

## Global Networking: The Australian Experience

By Elizabeth Steyn, Doctoral student



From June 16-27, 2014, I had the immense privilege of participating in the ATLAS Agora, a doctoral conference held in Melbourne, Australia. The Law Faculty of the Université de Montréal is a member of the Association of Transnational Law Schools (ATLAS), along with University of Melbourne (Victoria, Australia); Osgoode Hall Law School of York University (Toronto, Canada); Bar-Ilan University (Ramat-Gan, Israel); Queen Mary University of London (London, United Kingdom); National University of Singapore (Singapore); and, Bucerius Law School (Hamburg, Germany).

Every summer, a doctoral seminar is held by one of these institutions on the theme, “Law, Change and Regulatory Challenges in the Contemporary World”. Doctoral students enrolled at the Université de Montréal’s Faculty of Law are encouraged to participate, provided that they are able to express themselves well in both written and spoken English. The program is overseen by Professor Jean-François Gaudreault-DesBiens, Associate Dean, Research and Communications.

This year, a total of 23 doctoral students from seven law faculties spread over four continents participated in ATLAS. Université de Montréal was represented by four students, whose presence was made possible by a bursary jointly offered by the Faculty of Law and the *Direction des relations internationales* of Université de Montréal. We were accompanied by Professor Martine Valois. In 2015, it will be Université de Montréal’s turn to welcome ATLAS members.

As Melbourne is situated in the Southern hemisphere, we arrived there amidst a winter where everything was deep green and the temperature hovered around fifteen degrees. We discovered a modern and lively

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city, whose inhabitants have mastered the art of living well. There was plenty to discover and we enjoyed exploring the museums and spending time at the various tourist attractions. Our program also included a visit to an ancient prison, to the High Court, a dinner at Hutong Dumpling Bar in China Town and the screening of a film on prostitution, followed by a lively discussion.

The conference consisted of structured seminars, reading and writing workshops, as well as social activities. It provided us with an excellent opportunity to go deeper into our methodology and our doctoral thinking. Participants working in the domain of public international law could appreciate seminars on “Tax, Development and Globalisation”, “Researching International Economic Law” and “Researching Public Law: Methods in Comparative, Constitutional and Administrative Law”. Private law adherents particularly valued the seminar on “Private Law in a Global Age”.

As we were a small group and it was a fairly intensive period, we also had the opportunity to get to know one another better – establishing the beginnings of a scientific network that will benefit us for many years to come. Consequently, we created a Facebook page to reinforce the bonds created during our two weeks together and to maintain contact with our colleagues. Thanks to the social media platform, we are able to share our photos and souvenirs of ATLAS, as well as continue to actively exchange ideas pertinent to our research.

For me, ATLAS Agora 2014 was an enriching experience with intangible but significant benefits; a source of lasting memories.