

“Life doesn’t always go according to plan. Sometimes heading in a new direction can be scary until you realize you’re heading toward a new and exciting destination.” *Susan Gale*

Internationalisation at Home

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I am currently doing the course “Energy and Climate Governance” at the University of St.Gallen as part of the [CBS-HSG-WU Online Course Initiative](#). The way I came across this unique opportunity was not, let’s say, straightforward. With this article I would like to reflect on my experiences and impressions gathered during the course – and show that a detour often really leads to an exciting destination.

In February 2020, I received the opportunity to do an exchange semester in Canada. Not very surprisingly, I was really looking forward to my semester abroad. However, as you might anticipate, everything developed fairly different. The current pandemic foiled my plan. After a postponement of my exchange to a later semester, it was irrevocably cancelled shortly afterwards.

The road to my longed exchange semester, my believed main road, was suddenly blocked. However, as often in life, most blocked roads come with a, more or less well-signposted, detour option. In my case it came in the form of the CBS-HSG-WU Online Course Initiative. After a successful application, I was assigned to an online course from my preference list. As energy and climate subjects fall under my topmost fields of interest, I was all the happier to be accepted for the Energy and Climate Governance course. And as if that was not enough, the university hosting this course is a highly internationally regarded school: the University of St.Gallen.

Regarding the course format, pure online lectures were nothing new to me. However, I was curious how a course could be held physically and online at the same time,

without putting either of the student groups at disadvantage. In the first lecture, it immediately turned out that the course setup was well prepared and thought through. As an online participant I have never had the feeling of lacking involvement. This is mainly because the course is taught by two lecturers – with one focusing on the students in class and the other supervising the online participants. Nevertheless, I would not deny that weird situations happen from time to time. Contributing to a class discussion from online costs some effort. The other way around, I am sure that the people in class need to get used to the circumstance that the online participants suddenly speak up.

Another enriching experience I made during my detour is linked to the way of working. During my studies I developed a certain working style which meets the requirements of my Master programme in Vienna, which of course also carries my own mark. Therefore, it was valuable for me to see that in other Master programmes, let alone at different universities, approaches to reach the same goal can be quite different – but still viable and expedient. It was an interesting experience for me to see my group members' approach to our group project. What is more, the results I delivered followed by the way of working I am used to were evaluated from a different point of view. Regarding the style of working and the approach to solve problems, this virtual exchange definitely broadened my horizon.

There is something interesting about detours, be they on the road or mentally: The longer a detour is and the greater the scenery and the experiences on this new way are, the more it falls into oblivion that this is not the originally intended way. This is very true for my exchange experience. I cannot deny that spending a semester in Canada would not have been a great experience. Nevertheless, I am more than happy that the detour in the form of the CBS-HSG-WU Online Course Initiative opened up for me. The chance to do a virtual exchange at such a prestigious school like University of St.Gallen, in one of my major fields of interest, and with such engaged lecturers and peers is a huge pleasure. I am all the happier that I realized that I have been “heading towards a new and exciting direction” with my virtual exchange at the University of St.Gallen – on my new main road.