

# The Sextant

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Page 1+2  
Technology and  
Culture: "Studying  
for a new era"

Page 3  
International Dinner  
Ruedi Nützi

Page 4  
Partner Profiles

Page 5  
Cooking Class  
Honours for CASE  
Chinese visit farm

Page 6  
Who's Where

Page 7  
Continuation  
Who's Where

Page 8  
A Day in the Life of  
Prof Dr Mathias  
Binswanger

## Pioneering BSc in Business Information Technology Programme at Campus Basel



From left: Ali Al Namaani, Antje Obatolu and Sasha Märki. Photo: Tanja Kühni

## Technology and Culture: "Studying for a new era"

Experiencing the cultural diversity of technology management live is currently proving a main highlight of the new BSc in Business Information Technology course at Campus Basel.

"In class we had to explore what the cultural acceptance would be of an app that stored intelligence on neighbours so that people could check if they were in a safe neighbourhood," student Ali Al Naamani recounts. "Because our classmates come from different countries it was amazing to discover how different the cultural attitudes to such a technology would be. It makes what we're studying now really relevant."

People in the Middle East would reject such an app, he believes, because of pride and the close-knit communities. Fellow student Sasha Märki discovered from a South African class-mate that due to a prevalence of crime the app would theoretically be of interest but the unreliability of information and fear of repercussions would invalidate it. Antje Obatolu found herself in agreement with others that such an app would hardly be of interest in Switzerland or Germany where crime rates are low and people value privacy highly. All three joined the start-up year of the BSc BIT in September alongside about 20 other students. The programme is taught entirely in English and enables both part-time and full-time study modes. Antje, for instance, is studying part-time alongside her job as project mana-

ger within the Supply Chain department at Manor in Basel. She commutes from German Rheinfelden and till now, though admitting the overall workload is higher, finds the combination manageable. Sasha and Ali both opted for the full-time mode.

New with this programme is the merging of the two alternatives. Dean Prof Andreas Reber explains that previous experience with the ever more popular part-time studies is that students often still continued working at 80 or even 100% despite the recommended 50%. The overload and increasing failure rates indicated different approaches were needed. "We now integrate part-time into the fulltime schedule with a mutual two full days a week, rather than have separate streams where part-time students come in for several evenings and Saturdays. This virtually disables working full-time alongside the studies and ensures they are fit and present," he explains. "Fulltime students then have another two days of lectures, the part-time students also come in on Saturday mornings."

Till now, the students are finding this schedule optimal. They currently are in about five or six projects and in charge of organising their own time in order to achieve objectives. "I love the variety of the programme but also of these group tasks- not only all the different cultures but the ages vary and of course some work," Antje says. "It's hard but manageable." The diversity is especially noticeable in the backgrounds of the students. Ali, for instance, is of Omani-British heritage and having studied Telecom Engineering in Oman, then worked in London and later Zurich, he searched far and wide to find a university course that would enable him to advance in his chosen career. Two months in, he is passionate about the course, the teachers and his fellow students. "Really, it is the best programme out there at the moment." Alongside him are students from such as Algeria, Iran, Pakistan and South Africa in addition to the many Swiss students. Sasha, for instance, followed the classic path of a technical professional baccalaureate coupled with an IT apprenticeship, completed a year in the army and then decided he was keen to find a course which bridges business management and IT.

"I consciously opted to study in English once I discovered there was this option. For the most part, much of the vocabulary in IT is in English anyway. It's not a problem understanding but actually speaking is a challenge. What's a real bonus is that with now being fully immersed in English - all classes are in English and because some of the students do not speak much German, the interaction is also in English - my English is improving every day and all day long. It's working," Sasha reports.

"There is a definite trend in Switzerland towards studying in English," Dean Reber says. "Our School of Business is witnessing a great surge in registrations for the existing Bachelor and Master programmes taught in English and considering the global nature of many companies and organisations and the increasing need for employees who can integrate IT into business, launching this course as a diversification of offers will undoubtedly meet industry needs. In Basel particularly, there are significant clusters of companies in the pharma, banking and insurance sectors who need employees bridging management and technology."

All three students had clear visions of their ultimate goals when selecting this particular degree course. Ali plans to use his previous consulting and IT experience together with the knowledge gained in the course to become an entrepreneur. "With society moving to a different era where all is connected to technology, I want to set up a business and need the whole concept, not just management, a (set up a business)" Ali says. Antje had been involved as a user in an IT project and discovered she liked it so much she envisaged a future as an IT project manager. Sasha also envisages a position with more responsibility connecting technologies within a company. The subjects they study span Economics, IT, Business Information Technology, student projects and various foundation subjects in Communication, Law, Statistics and Analysis. For Antje, an unexpected discovery was maths. "At school I liked languages and maths but after school I opted for the language directions. Since starting here I have re-discovered my love of mathematics - it's great," Antje says. ■

Brigitte Sprenger



**The BSc in Business Information Technology is offered at Campus Basel of the FHNW School of Business. The fulltime mode envisages three years of study, whereas the part-time mode will take four years. Students have the additional option of a semester abroad. For further information go to <http://www.fhnw.ch/business/wi>**

*Photos: Prof Andreas Reber, Dean of the new BSc in Business Information Technology (top), Antje Obatolu studies part time (middle), Antje, Ali and Sasha at Campus Basel*

*Photos: Tanja Kühni*

## Studying, Socializing and Sightseeing ESN consolidates international experience



Swiss and exchange students at the International Dinner. From left: Laura Käch, Nicolas Joye, Elisabeth Castillo, Helen Ramon and Giuliana Pastore. Photo: Ahsan Manzoor

The yearly international dinner provides an ideal platform for students to mingle and to learn more about the represented countries. Held this year on October 24, students first spent several hours preparing food from their countries of origin in the Franziskushaus kitchen and then both exchange and local stu-

dents sampled the various international dishes which included cabbage rolls, Borscht, dumplings and tacos. Talking about different cuisines, traditions and tastes (e.g. what exactly is the difference between Chinese and Korean food?) is a great conversation starter and fosters intercultural exchange.

At the beginning of every semester, the ESN (Erasmus Student Network) Team recruits new people who are motivated to dedicate some free time towards making our exchange students feel welcome and at home. Like many other universities, the FHNW has a „buddy“ system. Buddies are local students who pick up incoming students on their arrival day and introduce, advise and support them during their exchange. Besides this, the ESN Team organizes various fun events for exchange students. This semester, they are organizing a visit to the Feldschlösschen brewery, paintball, bowling, a guided trip to the "Herbstmesse" in Basel, as well as a weekend trip to Chur. The international dinner was another example of the many events that the ESN organizes for exchange students.

Since 2012, the FHNW is officially part of ESN Switzerland. This opens up a variety of new experiences for exchange students. They can participate in events organized by other sections and get to know exchange students from different Swiss universities. Last semester, it was the first time that they were able to join the National Winter Event, which was organized by ESN Geneva. In December, they can join a Ski weekend in Davos, organized by ESN Zurich. ■ *Tanja Kühni*

## Ruedi Nützi wins China Friendship Award



Prof. Dr. Ruedi Nützi receives his Friendship Award from the Chinese Vice President Ma Kai

The highly prestigious Friendship Award, conferred on foreigners who have significantly contributed to China's economic and social development was awarded to Prof. Dr. Ruedi Nützi in Beijing on 29 September 2014. Director of the FHNW School of Business and initiator of numerous educational and economic collaborations with especially provincial executives, Nützi was the only Swiss among the 100 recipient from 25 nations. For over 20 years, the FHNW School of Business has maintained an active exchange with various universities and provinces in China including the Swiss SME Research Center China SSRCC in Harbin, which supports Swiss and Chinese SMEs with market entry in the respective partner country. ■

## Byebye Michael

**Michael Sitte has been contributing to The Sextant for two years and now leaves for new professional horizons. Thank you and best wishes, Michael.**

## Partner Profiles

The School of Business cooperates with 130 universities around the world. A full list is on [www.fhnw.ch/business/international](http://www.fhnw.ch/business/international). Each issue of The Sextant profiles half a dozen of these partners.



**École Supérieure de Commerce de Troyes**  
Where The university is located in Troyes, a commune on the Seine River in the heart of the Champagne region of Northern France. Due to its proximity to Paris, there is a vast array of economic opportunities. Half-timbered houses of the 16th century give the beautiful old town an ancient atmosphere.  
Cooperation Student exchange (2 places)  
Size 1700 students, 350 international students  
Study Fields The École Supérieure de Commerce de Troyes has three different schools at under and postgraduate levels: Management and Business, Tourism and Leisure Management, Design. Courses are taught in French and English.  
Campus The school has three campuses. The Brossolette Campus, which is a ten-minute walk from the historic and cultural town centre, hosts the School of Management. A new building will open its doors to students in September 2014, classrooms, living spaces and parking lots. The school facilities include WIFI, a library, a language lab, a restaurant and cafeteria, computer rooms, and a fitness center. Accommodation is organized online by the international office.  
Website: <http://www.study-in-champagne.com>



**Sungkyunkwan University (SKKU)**  
Where Sungkyunkwan University has two campuses, one in Seoul and one in Suwon. Seoul is the capital of South Korea, situated on the Han River. Suwon is located in the Gyeonggi province and lies about 30 km south of Seoul.  
Cooperation Student exchange (4 places)  
Size 19 365 students  
Study Fields SKKU offers more than 7,000 courses throughout the academic year in every field and level of study. As of now, over 30% of the courses are conducted in foreign languages, primarily English.  
Campus The university consists of two campuses: the Humanities and Social Sciences campus in Seoul and the Natural Sciences campus in Suwon. Among many other things the facilities include different dining halls and restaurants, snack bars, financial facilities, fitness center, convenience stores, and rest areas with sleeping rooms. Accommodation is available on both campuses.  
Website [http://www.skku.edu/eng\\_home/index.jsp](http://www.skku.edu/eng_home/index.jsp)



**Universidad San Francisco de Quito**  
Where The main campus is located in Cumbayá (2,400 meters above sea level), around 15km away from Quito (pop.: 2 Mill.). USFQ is the only university in the world that owns a campus in the Galapagos Islands and a campus in the Yasuni Biosphere Reserve (Tiputini Biodiversity Station).  
Cooperation Student exchange (2 places)  
Size 5500 students, including 1000 international students  
Study Fields Students can choose their courses from across USFQ's ten colleges: Business Administration, Architecture and Interior Design, Hospitality Management, Biology, Social Sciences, Communications, Health, Music, Law and Engineering. USFQ offers hundreds of courses each semester, including a growing number taught in English.  
Campus Private university with modern library, bookstore, education and research laboratories, seven themed restaurants, dental and medical clinic. The university provides accommodation with local host families.  
Website <http://www.usfq.edu.ec/Paginas/Inicio.aspx>



**Hogeschool Utrecht/University of Applied Sciences Utrecht**  
Where Utrecht is located in the heart of the Netherlands and is the country's fourth largest city (with 316,000 residents). Utrecht is well known for its institutions of higher education and as home to some 70,000 students is a real student city.  
Cooperation Student exchange (4 places)  
Size 12 professional/academic departments, 8'000 full-time and 400 part-time students, 200 international partnerships  
Study Fields Bachelor degree programmes in International Finance and Control, International Business & Management, International Marketing Management, Entrepreneurship for Developing Areas, International Communication & Media; 2 Master programmes in Communication areas. Many courses are taught in English  
Campus Several (non-residential) campus Locations inside and outside the city, access to full infrastructure, extensive sport and social programme. Housing usually in student flats, private but organised via International Office  
Website <http://international.hu.nl/>



**Universidad del Pacifico, Las Condes**  
Where Las Condes is a commune in the Santiago Province, the economic area of Chile. The country has developed a diverse economy based on mining, forestry, seafood, agriculture, wine and tourism and is a thriving and forward-thinking nation.  
Cooperation Student exchange (2 places)  
Size 5412 students  
Study Fields The university consists of the following faculties: Business and Marketing, Communication, Human Science and Education, Design, and Technical Formation.  
Campus The University has two campuses, one in Las Condes and one in Melipilla. The facilities include a library, a fitness center, health services and a spacious cafeteria. International students can take a 3-weeks intensive Spanish programme (not free of charge). Accommodation is either in host families or student's residences.  
Website <http://web.upacifico.cl>



**Shanghai University of Finance & Economics (SUFE)**  
Where With a population of 24 million, Shanghai ranks first in terms of population not only in China, but meanwhile also in the entire world. The city, known as Paris of the East or Pearl of the Orient, is divided geographically by the Huang Pu River into Puxi (west of the river), seen as the historical heart of the city, and Pudong (east of the river), famous for its financial district and ultra-modern cityscape. Over the last 20 years, it has been one of the fastest developing cities in the world.  
Cooperation Student exchange (2 places)  
Size More than 13,000 full-time students, including over 1,000 international students from 92 different countries  
Study Fields There are over 20 schools and colleges in the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics. The international students mostly study international economics and trade, finance, investment, accountancy, business administration, law, and the Chinese language.  
Campus SUFE has four campuses. International students enrolled in SUFE with a valid visa can live in international student dormitories at campus.  
Website <http://www.shufe.edu.cn/structure/english/index.htm>

Collated by Tanja Kühni

## High Honours for CASE

The Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) has awarded the Canadian Academics Studying Europe (CASE) with the CBIE Panorama Award for Outstanding International Education Program in Capacity Building. According to the CBIE Canadian faculty „ have opened their eyes to a new way of thinking and created new exchange partnerships and summer programs at 16 institutions“ thanks to the 10 day study tour jointly created and led by Catherine Vertesi, Capilano University and Prof. Robert Buttery FHNW.

The awards ceremony will be held in Ottawa in November and to additionally celebrate the honour, the Swiss Ambassador in Ottawa will hold a special reception at the Embassy. "This award has significantly increased interest in CASE with the result that we are now investigating making it an annual tour rather than one every two years," Prof Buttery said. "Another bonus is that the Ontario Trade Commissioner has pledged to support the programme in the future." ■



Participants from the award-winning 2014 CASE tour in the European Parliament this summer. Photo: Jeannette Merguin

## Organic Farming part of China Study Trip

In China the demand for organic food is increasing. However, according to one specialist from a 24-strong delegation of mostly agriculturalists from Heilongjiang Mr Li Minfeng, both industrial standards for self-regulation and the implementation thereof are still missing. So during their 3-week study trip to Switzerland in September, a main focus was „gaining a better and deeper understanding of Swiss organic agriculture“ Mr Li said. Next to input from expert speakers and theoretical background, the delegation also visited organic farms such as the one in Appenzell (left). The study trip was organized by the FHNW School of Business. ■



Heilongjiang delegation members get close to some organic Swiss cows.

## Cooking Class: Making Braided Bread

For some exchange students, going abroad means living alone for the first time and getting used to having to cook. In order to save the students from trying to survive by only eating cookies or other ready-to-eat meals, the members of the ESN team decided to offer cooking classes, where the students can learn basic recipes, as well as some traditional Swiss dishes.

To start small, the first class was about baking bread. Not any kind of bread, though: Braided bread is a Swiss specialty that needs quite some time and skills to prepare. On Saturday, 11 October, students from Spain, Mexico, England and Vietnam came together at the international residence Franziskushaus to learn how to make their own braided bread. Lia, a local Swiss student, translated a recipe into English and gave instructions. Despite minor hurdles - the kitchen lacked measuring cups and scales - the experience was fun and the result was more than satisfying. A next time is already being planned with a bigger challenge, perhaps a professional cook and proper kitchen supplies. ■ Tanja Kühni



Exchange students Van Chu, Jamie Downing and Victor Campas Llamas learn how to make „Zopf“ from Swiss student Lia Flück (right). Photo: Tanja Kühni

# Who's Where?



Theo Whitwill – FHNW Exchange student in Hong Kong

I am very lucky to be in Hong Kong during a historical period. All around me protests are going on. Tens of thousands of people are blocking main roads around the government buildings to protest against decisions of the Chinese government to restrict democracy. People are armed with umbrellas to protect themselves against tear gas and pepper spray for just standing there and singing songs. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University students keep us up-to-date by distributing stickers, using all social media platforms and hanging up posters all over the campus. Other than that, the protests do not affect my daily life. The student residence, a 21-story building with approximately 200 students on each floor, is only a 10 minute walk from campus. Living here never gets dull. On the second floor there is a swimming pool, table tennis, billiards, gaming, computer and a study room. Together with some exchange students and locals, I founded a squash society when I arrived in September. In the meantime there are about 40 members and we play squash nearly every day.

After school, locals like to go out and have food, sing karaoke, or have dessert in the middle of the night, which is really nice. Living costs are so low that I can afford to eat out every day. You can get breakfast for less than 3 Swiss Franks for example, and the food here is really tasty. Since everyone has different timetables, we have Facebook groups for every day of the week, like for example the "Fantastic Friday" group. There are also groups from the university for cultural, social and recreational activities. I actually just came back from a two-day field trip on the history of Hong Kong. There is of course also a lot of activity on Facebook around the protests, which have been going on for three weeks now. It's moving to see how passionate people are here, even though they know that they might be endangering themselves and their future. The persistence and passion I see in these people is truly remarkable. I asked some of my local classmates how they study for midterms, and they told me that they take their books to the protests and study in tents. TK



Ha Nguyen Thi Ngoc - 3 + 1 student from Vietnam in Olten

When I was still in Vietnam I set up an online shop trading in facial make-up. Through my own experience I'd discovered that there was a niche in the market for this and it was very successful. This then also increased my interest in marketing and public relations. I kept running this shop throughout my studies in Vietnam at the Banking University of Ho Chi Minh City where I joined the 3+1 International Management programme. The syllabus for this is set by the FHNW and is exactly the same and all taught in English. Then, at the end of the three year segment in Vietnam you have to pass an English test as well, and have achieved good grades and have had the work experience to be selected to come to Switzerland to join the International Management students here for the final year. Before I came I expected Switzerland to be clean and have lots of quality stuff – and it is like that. What I had not expected is that the method of learning would be quite different – we have a lot of

group work here and have to take responsibility for our own learning. I do like that a lot – that I can contribute more towards my own studies. This also lead me to apply for the PR team for one of the student seminars – I suppose my experience with my own on-line shop, which marketed mostly through Social Media, was helpful here. So now I am part of the PR team for Connect US and I'm enjoying this very much. I look forward to going on the on-site trip to the USA next spring and after completing my degree here I want to apply for a Master course, preferably in Communication or PR or Marketing. I'll be looking to do this abroad as well. Initially when I arrived I suffered from culture shock and homesickness but this has passed. Of course I still miss my family and friends, and the Vietnamese food – and cooking for myself is quite a new challenge – but everything has settled down now and I'm really happy here now. BS



Ulrich Pekruhl, FHNW professor in Hatfield, UK

COST is something quite important to us, but please note the capital letters: They stand for European Cooperation in Science and Technology, which is an organisation at European level supporting the networking of researchers. Basically they are a big travel agency - they do not support projects, but only contacts. I am the Swiss delegate in the management committee of the Cost Action "Dynamics of Virtual Work". This action has sub-groups or work groups and all of them meet about 3-4 times per year, always at different places. The last meetings were in Athens, Darmstadt, Brussels, Bucharest and Hatfield. In September we had the last conference in Hatfield (UK) with 160 participants from all around the world. The main issue here was Virtual Work. These conferences help us to find research partners. Currently I am involved in a project on the future of flexible work in Switzerland and in Hatfield I learned that in Dublin the European Foundation runs a project in this area. So I got in touch with the people involved there. The goal for us would be to apply for a bigger EU project in that field. However due to the problems Switzerland currently has with participation in EU research funding, it is difficult and we have to rely on European partners who need to take over the lead. Thus we hope that a national project will be funded by the Swiss

COST agency (fingers crossed). In this project we want to study the role of intermediary platforms for employee crowdsourcing. Those contacts allow us to test great things. Within our project we are now preparing a virtual workshop. For this we have invited 25 people from around 10 countries who we mostly know from the COST Action. We will try to do a normal workshop, while all of us stay in our home country. Using Adobe Connect we plan to have a welcoming session, split up into working groups, and then share our discussions and findings with the others by using virtual flip charts and everybody can come forward and say something. We will also use virtual cards which can be pinned on a virtual wall. And then the results are mutually presented. And we have further ideas. We purchased a sofa and asked our virtual partner to buy the same one. Technically you can then match those two picture recordings from both offices together so that you see yourself on the screen sitting together with the other person on the same sofa. This may create another degree of conversational intimacy in a virtual setup. You see, great opportunities for us researchers to try out new ways of conversations. I am quite excited to try this out and see if it works. MS



Megan Innes - Student MScIM from Canada

Ice hockey, or simply hockey as we say in Canada, has been my passion throughout my entire bachelor studies. In Canada when you seriously want to play hockey and study, there is basically no time left for other things. So it may be not be a surprise to you that my boyfriend is a professional hockey player. One day he got an offer to play for the EHC Olten hockey club here in Switzerland. Although never having been here, but aware of the good Swiss hockey league, he decided to take this opportunity and moved to Olten. When I visited him for Christmas last year and having enjoyed my first cheese fondue, the question popped up, what I will do after my undergraduate studies. Getting excited by the idea to follow him here to Switzerland and having checked the study opportunities, the decision was made. Since September, I am a student in the Master in International Management programme which is taught in English. For me this is kind of funny, being so far away from home and everybody speaks English with you in class all day. As I am one of the few English native-speakers, my colleagues here approach me frequently to edit their writing, which is quite nice. Sometimes I nearly forget that I am not in Canada. Once I went straight from class to a fast food restaurant and without thinking about it,

just ordered in English until I saw the face of the employee - I felt terribly sorry at that moment. It is a bit bizarre as people never try to speak German with me, but want to practice their English. This also prevents me from learning the language. Despite this language comfort zone, I went through quite a culture shock. First of all the lifestyle is so different. People here seem to eat mainly carbohydrates and bread is everywhere. In the supermarket it was quite thrilling to see the amount of fresh food, what is quite the opposite of all the processed food you find in North America. The biggest difference I have seen so far is in the trains. I think I will never understand why even in a full train it is completely silent and you do not hear a single person speaking. In Canada, sitting in a train ignoring your neighbour would be considered rude. Here, everybody minds his or her own business which always makes me feel uncomfortable. However, the trains here are great and I already took the chance to visit many places: Neuchatel and Luzern are my favourites so far. As the semester has started now, free time is limited. I will try to do a bit of snowboarding and also learn German. What I will not do is play hockey. When I came here I decided to quit it. Let's see for how long this works out. MS



Annemarie Schär, FHNW Social Media Manager in California, USA

Social Media is one of the most dynamic issues for those of us who work in communications. Just now I've come back from a study tour to San Francisco where I was updated on what is actually possible with Social Media for universities. Swissnex San Francisco, among many other activities, also promotes and supports social media among Swiss universities. Besides offering web-based seminars, so called webinars, and conferences, Swissnex SF also organises a study tour. I was invited to go to San Francisco together with seven other communication specialists from different Swiss universities. The study tour started with a speech from Chuck Darrah, professor for anthropology at the San Jose State University who studies the „species“ of the Silicon Valley people. We learned about the history of that area which basically began with start-ups or spinoffs from Stanford University graduates like Twitter, PayPal or LinkedIn. Then we went to the University of California Berkeley and talked to several persons responsible for social media. It was great to see what channels they prefer and how they manage them. They focus a lot on their alumni and get financial support from them. At Stanford University Bill Gates sponsored an entire building and around 100 people work for the alumni organi-

sation only. They provided us with an insight into how alumni management works. Stanford University produces its own videos for students (Mooc - Massive Open Online Course) which help them to prepare for classes. For this they have fully equipped studios with Hollywood-experienced staff for the production. It is fantastic to see what resources are used for this. In Silicon Valley we also visited YouTube and LinkedIn. LinkedIn is an important player for universities in the US as they offer some great features and want to help students find the best university for them. They have now started this for the USA, Canada and the UK and do a lot of tracking and analyses with the profiles of students and alumni. If this will be rolled out in Switzerland one day, it will be quite interesting for us. I gained great insight into what is actually possible with the help of social media for universities. Here at the School of Business we are not yet on such a high level with social media, but we're advancing. Check out our Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/FHNWbusiness>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/FHNWbusiness>) and YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/user/FHNWbusiness>) profiles to stay updated on what is going on at your FHNW School of Business. MS   
 <http://www.swissnexsanfrancisco.org/about/mission/>



Yulia Loshkareva Exchange student from USA in Olten

At the California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB), my major is biology. Originally, I am from Russia. I lived there until I was 12 and then I moved to the Czech Republic. I first came to Switzerland when I was about 18 to go to a boarding school. I stayed there for two years, before finally moving to California. One reason why I wanted to come back to Switzerland was my family; my father and my two younger brothers live in Geneva. Also, I already had a visa, so that facilitated the administrative work quite a bit. However, it was not until I met Tanja and Yannick, the first Swiss exchange students to study at the CSUMB, that I was made aware of the opportunity to go study in Switzerland. Also, spending time with them gave me a little insight into what it would be like to live and study in Switzerland again. Now that I am here, I have started to take business courses. It is a great opportunity to get an insight into a different field of studies, especially since the focus is very international here at the

FHNW and classes are diverse. The experience I have now is rather different to the one I had when I lived here first. Before, I was mainly interacting with other international students and there were only two Swiss students at the school. Here I interact a lot with Swiss students, which helps me to learn more about their culture and their way of life. Also the girl I met back in California happens to be my buddy now, and she was also one of the first Swiss people I met here. This unique friendship helped me a great deal with getting settled here. After my year abroad, I will have to go back to California to finish my biology studies. It is very likely that I will stay in the US, since my mother lives in Florida and most of my friends are in California. I already have a green card, and I am supposed to get my American passport in two years. But I would also love to come back to Switzerland at some point to learn German or French. TK

Photos: Michael Sitte, Tanja Kühni

## A Day in the Life of Mathias Binswanger



Photo: Alex Kaeslin

**Prof Dr Mathias Binswanger is the author of a bestselling book, a busy publicist and was recently selected by the highly respected Neue Zürcher Zeitung as one of the ten most influential economists in Switzerland. At the FHNW School of Business he teaches Macroeconomics, International Economics and Financial Markets.**

The great thing about my life is that there are no routine days. My work is also one of my major interests - there is a lot of variety and I enjoy this. So there are days when I start early, other days where I start late and the same goes for the end of the days. The day usually begins with coffee and a newspaper but the newspaper sometimes has to be skipped due to lack of time.

For instance, tomorrow I'm off to Berlin to give a speech. I do about 70 such talks and speeches a year outside the university - it's rather a lot. This number has increased because of the various books I have published such as *Treadmills of Happiness* or *Absurd Competition*. The talk in Berlin is on Income and Happiness: How we get more income but do not become happier. I don't give guidelines in my talks about how to live and be happy, but I explore the correlations between happiness and income. One of the paradoxes is that as we increase our income we often increase those activities which make us unhappy. So yes, the success of my books has led to more requests and more work but fortunately for me I do not consider giving speeches as work - it's something I enjoy a lot. I no longer suffer from stage fright after a lot of experience. However, although these talks are on the same subjects, I do always try to adjust to the audience, adjust to whether they are familiar with the subject or not. For instance, I'm often invited to talk at medical conferences where medics enjoy hearing about something outside the field of medicine. This is different from talking to an audience of economists. And I also try to include humour in my talks. Another enjoyment factor is that I get to meet

many interesting people who I've read about or heard of - for instance in Berlin I'm very much looking forward to meeting Eckart von Hirschhausen in person who has also published a book on Happiness. All such encounters can lead to new ideas about research and writing. I find that there are many tiny ideas which emerge either from such encounters or from my teaching or from my regular writing of newspaper articles or my column for *Bilanz* - and some of this will then reach a tipping point at some stage where I realise I have the essence for a new book.

I have just delivered the manuscript for my next book. *Money out of Nothing* (Geld aus dem Nichts: Wie Banken Wachstum ermöglichen und Krisen verursachen) is about how banks create money and what effect this has on the economy. People often think banks take money from people's savings - but since the 17th century banks are able to create money by crediting loans to customers' deposits, which represents the most frequently used form of money today. Like this constant growth is enabled. But more and more this newly created money flows into financial markets and not into the real economy.

This book took a little longer: usually it's about three years between books but I didn't have a sabbatical recently which is where in previous cases I made the time and had the opportunity to finish books. Yet I often find that when I go on holiday I also write well in that environment. I love going to warm places, different places all over the world, and I like staying in more basic hotels where somehow the circumstances are inspiring and then I find I can write well. I suppose if a hotel has too many wonderful facilities it would distract me - I like the atmosphere in simple hotels and it's easier to meet other travellers. On the other hand, I also loved going to China and Vietnam to teach there for a few weeks. These are nice experiences, since I travelled to these countries more than 20 years ago and it is amazing how they have changed. Usually I enjoy teaching, both abroad and

here. Teaching helps you to remain normal - if you're a scientist and research a lot there is a tendency to become peculiar - and this can be prevented by teaching. Also you have to keep up with developments and keep up with the data. Most of my teaching in the Bachelor and Master programmes is fairly basic except for the Financial Bubbles and Crashes course which is related to one of my fields of research. I like to instil a basic solid approach to economics in students. For many it is the only time in their lives where they will hear about Economics so it's important to help them understand a little bit what is happening in the economy. We have a tendency to talk and read a lot but not really know or understand key concepts. People will sit around and talk about Direct Investment for instance - very few though know what this actually is.

Trips like the one to Berlin are rather time consuming but they also allow for reading and writing. I discovered that in some cases it is all or nothing with me - for instance there are only two options regarding television: Watching too much or not watching at all. So I opted years ago for the second. That decision freed up a lot of time for the things I enjoy - for example listening and playing jazz music, I play the vibraphone, I also love meeting friends for dinner or drinks. Through researching about Income and Happiness, it is now well known that one of the things that makes many people very unhappy is commuting - so I eliminated commuting from my life by moving to a house which is a short walking distance from my work. Now I don't have to make distinctions between work and leisure, I can mix them up. Or, for instance, I am happy when work does not seem to be work. Working in non-work environments, for instance, or in hotel rooms.

For me it is difficult to do creative work in a pure working environment. It adds to our happiness if we can do things the way we like to do them. ■

Brigitte Sprenger