

I participated to the Journalist Fellowship program based at the Reuters Institute and Green Templeton College of the Oxford University. The program brings mid-career journalists throughout the world to Oxford to meet and pursue their research interest. I stayed in Oxford for three terms, the whole academic year 2008-2009.

### Journalism and religion

I did my research about coverage of religion in Finnish and British newspapers. The research paper will be published after copy-editing on the institute's website under the title 'To do, or not to God: Faith in British and Finnish journalism'.

The research included interviews with 12 Finnish and 13 British print journalists. Most of them were specialized in religion or writing about it at least occasionally out their own initiative. Also four editors-in-chief from both countries were interviewed.

I tried to find out what conventions we journalists follow when cover, or decide not to cover religion. To get a glimpse of them, I first picked ten example stories and presented them shortly to every interviewee. After each story I asked more or less the same questions: would this be a story for your paper, would you do this story yourself and is this a commonplace story in British/Finnish journalism. When the answer was no, I asked why. These why-nots gave interesting answers to my question.

I did expect difficulties in getting interviews. However, not only religion specialists but also editors-in-chief were interested in sharing their insights on the subject. One result of the study was that leading journalists from the most sober and internationally oriented papers, particularly in the UK but also in Finland, strongly felt that religion coverage is getting much more important in journalism.

My research was supervised by Jeremy Harris, Director of Communications at the Oxford University, former adviser to the Archbishop of Canterbury and correspondent for the BBC in Moscow during the glasnost and perestroika.

He asked tough questions which forced me to focus and gave useful and supportive feedback which helped to improve the first draft of the research paper. Altogether, I met him five times during the project and these meetings also served as necessary dead-lines for my work..

### Fellows' seminar

Apart from the research, the program consisted of three weekly compulsory seminars. One of them was Fellows' Seminar where each of us gave a presentation about some journalistic issue in his or her home country. My speech was about Mohamed cartoon controversy in Finland.

Particularly interesting were the presentation of Amel al Ariqi, managing editor of the Yemen Times, about breaking the news of the eight years old who wanted to divorce her

husband, the presentation of Hanyang Wang, Chinese investigating journalist, about the frame that the Communist party puts for journalism in China and the presentation of John Cunningham, South-African editor-in-chief, about problems of making newspaper in the country of fragmented audiences which are deeply divided even in their interest in sports.

## Media and politics

Media and Politics seminar in Nuffield College was chaired by David Butler, senior journalist who became famous for reporting elections for the BBC for many decades. Guest speakers were British top journalists and politicians like David Aaronovitch who is able to earn his living by writing one column per week and Lord Patten, former cabinet minister, EU commissioner and Governor of Hong Kong. However, probably the most fascinating guest was Gillian Tett, assistant editor of the Financial Times who was named Journalist of the year at the British press Awards. In the stampede of the credit crunch last year, she became known as one of the earliest persons to foresee the crunch. How was she able to see what others did not? Was she a former banker? Did she have a degree in economics?

Tett came to FT as a young social anthropologist who had just made her PhD studying Tadjik wedding rituals. In the training program of the paper, she was placed in economics. Once there, she had to acquire new language and new culture, just like an anthropologist in a new world. She soon realized that journalists were obsessed with equity market though it seemed to be just a small part of the whole economy. Behind it, there was a vast murky world which was blank for the media. Tett started studying debts. Colleagues thought she had moved to so called mommy track as she was pregnant for her second child. Nobody ambitious and in her right mind would go to cover debt market.

Going to maternity leave, Tett thought she would miss huge news. She was sure the system would collapse during the leave but it did last a bit longer. Actually it lasted so long that Tett already thought that she had not understood anything. That was what bankers had said when she had written that the bubble would burst.

## How to save newspapers

In the Institute's own weekly seminar speakers were journalists and media scholars. The central theme during the year was the future of the newspapers and, more broadly, the fate of journalism after the digital revolution.

The business logic of the print journalism is broken. The news are given for free in the internet and, as a result, people are less willing to buy newspapers. As circulations are diminishing, the interest of the advertisers in print is fading.

On the other hand, internet advertising does not bring much money, not matter how big readerships. Even the Youtube with its massive audience is in the red.

Not a single speaker during the year believed that any paper will be able to make profit on adds only.

Heydays of easy money will not come back. Newspapers have to invent themselves anew and start doing stories that readers are willing to pay for. To achieve this, they have to invest more in journalism. A paper that tries to save itself by just cutting the costs is sure to bleed dead, warned Juan Senor, a research fellow of the institute and consult of an international media consulting group.

Professor of media management Robert Picard also said that newspapers can't make big profits for their publishers any more and the modest surplus must be invested in better news and better papers if we want them to be viable in the future.

Also in internet we have to find ways to offer content that audiences are willing to pay for. There is a strong ethos that on-line must be free. However, micro payment systems could be built to make it possible to buy information by couple of clicks. If buying is easy indeed and the price is ridiculously low, why should one not purchase a story of photo that is not available otherwise. Couple of cents per click can make a real difference if the click stream is wide enough.

Visits and rowing

Program also offered had some single events on different topics.

In the spring we had a workshop on communicating climate change together with environmental management and environmental policy students. We prepared for the workshop studying how Poznan climate conference was covered in different countries. Each fellow examined two papers from her or his own country. The results were gathered and presented in the workshop.

The fellows also had a mini seminar about the relation of blogging to journalism. Each fellow prepared a short presentation on the situation in his or her own country.

During the year went to London to visit Reuters, BBC World Service and Al Jazeera English. Doing my own interviews, I also had opportunity to visit the Times, the Guardian, the Economist and the Telegraph.

We could make use of the libraries and lectures of the university. I attended a lecture series on current political questions in Islam and several single lectures.

The sport facilities and clubs of the university and college were available for us. I participated to the novice rowing team of the Green Templeton College during the first term and went to train judo in the Oxford University judo club through the year.

I greatly enjoyed the opportunity to free research, added with intellectual stimulation, international peer group and inspiring academic environment.