

Report by Kristine Andreassen, UiT

Research visit at Visual, Digital, Material Research Group The Cairns Institute, JCU Cairns.



Time span: 12th of February – 25th of March 2017.

Five weeks following normal working hours and routines of Visual, Digital, Material Research Group (VDMRG) at The Cairns Institute in Cairns, Australia (www.cairnsinstitute.jcu.edu.au). Both the research group and the institute gathers many researchers close to my own work, especially within Anthropology. Afterwards one week in Sydney, Australia, together with my main supervisor, May-Lill Johansen, to convert the newly acquainted knowledge into written products relevant for my PhD.

JCU Cairns

At The Cairns Institute, I got a desk in a landscape office with 8-10 other PhD students and post docs from VDMRG and closely affiliated research groups. All accesses and administrative issues were taken care of ahead of my arrival.

Main daily activities were academic coffee chats with my colleagues and normal work for progression on my PhD analysis and writings. The head of VDMRG, Jennifer Degger, gave me a warm welcome and took her time to understand my project and what knowledge I wanted to gain from my visit. Through her supervision, I got both theory, literature and relevant human resources pointed out. The same goes for all the colleagues I befriended through the mentioned academic coffee chats. Their academic background feed into the gap of knowledge I have experienced as a medical doctor researching within the field of anthropology/sociology. Their inputs came from a varied set of backgrounds, spanning from academic fields of Arts, Education, Media, Anthropology, Sociology, Linguistics and Psychology; from areas like Indigenous Australia, Papua New Guinea, Mexico, Thailand, Indonesia, India, Zambia and South Africa.

On the 27th of February Jennifer Degger helped me organize a seminar to share my own experience, but also get feedback from my colleagues: <http://www.cairnsinstitute.jcu.edu.au/positive-youth-development-haiti/>. I learnt a lot from this experience and the discussion lasted for many days, intensifying the collaborations I had with my closest colleagues.

Main weekly activities at The Cairns Institute/JCU Cairns:

- Wednesday Morning Tea: weekly social event open to all the affiliated PhD students at JCU Cairns. Good place to network and meet researchers working on relevant subjects also through other faculties.
- Weekly confirmations of PhD students: good way to get to know the different research fields focused on throughout the university. Also, a way to debate relevant themes and meet leading researchers and professors, either as they supervise the student or came to listen themselves.
- “Thinking in Dark Times”, Critical Theory Seminar. Interesting and useful weekly seminar series that started while I was still around. (<https://www.jcu.edu.au/events/events-listed/college-of-arts-society-and-education/thinking-in-dark-times-critical-theory-seminar-populism>)
- Afternoon ethnographic movie screenings by ALTAR (<https://espaces.edu.au/altar/>), one of the closely affiliated research groups to VDMRG.

Meeting supervisor in Sydney (19th – 25th of March)

The following week spent with my supervisor in Sydney, helped sort and seal the knowledge gathered and get going on the final stages of writing my first article.

Outcome

The research visit has broadened my horizons in many ways. Through the many meetings and academic discussions with colleagues with similar theoretical focuses and struggles as myself, I have built insights and theoretical confidence essential to my research and a network of fellow international researchers that I believe will be beneficial for my future career. Tight friendships have also been made.

Through the seminar I held and the feedback I got, I have established a theoretical turn within my anthropological stance from Visual Anthropology to Mediation Anthropology / Multimodal Anthropology, that has proved helpful already. Another important decision made from the knowledge gathered is to find a way to build a web page as a part of my research project, as well as publishing some of my findings as cartoons drawn by the youths I work with – to enable the knowledge to reach out to a broader audience.

Future collaborations

Visual, Digital, Material Research Group is closely linked to Moesgaard Museum and Aarhus University in Denmark, and will be spending January – July 2018 in Århus. I have a standing invitation to join them also in Århus, strengthening the opportunities for further collaborations. I am hoping to let NRSRGH benefit from this network of global anthropologists with expertise in practice-led research methods involving film-making, new media and/or exhibition as research methods – fields that I know were of interest within the group of NRSRGH PhD students participating in our writing course in fall 2016, and that I, from my own experience, can say has been of great inspiration and an important source of knowledge. I also believe the turns toward participatory methods, new media and alternative research communication strategies are fields the global health research platform struggle to keep up with. I am already working on a way to use the network I have built up within these fields to give this knowledge to other members of NRSRGH, hopefully through a course in Tromsø during the spring of 2018.

To sum it all up: I am very pleased with my research visit at The Cairns Institute and would like to thank NRSRGH for the opportunity. It has really given me the push forward that I felt like I needed.