



After studying several years in Enschede, I decided that it was high time for a change. Therefore, I left our tiny flat country in order to finish my studies at the opposite place of Enschede on the Earth: Wellington. My adventure of studying in New Zealand in the first half of 2012 definitely turned out to be an unique experience in many aspects. Kiwi English is a bit different than the English we are used to and they drive on the left side of the road. Still, it's a breeze to adapt to the easy-going, friendly kiwi attitude to life and the beautiful nature. Before you know it, you are marking the rugby finals in your calendar and you may wish that writing a master thesis takes a full year instead of only six months.

My plans for writing my master thesis in New Zealand started somewhere in 2011. By asking around at the BIT department for interesting thesis projects, I came into contact with Elfi Furtmüller. She was working on some highly interesting papers together with a very friendly colleague from the Victoria University in Wellington, Mary Tate. Doing research in New Zealand sounded like a once in a lifetime opportunity. The University of Wellington is located right across New Zealand's parliament building, called the "beehive", because of its extraordinary shape. In combination with the very open government culture and the approachable nature of people in New Zealand in general, this turned out to be a perfect location to study the concept of shared services in public organizations. The flexibility and freedom of defining my own master thesis project proved to be one of the biggest challenges for me. I spent quite some time on defining the exact research questions and the scope of my project after arriving

in Wellington. For a flying start in a foreign country, I would recommend students to formulate the research questions before they leave the Netherlands. However, with the help of my two supervisors, I could develop research questions and a research plan within the first month after arrival. It also turned out that my UT supervisor, Elfi, visited Victoria University



in the same period that I was doing my research in Wellington. This made it of course much easier to talk about my progress and discuss the various choices that had to be made in the research cycle. Having your supervisors close by is quite unique in a research project abroad, so be prepared to work a lot with e-mail and video conferencing when you write your thesis in a foreign country.

To study the motives for introducing shared services in public organizations, my master thesis topic, I conducted interviews with experts. This turned out to be a very pleasant and diverse phase of doing research. In my experience, Kiwi's are very friendly and open. I could call up or e-mail anyone in an organization and people responded very enthusiastic and positive. Most people were willing to share their opinions and experiences with me. The difficulty of my project lay more in finding the right experts than getting enough people to participate. Back in the Netherlands, I also conducted interviews with experts in Dutch government to compare the results from the two countries which yielded interesting insights for me and for my field of research.

The ease of getting into contact with Kiwi's and taking care of administrative issues turned out to be a very easy affair. At the university, I was welcomed with open arms by Mary and her colleagues. They arranged a room for me, I could also attend courses and lectures and everybody was willing to give advice or share ideas that could be helpful to my project.

Also in daily life, it was not difficult to integrate into the culture of New Zealand. The first three weeks in New Zealand, I traveled around the south island together with my girlfriend. As public transport outside of the big cities is quite limited, we bought an old car which we sold in the end. We



didn't have a New Zealand address yet, but putting the car on our name, taking care of insurance and paying road taxes was all arranged within half an hour at a nearby post office. Before we knew it, we took off in our right-hand drive car. After our travel, we

settled in a nice house with 8 flat mates. Finding a house was also easy and I quickly felt at home. As Wellington has more bars and clubs per 1000 inhabitants than New York City, there was never a dull moment. Although the south island already surprised us with spectacular nature sceneries, with rainforest, glaciers and wonderful beaches, there was also plenty of nature to enjoy just outside the city center of Wellington. For family and friends back home, we tried to write weekly on our blog: <http://jessiarninz.tumblr.com/>. This blog gives you a nice impression about the many things to do and see in New Zealand.

After leaving New Zealand with a heavy heart, I finalized my thesis in the Netherlands and presented my findings during my final symposium to my

supervisors, family and friends. Currently, I work on a publication for a scientific journal and I will also present my thesis on two international congresses in the Netherlands and in Turkey.

Working and living in a foreign country makes you experience the culture and people much more intense than only traveling around for shorter period. Studying or writing your master thesis abroad might require a bit more effort and planning, but it is definitely worth it. All in all, I had a wonderful experience and I am very grateful for the opportunity that Elfi and Mary offered me to write my master thesis in the land of the long white cloud, or Aotearoa as the Māori say.