Final Report

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Semester: Winter semester

Location: Vancouver, BC, Canada

Year: 2015

As I am a graduate student at Free University of Berlin studying Media and Political Communication, my main reason of visiting University of British Columbia was to get involved in its program called Master of Digital Media and to work on my research, on socially sustainably digital media products. Even though I have contacted the program coordinator beforehand, when I submitted my application and research proposal I didn't know yet that it won't be possible to attend this program for bureaucratic reasons. I applied for a study stay scholarship of UAS and despite all the difficulties regarding the bureaucracy, I was still committed to accept the scholarship I have been awarded with in the meantime. So I had to restart the planning phase and eventually I could visit three courses at UBC, "Gender and Popular Culture", "Anthropology of Science" and "Technology, and Digital Libraries." Besides I was looking for an internship to complete my stay with other relevant activities. The creative director of one of the media agencies I contacted, Gen Why Media, replied to me that she is currently undertaking her PhD research at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver and I could volunteer as a research assistant. Thus I could not only visit three courses at the UBC, but also work on a public art and political engagement project at the Simon Fraser University.

My primary contact person at UBC was Wenjie (Wendy) Kang, Go Global Advisor, who was always very helpful. I had to ask her for advices very often since it was really complicated to get into courses as a visiting student. When our stay started in October 2015 it was already midterm at UBC and the professors, understandably, were not that open to visiting students. Regardless, I can recommend taking these three courses to anyone interested in digital media and social sustainability. Moreover it was really easy to get in contact with the professors of all of these three courses by emailing them, they were open to visiting student and interested in my point of view.

The "Anthropology of Science" course was offered by the School of Journalism for anthropology and journalism students. It has a more theoretic framework consisted of ethnographic studies of field sites that range from nuclear weapons laboratories and surgical operating theaters to

tech start-ups, activist communities, and responses to recent disasters. The main goal of the course was to discuss the roles of science and technology in politics, policy, social movements, and their representation in media. For me visiting this course provided a whole new aspect regarding digital media products. How can a platform, the structure of a website, and digital tools influence both the information providers and the users? In a case of a news site, for example, the structure of a certain news site can even influence the journalistic practices and standards. "Gender and Popular Culture" was offered by the Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice, and it was really easy to connect it to my field of research. At this course we used our own expertise as consumers of popular culture as a take-off point for exploring the various roles played by mass-mediated popular culture in our lives and analyzed how such factors as ethnicity, race, gender, class, age, and sexuality are shaped by and reshaped in popular culture. Even though I could only audit courses, I submitted a research proposal on the topic of newly founded, click-based online news media that capitalize their LMBTQ users by offering them an extra platform dedicated only to gender topics. My final research question was whether authentic coverage of LMBTQ community exists in a mainstream media environment. The "Technology, and Digital Libraries" course's aim was providing theoretical and practical knowledge required to understand the processes and techniques involved in creating, organizing, presenting, and using information in digital environments. That is, basically, how a digital media product should be designed in the most user-friendly way. Even though the course was offered at the Master of Archival Studies and at the Master of Library and Information Studies, it had a great significance regarding my field of research.

I also asked one of the fellow students at the School of Journalism to notify me about the talks and events held at the UBC relating to media. Besides, by fellow UAS-students, I got invited to talks and workshops about environmental sustainability, on topics such as climate change, biodiversity, and environmental issues. Since we were five altogether visiting UBC during that time, the research fields of most of us were more related to economical and/or environmental sustainability. This gave me the opportunity not just to immerse into my field of interest but also the get familiar with sustainability in a more holistic sense, which I highly appreciate.

This study stay at UBC combined with volunteering at SFU had a significant impact on my research on socially sustainable digital media products. In the future I continue to widen my knowledge into a more practical direction by learning user experience design and the basic of digital product management. As my professional future, I am hoping to establish an online news platform which will let its users to cover themselves meanwhile focusing on being socially inclusive and authentic to all, in the mainstream media traditionally under-represented social groups.