

# Taking time to think

A Perspective by Visiting Scholar Anna Holzscheiter, John F. Kennedy Memorial Fellow

---

*Anna Holzscheiter is one of three recipients of the CES John F. Kennedy Memorial Fellows this year. A Junior Professor of International Relations at the Freie Universität Berlin, Holzscheiter's research focuses on global health governance. Holzscheiter shared her experiences as a CES Visiting Scholar.*

## **CES: Why did you choose to apply for the John F. Kennedy Fellowship?**

AH: Upon completing my post-doctoral studies, I realized that in the field of global public health it is essential to spend time in the United States. I was at a junction in my career and I thought it would be a good time to spend a year abroad. The John F. Kennedy Memorial fellowship is one of the most prestigious fellowships for German social science scholars. So, I thought I'd give it a try. It was a lot of work and the application demanded a serious commitment. You had to put a lot of effort into it. The day I received my acceptance letter I just thought this is like winning the lottery.

## **CES: As a European scholar, why did you choose to come to our Center at Harvard?**

AH: I had two main motivations for coming here. First, I wanted to experience the U.S. academic system even though I realize that being at Harvard is exceptional and in many ways an academic's paradise. Second, as for my research, I was curious to see how approaches to international health politics are influenced by different ideologies and philosophies regarding public health. Although international health politics it is completely detached from the national health landscape, a country's international approach to these issues is influenced by domestic ideologies on public health. I wanted to learn more about the American approach not only from an academic perspective but by experiencing it myself.

## **CES: The American Council on Germany (ACG) invited you to talk at two U.S. chapters. Could you describe your experience?**

I did not what to expect from the trip, and it was very enrich-



ing. My first stay was in Leesburgh, VA where I gave a talk at the Marshall House, where General George C. Marshall spent his retirement. The focus of my talk was an overview of the complex landscape of global health. I described the historical evolution of this field and why we have ended up with this incredibly complex landscape of different agencies and programs systems and explained what kind of problems this creates in trying to effectively contain a virus like Ebola, for example. The response to my talk was very positive.

In Pittsburgh, PA I gave a lunch presentation to members of the local ACG chapter. I had a chance to discuss global health issues with European scholars, epidemiologists and international relations experts and heard their perspectives. The atmosphere was very warm and welcoming. As a result of this trip, I have started to collaborate with several scholars. It was an unexpectedly rewarding trip.

**CES: How has this fellowship advanced your academic career?**

AH: In the first place, winning this year was like winning the lottery because I won a year to have time to do research which I often do not have at home. By having the time to be here, to be in these incredible libraries and just thinking again without the need to immediately put something down on paper, I made a big leap in my research. It was just a luxury to indulge in doing research without the hectic pace of everyday teaching.

Talking to people, meeting people was enriching too. I not

**I made a big leap in my research.  
It was just a luxury to indulge in  
doing research without the hectic  
pace of everyday teaching.**

..... Anna Holzscheiter

only met with a lot of people within Harvard, such as at the School of Public Health but also at other universities in the Boston area who do work on my PhD topic of child protection issues. I always felt there was an incredible openness to ideas. People provided constructive feedback and were enthusiastic about what they do and what others do.

I also learned a lot from CES' weekly Visiting Scholars seminars because the topics that were presented came from a wide variety of disciplines, such as sociology, economics, history. So even if I had no prior knowledge of the topics, I got a lot out of them.

**CES: Did you know about CES before you applied?**

AH: Yes, my former boss Thomas Risse and his wife had come to CES in 2007. I also knew other Kennedy fellows who had come to CES in the past.

**CES: What will you be doing next?**

AH: It's pretty exciting. Upon my return to Germany, I will start as a junior professor at the Freie Universität Berlin. I am certain that this fellowship at CES helped me get this position. What makes this position even more exciting is

that it comes with a chance to head a research group that is funded for three years. The research will assess governance architectures in global health in order to come up with a better framework to manage global health issues more effectively. I have already started to lead the group from here but when I get back this will be my main focus.

**CES: What will you take back from your experience?**

AH: I think that anybody who would ask me if they should apply for this, I would strongly encourage. Even though CES has a lot of activities between its events, workshops and seminar but at the same time, CES is a quiet place for research. For me, this was probably the best feature of CES. Many people come here precisely because they want to take a break from what they usually do from their hectic work. So to me it felt a bit like a monastery, meaning that you really had time to think.

I also met a lot of people here who I will stay in touch with, including this year's group of Visiting Scholars and my other two Kennedy Fellow colleagues, Sascha Münnich and Philipp Müller.

**CES: How would you summarize your time here?**

AH: A most enriching year in every way: academically, personally and culturally.



Stella Gervas and Thomas Weber will be returning to their home institutions in France and the United Kingdom respectively after spending two years as Visiting Scholars at CES.