

COINS seminar + NISK conference Svalbard – Travel report

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1 Introduction

This years NISK conference was in the polar archipelago of Svalbard, in the old mining town called Longyearbyen. Svalbard is located at 78° north, and is the home of more polar bears (approximately 3000) than humans (approximately 2700). Even though Longyearbyen originally was a mining town, today only one mine is operating, and the majority of people are working in the tourist industry and the University Centre in Svalbard.

Svalbard is also in a convenient location for communication with satellites in polar orbits, and Svalbard Satellite Station can see the low earth orbit satellites on every pass around the earth.

The Global Seed Vault is a storage for seeds from around the world for conserving the biological diversity of the world located close to Longyearbyen. As of today it has been one withdrawal from the seed vault, to Syria in 2015. Unfortunately the global warming has already made its impact, so the area around the seed vault was closed while the work for protecting the vault from the water melting was performed.

2 COINS Seminar

The COINS seminar started with a talk by Chris Carr on *How to get (and not to get) an PhD + why you should/ shouldn't travel*, followed by Andrii Shalaginov on *"Mission Impossible" or "Roadside Picnic"* and Bo Sun on *There is always light at the end of the tunnel*. These talks focused on some of the lessons the PhD's learned from their PhD studies, and we got an insight into both the hardships encountered and the joyful parts of the process. The main takeaway as a PhD student, is extrapolated from Andrii's presentation: No matter how hard the PhD seems, it will be even worse as a post.doc. (Figure 1.)

The next session was other PhD candidates presenting their work, and it was refreshing to hear about advanced topics in other fields than just my own. There were presentations from network and graph analysis to the more human-centered decision making.

The last session was about life after the Ph.D. The first focused on the job searching process after finishing the PhD, and the other was about how to start

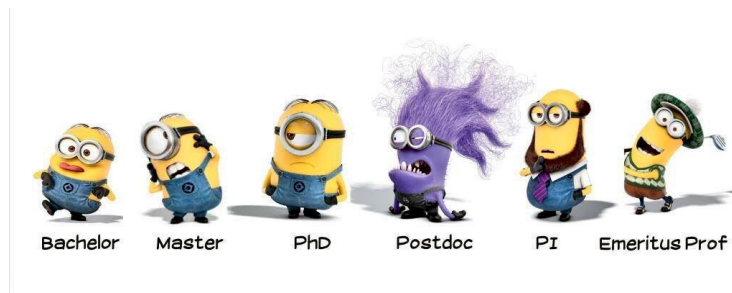


Figure 1: From Andrii's presentation. [From Twitter/Paul Coxon].

up your own business. These were inspiring talks, and interesting to see two approaches on finding and creating a job.

The seminar ended with the election of two COINS student representatives. Three hopeful students competed and each gave their election speech. It was difficult to select between these three competent candidates.

3 NISK conference

One of the things I appreciated with the conference, was the co-location of 4 conferences in one, and the common keynote speeches. It was very interesting to hear about both learning analytics, protection of communication, the development of QT, and of course the talk about computer history,

The rest of the NISK conference was a good introduction to what is going on in the information security research community in Norway. We heard about crypt-primitives and crypto-protocols, web security, biometrics and malware.

4 Final thoughts

The co-location of 4 informatics conferences gave the opportunity to meet people with other focus areas and view on computer and information science. The dinner gave many good and interesting discussions about our fields viewed from different angles. I had a good discussion of information security and teaching with a couple of participants from the Norwegian Conference for Education and Didactics in IT subjects (UDIT).

Longyearbyen was a nice and quite place to have a conference and Ph.D. seminar. I enjoyed the nature and the quiet atmosphere, together with interesting talks and people which gave me a lot of inspiration and new ideas for my own research. The drawback with the location, is the limited bandwidth of sending humans by air, or the huge latency by boat. I understand that next years conference will be a more centrally located area, in Narvik, and already looking forward to coming back to this conference and PhD seminar.