

Report Research Stay Abroad

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Place of stay: Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources & Security (ANCORS) at the University of Wollongong (UOW) in Australia

Duration of stay: November 2018 – May 2019

From November 2018 to May 2019, I had the pleasure of being a visiting researcher at the Australian National Centre for Oceans Resources & Security (ANCORS) at the University of Wollongong (UOW) in Australia. It was a very valuable experience, for many reasons, some of which I have set out in this report. This report is split up into sections about the location of ANCORS and its facilities as a visiting researcher, the academic community at ANCORS, housing, the academic proceeds of my research stay specifically, and further cooperation with the host institution.

Location and facilities

ANCORS is a large, multi-disciplinary research and education centre, with many PhD students and other law of the sea scholars. It is situated at the Innovation Campus of UOW, a bright new campus, accessible by bus and car, in North Wollongong. ANCORS is located in the ITAMS Building of the Innovation Campus, and comprises three floors of office space, lecturing rooms, meeting rooms and kitchen facilities. PhD students in Australia are not usually employees, but rather students, so, as a visiting PhD student, I was treated the same as the other PhD students. I got my own workspace in an office with 5 other desks, and the other PhD students had similar workspaces. I also got an online account for the UOW library, e-mail, etc., which gave me access to the online library of UOW, including the physical library on Main Campus.

Academic community at ANCORS

Everyone at ANCORS was very welcoming. The director, Stuart Kaye, told me at my arrival that I was welcome to participate in any ANCORS activities. At ANCORS, they organise a lab group every week, mainly for the PhD students, although senior researchers also regularly attend. As a visiting researcher, I was able to attend and contribute to these lab group meetings. ANCORS also very kindly invited me to their social events, such as their Christmas party, or other welcoming- and farewell drinks/cake meetings.

Housing

The housing market in Wollongong and/or Australia is quite different from that in Norway. You pay rent per week, instead of per month, and it is very hard to get short-term rental contracts (most rental contracts are 6 months minimum). However, there is some availability through Airbnb, or through university-sponsored housing. As a visiting researcher, I was not eligible for student housing per se, but most of the student housing buildings also had guest rooms for visiting researchers. However, they were usually quite expensive. For my first month, I stayed at a guest room on Campus East, which is a student housing facility on Innovation Campus, so very close to ANCORS. This was arranged by Myree Mitchell – she paid for the housing (as UOW employees can get a tax discount), and I then subsequently reimbursed her/the university. However, Campus East closed over the summer/Christmas holidays, and so I had to find something else. Through 'Studystays' I found my granny flat. Studystays is a website which offers accommodation that are regularly checked by the university to make sure they are not scams. I lived in Keiraville, which is one of the suburbs of Wollongong. Unfortunately, the bus route from Keiraville was not ideal, and so I had to travel to campus by car.

Academic proceeds of my research stay

I not only greatly enjoyed my research stay in Wollongong, it was also very productive. Although I was invited to participate in activities organised by ANCORS, these were relatively sparse compared

to events and activities here in Tromsø. This meant that, for 6 months, I could focus on my PhD, without any distractions. The weekly lab group meetings were a nice chance to discuss my research with the other PhD students there. One of the PhD students worked on a similar topic as my PhD topic (science and technology), and so we frequently discussed the various stages of our PhD projects together. Another PhD student there was just finishing up his PhD on a topic also similar to mine (the continental shelf), and so I was able to benefit from talks with him too. In addition, many of the academic staff at ANCORS are well-established researchers, and so it was both an honour and a privilege to listen to their presentations, discuss law of the sea with them, and get feedback from them concerning my own research project. It thus greatly expanded my academic network, through which I was able to meet new friends, colleagues and connections that will contribute to me being a better researcher.

One of the other reasons why I wanted to go to ANCORS was that Professor Clive Schofield was there. He is someone who has significant expertise in technical aspects of the law of the sea, including the continental shelf and maritime delimitation. Unfortunately, before my arrival in Wollongong, he had just moved to Sweden for a sabbatical. However, he did come back to Wollongong for a short visit whilst I was there, so I was still able to talk to him and discuss my research.

With respect to my PhD, I managed to be very productive and write several chapters of my PhD during my research stay. The first three months of my stay I mainly focused on my conceptual framework: researching the role of science in law in general, and identifying patterns and trends that I could use for my own research on the law-science interface in the law of the sea and within the continental shelf regime. The second three months I conducted an historical analysis of the continental shelf regime, and set out the development of this continental regime from the beginning until the moment the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea was adopted.

In addition, the events organised by ANCORS were great to attend. Especially a workshop organised by Professor Robin Warner, on environmental impact assessments (EIA) in the context of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) was extremely valuable, where I was able to contribute my own ideas and learn from others.

A final proceed of my research stay was that it gave me a different (geographical) perspective on the law of the sea. I have always learned about, studied and researched the law of the sea from a European perspective. However, being in Australia, with the Pacific Ocean next door, and many small island developing States nearby, it was very interesting to learn the Pacific perspective on ocean law and policy. This may not necessarily be reflected in my PhD work, but it does contribute to me being a better researcher.

Further cooperation with the host institution

The director of ANCORS is Professor Stuart Kaye. The deputy director is Professor Robin Warner. The administrative team, which is whom I was most in contact with, consists of Myree Mitchell and Anica Damcevski. ANCORS is a great institution that contributes to the field of environmental law and law of the sea in an impressive way. The researchers from ANCORS travel the world, and they are almost always present at the most important law of the sea related conferences and/or events. Although (as far as I am aware) there is no formal cooperation between UiT and UOW, ANCORS has been a popular destination for research stays abroad. Erik Molenaar, who is an employee at the Law Faculty of UiT has visited ANCORS for a research stay, and so has Elise Johansen. Eva van der Marel also considered ANCORS for a research stay abroad during her PhD, and most recently, Ingvild Ulrikke Jakobsen also considered going to Wollongong for a research stay. It would be great if we could continue cooperation between UiT and ANCORS, by sending our researchers there, as well as welcoming their researchers to come to Tromsø. Many researchers there spoke highly of Tromsø and told me they would love to come and visit someday.