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6th Global Diplomacy Lab in Buenos Aires, Argentina

By David Patrician

This past June I had the honor to represent the Fulbright Commission in Berlin and attend the 6th Global Diplomacy Lab (GDL) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The GDL was established back in 2014 by the German Federal Foreign Ministry, which is also a key contributor to the Fulbright program, with the goal of shaping a new kind of diplomacy for the future. Diplomacy is no longer limited to national governments and international organizations. This calls for a new way of communicating and bringing together creative and influential actors to discuss the challenges facing our world today. Supported by the German Federal Foreign Ministry, and in partnership with the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt, the Global Leadership Academy of the GIZ, the Stiftung Mercator and the international alumni center of the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the GDL strives to bring together participants from all continents to discuss a variety of issues facing us in the 21st century. Having participated in the Fulbright Young Journalist program here in Germany more than 10 years ago, it was a great chance to represent Fulbright as an alumnus and collaborator and learn more about this relatively new program.

In the past, GDL Labs have dealt with complex issues such as balancing power through information technology or designing migration policies for the future. This Lab (June 18 – 21, 2017), the first ever in South America, dealt with interweaving regional capacities for mass atrocity prevention at the local level. A group of over 30 diplomats, academics, journalists, activists, entrepreneurs and artists gathered to discuss the difficult issue of mass atrocities in the world and various ways of preventing these crimes in the 21st century. Our group visited the ESMA memorial site in Buenos Aires (originally an education facility for the Argentinian Navy) where almost 5,000 people were abducted, tortured and killed between 1976-1983. We learned about the 30,000 Argentinians that disappeared during the dictatorship period and visited Remembrance Park, a memorial to the victims of the National Reorganization Process, a period of unprecedented state-sponsored violence in Argentina. In addition, we were able to have group discussions with representatives from the Latin American Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention, the African Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention and the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation. The discussions were passionate and left us with many new ideas and impressions.



David with some GDL Members from Africa

The Global Diplomacy Lab has around 150 members from over 60 countries. It is a member driven organization, and meeting members from around the world was certainly one of the highlights of attending my first Global Diplomacy Lab in Buenos Aires. Making friends from Cameroon and Pakistan, discussing current affairs with South Africans and sharing a beer with new friends from Serbia were also some personal GDL highlights. The Lab provided opportunities for informal cross-sectoral and cross-regional peer to peer knowledge and skill sharing. It also speaks to the core of the GDL: having a mindset of mutual respect and openness. The Global Diplomacy Lab strives to identify experimental approaches focusing on cross-sectoral knowledge exchange and on the drawing of a common language.

Beside the Labs, the Global Diplomacy Lab members and partners initiate, implement and participate in GDL activities all over the world. One example was back in 2016 at the HABITAT in Quito (Ecuador), where a Turkish GDL member organized the event "Cities – Combating Urban Poverty". Another was recently this past June, when several GDL members spoke about "Managing Diversity in a Time of Turmoil" at the Global Media Forum in Bonn, Germany. Both are examples of synergy, collaboration and finally reaching out for the goal of change.

It was a great honor to participate in the 6th Global Diplomacy Lab in Buenos Aires and I wanted to thank the Berlin Fulbright Commission for their support and a generous travel grant. The GDL mission resembles the philosophy of the global Fulbright program and I encourage Fulbright Fellows become more involved in this exciting and dynamic new project. If you would like to learn more about the GDL, take a look at www.global-diplomacy-lab.org > . Plans have already started for the 7th Global Diplomacy Impact Lab, taking place this upcoming November in Berlin.

David Patrician is a freelance journalist and event moderator based in Hamburg, Germany. Prior to that, he hosted a weekly show, in German, for Delta Radio. In addition, he has filed stories for the WDR, Radio Bremen, Voice of America, Deutsche Welle and Newsweek (including being embedded with the German Bundeswehr in Afghanistan). He worked for the Voice of America, Washington DC, for several years and filed stories for both the English and Korean language services. David graduated from the University of Maryland with a double degree in Government & Politics and German Language & Literature. He is currently the Fulbright alumni coordinator for the Hamburg regional chapter.

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