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Students Get Innovative with LawWithoutWalls



When one mentions innovation and enterprise, lawyers are not usually the first group that springs to mind. Traditionally, legal education and practice have been defined by barriers and hierarchies: walls exist between academics and students, law and business, practitioners and students. Breaking down these barriers, three Master in International Law students at the Graduate Institute (Giorgia Linardi, Sophie Berner-Eyde, and Kyunghyun Park) recently took part in a new groundbreaking global legal education experience, LawWithoutWalls.

Launched by the University of Miami in 2011, LawWithoutWalls is an intensive learning-by-doing experience that brings together students from over twenty different law and business schools across fourteen countries around the world, including Harvard, Sciences Po, Stanford and University College London.

Participants are put into teams of two to three students and two to three mentors and assigned a broad topic in legal education or practice. Topics range from increasing access to justice, developing technology to maximise firm and educational efficiency, and enhancing communication between international legal regulators. Each team is tasked with developing a Project of Worth: a business plan and prototype that creatively and viably solves a problem in legal education or practice.

The programme opens with a KickOff event, followed by three months of virtual dynamic teaming via videoconference including presentations by thought leaders from around the world, and culminates with a ConPosium where each team presents its Project of Worth to a panel of judges.

From the Graduate Institute, Kyunghyun Park took part in the virtual version of the programme (LWOW X), which is held completely online, while Giorgia Linardi and Sophie Berner-Eyde experienced the regular version (LWOW), attending the KickOff event at the University of St. Gallen and the ConPosium at the University of Miami.

At this year's ConPosium, Kyunghyun Park and Giorgia Linardi presented projects concerning the responsibility to combine profit with the protection of human rights. Kyunghyun's project focused on the Niger Delta oil crisis, establishing a communication bridge between suffering indigenous people and international organisations. Giorgia focused on corporate social responsibility in the ready-made garment industry, presenting a project that aims to provide companies with a deeper insight into the labour standards of their factories by giving a voice to workers.

Explaining what she gained from the programme, Giorgia Linardi commented, "I discovered innovative ways to apply my studies to the labour market, linking legal education and entrepreneurship. My experience with LawWithoutWalls connected me with practitioners, academics and professionals from all over the world and I am looking forward to developing those connections through future collaborations."

The Graduate Institute's participation in LawWithoutWalls marks the latest in a series of opportunities that have been facilitated by Just Innovate, a student initiative launched in late 2012 to inspire and facilitate the creation of social innovations within student communities, and TradeLab, an online platform bringing together legal experts and law students to make legal expertise on trade and investment treaties available to a broader group of stakeholders.

Barrie Sander (PhD in International Law and Co-founder of Just Innovate) participated in the programme as an academic mentor. Professor Joost Pauwelyn (Co-founder of TradeLab) acted as academic supervisor.

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