

Reflection

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During my internship I have had the incredible opportunity to delve into a topic which I was only partly familiar with. As my undergraduate and postgraduate studies are in anthropology, I naturally felt comfortable with the anthropological angle with which I tackled the object of inquiry of this project. However, applying it to artificial intelligence and digital commons was quite another thing—both challenging and exciting.

I started off by exploring the concept of sustainability in the history of anthropology. This was a topic I had particular affinity with, because of my undergraduate dissertation, but I could now truly dig into the particular history and trajectory of the concept itself and develop my own opinion and interpretation of it, sustained by various works and thinkers within anthropology. With this base of knowledge I could then begin studying a theme which I was really curious about, but had no research experience with. Researching the digital commons and artificial intelligence, I have to admit, was pretty challenging as most publications and sources on the topic are from outside of anthropology. Up until this point, the little research I had carried out in the context of my education has been limited to anthropological texts, and occasionally with philosophy, sociology and political science. But I have never had the opportunity before to learn concepts, ideas, styles of writing, and disciplinary traditions thus far from anthropology. For me, this is the nearest I have been to what anthropological research is (apart from fieldwork), in the sense of applying anthropology in a ‘meta’-way—that is, to analyse the discourse and language of other sciences. While I am yet a long way from anything close to being a good researcher, I am convinced this brief internship has been invaluable not only for the insights on the theme I have gained and the ideas I have developed, but helped me gain experience in research processes. And as I am aspiring for a career in academia, I could not have asked for anything better.

Considering what I would want to improve, I place collaboration and communication highest up on the list. In other words, I wish I had been better at communicating with my supervisor, sending her drafts and ideas more often than I did to get feedback, but also to develop the lecture and reading list through a kind of critical dialogue. But I would also have wanted to work more with the other interns, sharing and discussing ideas. Instead, I often worked alone with my thoughts and ideas. However, that is also a sort of privilege which you are rarely afforded on a postgraduate level, and I deeply cherish this opportunity.

To conclude on a (perhaps not so) humble note, I do think the insights and arguments gained and developed for this lecture are important in and of themselves. They are of course not anything close to being revolutionary in any sense, but they are nevertheless relatively original. In fact, this whole particular angle—sustainability, digital commons and AI—has been a quite unique research topic, although currently extremely relevant, and has necessitated much thinking. I believe this internship was a great starting point for beginning to think about this; now, we need only continue doing so, for it is a field with a high demand for answers but not nearly enough research.