



GLANAM Newsletter



The GLANAM Newsletter is back in shape!

Dear GLANAM followers, I am happy to present you with the new format of the GLANAM Newsletter which will appear on

the GLANAM website every two months. On this bulletin you will have the possibility to share information on the progress (both science and training-wise) and on general news in the Quaternary Science world. I think that this constant communication and update will be both positive for the fellows (and supervisors) and will help increase the exchange of experiences between them and the rest of the community.

The structure of the newsletter, although subject to alterations depending on the issue, will be generally as follows:

In the first page we will present the news, information on meetings and training concerning the GLANAM network. If you have any communication you would like to share with the group please get in touch and I will make it appear on the next edition of the

Newsletter.

The second column “Meet the Researchers” will normally feature interviews with one or two fellows on the status of their work. We would like to know not only at what point they are but also if they have encountered any particular problem during the research process. Whether they are stuck at a dead-end and do not know how to proceed, or they have got a nice dataset but are not sure what kind of method or software could be useful to interpret it, we are interested in their experiences. Moreover these problems will reach not only your supervisors but the entire community.

A third and final column will present a piece on a general scientific or non-scientific subject relevant to GLANAM. For example, this issue Oscar will present a very brief introduction to the life in Longyearbyen, which is intended to give an initial taste of the geography and touristic attractions that Svalbard has to offer before the fieldtrip in June. Katharina, Amandine and I hope you will find this improved newsletter useful for you and the progression of the project.

Take it easy,

Riccardo Arosio

this issue:

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Getting ready for the Mid-term review

As a Marie-Curie ITN, we have a Mid-Term Review (MTR) meeting coming up in a couple of weeks, in Copenhagen. The MTR assesses the fulfilment of all aspects of the project, facilitating the dialogue between the network participants and the Research Executive Agency (REA) project officer. It is also a valuable source of feedback to both GLANAM and the REA.

Every fellow will have to present the project and results or achievements so far. Scientific content is expected in the presentations, but particular attention is also paid to the training activities and networking aspects including activities across different

sectors.

In the 10 minutes at our disposition the fellows should briefly present themselves, their background, and their training experiences within the Network. Most importantly, we should show the main objectives of our projects, methodology used and main results obtained so far. The end of the presentation should include also the expectations on the possible impact of the action on their future career.

So, good luck to the fellows with their presentations and enjoy the brief visit to Copenhagen.

Riccardo Arosio

The Enterprise School in Durham

2014's GLANAM meeting in Durham, UK, kicked off with a week-long Enterprise School at Collingwood College, which was designed not only to impart the annual "transferrable skills" on us research fellows, but also to get us involved in entrepreneurial thinking. The business school was open to everyone and thus a bit less specific than last year's "communication skills" in Norway. With the main objective of getting everybody out of their COMFORT ZONE, the school focussed on TEAM WORK skills as well as COMMUNICATION, both qualities which are highly useful for researchers and young entrepreneurs. In addition to hearing several lectures from people who

had taken the leap and become an entrepreneur, we were given numerous smaller tasks over the four days, which we completed in groups of 8 or 9 people (an example is given in the picture below). This way we gave business advice to one of our mentors, who pretended to be in financial trouble with his made-up firm, we built protective shells for egg-long throw to make the egg land unharmed, we pretended to be blind sheep being herded into the shelter by our shepherd using just a whistle and we introduced our research to a number of pretend-audiences, i.e. kids, social scientists or business people, who ordinarily do not interact closely with our branch of science.



We also spent some time coming up with a gadget to market, thus practising to “sell” our ideas, advertise them properly and find sponsors to support them, something which is bound to come in handy in our careers when we are expected to gather funding for our newest projects by writing research proposals. Throughout these exercises we were nudged to take over roles we ordinarily wouldn’t feel comfortable with (for example the shy and quiet girl being asked to lead a team discussion, or the bossy, self-confident control freak to just observe and listen), thus broadening our horizons and experiencing different ways of problem solving. Although it took a lot of effort and involved quite some personality clashes in my group, I did learn that it is possible to work with everyone if willing to adapt to different roles. And it was interesting to see where research can take you,

even though you might not expect it...

Katharina Streuff



Photos courtesy of Kevin Schiele

Life in Longyearbyen

The upcoming GLANAM workshop takes place in the remote and in many ways exotic Longyearbyen, Svalbard. This will be the first visit to this Arctic Archipelago for many of the GLANAM members. Therefore we leave some room for introducing Svalbard in this issue of the newsletter.

In spite of its harsh climate and remote location, Svalbard has interested people for ages. The first, sometimes disputed discovery of the archipelago may be credited to the Scandinavians of the 12th century. Sources from this time tell about a land named “Svalbarð”, or “The land of the cold shores”. Svalbard reappears in the history books at the end of the 16th century, when a Dutch expedition led by Willem Barentsz came across the archipelago. Whaling and walrus hunting became the main business up there, and several European countries sent their fleets to take part in the exploitation. At the end of the 19th century the coal mining business started, which in addition to the Europeans, also attracted Americans and Russians. Coal mining is still an important industry on Svalbard.

Active mines are for example found near Longyearbyen and in Svea. Worth to know is that in the aftermath of the colonisation of Svalbard, the “Svalbard treaty” was signed in the year of 1920. The treaty includes several paragraphs about laws and regulations on Svalbard.



http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Topographic_map_of_Svalbard.svg

The most important one states that the countries who have signed the treaty recognise the sovereignty of Norway over Svalbard. In return, the signatories have equal rights to engage in commercial activities in the archipelago. This is the reason why mining cities belonging to different nations could (and still can) open up.

Today, the mining history has become a tourist attraction. One of the most famous abandoned coal mining cities is called “Pyramiden”, and was run by the Soviet Union (and later Russia). Today Pyramiden looks a bit like a post-apocalyptic town with a Soviet touch. Due to its location nearby Billefjorden, Pyramiden makes a good day trip by boat from Longyearbyen. Such a trip can be arranged by any of the travel agencies operating in Longyearbyen. Definitely worth a visit! If you are more interested in an active coal mining city, Barentsburg is also a good excursion by boat from Longyearbyen. Even if the first glimpses of Barentsburg give you the impression that it is also abandoned, there are possibilities to have a Russian meal and a beer at the local restaurant, or buy some souvenirs in the shop. Whatever you do there, don’t use your cell phone too much since you will be surfing on the Russian net!

If you prefer to see what the nature has to offer, there are countless of mountain tops to hike and glaciers to study. Just around Longyearbyen itself you have several tops that make good day hikes. Relatively popular tops nearby have names like “Trollsteinen”, “Sarkofagen” and “Sukkertoppen”. Reach these tops and you will have amazing views in all directions. Hjortfjellet opposite to Longyearbyen on the other side of Isfjorden is also a beautiful mountain. However, to get there kayaking is recommended. This can also be arranged by one of the travel agencies in town.

Very important information is that as soon as you leave Longyearbyen,

you have to bring a rifle. This is due to the 3000 polar bears that are spread over the archipelago of Svalbard. Even if polar bears are more common on the east coast, there is nothing that prevents them from reaching the west coast and Longyearbyen itself. Encounters are rare, but not impossible. With that said, Svalbard is most likely significantly safer than your respective home towns, but common sense is important when leaving the town.

Longyearbyen itself is a tiny place with just over 2000 inhabitants from over 40 different nations. Although its tiny area squeezed in a valley, there is a relatively good selection of restaurants, pubs and shops. One of the most famous (and pricy) restaurants is “Kroa”. Even if the pan pizzas are popular here, it could be worth trying something more local like a reindeer steak, or maybe whale meat. If you are interested in whiskey, “Karlsberger” is recommended.

They say that they have “The best whiskey selection of Northern Europe”. I do not know what that means, but I know I have never tried Nepalese whiskey before I went there. Did you know Svalbard is tax free? Another good outcome from the treaty of 1920!

Last but not least, there will be very little (if any) snow in Longyearbyen in June. Hopefully this introduction gave you some inspiration and ideas that could work as a substitute for ski trips.

If you have any questions about Svalbard before you pack your bag, you are welcome to ask Riko, Anne or myself.

Welcome to Svalbard!

Oscar Fransner



Photos courtesy of Oscar Fransner

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