

Final Report: Research Stay at HUJI

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Building bridges between human rights and sustainable development
discourses

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As a master student of the Freie Universität Berlin in Germany, I was awarded a grant of the mobility program by a newly established network of partner universities in five different countries working towards an alliance and focusing on the field of “sustainability” in its comprehensive form. As my master thesis project had an international outlook, benefitting from this exchange of global discourses around sustainability was very useful during my one-month research stay.

Thanks to the 2016 thematic framework of the University Alliance for Sustainability (UAS), i.e. “Governance for Sustainable Development,” I could realize my trans-disciplinary research project for my master thesis. The short-term period of my research project needed clearly formulated goals, necessitated feasible outcomes, and a high degree of showing initiative and a goal-oriented working ethic. I could thus also benefit from an Inter-institutional learning that goes beyond faculty and disciplines and develop my project around the partner university’s location. Working primarily with and consulting law school faculty members allowed me to go beyond politico-economic and social dimensions of my thesis work and added a legal perspective to the project.

Overall, my UAS-research stay was aimed at adding an illustrative case study country for a framework I had developed at the intersection of new institutional economics and equality for minority groups. I was able to interview experts within academia, as well as in the third sector outside of university walls on the country’s politics and legal situation and link it to my research. Additionally, I designed a survey for my hard-to-reach target population within the spectrum of minority groups, and disseminated it through two different research methodologies, venue-based and network sampling, due to certain research restrictions. This survey was bilingually available in order to be more inclusive and not only target internationally or university-educated survey-takers.

When it comes to hard-to-reach populations for qualitative or quantitative research projects alike, obstacles are higher, yet one has to be also more careful when approaching people, since ideally, the research project is not only to serve the researcher, but also the community or populations surveyed or interviewed. Initially, my access to local populations was limited, yet I managed to get a hold of a many experts, people and mobilize them for my project. The survey – also thanks to the fact of it being available in more than one language – was ultimately completed by roughly 100 people of this hard-to-reach population, which does not allow for a representational analysis, yet this was not the expectation – due to the already to be expected limitations – in the first place. However, it allowed me to draw certain conclusions and parallels with other research results I had gained from different methodological approaches.

I am grateful to the UAS for having provided me with the opportunity to not only include this valuable addition into my thesis work, but also to have allowed me to experience a country and culture, I knew little about prior to my research endeavors. I found it extremely beneficial to interact with different students, faculty members, and people living there when exchanging about my project, but also beyond, on political, legal, and socio-economic developments in the region. Having been selected as a fellow to be part of and engage with the University Alliance for Sustainability constituted an honor for me and I am hence looking forward to further inter-institutional exchange opportunities through the UAS.