INTERNSHIP FINAL REPORT

UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN

MASTER’S DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (SPECIALIZATION COURSE: GLOBAL GOVERNANCE)

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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

For almost five months, from 28 February 2017 to 21 July 2017, I did an internship at the Spanish non-governmental organization “Paz y Cooperación”, located in Madrid. Such internship is a part of my master’s degree program in International Relations (with Global Governance as specialization course) that I started last February 2016 at the University of Groningen (RUG).

“Paz y Cooperación” was founded by Joaquin Antuña in 1982 and consolidated as Foundation in 1998. Its primary objective was, and still is, to spread and promote a culture of peace, non-violence and collaboration between nations and people all over the world, emphasizing the great role of creativity.

During these almost five months I carried various activities that ranged from writing articles or reports related to the conferences and lectures I assisted, performing administrative tasks at the Office, translating articles from Spanish to English and vice-versa, organizing and monitoring the 2017 Paz y Cooperación School Campaign, named “Looking at the stars. The future of the world”.

My internship at “Paz y Cooperación” was overall a very positive and enriching experience, although not effortless.

1.1 Placement preparation and its rationale

While looking for an institution, association or organization in which I could have done my internship, I approached to “Paz y Cooperación” after an internet-based research related to the plausible organizations that could have married my internship criteria. After a brief mutual presentation, the entire placement was set through diverse e-mail exchanges: through such contacts, once the Ngo’s availability to offer me an internship was confirmed, the placement was organized in detail. In particular, it was established its total duration (almost five months consisting of 25 working hours per week), it was filled out my Placement Plan with an overview of the activities that I would have carried out, it was settled the monthly reimbursement of the means of transportation subscription as financial compensation.

Among other international organizations and non-governmental organizations available to offer me the possibility to do an internship, I convincingly chose “Paz y Cooperación” for different reasons. Firstly, I strongly shared, and still do, the principles it aims at divulging that are peace and collaborations among States and people with the objective of constructing a new culture and world based on the respect of human rights, non-violence, solidarity and education. Secondly, I was very
curious about the working environment that the Ngo presented me during the first contacts: I would have worked in a multicultural context, with people coming from different backgrounds and with different experiences. This was a further element that encouraged me to choose such Ngo, given the extremely positive experience with not Italian students I already had during my studies in Groningen. Thirdly, the dynamicity of the internship and the wide variety of activities (performed not only at the Office) strengthened my willingness to prove myself in this first job experience.

1.2 Prior expectations

Before starting my internship, I had various and very positive expectations that have been mostly satisfied at the end of it. First, I would have worked in a Spanish non-governmental organization and Spanish itself would have been my working language most of the time. As I already had been studying this foreign language for five months, the greater expectation consisted of the possibility to improve its knowledge and proficiency by practicing it every day, progressively enhancing my communication skills.

Second, I imagined that my working environment would have been quite dynamic and multicultural, being the organization itself available to accept students from all over the world and give them the opportunity to do an internship. I expected to establish and develop strong interpersonal and working relationships with my colleagues in order to create a stress-free atmosphere in which we could have worked. This way there would have been the possibility to ameliorate both my interpersonal and team work skills. What I had in mind was the great opportunity to get in touch with people coming from different contexts and background, to know their past personal and working experiences in order to create a solid group that would have been one of my reference points during the whole placement.

Third, speaking from a more practical perspective, I assumed the internship to be an experience that would have broaden my horizons, better understanding the social, cultural and political issues that actually appear more relevant than others. Particularly, what I expected was the possibility to conduct a sort of exploration of my future career and to obtain information about job opportunities available in my field, becoming familiar with the international and non-governmental organizations’ world. Moreover, I presumed the placement to be an extremely helpful learning process through which I could have gained practical knowledge about the organization’s functioning, hiring processes, mission, collaboration with other national and international bodies and, at the same time, got practical experience to get hired in the field of my interest. Working within a non-governmental
organization would have helped me to test me in a completely new, international, environment in which carrying out new tasks, developing problem solving (in particularly critic situations) and analytical skills as well as ameliorating either my organizational skills or my capacity for initiative and adaptability.

1.3 Report outline

The report is organized as follows:

The first chapter, the introduction, provides very general information about the internship: it presents the duration, the non-governmental organization in which it was carried out and its mission, the activities conducted for almost five months. It then displays how the whole placement was arranged and organized as well as the rational at its base. Moreover it introduces the prior expectations the student had before starting the placement.

The second chapter briefly delineates the non-governmental organization’s profile, presenting its history, mission, objectives and commitment to the Spanish and international civil society.

The third chapter details the activities and tasks performed during the internship: administrative tasks, items and translation, attendance of acts and conferences, elaboration of reports and articles, monitoring of the 2017 Paz y Cooperación School Campaign. In particular, it delineates how such activities were carried out, describing the interns’ working conditions.

The fourth chapter represents the core of the entire report as it focuses on the self - evaluation of and personal reflections about the internship intended as learning experience. The student evaluates to what extent her prior expectations were satisfied at the end and how enriching these almost five months were to her education, knowledge and practical experience. Particularly, the chapter constitutes an observation of the internship itself from a personal point of view, considering the gained or ameliorated experience, skills and qualifications, the undertaken responsibilities, the correlation between the internship and the theoretical knowledge accumulated during the previous studies and the contribution the internship has given to future career plans and prospects.
Chapter 2. ORGANIZATION’S PROFILE

2.1 Fundación Paz y Cooperación

“Paz y Cooperación” is a non-governmental organization founded by Joaquin Antuña (its President) in 1982. Since its beginnings the activity of this NGO, consolidated as a Foundation in 1998, has been focusing on the promotion of different values: among them, non-violence and creativity to build a world of solidarity. With its motto “Believe and Survive” and renouncing the option of violence, it has been working in a new direction acting in favor of disarmament, sustainable development, respect of human rights, solidarity, worldwide education and peace.

“Paz y Cooperación” is associated with the Spanish Confederation of Foundations, the NGO Coordinator for Development, the coalition of Ngos that enjoy UN Special Status (CONGO), the International Peace Bureau (IPB), the Assembly of the Millennium Peoples, UNITED (against racism) and the UNESCO Securipax Forum.

Since 1996, it has been in close contact with Airline Ambassadors, an American Ngo also active collaborator of the School Campaigns that “Paz y Cooperación” yearly launches.

The work and effort of this Foundation have been recognized by the United Nations, which conferred it the “Messenger of Peace” status in 1987. Since 1994 “Paz y Cooperación” has also been associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information that in 1999 granted it the Special Consultative Status of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

“Paz y Cooperación” is a founding member of the Federation of Defense and Promotion of Human Rights of Spain (1993). It has participated in meetings of the Organization for European Co-operation and Security (OSCE) concerning the human dimension. It collaborates actively with the Office of Human Rights of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain. In addition, it continuously offers its support for the religious rights of minorities.

On April 21, 2007, “Paz y Cooperación” received the prestigious “Paz y Cooperación 2006” award.

The motivations for granting the award were: “it is a non-governmental organization that primarily aims at promoting a movement of non-violence using creativity as a priceless resource to build a world of solidarity. Its work, developed in a quarter of century, has addressed fundamental issues related to the building of a peaceful planet.”
2.2 Its international dimension

For 25 years, “Paz y Cooperación” has been dedicated to the indefatigable defense of the promotion of universal education directed to the most vulnerable sectors, promoting the development of local and national agricultural economies, encouraging the local production and business networks, improving health and medical services (including the fight against malaria, AIDS and other pandemics). With the same commitment, it has supported the marginalized populations in their access to adequate housing, promoting gender equality, carrying out food security projects. Its world-renowned initiative of the School Campaign distinguishes students, teachers and schools that work for the ideals of peace, multicultural relations and diversity.

“Paz y Cooperación” has actively worked in Africa, the Middle East, Central America and the indigenous communities of Mexico. In Africa, it has acted to promote the productive sector and infrastructures that facilitate macro projects of agricultural development. For example, in Mauritania it has worked to rehabilitate agricultural fields for rice production as well as built a maternal and child hospital. It also has community projects for women in South Africa and children in Equatorial Guinea. In Colombia, South America, women are educated in basic training whereas in Mexico health and environmental sustainability are pursued. In Nicaragua, Paz y Cooperación still promotes the training of peasants while promoting the balance between population and the environment. Among the Middle East projects where it has been working since the 1990s, especially in Jordan and Palestine, attention has been drawn to children and the general population suffering from disabilities and special needs in the Bethlehem area.
Chapter 3. INTERNSHIP ACTIVITIES

The placement was based on a variety of different activities, delineated and organized on a daily basis and personally evaluated by my placement supervisor. Each morning we used to reunite with our supervisor Mrs. Milagros Gonzalez and the Ngo’s President Joaquin Antuña to establish and define the activities that we would have to carry out, either at the Ngo headquarter or elsewhere.

3.1 Administrative tasks

The administrative and office support tasks carried out at the Ngo headquarter mostly consisted of researching data, updating the Ngo’s Facebook and Twitter pages, contacting other Ngos, organizations, embassies, which might have been available for future collaborations and projects in the forthcoming years. In detail, I used to respond to the invitations for public events and conferences that the Ngo daily received on its official e-mail address; when launching the Ngo School Campaigns in cooperation with other international subjects, I used to research the needed e-mail addresses of other Spanish or international Institutions or Organizations or Embassies in order to contact and propose them new projects; I also created and sent event invitations concerned with the Ngo itself. Furthermore, I used to answer calls and direct inquiries to the appropriate staff member, I made copies, collated documents and prepared shipments and mailings (mostly related to the School Campaign).

3.2 Items translation

The activities included items translation as well. In particular the translations I did were from English to Spanish and vice-versa. I translated official documents and invitations that other Spanish or international organizations or Embassies used to send to the Ngo and concerned with the future projects they decided to carry out together. Moreover, I translated the articles that the Ngo’s Founder and President Mr. Antuña used to write and publish on Galicia Digital (an online platform) every week. From time to time, I also translated official invitations addressed to relevant Italian personalities working within the Organization taken into account and related to the public events that the Ngo’s entire staff organized.
3.3 Attendance of acts and conferences

What really contributed to make the internship’s timetable more dynamic was the attendance of public events, lectures, conferences and acts held in different places. Me and the other interns were always informed about the acts that might have been interesting to us and were always encouraged to attend them. Most of the acts and conferences I attended were held at Casa de América, which is a Spanish committee created by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Municipality of Madrid in 1990; at the Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos de Madrid were given other lectures as well as at Casa Arabe e Instituto Internacional de Estudios Árabes y del Mundo Musulmán. The Instituto Cervantes de Madrid, in addition to the Palacio de Cibeles (headquarter of the municipality of Madrid) and the Casa Encendida, which is a social and cultural centre belonging to the Montemadrid Foundation, hosted other conferences.

Such acts and lectures concerned current international issues, of general interest. Some of them were related to: the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Objectives, the international terrorism together with the radicalization process that the youngest generations are undertaking, the freedom of conscience and expression, the feminicides and the struggle against juridical and social impunity, the 2017 Human Development Agenda, the French presidential elections, new proposals for the prevention and sanction of genocide, Donald Trump and the role the United States of America play on the international scene, the women within the European Union and their leadership, the current humanitarian challenges.

Other acts consisted of book presentations: for instance, the Ngo’s President Joaquín Antuña presented his book “Bold Chronicles” during a conference that took place last April whereas others were directly held at the open air: to make an example, the celebrations of the International Day of Nelson Mandela or the International Day of the European Union were held within public squares.

To conclude, we were also invited to the Palestinian Embassy to discuss with the Ambassador in person about the Israeli occupation.

3.4 Reports and articles elaboration

Most of the times, my supervisor asked me to write reports or articles concerning the events and acts I previously attended. Once I took notes about the issue, the participants and the timetable, I wrote reports in Spanish. I wrote such reports following a particular scheme, applied to all of them. I used to firstly describe the places in which the act took place, then to make a list of the most
relevant personalities involved into the discussion, specifying their occupation, role and importance related to the issue. In addition, I used to describe how did the act take place and what did the discussion consist of (specifying whether it was developed through single slide presentation, mesas redondas corresponding to open and interactive debates, single interventions, audience involvements and collective discussions). Once done this introduction, I used to focus on the subject of the act itself, presenting the problem and motivating why was it so relevant to the extent that it required the organization of a specific conference.

When the acts consisted of simple exchanges of opinions and points of view, I highlighted the contrasting views organizing them in a coherent manner, which contributed to provide a complete overview of the question taken into consideration. The articles about the acts that took place within public spaces included also brief descriptions of the surrounding environment.

All the articles and reports were enriched with two or three pictures I took during the acts and were all published on Galicia Digital.

### 3.5 Monitoring of the 2017 Paz y Cooperación School Campaign

The 2017 Paz y Cooperación School Campaign entitled “Looking at the stars. The future of the world” was realized in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA). It was based on the space exploration as general question and, as the other School Campaigns the Ngo uses to promote, it aimed at stimulating the students’ creativity about that, expressed through drawings, paintings, artworks and free compositions depending on their age.

Ever since that Campaign was launched, the role I played was really active. With my colleagues, I participated at the one-week Education Fair organized in Madrid the last week of February. “Paz y Cooperación” was included among the Ngos that could have taken part the entire week to present their future projects and to offer students and teachers educational opportunities. As intern, I had the possibility to present the School Campaign, explaining the objectives and providing general information (deadline, modalities of participation). From February to July we kept receiving artworks sent by worldwide schools and institutes that were previously informed and encouraged to participate as well as contacting other countries, through their Embassies in Madrid, to increase the number of participants. Once received the artworks, by e-mail or post, I classified them with a number and all the relative received information such as country of origin, the name of the school/institute, the student’s name and age. After the Campaign deadline (05 July 2017), I finally calculated the total amount of works as well as the total of the participating countries. Based on
that, I elaborated a table with all the data and it will be used by the International Jury next September, when decreeing the winners.

Chapter 4. PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

As already said, the internship was an enriching experience. Most of my prior expectations were satisfied, although some difficulties I had to deal with during the first weeks. Living in Madrid really helped me and facilitated the social inclusion process I undertook once arrived and, in hindsight, I may say that such placement significantly contributed to increase my personal practical experience, to further clarify my future plans and objectives.

4.1 Living in Madrid

Living in Madrid was the best complementing experience I could have asked for during my placement. Madrid, although holdings on traditional Spanish values, is international with millions of people coming from all over the world and perfectly integrated into the society. I was immersed into a multicultural context that was obviously quite different from the one in which I was born and grew up. I was positively impressed by the way the city is administered: the public transportation system is incredibly efficient, public urban and green spaces are kept clean. Spanish people are also really kind and friendly: every time I needed any information or help (especially during the first times, when I did not know the city very well yet), they demonstrated to be really open and available. I shared my apartment with its owner, a 50-year-old woman from the Dominican Republic, who always gave me useful advices.

The costs of living are quite affordable, in general. They depend on many factors, above all the urban area where you choose to live. To make a personal idea, I compared them to the Italian ones which I was accustomed to and they are pretty much the same.

4.2 Self - evaluation and placement contribution

The placement was an intense life experience that, through a profound learning process, paved the way to new ways of thinking and future prospects.
First of all, working using the Spanish idiom was not difficult to me at all: studying it for five months before starting the internship helped me become familiar with such language and due to my predisposition towards it, once immersed in the context, I felt like speaking it fluently.

The difficulties I had to face during the first weeks of the placement consisted of understanding the environment in which I was supposed to work: how the Ngo was organized, how relevant was the interns’ role, which functions the other staff members had. Once understood and become confident with the other interns as well as my supervisor and the Ngo’s President, it was a little bit challenging to understand the way in which I would have had to work in order to meet and satisfy my supervisor’s expectations and requests. I did an effort to comprehend her working methods, the way she used to approach and interact with interns. From a more practical point of view, it was also hard to apprehend how to carry out the single activities: to make some examples, I rarely wrote articles and reports related to acts and conferences before that and I had to figure the most appropriate structure out; likewise, as I never got in touch with relevant personalities such as Ambassadors or Presidents of other Ngos or international organizations, I had to learn to directly and indirectly relate to them in a formal manner. With the help of my supervisor and the other interns that already worked there, I successfully overcame these initial difficulties: what did really help me was the fact that my placement supervisor always helped and oriented me to the internship, provided adequate supervision and assigned career-related duties, made available to me equipment and space necessary to perform the activities. She continuously appreciated my work, encouraged me to keep working in the way I used to and gratified me.

Apart from such parenthesis, I lived and worked within a multicultural environment, either inside or outside the Office. I had the opportunity to make connections with a lot of people and each one of them enriched me with personal and professional experiences, widening my horizons.

The placement contributed from various perspectives: concerning the single activities I acquired specific skills: for instance, I learnt to reflect on the articles and reports writing process and their content before completing their final version; or, when updating the social media pages, I apprehended to carefully consider the material before publishing it and to use reliable sources when looking for clarifications on the Internet. I also acquired the ability to appropriately use the technological devices and specific programs. When launching and spreading the School Campaign, I gained analytical capacity to develop captivating ideas and options.

As far as the working environment is concerned I acquired professional skills developing self-understanding, self-discipline, maturity and confidence and building as well as maintaining positive professional relationships. The placement helped me become more responsible: treating it as a serious professional opportunity led me to ask whenever I needed information, to be always
punctual and reliable, to dress appropriately, to update my supervisor at the University about the placement progress.

Considering then the interconnection between the placement and my previous studies and academic knowledge, it appeared clear to me. Studying and being involved into the international relations entail positive diplomatic relations between people and countries as well as knowing and becoming part of the social and cultural lives of communities. During the internship, such aspects to which I was prepared during the academic studies appeared realized and confirmed, from a practical viewpoint. I was continuously in contact with Ambassadors, Professors and relevant personalities to spread the School Campaign all over the world and to encourage them to collaborate with the Ngo for future projects and the global interconnection which a student of international relations aims at was highly perceivable. Clearly, receiving artworks and pictures from the American, Asian and African continents increased the expected inclusion and contributed to extent the positive influence and role that the Ngo wants to spread through the Campaign itself and to enhance the international context in which I worked.

4.3 Career orientation and future prospects

Taking my future career plans into account, the internship played a significant role in helping me understand in which sector I would like to work in the future. Surely, it confirmed my interest in working in an international and open environment, with the possibility to create networks, to meet people of diverse nationalities and from different social and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, it was really helpful to comprehend the practical difference between the international organizations and the non-governmental ones, together with the contexts in which they operate, the projects they promote, the objectives they pursue. To me, after the placement, it was easy to envisage my future occupation and the way I would like to work: working in a non-governmental organization, as I did, would be really stimulating and satisfying as I really appreciated the efforts that Paz y Cooperación to promote non-profit-making projects and School Campaigns, with the only objective of engaging the worldwide schools and children into a new society and way of thinking, based on the core principles of the United Nations. The non-profit-making element was the one that captivated my attention and that I would like to keep applying in my future career, as it symbolizes the complete willingness and availability you, your colleagues and the organization as a whole offer to change the world.
Obviously, the role played by the international organization cannot be underestimated: they offer a solid support in terms of collaboration, spreading of ideas and projects, and most of the times their position is useful to reach the established goals.

Clarified that, working in the same area of the Ngo in which I did my internship would be interesting. However, it is not the only one that captivates my attention, nowadays. I am really interested in the global issue concerned with the humanitarian and the consequent refugee crisis that the world is currently witnessing. So, I consider that as a priority. But, given the projects promoted by Paz y Cooperación that were concerned with this theme in the past, playing an active role in promoting awareness campaigns in such non-governmental organizations may be an option.

Chapter 5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion and recommendations

My almost five-month internship at Paz y Cooperación, which is a non-governmental organization located in Madrid, was an overall positive and enriching experience.

Although some initial difficulties I had to deal with at the beginning, during the entire placement I built really positive interpersonal and working relationships with my colleagues and my placement supervisor, who continuously appreciated the way in which I used to work. The placement was dynamic: I carried out a lot of different activities that stimulated my creativity and led me to develop new responsibilities and skills. It also contributed to my future prospects, by letting my understand that working in a non-governmental organization that promotes non-profit-making projects concerned with issues of global interest would be interesting.

I lived in a such positive environment also thanks to the city of Madrid that, although different from it, I almost perceived as my hometown.

Whether I had to recommend an internship at Paz y Cooperación, I would give some possible tips and advices to the students that consider this possibility: in order to do a satisfying placement, it is important not to get discouraged during the first weeks and, more important, to get acquainted with the working environment and familiarize with all the people working there as soon as possible. In particular, it is important to understand the way the placement supervisor likes to work, in order to satisfy and meet her requests, avoiding misunderstandings. The working and social relationships with the other colleagues or interns that will be built in the future, will contribute to make the working atmosphere a pleasant and enjoyable one.