It was no surprise to learn that the ISTR session would be migrated to an online format due to the COVID19 pandemic that has affected all sectors worldwide limiting travel. It became clear to me that we needed to rethink how we normally conduct these sessions and required me to make adjustments on my side. I moved out all meetings happening that week so that I could be fully present, invested in the strongest possible network connection and made a plan for my children to be entertained to avoid disruptions during the sessions. When the seminars began, I was ready and fully engaged.

Our faculty members and the other students attending the seminar made it all worthwhile. We had a really warm and engaged group of people from the overall group to my individual group 5. We all had an understanding that the circumstances were different so there was no uneasy time pressure to stick to the programme and timelines. In our group we ended up allowing each student to go on for almost 1hr 30 mins each thereby allowing us to discuss all the issues and receive valuable insights from the group. Everyone did take their time to read the abstracts prior to the session so it was very easy to discuss because they all had a good idea of the research topic.

I also managed to join a café session to meet other students who were not in my group and it was light and fun to discuss and network as we would have had we all been in Canada. COVID19 did not rob us of the opportunity to receive scholarly interaction and feedback on our work. One of my faculty members (Stefan Einarsson) actually took out more time to give me an individual consultation and provide more assistance on my concerns and the feedback that had been provided during my session. This was over and above the 1hr 30 mins session I had. This encouraged me greatly and gave me guidance on how I should proceed in a smart manner and cater for any scholarly arguments that could come about in future. I am extremely grateful to Stefan Einarsson for his patience, time and going all out to help me and show me the way in which I should go. I would not have benefitted from all this had this session been cancelled.

So although COVID19 changed life as we know it and stopped my dream to visit Canada in 2020, it provided me with an engaging, insightful, reflective and constructive PhD seminar that puts me in a better place with my study than I was before the seminar. I am very grateful to ISTR for not postponing the session and finding a way to make it happen online, the decision was worthwhile for us all. I hope to meet all the other students someday (in Canada as that dream is not over and my visa application is ready to submit) as they are a great bunch of people who I will enjoy interacting with again any day, any time 😊