

#hertielove2020

Alum-spiration: “Make sense of the bigger picture”



Natalia Irina Roman says that developing and re-evaluating new strategies for one’s career is a winning combination.



During the second year of Natalia’s Hertie School MPP degree, she worked part time for the Martin-Gropius-Bau exhibition center, after having done an internship with them the previous year. She continued working there for a few months after graduating in 2009, which gave her the time she needed to orient herself professionally. After gathering more experience at various cultural institutions (Berlinale) and art initiatives (MigrArte) in Berlin, Natalia began a career as a cultural consultant, working with various clients. Currently, she is on the last stretch of an artistic PhD at the Bauhaus University and has successfully initiated art projects, such as Along the Lines – a platform of art spaces seen from trains passing by and from S-Bahn stations. She regularly participates as a speaker or moderator in public discussions on topics dealing with public art, city research and co-housing. She also works as an installation artist.

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You graduated from the Hertie School during the global financial crisis. What were the main challenges you had to face?

The financial crisis at that time was in my case a double challenge, due to my status of a foreigner in Germany and my intermediate level of German. On top of this, I was aiming for jobs in the cultural field, which is a challenge in itself at any time. In the meantime, I became a German citizen, so it is good to look back sometimes and remember where I am coming from.

Do you have any advice for graduates searching for a job during a global crisis? How can they navigate the job market?

Developing new strategies for your career and regularly evaluating where you are at is always a good idea. One thing that might particularly help in such crises is your connection to professional networks relevant for your career path, such as [HEEN](#), the Hertie Energy and Environment Network, which is a network I helped set up and design as an adviser for the Hertie Foundation, and which serves as a best practice for future networks, regardless of their content focus. The HEEN members are advising each other and have regular meetings, focused on their professional development and interests. Identifying such networks and fostering them is sometimes key to being at the right time and place for the next opportunity.

What are the most important skills to highlight in an application?

I don't think there is one answer to fit all career paths, so it depends on what you are going for. In most cases, however, it is important to have acquired some relevant work experience prior to your application, so make sure you go for internships and professional development programmes during your studies.

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Do you have any tips on how to deal with setbacks?

I have learned to see setbacks as opportunities, too. These are the times when you will have the space to think things through and come up with new strategies for your career. Make sure to continue developing yourself throughout such a challenging time, like taking an online class, for example. It might just be that such a setback equips you with the detachment you sometimes need to make sense of the bigger picture.



Natalia's post-it mantra.

In what way was the Hertie School network beneficial to you during your job search?

While at Hertie, I had applied for various internships in the cultural field, I had sent a few so called *Initiativbewerbungen* (unsolicited applications). I will never forget how Jan, who at that time was working in the Career Services Department at the Hertie School, sat down with me and made some follow up calls to check on my applications. We will never know whether Jan's call was decisive in me being offered an internship at one of the biggest cultural organisations in Berlin, the Berliner Festspiele, but I will always be grateful to him nevertheless for his restless support and the inspiration that he provided me with. On top of this, the Hertie Foundation provided a wonderful network of support – I used to have a scholarship from the foundation for my studies at the Hertie School. In the meanwhile, the foundation offers a wide range of services for students and alumni of the Hertie School, from mentorships to various events. Make sure to reach out to them.

From your current standpoint, how did the difficult situation after your graduation prepare you for the career you pursued? Do you have pearls of wisdom you would like to share?

I have learned that grit and strategy are key to further developing yourself, and that setbacks come with new perspectives, too. Just keep at what you do and foster your professional networks

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