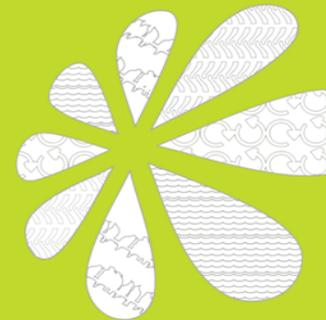


Brianda Bugge-Mahrt

Degree: International Relations with Sustainability and Arabic (Flexible Combined Honours)

Year: 2



Why sustainability?

I've always been interested in sustainability. Being born in Norway sustainability was incorporated into my values; Norwegians are very close to nature. When my family moved to Saudi Arabia I was shocked to see what another country was doing and how they viewed sustainability. It never occurred to me people didn't inherently think about their impact on the environment. I had never even seen plastic bottles – in Norway we solely used recyclable glass bottles. I remember talking to my Dad and saying we need to do something about it. When I asked people "why do you do something that will pollute the environment?" the common answer was that it was justified because it gave jobs to other people.

When applying for university I looked into sustainability courses. Exeter had a great focus on sustainability which greatly influenced my decision to come here over other universities.

As you have seen two extremes of approaches to sustainability in Norway and Saudi Arabia, where do you think Britain fits?

In Britain I think there is a lot going on to incorporate sustainable practice into everyday living. The University has supported the NPower project (described later) and has opened doors to new projects which may not be so easily accessible in other countries. The university environment is very helpful to bring about projects. The Sustainability team, for example, really helped us.



What experience have you gained at University?

One of the best experiences I've had at Exeter is being part of the NPower Future Leaders Challenge. Since leaving Norway I have always dreamed of working in a community in a sustainable way, or on sustainability-targeted project and this seemed like the perfect opportunity. I didn't know the other members of the team before we worked together; however they were dynamic people with different ideas to bring to the table. The team members were international students, demonstrating how sustainability can bring together people from different continents. We had so many ideas agreeing on the right project was tricky. We had to be realistic about how much we could do in the short amount of time.

We agreed on an eco-printing campaign because printing is a common activity of many people on campus. We created a video proposal and got through to the final eight teams nationally. We had two months to do the campaign which involved talking to many people in order to finally reach the right people. We were led to Karen Gallagher, Sustainability Manager, who helped us fight our campaign for eco-printing.



What skills have you gained?

From doing the NPower project I have really learnt how to make use of the people around me and how to network. Working alongside strong, dynamic personalities means you really have to get to know them and take the best out of each individual to make the project a success, this meant developing strong leadership skills. Time management obviously helped me to ensure the project was delivered on time.

What are you going to do next?

At the University there are always new and exciting projects arising so I am going to keep my eyes open for the next one. For a career I am looking to work in sustainability or incorporate it into my job. There's so much you can do, so much room for fresh ideas and many opportunities that as an individual you can have a great positive impact on the environment which is really motivating.

What is one thing that everyone can do to make a difference?

If you've got an idea the University will support you. You don't need to have a team together already because they will help you get in touch with the right people and the right students; they can help you make it happen. Take advantage of competitions because companies are open to what students can bring and even if you don't win, you've still gained a lot for yourself and your CV.

To keep up to date with opportunities in Sustainability, email sustainability@exeter.ac.uk to sign up to our opportunities mailing list.

