

Research focus on sustainability

PhD student Claire Doll from Perth, Australia, is conducting research on the topic of Economic Environmental Assessment at the HWR Berlin as part of the BMBF's Green Talents programme.

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The BMBF, through the Green Talents programme, offers opportunities to early-career researchers interested in sustainability. One of them is Claire Doll who will stay in Germany for 3 months as a Green Talents awardee. Having arrived at the HWR Berlin at the end of June, she gave us an interview on her research topic and her first impressions on Berlin.

Why did you choose the HWR Berlin for research?

The HWR Berlin was my first choice for my Green Talents research stay. When I was informed I was selected as a 2021 Green Talent, I knew I wanted to work with Dr. Jürgen Meyerhoff because of his experiences conducting research on urban biodiversity, and his expertise in survey work, which is a core component of my PhD research. I reached out to him over email, and he agreed to my request for research mentorship as part of my visit to Germany. At that time (in early 2022), he was in the process of transitioning to the HWR Berlin with Prof. Dr. Tobias Börger's research group. I feel fortunate that this transition aligned with the timeline of my research stay, as it means I get to learn from and build relationships with not one, but two esteemed environmental economists during my time at the HWR Berlin.

Economic environmental assessment is your research topic. Can you explain to us what is it all about?

My research looks at two aspects of sustainability within urban parks and other public open spaces: water use and biodiversity. As an environmental economist, I use survey tools to better understand public preferences for different landscape designs and to estimate values associated with environmental changes. These values can be helpful when comparing different environmental policy alternatives.

Looking at your hometown Perth and Berlin: Which difference strikes you at first glance - and what (maybe unexpected) similarity do you see?

"Hometown" is actually not that straightforward for me! There are a few different places I consider home. I grew up on the west coast of Canada in Vancouver, British Columbia. I then spent ten years in Edmonton, Alberta where I completed my undergraduate and masters degrees, and had my first professional jobs. Perth, Western Australia is where I am pursuing my PhD and has been home for about three years. Maybe Berlin will be home, too, someday.

It is an interesting time for me to compare Perth to Berlin. Perth is where I experienced the first two years of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was a very fortunate place to be during this time, because State border closures meant that we were largely shielded from any cases for the majority of this time. But these border closures also mean that I haven't experienced a larger city like Berlin in a long time. The most striking difference, at first glance, is the high density and faster pace of day-to-day life

in Berlin. Regarding similarities, so far I have had nothing but pleasant interactions with the people I have met in Berlin. Perth and Berlin have similarly been very welcoming to Canadians!