Ninni Lehtniemi University of Oxford 2015–2016

Final report

I spend the academic year 2015–2016 as a journalist fellow at Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford. My main project was a research paper on how to improve team work in multiskilled teams working on digital journalism. My paper discusses the challenges that arise when professionals from different professional cultures work together and best practices to overcome these challenges.

The journalist fellows programme included three weekly seminars. One of them was about journalistic work, the other about media and politics. My favourite one, however, was fellow's seminar run by journalist fellows. People on my course were experienced journalists from all over the world, from places as diverse as Afghanistan, Syria, China, Turkey, Fidji and Kašmir. In many of their home countries, journalistic work is extremely difficult. I really enjoyed hearing how, despite the hardship, they practice their work. Another interesting recurring theme of our conversations was our experiences of digital transformation. My fellow's seminar presentation was about journalistic co-creation project Oma Olivia, which I was involved in as a producer. I talked about what this project taught our organisation about building a community and serving it. After seminars the discussions with journalist fellows often continued in some of the cozy pubs in Oxford. I hope our connections will remain after we have returned to our respective countries.

In addition to RISJ seminars I regularly attended lectures at Oxford Internet Institute, (where I enjoyed returning to social theories I used to love as a student and exploring the ways in which digitalisation influences them), Oxford Centre for Life Writing (with prominent biography and autobiography writers talking about their work in philosophical and sometimes quite eccentric manner), and Oxford Martin School (with some of the brightest people discussing the challenges faced by humanity, such as climate change, the rise of artificial intelligence and how to inhabit the universe).

Furthermore I often visited seminars and lectures on current issues such as refugee crisis and Brexit. Oxford also attracts big names, so I had a chance to turn into a fangirl at lectures by eg. Gloria Steinem, Nicholas Stern and Buzz Aldrin. As RISJ does not organise practical teaching, I also attended courses by IT centre on beginner's coding and how to make podcasts and films on your smartphone.

I started working on my research paper early in the autumn. The most energy and time consuming part was finding people to interview. British society is much more hierarchic than the Finnish one, which meant I could not contact people without being introduced first, preferably by someone high-ranking. I practically finished my paper before Easter break, which meant I had plenty of time to travel in the UK and enjoy Oxford spring. I participated in trail running events in Dover and Pembrokshire, toured Scotland, visited my friends in Bristol, Birmingham and Paris and got familiar with London.

Most of my leisure time in Oxford was spent with Green Templeton College boat club. Rowing was a new sport to me, and learning it was physically and mentally demanding. We often trained twice a day, first time at 6 am. Through this madness I got to know a nice bunch of postgraduate students from my college. When they were not rowing they studied medical science, genetics, social anthropology and many other disciplines. Like my journalist fellow friends, they also came from all over the world, and some of them worked and studied at labs ran by Nobel prize winners. Spending time with my boat club friends gave me a glimpse on lives of students at one of the world's top universities. I rowed in four different races, which meant experiencing some of Oxford's strangest traditions.

My year as a journalist fellow took place at the time of my career when I needed some time to think. Just two months before the first term started, the magazine I worked for was closed and all staff, including me, made redundant. At the moment it seems like my time in Oxford was a long goodbye to journalism. Yet I know that for many years to come I will find ideas and inspiration from things I learnt and people I met in here in Oxford. I want to thank Helsingin Sanomat Foundation for this unforgettable year.

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