

Travel Grant Recipient Report

Graduate Travel-Research Fellowship funding provided by the Centre for European Studies and Carleton University, Spring 2013

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With the generous help of the Graduate Travel-Research Fellowship provided by the Centre for European Studies at Carleton University, I was able to travel to Brussels and conduct the interviews and ethnographic research needed for my dissertation. My project looks at the role risk management practices have played in EU natural disaster and migration policymaking institutions. More specifically, I am interested in the ways that the model for combating natural disasters (through early warning systems, forecasting techniques, and monitoring centres) has become the de facto way that the EU manages its immigration policy.

I arrived in Brussels in February and was given an office at the Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis, a university in the centre of Brussels. I had previously secured affiliation there through a colleague. Using Saint-Louis as my base, I made contact with high-ranking officials from the two EU Directorates-General (DGs) I am primarily interested in: Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid, and Home Affairs. Within the first 16 days, I conducted 7 interviews with high-ranking bureaucrats from both DGs. Between interviews I was also able to write draft versions of my dissertation chapters.

In early March, I attended two workshops, one in Amsterdam and one in Mainz, Germany. The ‘Anticipate and Preempt’ COST-sponsored workshop hosted at the University of Amsterdam was focused on the study of anticipatory policymaking practices. A week later the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz hosted the ECPR Joint Sessions, where my session focused on EU Natural Disaster Policy. Both workshops were excellent networking opportunities, and provided great venues to present findings from my initial interviews.

I returned in Brussels for two more weeks, where I conducted 8 additional interviews and sat in on a working meeting between DG and Member State bureaucrats. I also presented my findings at an open seminar hosted at Saint-Louis, to which EU Commission and DG officials were invited. The presentation gave an overview of what I had learned from the interviews, as well as provided me an opportunity to confirm those findings with EU representatives.

I want to sincerely thank Joan DeBardeleben, Brigid Bedard-Hinz, and the rest of Carleton University’s Centre for European Studies for providing me with the opportunity and resources to make this research trip. What I learned in Brussels is invaluable in not only allowing me to finish my dissertation, but in providing a context and angle to my more general work that I could have only learned from spending time in Brussels.