

Narrative Report

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First, I would like to express my deepest gratitude for having been awarded the travel/research grant by the Centre for European Studies at Carleton University. This generous grant supported my research trip to London connected with my work on the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) related to my PhD topic. My dissertation is tentatively titled “Environmental Governance in the Context of Post-Communist Transition: The Role of Multilateral Development Banks and Civil Society Organizations.”

The purpose of this project is to get an understanding of theorization and practices of (global) environmental governance. More specifically this project examines the ways in which two Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) – the World Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development – have coped with and interacted with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) regarding issues of environment and participation in governance while funding development projects in post-communist transition countries. Thus a significant part of this dissertation concerns the interaction of the EBRD with civil society groups in post-communist countries, namely Georgia, Azerbaijan and Albania (the focus countries of my project), but also with some EU based civil society groups. My trip consisted of a stay in London to complete interviews at the EBRD headquarters.

During this trip I was able to interview officials at the EBRD. Most of the interviews had been planned ahead of my trip, however while I was there I was introduced to other EBRD representatives who were willing to give me interviews and have conversations about the projects under investigation in my dissertation. More specifically, I interviewed the Senior Environmental Advisor, Civil Society Advisor, two senior environmental advisors in the Environment and Sustainability Department, the Chief Compliance Officer and one project Complaint Mechanism Officer. Besides these interviews I was also introduced to and had conversations with three more bankers about the role of EBRD in the projects and countries I am focusing on. Moreover, I had the opportunity to visit the Business Information Center and was able to have three more interviews with members of a civil society that are based in London but that operate as a watchdog for the EBRD.

The experience I acquired during this research trip has been very useful in many ways. In a general sense it was important to have been introduced to and to have seen firsthand the internal dynamics of an institution like EBRD. This has helped me to get a better grasp on the institutional culture. More directly related to my project, this experience helped a great deal with comparing and contrasting EBRD to the World Bank, where I had conducted interviews prior to my London trip. Additionally, the interviews and discussions at EBRD proved essential for evaluating the situation around the projects under investigation, as well as sparking further questions which I incorporated into my second round of interviews which took place on location in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Albania this past summer. The interviews at the EBRD helped me make a stronger argument regarding the role of EBRD in assisting Georgia, Azerbaijan and Albania in their aspirations for integration/association with the European Union. During this research trip not only did I get answers to my questions and ideas for the project at hand but it also opened venues and shed light on issues to be considered for further research. I have the Center of European Studies at Carleton University to thank for all of this. None of this would have been possible without the support of the Center of European Studies at Carleton University and the European Commission. This research trip has been extremely useful and rewarding.