB and work from there.

When I spoke to several of my fellow students, they said that they had some trouble with integrating with students in cities, especially in Northern Europe. I can confirm that this was also my experience. While this worked out fine in my case, since I was able to make one good friend, and found the fellow co-op students willing to collaborate. They also invited me to lunch regularly, and I went out to a social event with some students, the culture of privacy makes it easy to default into not being that social. As a generally introverted person, I was surprised at how much I missed daily social interaction. It was extremely important for me to make plans to meet up with other EURUS students who were also in Europe for day trips. Additionally, it was important to me that both my family and partner visited me for a week,

In general, I found the internship to be an extremely rewarding positive experience. Besides the great benefits to my research, I was able to immerse myself in European culture, visiting Paris, Rome, Naples, and Florence, along with several towns in Belgium. The most important thing I could think to highlight about this experience is that it is entirely what a student makes of it.