

ERASMUS MUNDUS MASTERS
Journalism and Media within Globalisation:
: The European Perspective

Blue Book
2006-08



In front of the Danish School of Journalism.

Photo: Inger Munk

The 2006-08 masters group covers 36 participants from all over the world: Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, Georgia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Norway, Pakistan, Phillipines, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam, Ukraine, USA

Introduction

This Blue Book covers the short stories of the second group of participants in the Mundus Masters Journalism and Media within Globalization: The European Perspective.

The Consortium that offers this Masters is very proud to present a group of students who is truly global as to professional interests and with representation from all over the world. The group has been carefully selected within a pool of more than 250 applicants, so a lot of expectation is put to the outcome when hopefully all participants graduate with this Masters summer 2008.

Before graduation, the group is going to explore different professional and cultural environments in Europe.

The first semester takes place at the Danish School of Journalism / University of Aarhus in Denmark. Just after Christmas the group goes on to University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands.

For the last year the group is divided into three to study their choice of specialization:

University of Wales, Swansea United Kingdom: *War and Conflict*

City University, London United Kingdom: *Business and Finance*

University of Hamburg, Germany: *Media Systems, Journalism and Public Spheres in a Comparative Perspective*

For the Blue Book the participants have interviewed each other with the aim to get a picture of each participant as to areas like journalism experience and the expectations and future plans with this Mundus Masters.

The Consortium for this Mundus Masters welcomes this second group of the Mundus Masters Journalism and Media within Globalization: The European Perspective, and looks forward to hopefully providing the best conditions for excellent course works, so the Masters group will have the next two years of professional and cultural experiences as ever memorable.

Inger Munk

Coordinator the Mundus Masters

Journalism and Media within Globalization: The European Perspective

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The following articles are in alphabetic order according to first name.

Turning the tables round

After a decade working as a journalist, Al intends to go from practice to academia

Named after a former King of Thailand, King Chualongkorn, Alongkorn Parivudhipongs, now 36, does not seem to be affected by aging. Looking like a young man in his early twenties Al, as he is popularly known, is now looking for a new adventure in Europe with the Erasmus Mundus Master in Journalism.

Having worked as a journalist/feature writer for about 10 years with Outlook, a general feature section at English-language newspaper Bangkok Post, he felt like he was doing a "mechanic" job. "I felt like a story factory and I became less human in my writings...I came here hoping to recharge my batteries and looking for a new start in life" - he says.

Well-known in class for having interviewed many international celebrities, Al himself does not give that much importance. He makes sure to emphasize that he has also covered the areas of education, consumer rights, media reform and entertainment.

In November 2005, Al decided to resign from his much-loved job at Bangkok Post to experiment a new challenge. "I took up a job at an international NGO, working as a Regional Communication Officer, but I ended up finding out that the NGO was not exactly what I had expected. I expected more responsibility and more contribution to society" - he highlights.

Al is now pursuing a career as a full-time lecturer in the university, and he also wants to continue his PhD after this program. Willing to achieve his goal, Al has already worked as a guest lecturer at three major Thai universities since 2001, teaching the courses Journalistic Writing, Media Technology and Theatre Criticism. The new ambition seems to suit him just fine. His genuine interest for education can be well observed in his 1997 and 2002 award-winning articles on the subject from the regional competitions.

Describing himself as a selfish being, Al is not and does not intend to get married. "I can't even put up with myself" - he says, laughing. Despite his individualist view of himself, Al seemed very friendly and caring as he described his relationship with friends and parents. Regarding social relations, Al expects to make new friends and learn more about other cultures throughout the next two years. "And of course, guarantee free accommodation in my trips around the world" - he says in a funny tone.

Alongkorn Parivudhipongs from Thailand was interviewed by Isis Almeida

A Notebook of a young Canadian traveler

The combination of perfect physical condition, distinguished brain cells, willingness to work hard and social sensitivity has been her main assets. With her eagerness to explore the world, Angela Johnston is certainly not just another newcomer in the journalism world

The soft-spoken Angela Johnston is a down-to-earth figure. But, don't get fooled by her physical appearance! She completed her bachelor degree in journalism with the highest honors on the Dean's Honor List from the Ottawa-based Carleton University, involved in a long list of internships and working experiences during her university years and reached the finish during a full marathon (yes, it's 42 kilometer!) competition in her hometown in Winnipeg, Canada this year.

She has traveled extensively, but it was her visits to London and Malawi which become the most memorable ones. In London, she learnt a lot from CBC bureau. Angela was "really touched in profound way" while working in Malawi. She recalled about volunteers who donated food from their personal gardens to feed the orphans. "They weren't being paid; they might not have enough food and I thought that amount of generosity was amazing," she said.

Starting to travel abroad since the age of 16, Angela is now addicted to traveling. "I remember being so amazed by the differences in culture, architecture, etc. I think from that point on, all I wanted to do was traveling". Her passion to traveling has brought her to Aarhus, Denmark, where she is attending the first semester of the Erasmus Mundus journalism masters program. Angela is expected to depart to Amsterdam; the Netherlands for the second semester and to Swansea, UK for the second year to learn war and conflict.

However, her love to her family and friends is so enormous that Angela plans to go back to her hometown after the completion of the program. "I'd like to re-connect with my family and friends," said the 23-year-old, who has left her home for over 5 years.

Angela Johnston from Canada was interviewed by Muninggar Sri Saraswati

From Pakistan with academic ambitions

Mr. Azmat Rasul hailing from Pakistan was serving as Assistant Professor in the Institute of Communication Studies at the University of the Punjab, Lahore before joining the Erasmus Mundus Journalism Programme 2006-08. He has very strong academic profile behind him which has facilitated his selection for this esteemed programme. The most important feature of his brilliant career was that he already had the M.Phil degree in mass communication from Pakistan.

Mr. Azmat told that Ms. Salma Ambir, Chairperson of the Department of Mass Communication at Government College University, Faisalabad informed him about the programme with just three days to left for applying. After studying the outline of the programme, he found it suitable for his journalistic ambitions. He told that as the programme was masterminded very professionally with having students from across the globe and the experience of three best universities of Europe pushed him to go all out for the programme.

He expects that the programme will not only broaden his knowledge in the area of journalism with special reference to the European perspective but also establish close professional and social relationships with the classmates belonging to diverse cultures and societies which in itself is rewarding in future.

While throwing light on the future plans, Mr. Azmat candidly disclosed that he will continue his career as academician at the university to disseminate the precious knowledge gained from Europe and would share his experience with the budding scholars who wish to seek career in journalism in Pakistan.

When asked to share his best experience so far, he said during his early period of practical journalism, he got the opportunity to visit the worst drought-hit area of the Punjab Province which is also connected with the Sindh Province and also south western part of the India.

He said that the people were so badly affected by the water shortage that they were forced to drink the unhygienic and polluted water with their animals from the same ponds. And a large population was forced to migrate from the area which ran against their tradition. Migration with a family with very meager resources was challenging, but they had no other option to save their lives. Mr. Azmat highlighted the plight of those poor people in the national press. He considers the series of stories on the issue as one of the best experiences he has had so far in journalism.

Azmat Rasul from Pakistan was interviewed by Soulat Nazir

Thai student will fight corruption with journalism

Bamrung Amnatcharoenrit joins the 2006-2008 Erasmus Mundus Masters program from the *Bangkok Post*, and hopes to make his home country's press more free

In mid-August, Thailand native Bamrung Amnatcharoenrit, 37, arrived in Aarhus, Denmark, to begin a two-year Erasmus Mundus masters program focused on journalism and media within globalization. The program will later take him to Amsterdam and London, and will give him tools to achieve his ultimate goal: "I want to fight government policies that try to interfere with media freedom," he said.

After a recent orientation meeting, while quietly observing his new classmates and thoughtfully adjusting his fashionable turtle-shell glasses, he explained why he chose to leave a six-year, stable job as a business reporter at the *Bangkok Post*—an English-language daily, circ. 70,000—to participate in the program.

"The best media in the world are in Europe," he said. "At the same time, we can all learn new cultures and meet people from other places and journalists from worldwide."

By studying journalism and media in Europe, Amnatcharoenrit believes, he will learn about how societies integrate a free press into political and civic life, a process yet to be achieved in his home country.

"In Thailand," he said, "the government tries to interfere with media freedom. Maybe I can get new ideas to bring back home."

Amnatcharoenrit has always looked for lessons from other cultures. At Kasetsart University in Bangkok, he received a bachelor's in English literature, and early in his career, wanted to be entertainment reporter, writing about movies, books, and music from all over the world.

For the past ten years, Amnatcharoenrit has worked as a business reporter, first for *The Nation*, a Thai English-language newspaper, then for the *Bangkok Post*.

Now he wants to gain a broader perspective. "I've never been satisfied with my own work and think I can do better," he said. "I want to write stories that get a bigger impact."

After hearing about the Erasmus Mundus Masters from an advertisement in the *Bangkok Post*, he knew he'd found a good match for his experiences and goals.

In year two of the program, Amnatcharoenrit will study business and finance in London, and this specialization will help him with his ultimate goal of fighting corruption at home.

In the meantime, he's happy to be in a program with classmates from 19 different countries and teachers at the forefront of journalism studies. He regarded the orientation room, and added, "I have to learn more. We cannot stop learning."

Bamrung Amnatcharoenrit from Thailand was interviewed by Emily Drew

Chinese lady reporting life of the world

Bonnie Yining Cao, Erasmus Mundus student from China celebrated her 23-d birthday on the Danish earth at the very beginning of her study at the Erasmus Mundus Masters Program in Journalism. New year of her life coincides with new highly challenging undertaking which should bring Bonnie many new things –precious news knowledge and skills, new friends, new world outlook, new perception of European culture

Bonnie was born in Mainland China. She has got the Bachelor degree in International Journalism at the Hong Kong Baptist University. Despite her young age this Chinese lady managed to obtain great journalistic experience. Bonnie really fulfilled many good things. She won the scholarship of Hong Kong government to study in Hong Kong, studied as an exchange student in Australia during one semester, made a number of internships at print media and at BBC. Bonnie worked for Hong Kong “Asia Weekly” and local newspaper in Australia. And what is she looking for in Europe studying at the Erasmus Mundus Masters Program?

Bonnie considers journalism is not just the technical fact reporting but complicated, highly qualified job demanding wide and deep range of knowledge, fresh ideas, academic background. ‘I would like to get new skills and fundamental academic knowledge of the present-day world agenda’ Bonnie said. Upon completion of her first year Bonnie is going to London to study economics and finance which, she believes, will grant her these desirable knowledge.

As her the brightest journalistic experience Bonnie regarded the interview done with the spokesman of the Chinese Ministry for Foreign Affairs at the National People’s Congress Annual Meeting Mr Liu Jianchao. She was selected among journalism students at her university to the top 10 excellent students who got the access to the great national meeting. Many outstanding people were there. But interviewing the spokesman of the Minister is twice more valuable for a young curious journalist. The spokesman is the person whose obligation is to report publicly the official position of his chef. He is ought to report correctly, accurately, clearly, wisely, and confidently. He has little right to mistake or even has no one at all. Reporting the life of the official state body, he should be the face of only one Ministry. The journalist reporting life of his community has to be the face of this community. The journalist reporting life of his nation has to be the face of this nation. The journalist reporting life of the world is the face of this world. This young Chinese lady applied to the Erasmus Mundus Masters Program because she feels strong enough to encounter with reality of the whole strongly globalized world in order to be the face of this complicated but sincerely loved by our world.

Bonnie remembers that reporting life of the world is one of the most difficult jobs that ought to be done by valiant and well-educated people.

Bonnie Yining Cao from China was interviewed by Zhanna Bezpiathuk

Catch her if you can

A drastic change. That's how Chuan-Fen, 36 years old, sees her own participation in the Erasmus Mundus program. As a free-lance writer, she has spent most of her time focusing on investigative journalism books and living a quiet and peaceful life in Taipei, Taiwan. Extremely modest, this award-winning and highly acclaimed author decided to apply for this course after a life-changing trip to Nepal, in 2004, when she realized her life had not "changed much" in the past ten years, and it was time for a new challenge.

Her career began at the daily *China Times*, right after graduating with a BA in Sociology from *National Taiwan University*, in 1992. After five years of reporting, she felt overwhelmed by the daily news and moved into writing. It didn't take long for her to realize that it had been the right decision. From the four pieces published, three were elected by the readers of the *China Times*, the *Central Daily News* and the *United Daily News* as "one of the ten best books of the year". *An Unhealthy Coming of Age, the Case of Hsichih Trio, 1991 to Date*, about a controversial double murder case that convicted three innocent men, received the Taiwan Literature Award for Reportage in 2003.

The other works concentrate on the oppression of lesbians in Taiwan. *Against the Wall, Lesbians Like This and That: The Eroticism of Lesbianism and Its Cultural Meaning* and *When The Rainbow Raises* were highly recognized by the national press and academia as "powerful in shattering the stereotypes that the society holds for lesbians".

It only takes a few minutes of conversation to discover that behind so much modesty there's a controversial, intelligent, talkative and fun woman. Her background includes intense participation in feminist and human rights movements and also travels to New Zealand, United States and Greece. It was on her last trip to Nepal, while trekking in the Himalaya, that Chuan-Fen reached the conclusion of going overseas for a while. Some time later, she read on the news about the Mundus scholarships and had no doubt about her destiny. But leaving everything behind was no easy task.

"This is totally against my nature. Sometimes I can go for days without leaving my apartment, just writing and maybe talking to some very close friends", she explains. Adapting to a whole new reality and to this exquisite group of internationals is definitely seen as a great challenge. However, just like her native land, Chuan-Fen may surprise many people. "During the Cold War we could not have contact with anyone, and for many years we have been living in the shadows of China, but this is not how we think of ourselves. Globalization seems to be able to put Taiwan back on the world", she says. The same phenomenon brought her to Europe, and one could only expect that this Mundus Masters will also reveal this talented journalist to the globe.

** If, like me, you ended up curious to know more about the controversial double murder book, here's a little preview by the author: *An Unhealthy Coming of Age* is about a double murder happened in 1991. The police traced a marine by a finger print left in the crime scene, and he admitted it. But they didn't believe that he had done it alone: "how can one person kill two?" After long detention, the marine said that he had three helpers, but he didn't even know their names. He only knew their nicknames. The police arrested three young men and was convinced that it had solved the case, but there is still no evidence confirming the three young men's involvement. All we have is the trio's statements made in the police station, but they all retracted it as soon as they left the station and claimed to have been beaten up. It is against the law to convict someone only by his statement; you can only do that when there is circumstantial evidence to back it up. Yet they were sentenced to death, put in jail for nine years and were on the death roll for five years.

They have been suffering for 14 years until now, when one of them walked out of jail with depression and the other one has bad health. But thanks to them, the judicial system made a lot of progress because we try to prevent this from happening by making structural changes. For example, the police is now asked to videotape the whole process of interrogation, so there will be no more beating or any other tricks.

** She is also working on *Clean for Two Months: My Trip to Nepal*. Consider yourself lucky if you're able to start a conversation with this extremely interesting and sweet Taiwanese. Piece of advice: act fast. You must catch her right after class ends, before she runs to her kollegiet and starts doing what she loves the most.

Chuan-Fen Chang from Taiwan was interviewed by Jefferson Puff

Learning to share

After graduating from the University of Siegen, Germany, in Literary, Cultural and Media Studies, Cliff was relatively undecided about what kind of MA programme he was going to pursue afterwards. On the one hand, he had cultivated an intense interest in cultural studies and cultural management during his studies; on the other hand, he had been writing since his days in school, and was appealed by a further education in journalism. The second option was generally his first choice – still, he looked at it with mixed feelings, especially after rather sad experiences with local print media which somewhat curtailed his freedom to report and temporarily crushed his spirit and enthusiasm with which he had entered the domain of media, hoping to write and narrate to the fullest. He was looking to enrich his experiences and explore new vistas to hone his analytical abilities when he ‘googled’ into the *Erasmus Programme* and found the prospect of studying journalism in three different countries ‘very appealing.’

Still in school, Cliff Lehnen had turned to reporting news of the music world in Germany for the online magazine NOIZE, where he wrote concert and album reviews, interviewed popular alternative music bands of the likes of *Pennywise*, *The Get Up Kids* or *Beatsteaks*, and had his own regular commentary. It is here that he took to ‘writing his heart out’ and experiencing ‘the real thrill’ of the media world after his disappointment with newspapers, which killed his creativity and allowed ‘no personal element’ to flourish.

Cliff was always hooked on to the theories and excited by the academia and he found the Erasmus Masters Course in line with his interest in writing academic essays and pursuing theories in detail as part of the curriculum at the universities.

He is keen to learn from the lectures and believes that as an Erasmus Mundus scholar, his interactions with ‘amazing classmates and great professors’ will awaken in him a new passion to take on the future with great hopes. He is open to all possibilities that this course will bring his way and might either directly work as a journalist or elsewhere in the broader media sector, or stay in academia. Not only does he want to take away from the programme, but ‘also give as much as possible.’

Cliff Lehnen from Germany was interviewed by Navin Agarwal

Revelling in the silence of Århus

The most striking feature about Denmark for Cuckoo Susan James is the silence. An alien feature compared to her home in Cochin, on the west coast of India, the silence is both lonely and calming at the same time; an ideal environment for a journalist passionate about private nature of creating analytical print journalism.

James worked on a broadcast documentary on the plight of Tibetan refugees in Karnataka, a state located in southern India before delving into work in her preferred medium: print.

She started working for the *New Indian Express*, a daily with a reputation for investigative and analytical journalism. And while senior reporters covered the more investigative stories, James says it was a great place to start, “as a beginner I could try anything and everything.”

“Journalism is about more than just the stories we tell,” says James, who also has a master’s in Mass Communication under her belt. “It’s about the people.

“I feel journalism is almost like a form of counselling because people who are in pain feel like they’re being listened to; people want to talk about their pain. They want people to know what they are going through and through the stories we write they are heard and understood.”

James was attracted to the Erasmus Mundus Master’s in Journalism not only because of the opportunity it offered of living in three European countries. James, who will set off for Swansea, Wales, to complete a concentration in Reporting War and Conflict, hopes the program will equip her for her plans of living in Jerusalem and pursuing analytical journalism in the heart of conflict zones.

“Jerusalem is the centre of a lot of conflict. If we could solve Jerusalem, we could solve a lot of the world’s conflict,” says James. She admits that it seems like an almost impossible and frightening dream now, but she knows she will accomplish it. “The media gives us only the violence. A lot of other things go on - they live daily lives; I want to learn that.”

Cuckoo Susan James from India was interviewed by Miriam Christensen

Life never stops for Emily Drew

Talking to Emily Drew, it feels like you are touching her childhood and adulthood at the same moment. Her beautiful eyes show innocence and hide big fun when having a chat about her old days. But her eyes turn even stronger with more commitment when asked about her future life and job.

Born in Sandy Lake, Pennsylvania, young American Drew enjoyed her tranquil life with five family members, including two brothers, in a town of 600 people. She was the oldest and her family lived on a farm.

She went to Davidson College in North Carolina and chose English language as her major, while concentrating in political science, too.

During her college years, she received two grants to go to Taiwan from Freeman Foundation and her college. She studied at National Chenghai University and Shida University, both in Taipei.

While in Taiwan, she never stopped learning. Her time was contributed to learning Mandarin and her language helped her life have more fun there.

Her Mandarin skill was improved further when she received a grant from the Lilly Foundation to work and study in Taiwan after she completed her bachelor degree.

In Taipei, she had an opportunity to work with the Taipei Times, an English-language daily. Her responsibility varied from covering entertainment news and feature stories to helping edit English stories written by local reporters.

She learned a lot there and had a lot of fun, she said. In particular, she got a valuable journalistic experience from her editor, who taught her a lot about journalism and editing.

After one year in Taiwan, she moved to New York and worked with Simon and Schuster in Rockefeller Center for a year.

While working, she realized her first degree was not enough for the competitive world and therefore started to look for courses to strengthen her knowledge.

She had no hesitation to apply for the Erasmus Mundus Master Journalism and Media within Globalization: The European Perspective when her friend told her. And she does not feel disappointed so far.

Ms Drew, 24, said the program gave her a chance to meet friends from worldwide to help expand her horizon. In the final year, she chose to go to London to study business and finance as her specialism because she believes these fields are integral to every other aspect of society and are not understood by enough people.

After completing the degree, she plans to come back to journalist life. Two choices in her mind at present are to work in New York or to go to mainland China or Taiwan.

Especially in mainland China, she hopes to cover in-depth stories via her American eyes for American readers.

Meanwhile, she will also keep traveling abroad to discover different cultures, including Thailand as one of her destinations.

Good luck Ms Drew.

Emily Drew from USA was Interviewed by Bamrung Amnatcharoenrit

The Malaysian invasion

As a general assignments reporter for the Malaysian newspaper, *The Sun*, and editor of the paper's contemporary supplemental paper *U!*, one would think 24-year-old Emily Tan knew exactly what she wanted to do at a very young age. However, Tan said it wasn't until after the age of 17 that she ultimately dedicated her life to writing.

"My parents wanted me to be a doctor or a scientist," said Tan, a new Erasmus Mundus journalism masters student.

Through writing and editing, Tan said she meets inspiring people and gives youths a venue to express their interests and opinions as they launch their journalism careers. Tan's ambition to "learn a bit about everything" motivates her career in journalism, she said.

From beauty to gadgets, and from health to politics—she's covered just about every type of story. In fact, Tan discovered the Erasmus Mundus program in 2005 while covering an event announcing the first-ever scholarship guaranteeing a Malaysian student a place in the program. Tan, who said she wants to steer away from "fluffy writing," expects the program will improve her analytical skills, which are essential to write in dept articles.

"I feel I am under exposed, but the program will help me become a better writer to supply better content," she said. "It's a dream come true."

Although Tan said she would like to return to Malaysia to improve the media in her country, she's open to the idea of not returning to her mother land after continuing her specialism in business and finance in London. "I'm expecting my priorities to change," she added.

Tan admits the program's curriculum will be a challenging one—but she's used to challenges. After all, she did write for five different desks and managed her own publication all at one time before being accepted into the program.

But it won't all be grueling times. Tan said she also expects to have a "rollicking good time."

Emily Tan from Malaysia was interviewed by JoAnn DeLuna

Come to see myself in the big world

It was astonishing to hear that Ferdinand Maglalang could have become a priest, when the well-built young man said he spent 9 years of his life studying in a seminary, intending to serve the spiritual life of his fellowmen. But his life changed forever in 1994 when the Philippine Manila Bulletin chose him to be a political reporter.

For twelve years the could-be priest Ferdinand has quickly become an elite of Philippine journalism, with big and sharp coverage on performance of Philippine president and cabinet in Malacanang, Manila, and the Philippine senate. But somehow the ideal of a religious servant is still cumulated in the job of a media person.

“By direct contacts with top leaders of the country and debates on press, you help shape the government policies. So being a journalist, you serve your people more actively”, he said in a calm and modest manner that covers a devoting heart.

Ferdinand is also an adjunct professor at the University of Philippines and find in this job a “feeling of fulfilment”, a way of sharing his possessions and inspiring freshmen. “Sharing” is an outstanding theme when he says about his participation in any professional and social activities.

To further benefit his Filipinos, who have been confused by political and military conflicts for three decades, Ferdinand chose War and Conflict as his specialization in the Erasmus Mundus program. He desires to make some change in Philippine conflicts reporting, which “is generated by events, and fails to analyze the profound causes of policies and mechanism”. But more than just critics, Ferdinand sees journalists’ mission as giving hope to people, changing their perspective and motivating their actions.

In summer 2006, on the peak of his career as a high-profile of Manila Bulletin, Ferdinand made a brave decision by leaving all the comforts and promotions behind to become a student once again. The adaptation is not easy, but Ferdinand prefers challenging himself, to “see myself in the big world” as he said, a sense that only professional traveling cannot bring to him. The ambitious pressman comes back to the academic life in Europe, seeing it a springboard to reach solutions to his local problems from global perspectives.

Ferdinand Maglalang from the Philippines was interviewed by Thi Phuong Thao Vu

In the name of a Goddess

If you are going to a party or a bar, chances are you will meet Isis Caroline Malta Almeida. Fun-loving and vivacious, this 23-year-old from Rio de Janeiro prefers to be seen as a social animal above all else. Her slogan of living is 'work hard and play harder.' "I live the present. I focus on what's going on now because we don't even know what's going to happen next," she says.

Brazil is her birthplace, but the world is her home. The job of her father, an engineer for the Brazilian state oil company, Petrobras, has allowed her to travel to many different cities, which has helped her not only to get to know Brazil inside out, but also to understand herself as a different being. "For Brazilians, I am a blond woman. But for Europeans, my hair color is brunette," says Isis, who inherited such beauty from her Portuguese ancestors.

Her first visit to Europe when she was 14 was an eye-opening experience. Her family moved to Rotterdam, in the Netherlands, where Isis spent 18 months studying and gaining her English language proficiency, which she later used for tutoring and teaching children and adults after returning home to Brazil. At the age of 22, she went to Stockholm on a study exchange programme for several months. In Stockholm, Isis learnt about how equal a society can be. "There are so many things different from a patriarchal society like Brazil where it is still full of gender discrimination and social gaps," she says.

In fact, what generally turns her off is social prejudices and disrespect to individual choices. "So many prejudices in the media and society. If you can't understand people the way they are, at least try to accept them. Don't make judgments. Let people be what they want to be"

With a BA in Journalism and Communication, this recent graduate started her professional career doing PR work for Shell. She then went on to working as a freelancer for websites. "I could write anything from IT to music, but no, no sports." Back home, she was a manager of a Pop-Rock band consisting of five guys, which produced some indie music, and ran the gig every week.

Isis pursues this master's program because she wants to learn more about journalistic practices with other ambitious and professional journalists from different countries. It will also create better opportunities for her in the job market. "Hopefully I will leave the program with more experiences, and become more professionally mature."

What's her future goal? "I am like a rolling stone. Just take life as it comes...I know I don't want to be a famous reporter. I just love to write." Perhaps, only the Egyptian goddess of fertility, Isis, with whom she shares her name, can tell what lies ahead for our young, aspiring storyteller.

Isis Almeida from Brazil was interviewed by Alongkorn Parivudhipongs

Oldest in the group, but young at heart****Janet Thomson

Janet Thomson, a Canadian happens to be one of the veteran journalists on the *Mundus* programme. I am stressing on 'one of the' because Marianne also shares the same space - both age wise and of course experience wise. Well, let me tell you, Janet has over 28 years of experience in media, and that's quite a lot!

Janet graduated from the Ryerson University in Toronto from where she pursued her degree in journalism in 1978. Very early on she had made up her mind to be a writer. But in her second year at Ryerson, she fell in love with the electronic media.

She enthuses that she has so far enjoyed her career as a television journalist!

Soon after graduation, she started working as a studio director and directed the 6 o'clock news for *Atlantic Canada*. And a couple of years later, Janet started producing documentaries, which has so far been her biggest passion.

Janet has always been interested in stories about people and learning and exploring their ideas. She believes everyone has a story to tell.

Janet has worked on and created documentaries on various subjects. One of her early documentaries in 1985 was about a man who lost his job as a teacher just because word got out in his small community that he was HIV positive.

Another documentary worth mentioning won a *Hot Doc* award at the Toronto International Documentary Festival. '*Harvesting the city, the wonder of Garbage*' was the story of what happens to garbage in a large city like Toronto. Janet has also produced political documentaries in Indonesia, Russia and Northern Ireland. She also produced two documentaries on the post 9/11 tragedy. And she produced a piece in New Orleans shortly after *Katrina*. Her work has also taken her to many INPUT festivals that celebrate innovations in public television. One series she created and produced was a main-stage selection for INPUT in Spain. Two years ago, Janet also produced a panel show on the '*Koran*', the Islamic Holy book another on the existence of Evil and a documentary entitled- *The Trauma and the Triumph of American Empire*.

Most recently Janet has been the producer of a book show on television called '*Hot Type*'. The slogan of this show is *Ideas in Print*. The show has seen the likes of some well-known names in both fiction and non-fiction Robert Fisk, a foreign correspondent; Henry Kissinger, Toni Morrison, Noam Chomsky, Robert Kaplan, etc.

One day, while sitting in her office in CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), her partner flipped her a website about the *Erasmus Mundus* course knowing that Janet had been looking for a Journalism Masters programme with a difference. Janet simply loved it and expressed her enthusiasm to be a part of the course. And that's how she is in Aarhus right now with the rest of us!

Janet feels this Masters' degree is going to help her extend and widen her knowledge and interest in the aspect of globalization and world politics.

Last year, she taught the subject '*Writing for newspapers and magazines*' at Sheridan College in Toronto. Janet loved teaching the students there.

Through this course, Janet intends to apply her learnings in teaching, traveling and making a lot of documentaries. She strongly expresses, "I would like to write a book and make a feature film."

Janet Thomson from Canada was interviewed by Ruta Vaidya

Amazement for cultural diversity

For most of the students of Erasmus Mundus 2006 - 2008, their journey to Aarhus starts from Jefferson Puff's "Mundus Report". It is a detailed survival guide written by the young Brazilian journalist, who arrived in Aarhus earlier than his peers. Many Erasmus Mundus students read the report and said, "That's exactly what I need!" And some can't help wondering, "Where does Jeff's journey start as a journalist?"

Jeff grew up in a loving family; all his siblings are 13 to 9 years older than he. He dreamed of being a doctor. At the age of 14, he went to London to study English along with classmates from the English school he attended to, but somehow they didn't click. The trip ended up a solo expedition of a young boy. Jeff stayed with a 75-year-old widow who was severe enough to once throw out all his clothes; he got on a wrong bus and jumped off just in time but found himself lost in the outskirts of London around midnight; his family worried about him very much. Jeff had fear at some moments, but he proved to everyone as well as to himself that he is capable. A month later, Jeff came home with a smile of empowerment, and a new aspiration: journalism.

Jeff worked in the TV and radio stations of university as reporter when he studied in Universidade do Vale do Itajai, and his monograph on international correspondence was a successful piece. He traveled to France, UK and the USA. to interview Brazilian journalists and once again his passion and talent in international journalism was confirmed. He speaks Portuguese, English, Spanish and French, the multilingual ability is a plus to his ambition. After school Jeff was hired immediately by Jornal A Noticia, the no.1 newspaper in the state of Santa Catarina, covering city news. When he learned about the Erasmus Mundus journalism program from the internet, he grabbed the chance and moved from local journalism toward a career in international journalism.

Driven by a strong curiosity of people, Jeff can't wait to resume his career after getting his master's, yet he has another dream waiting on the list: to backpack around the world for a good three years. Either way, the spark of the 14-year-old boy with amazement for cultural diversity can be found in Jeff's eyes.

Jefferson Puff from Brazil was interviewed by Chuan-Fen Chang

Great things come in small packages

Even in a crowd, 5'11"-tall JoAnn DeLuna stands out effortlessly with her incredible sense of style, fun, and personality. Hailing from Texas, United States, DeLuna has dreamt of joining the Erasmus Mundus Masters in Journalism programme since she first heard of it from a university professor in 2004.

"It was too late for me to make the deadline for the stipend then. So I just waited a year, and here I am!" said DeLuna smiling mischievously.

Delighted to be back in Europe since completing her degree in English Communications in London, fall of 2004, the 24-year-old is looking forward to the challenging course programme.

"I expect a degree of personal development during this programme and a wider understanding of the political realm," said DeLuna.

Of mixed-Mexican heritage, DeLuna grew up with a love for science and a determination to be a pediatrician. With that in mind she enrolled for a biology major in university but found that she just couldn't "click with it". "Although I love maths and science it just wasn't working out so I switched to English Communications and found my niche," explained DeLuna.

Since graduation she has thrown herself into the field of communications with jobs and internships ranging from broadcasting to public relations. But it wasn't until her stint with small local bi-lingual paper, *La Prensa Bilingual*, that she fell in love with journalism leading her to be a general news reporter, education writer, and even a crime reporter with the *Valley Morning Star*.

"Being a crime reporter was, without a doubt, my most challenging experience as a journalist. When I first started no one took me seriously, but I'm proud to say that I gained their respect." she said.

Despite her success at crime reporting, DeLuna's true passion lies in covering women issues and struggles faced by minority races. "I want my writing to make a difference, and I hope to increase my scope of writing to include the rest of the world," she said.

JoAnn DeLuna from Texas USA was interviewed by Emily Tan

The spirit of a Viking

Katja Nyborg has a dream. She hopes that one day she becomes a Sports reporter with the biggest paper in Europe, so that she can report on sections of sport that she feels, are being deliberately side-lined. Being a top class competitive athlete in both athletics and swimming, Katja is also the Public Relations manager of the AGF swim team and liaises with various media to get adequate media coverage for her club.

Initially Katja enrolled in a Political Science Course which she dropped out of, as she wanted to pursue a course with a broader vision. She never dreamt she could qualify for the Erasmus Mundus Masters in Journalism course and so sent in her application with great trepidation. Happily she was accepted and as she very simply says, “ this Erasmus Mundus Masters is a dream come true for me! Doing this course will equip me to become a skilled journalist theoretically. With this course I will get an indepth knowledge of how media should work in a globalised world. My specialism is in Hamburg where I will be exposed to a different European culture and I will enjoy learning about people and lifestyles. I hope, armed with this degree I can get a job as a reporter for the EU stationed in a foreign country.”

Before joining the Erasmus Mundus Masters in Journalism Katja worked at a software company called TOPNORDIC, where she was the web editor of their online magazine. She also worked with the Aarhus swim department which was totally voluntary, where she tried to get as much press coverage as possible to help the club financially. “ I was successful in getting a really big article in the Aarhus Stifttidende a prominent newspaper here where a story with large pictures of the swimmers were published. Thereby I was able to publicize that the club was in dire need of funds and it helped.”

Sport for Katja is a challenge where one can always stretch the limits to do a little bit better and go a little bit further. “ I am a better athlete than a swimmer, and in a Marathon race in southern Denmark even though I was ill I was able to clip six minutes off my best timing, and come in with a bronze,” she reminisces with pride. “ I like to apply this same method to everyday living – push a little harder in all I do in class or out.” With that attitude as her parameter, one can be sure Katja will emerge on top in anything she does.

Katja Nyborg from Denmark was interviewed by Marianne de Nazareth

A focused view

“Sometimes I think I’m obsessed with journalism,” Maren Naess Olsen from Norway puts the profession she loves into perspective

At 23, Maren Naess Olsen definitely has her head on her shoulders. Even as a paper delivery girl at 12, Maren saved every penny to travel, moving often from her native city of Bergen to explore and understand the world around her. Besides visiting China, Morocco, Egypt and most of Eastern Europe, Maren moved to Brazil as an exchange student at the impressionable age of 16.

“It opened up my mind, made my social conscience come alive,” she says of staying with a non-English speaking, lower-middle class Portuguese family and coming face to face with stark class disparities. Maren was then certain she was going to become a journalist.

Real journalism, however, wasn’t all roses. Disappointed with the local paper she worked for while completing a practical journalism course in Stavanger, Maren welcomed the opportunity to study a semester of international journalism at the Danish School of Journalism in Aarhus, “the best semester I’ve had so far,” she enthuses. Back home, Maren put in about a year and a half at Bergen Times, covering everything from pop culture to ballet to modern art. It satiated part of a long-time desire to be a magazine or features writer. Later, while working on the immigration and health beat, Maren found a different niche. “It’s faster, if not very analytical. Gives you the power to dig things up and maybe change them,” she says giving the example of a story she wrote on meagerly paid Estonians in Norway.

If Maren were given the world, her very own magazine to run in Norway... “It would go bankrupt very fast,” she laughs. “There would be no audience, for I would come out with a magazine that has plenty of in-depth features covering the world. Papers in Norway are very local news centric. What people want to read is not what journalists necessarily want to write,” she adds sagely.

It was while communicating with Inger Munk that Maren found out about the Erasmus Mundus Masters in Media and Globalisation within Journalism. Journalism and European Studies top her list of interests. “It’s interesting to observe Europe right now; is there something like a European identity and culture or are there many of them?” she wonders.

Though Maren plans to specialize at City University in London, finance, she admits, has never been her field. But she believes an understanding of economics is important in any field and would like to use it to integrate hard and soft news, pick any relevant issue and tell it in a features format. Maren believes the programme here will help her gain a deeper understanding of the concept of globalisation and how it’s affecting us. She believes we, as journalists, need to focus more on international news. “We are intertwined with the rest of the world and have to understand it. Journalism should be solution-oriented, not conflict-oriented,” she opines.

It’s tough to take time out, but this passionate journalist also indulges in the very Norwegian pastimes of hiking and skiing and is wont to often curl up with a cup of coffee and Sylvia Plath. Famous last words? “If I weren’t a journalist, I’d have been a photographer,” she offers.

Maren Naess Olsen from Norway was interviewed by Radhika Mittal

The Indian power of journalism

Being an experienced journalist, Marianne de Nazareth, works as a Chief Sub Editor for “The Deccan Herald” in Bangalore, India. She has also worked as a feature writer for a host of in flight magazines and currently writes and edits a magazine called ‘Salaam Bangalore.’ She has experienced the power of journalism when used as a tool of education in the rural districts of her country.

On a trip to a small village, accompanied by her son, Andrew, who has just qualified to be a doctor, Marianne bore witness to an epoch making experience in her journalistic career. They visited a young mother and her new-born baby both infected with AIDS in a small village: “My son was so chocked at the thought that this young mother had no idea of how dangerous this disease was – she simply didn’t know at all what AIDS was”! This complete condition of unawareness had a great impact on Marianne. In fact so great that she shortly after wrote a story on the subject with the specific purpose of educating unaware young women in the area. It worked! The story was published in a local paper and furthermore translated into their specific dialect. To Marianne the experience has emphasized exactly how powerful journalism as a tool of education can be: “This is precisely the way journalism is supposed to work, passing on information to those who need it”.

The Erasmus programme was applied for in a desire to broaden her world perspectives and to be accepted was nothing less than a dream coming true – something she had always wanted and hoped for. When asked about expectations of the programme, she smiled and answered quickly that she had huge expectations but already had realised that they will all come true. “It’s a world perspective and globalized view we are given – I’m sure that the outcome will change my entire narrow perspective of looking at the world.”

Actually Marianne already anticipated the aim of the Erasmus programme when she recently interviewed a lady designer from Milan. During their interview Marianne was asked if she would consider handling the Indian edition of an Italian fashion magazine that would like a “window” in India. If anything this is what working in a globalized environment is all about.

What Marianne hopes for after completing the Erasmus Mundus Masters, is an opening in the UN Public Relations Offices, where she can use her writing skills to liase with the media.

Marianne de Nazareth from India was interviewed by Katja Nyborg

Flowing with the tide

Mia - "the Finnish girl", her early mails to the Mundus e-mail group used to add - says her name means "mine" in Italian. But there is nothing about her that suggests an "I-me-myself" attitude. After all, a person who wants to "live in every single country of the world, not as a tourist, but as a part of it" can be anything but self-obsessed and closed from within.

Hailing from the city of Kerava, near the Finnish capital of Helsinki, Mia learned to read at the age of five, loved writing at school and decided to be a journalist during her high school years. After finishing her Bachelors from the University of Tampere with a major in journalism and mass communication studies in Spring 2006, she interned with a Finnish public broadcasting channel Yle, and Helsingin Sanomat, the biggest newspaper in Finland. There seems to be nothing that does not interest her – working on a television documentary on health issues in Mozambique to music reviews. Last year found her in Ireland, studying Irish and the politics of Ireland and Northern Ireland. "I also dabbled in Irish folklore and Gaelic," adds the 26-year-old Mia.

And her plans for the future? The "most current dream" of Mia is to be a foreign correspondent. But, she says, "I like to go where the flow takes me, and catch the best fish. So one day I could become a movie director or a novelist, who knows."

Mia Ylönen from Finland was interviewed by Nandagopal R. Menon

Miriam Christensen: A battle of wits

Miriam had given her two weeks notice on a Monday. She still had time to sweat it out in the newspaper, owned by the largest media conglomerate on Canada's East Coast, before moving out of the country. Half-Danish and half-Canadian, the young graduate from St. Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick had taken on a huge task – fighting for what she thought were good journalistic standards. A fair enough thing to do. "Why would an alternative newspaper not want to do that? It was supposed to be different!"

The weekly newspaper, with a circulation of 45,000, catered to a younger demographic than dailies in the region and promised Miriam the opportunity to take on commercial media. I will try, she told herself as she accepted their offer that had come before her graduation. While in university, Miriam had worked as a radio journalist for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in Fredericton.

But her stint at the newspaper was unexpectedly different. "It was challenging since I refused to do any advertorials. It was exhausting to say 'no' all the time. There was pressure to pursue stories based on our advertisers from all around, pressure from the publisher and from the advertising team and I didn't believe that was my role as an editor or a journalist." And now, after six months of constant pressure, Miriam had decided to quit. But this, unfortunately, was not the end of her dealings with the newspaper. Merely three days into her notice period, she walked into the newspaper office to find her computer logon deleted. "The newspapers too hadn't arrived on the newsstands. I knew something was wrong," Miriam remarked with her characteristic twinkle.

She had been fired from her job for putting a picture of a mother breast-feeding her child on the front cover Here Magazine. "It didn't make any sense, the picture was beautiful and anyway I had already quit. In fact, it was highly unacceptable."

The picture coincided with World Breast-feeding week. Moreover, the cover story was aimed at raising awareness to counter the abysmally low rate of breast-feeding, one of the lowest in Canada, in New Brunswick.

With characteristic verve, Miriam decided to speak out about it and approached the Advisory Council on the Status of Women in New Brunswick. The censoring was widely condemned in Saint John and the public rallied in support of the young journalist.

"You could call this my best journalistic experience," laughs Miriam.

Pragmatic as ever, Miriam packed her bags and moved to Denmark to re-discover her Danish roots. After a short stint at CPH:DOX, a documentary film festival in Copenhagen, and the Copenhagen Post, she decided it was time for something new. She now hopes to finish her Masters degree in Erasmus Mundus Journalism and believes the programme will fulfill her dream of studying in an international atmosphere.

But her biggest dream would be to get back to radio journalism. "I belong there," she says firmly. "There's something different about telling stories with sound and I love that."

Miriam Christensen from Denmark/Canada was interviewed by Cuckoo Susan James

Among Disasters and Danes

Muniggar Sri Saraswati has covered major Indonesian stories from tsunamis to peace accords. Now she's trying to unravel another complicated phenomena through a European masters program—the Danes

Few reporters are able to say they cover the “disaster beat.” But Muniggar Sri Saraswati—Muni—from Jakarta, Indonesia, is able to claim this beat as her own.

“I have to be ready, 24 hours, to get a call from my editors to assign me somewhere else,” she said of her position. Within weeks of the disastrous 2004 tsunami, Saraswati was on the scene. “It was still chaotic,” she said.

Though the disaster was tragic, she said one of the best stories she wrote was when she met a woman who had lost her husband, two children, parents and all relatives. But the woman was still helping others cope in the aftermath of the tsunami. Saraswati said though the woman cried, she reasoned that tears would not bring her family back.

Though she has covered Indonesia’s tsunamis, Saraswati, 28, primarily reports on politics at the local and national level for the *Jakarta Post*, Indonesia’s only English-language newspaper. She began at the *Post* five years ago, after completing a journalism degree at the Gadjah Mada University in the Javanese region of Yogyakarta.

Of all the political stories she has covered for the *Post*, she said that she is most proud of reporting on the peace negotiations between Indonesia’s former authoritarian government and the Free Aceh movement, a rebel group, to achieve independence for the Aceh province.

“This truce ... ended 32 years of bloody conflict in the province which killed 10,000 people,” she explained. She traveled to Finland to report on the brokered deal, and managed to interview the rebel leader—an exile in Sweden.

She said for Indonesians, this was an important historical moment because it ended random killings by both the government and the rebels. She said, “It’s a new chapter for Aceh.”

Far from the Aceh negotiations or tsunamis, Saraswati is now a participant in the Erasmus Mundus journalism masters program. She said she became interested in the program largely because of the recent Danish Muhammed cartoon debacle.

She said that Indonesians have long considered Scandinavians as friends—for historical reasons, such as the Finnish brokering of the Aceh deal—“but then suddenly this case happened.” She said she wanted to understand European approaches to issues to bridge the gap.

After completing the first year of her program in Aarhus, Denmark and Amsterdam, the Netherlands, Saraswati will be specializing in Media Systems, Journalism and Public Spheres at the University of Hamburg in Germany.

Muniggar Sri Saraswati from Indonesia was interviewed by Angela Johnston

Always be capable of feeling

With a name long enough to fill a page and words plenty enough to talk all night, Nandagopal Radhakrishna Menon feels passionate about many things, but one above all: feeling

Life is a series of coincidences, one of which took Nandagopal R. Menon – Nandu for his friends – from India to this cold and dark part of the world. Or who would have guessed that we have an Irish Catholic priest to thank for Nandu’s participation in the Erasmus Mundus Journalism programme 2006–2008?

”I was actually thinking about studying Catholic theology, when my priest friend told me about this programme”, Nandu says. Strictly speaking the Mundus programme does not fully agree with Nandu’s interests, but he wishes that as much as he gets from the programme, he can give back to other people, especially regarding religion and media.

But let’s not skip to the end yet. Nandu, now 29, has a strong background in leftist student politics. Majoring in English literature, Nandu graduated in 1998 and studied at the Asian College of Journalism, then run by the *Indian Express* group of newspapers. He initially worked with *The New Indian Express* as a sub-editor, then moving on to *Frontline*, the fortnightly news magazine of the Chennai-based Hindu group of publications.

Religion was his main area of interest during the seven years he worked for the magazine. During those years Nandu covered anything from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI and the science-religion dialogue. “People and their values must always be at the centre of journalism”, Nandu emphasises.

Nandu, a left-leaning journalist with a passion, quotes one of his heroes, the Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara.

“Always be capable of feeling any injustice committed against anyone anywhere in the world”, Nandu says, with a smile on his face.

Nandagopal Radhakrishna Menon from India was interviewed by Mia Ylönen

Ready to make a change

When I meet him in his place, Navin does not hesitate to care for a friendly, truly Indian atmosphere. The mutual interviewing may not begin until the specialities he brought from his home country have been served: Green tea, *Suhali* and *Pedhas*, all of them directly imported from his hometown Siliguri, “a small dusty place in the plains of Northeast India,” as he reports with a smile. “You’ll love the tea,” he predicts when he serves the local delicacy with an enticing aroma, and as soon as I try it I know that he is right.

Navin Agarwal was born and raised in Siliguri, where he also studied Social Sciences, Economics and History. Having received his degree in 2003, he took up postgraduate studies in Human Rights at the *Indian Institute of Human Rights*, and entered the *Association for Protection of Human Rights* as an activist “challenging the government.” Financing itself and operating without any governmental or organizational pressure, he found the association a “lovely” place to work at: devoted to the defence of those treated unjustly. Providing free legal advice, filing Human Rights reports, organizing demos, rallies and news conferences, the NGO’s work profile perfectly matched Navin’s committed nature. But still, he was looking for a broader forum for the globe’s most important issues. Consequently, he started publishing in *Now*, his province’s leading local daily based in Sikkim.

As a reporter, he wrote on environmental and political affairs, but also on historical ones – such as the re-opening of the Nathula Pass between India and China, which had been closed for border trade after the 1962 Sino-Indian war: Navin recalls getting up in the middle of the night, being brought to Nathula with over 300 journalist colleagues from all over the world, standing 14,400 feet above sea level in the freezing cold, feeling the rain running over his face, short of breath, all empty and lifeless – but still going through the greatest journalistic experience of his life. His province had been organizing and conducting the opening and it made him proud and happy to experience such a “colourful event” with local music and dances, carried out by his “tiny state.”

And the episode opened his eyes in even another way: shortly before the opening took place, *Now*’s editorial office had been overrun by international journalists trying to retrieve information about the region and the actual historical event, revealing they “had not done their homework,” as Navin puts it aptly. One more thing left him “sad”, he reports. The happening – meaning so much to his region – was not even reported about on every Indian TV channel. “There are so many people in India,” he explains, “that there is nothing like a pan-Indian interest. After all, the Indian media are very focused on the main cities and the best eye-catchers.”

The great experience with the finally somewhat bitter aftertaste strengthened his will to open up the medial horizon for important issues like Human Rights, and to do it proficiently. He sought for a way of combining the activist’s and the journalist’s work fields, he was “pursuing something different.” When his search for an adequate course of study led him to the *ERASMUS MUNDUS* programme, he felt it to be the perfect choice.

In his multinational class studying in three countries, Navin hopes to get as much knowledge and inspiration as possible. Full of excitement, he expects an “exchange of cultures, ideas, and thought” that will provide new perspectives and understanding, especially with regard to European issues. He looks forward to embracing a mixture of irreplaceable experiences which help him to become “a complete journalist, able to make a change.”

After his studies in Europe, Navin would like to return to India – a country which, in his point of view, “lacks high-quality journalists” – in order to professionally contribute to the world of journalism. With a combination of creativity and dedication in his work, he hopes to then be able to set “a positive impact to the ever-changing world.” “The medium is not important,” he asserts while I take the last delicious sip from my cup, “what’s important is that the message comes across: that it hits the target.”

Navin Agarwal from India was interviewed by Cliff Lehnen

Continuing a family tradition

“I just felt it was something interesting that I could write about and I went to a newspaper company catering to children. I asked if it could be published.”

At 12 years old Nestan Charkviani had the passion to write. She joined a community environmental awareness activity with a group of other children to help clean a beach in a Georgian resort Bichvinta, on an island near the Black Sea. As a kid she only knew they did something exciting and she wanted to share the experience with other children through a literary piece.

Born to journalist parents, it was easy for her to fall in love with the same profession. Having a famous writer, poet and TV scriptwriter for a father has its perks. But she is determined to make her own name in the industry. “It seems challenging to write and sign with my dad’s last name because people just can’t help comparing. I don’t look at it as a pressure but something that motivates me for constant improvements.”

Sixteen years after her first published work, Nestan prides of her literary pieces, which she describes as mostly philosophical. She has a degree in Philology from Georgia’s Tbilisi State University. She also studied Art History at the University of California, Davis in the US. She feels, however, that the opportunities for journalists are endless that’s why she is keen on a master’s degree. She is also convinced that the job has become more challenging, as the new world is proving the adage that “the pen (and the camera) is mightier than the sword.” Nestan believes that the Erasmus Mundus Global Journalism program will help sharpen her skills as a writer. “Simple reporting of events is no more sufficient, more specialization and professionalism in reporting is required.”

She is specializing in War and Conflict at the University of Swansea. “I am hoping to make journalism my lifetime career.” She said with a wry smile. Of course she is just happy to continue a family tradition.

Nestan Charkviani from Georgia was interviewed by Rose Eclarinal

The voice of America gets a European accent

Don't get fooled by his boyish good looks, golden locks and cheeky smile. This young American (Well...technically half Danish thus his bright blue Scandinavian eyes!!) has a whole lot more to offer than just that.

Despite working for the Public Health sector as an analyst and report writer in New York, Nikolaj Nielsen felt the urge to once more don his school uniform and complete his masters' degree. God bless this global phenomenon otherwise referred to as the Internet! Especially considering that it was a "Google" search that led him to the "Erasmus Mundus" programme, which he went on to apply for and so forth.

A strong sense of social conscious is obvious as he talks about the need for Media reforms in his country. According to him, "America needs a fourth estate that emphasizes on the serious truth and not just entertainment." He believes that this course with its emphasis on the European perspective will offer him exactly what is needed to take back to his homeland and get the ball rolling on that front.

His fondness for adventure is highlighted with his tales ranging from hitchhiking across Europe to living in a bookstore' in Paris to working in the slum areas in Nairobi. But one of his most touching experiences was during a stint in Tanzania where he was working as a field officer and reporting to an organization that fights against female genital mutilation. He went to investigate one such case in a village in the Mount Kilimanjaro region. He went on to spend 3 days there collecting facts and putting his report together. But despite an urge to pursue the story, he was requested by the mother of the young victim to avoid any syndicated publication. Keeping their interests in mind, he only reported the basic facts back to the organization and discontinued any plans of publishing a full story, apart from a small article of the experience at www.hapax3.info.(Hapax3 is a non-profit organization presided by Nikolaj)

As for his future plans after completing his Masters degree, he's "keeping an open mind", but ideally he would like to work as a field administration officer and help procure material that will contribute towards policy making back in the United States of America.

Nikolaj Nielsen from Denmark/USA was interviewed by By Parvati Tampi

India's fragrance graces Europe's finest

A young, intelligent and ambitious woman left behind in New Delhi a promising career in print media to pursue a once in a life time chance at receiving a Masters of Journalism in Europe.

It was in December 2005 while working as an editor of the magazine Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) that she began to seriously consider it.

This was a prime opportunity for her to indulge in new perspectives and develop herself as a person and as a journalist. "I count myself as one of the lucky few."

Prior to ITS she worked at Headlines Today, India's first 24-hour English news channel. She dropped the planned launch of a television show aimed at debating the various perspectives of the world events and shifted her attention to print media. "While Broadcast Media always holds a special place in my heart, I saw a challenge in a shift to print media and I accepted it."

Education aside, her experience as a journalist drove her desire to become an international correspondent. This is not unfamiliar territory for Parvati.

She was sent to San Francisco by her magazine to cover the ITS World Conference and landed a front cover story. However, it was a special interview with former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto that shaped her career outlook.

The events surrounding Bhutto's one-day New Delhi visit were particularly unique considering that the Americans had just captured Saddam Hussein and Pakistan Prime Minister Mushareff was nearly assassinated that same day.

Parvati was the only journalist capable of securing an interview and discussion content was not lacking. "It was wonderful spending time with such an enigmatic woman. I learned a lot being with her for a few hours. It provided the impetus to pursue international journalism."

Taking the Hamburg track, Parvati's future holds a lot of promise and most of all, great journalism.

Parvati Tampi from India was interviewed by Nikolaj Nielsen

An Indian traveller

Radhika Mittal (27) wants to understand the human mind, in India, Århus or anywhere

Radhika might never have travelled to Denmark, had her father not spotted the ad in The Economic Times, only two days before the application deadline to the Mundus Journalism Masters. She hurriedly gathered the necessary papers, and posted her application. “Travelling doesn’t scare me”, she says; her background leaves little room for doubt. Radhika grew up in Bombay, but has travelled and lived all over India. “I belong to most of it,” she claims.

Although she graduated in commerce, writing was always on her mind. At the age of 19 she started working for an anti-establishment college newspaper.

“It was a very passionate experience. We did everything by ourselves”.

The student newspaper job led her on to a Masters degree in Mass Communication. Later she would come to work for both The Indian Express and Times of India, but in the end, Radhika needed change.

She quit her job at Times of India and made a drastic decision: She took off to the Indian countryside to work at a leprosarium in Maharashtrian interiors, and then at a tribal hospital in Gadchiroli. She would go to the tribal villages nearby, where she educated people on health issues, using plays and puppet shows to get the message across. And she would observe how the media has an influence, even in remote villages. “They don’t understand modern life, but are clearly affected by it. The tribal children have only one TV, but their viewpoint is so coloured by it. Are we losing our identity or gaining a new one?” she asks.

Radhika is a vegetarian, practises yoga and meditation, loves reading and has enjoyed trekking in the Himalayas. She describes herself as relaxed, and says she doesn’t believe in planning. She has lived her life without following a master plan, but is comfortable with her choices so far. “It has all been valuable, as I have learned more about the world we live in”.

With experience from large parts of the media world, Radhika no longer wants to be a journalist, but says she wants to understand all aspects of the media. She could see herself working with media research, but is keeping her options open.

“I could also go back to the villages and start a school there”.

Radhika Mittal from India was interviewed by Maren Næss Olsen

Messenger without frontiers

“It is very competitive but also very fulfilling seeing how your report affects people’s lives,” says Rose Eclarinal musing on her eight-year career as a TV journalist.

To many in the Philippines, TV journalists are veiled by the mist of mysterious glamour, they are treated as real celebrities and often have much bigger impact on the population than politicians. Rose could fully realize the weight of responsibility when after several years of working as a producer for the ABS-CBN’s news magazine show, she had an opportunity to join the pool of correspondents alternately reporting for a 45-minute documentary.

“In my efforts to carve a niche in the broadcast industry, I pursue advocacy journalism. The stories I produce in my program mirror this commitment. Five years ago, during the height of former President Estrada’s impeachment trial, my team had embarked into investigative reports on Estrada’s ill-gotten wealth, his mansions and mistresses. Our brand of journalism paid off when the former President was ousted through another bloodless revolution. “

Having worked as a producer, correspondent, field reporter, story editor and executive producer both in the News and the Current Affairs department, Rose felt she almost had a full circle in her career. But of course, she realized she had many more fields to explore.

Her studies abroad as well as the training she received from BBC and ITV networks in the UK have given her a grip of the global society and provided her a chance to see the world in different perspectives. “It has also opened a window for me to examine and to be critical of our brand of journalism. After becoming exposed to the values of leading international media organizations, I felt the acute need to grow professionally. “

In a constant strife for perfection, Rose decided to concurrently start doing her Master’s degree at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City where she also earned her degree in Broadcast Communication. However, she had to halt studies because of her highly demanding work. The opportunity for a post graduate degree came again while participating in a short course in journalism in the Netherlands. A year later she has joined the Erasmus Mundus Master’s programme in Media and Journalism within Globalisation as a full time scholar.

“I intend to devote my career as a journalist to my countrymen both at home and those abroad and ensure they get quality information. Well informed citizens with an insight into global affairs will hopefully make our world a better place”, says Rose. She strongly believes that by assuming the role of a cross-border messenger, she can facilitate this process.

Rose Eclarinal from the Philippines was interviewed by Nestan Charkviani

She's no "Night Animal"

When Ruta Vaidya first dreamed of being a writer as a young girl in India she never imagined that her career would take her into the exciting night-time world of Bollywood movie stars and then to Aarhus, Denmark to begin a Masters degree in Journalism

From the eighth grade Ruta knew she wanted to be a journalist. But in her home town of Mumbai (formerly known as Bombay) in Western India there was no College-level media program so when the time came to enter University she entered the local college for a BA diploma. But as luck would have it, the next year the College introduced a Bachelor in Mass Media and Ruta's dream of being a writer came one step closer.

Before long Ruta was interning for *Filmfare*, the biggest entertainment magazine in the Mumbai metropolis of 13 million people. "In Mumbai" says Ruta, "Bollywood rules!" As she filed her interviews with established film stars like Amitabh Bachchan and upcoming heart-throbs like Shreyya Datta, star of *Gangster* Ruta started to feel "great". She says, "when you interview these big people you feel important—you become great." Ruta had been bitten by the Bollywood bug but she was no "night animal". Besides, she says, she had always wanted "to be aware of all the beats" especially international affairs. So after her internship she moved on to a job with *Zee News* and then on to *The Telegraph*, a daily paper based in Calcutta. At *The Telegraph* Ruta put the night-life behind her and circulated in the daylight--in political circles. One highlight there was her interview with a VJP minister, who coincidentally was also a film actor, for a profile of Prime Minister Vajpayee.

This July 17th luck shone on Ruta again when she got the news that she would be accepted into the Erasmus Mundus program. She says, "I have never met people from different spheres before. The course is a very globalized process. It opens up the mind."

Ruta Vaidya from India was interviewed by Janet Thomson

In Denmark through airwaves

Boundless feelings, creativity and energy blend harmoniously to form special techniques that herald an art known as journalism. It is a profession where a multitude of themes are explored and attitudes questioned. It is a celebration of the intellect as Khalil Gibran puts it, "All words are crumbs that fall down from the feast of the mind." And it is this highly versatile vein of artistic and professional expression that consumes the life of Soulat Nazir Kokhar.

Young, talented and handsome, Soulat has worked for Radio Pakistan and a local television channel in Pakistan. He belongs to the ilk of people who believe in incessant hard work and are invariably ready to embrace challenges. His source of information about the Erasmus Mundus Program was a close friend who had guided Soulat to apply for the program ahead of time. Soulat gave caution to the wind after carefully studying the contents of the program and finding it especially suitable for his broadcasting pursuits.

He expected that this prestigious program will broaden his outlook towards life and will provide him a unique experience to study in various cultural settings having no parallel in his past educational career. He hopes that he will equip himself with something new that he has not experienced in his home country. He is hankering after a PhD degree and finds this program exceedingly useful in fulfilling his academic pursuits.

Soulat aims at changing his career as soon as his education draws to a close.

He thinks that Pakistan badly needs brilliant teachers in the realm of journalism and he wants to be an academician par excellence. In his journalistic career, he has had many valuable episodes that could be shared with people, but the event that moved him deeply was the coverage of the earthquake that struck Pakistan last year in the month of October. Soulat traveled though the area worst hit by the killer quake and the misery of the people left indelible imprints on his mind. He is determined to tread on the jagged path of journalism as a freelance journalist after he returns home and joins an educational institution.

Soulat Nazir Kokhar from Pakistan was interviewed by Azmar Rasul

I represent Africa

As the only African in the 2006-2008 class of the Erasmus Mundus Masters in Journalism, Teke Ngomba feels both honored and under pressure, yet well prepared for the coming opportunities and challenges

Teke's journalism career started in 2003 when he was still a third-year student at the University of Buea in Cameroon. He wrote articles on a freelancing basis mostly on Africa's development crisis and commentaries on international relations which were published not only in Cameroon newspapers, but also in *City Press South Africa*, *Agenda (South Africa)*, *News from Africa in Kenya* and *Africa Files in Canada*.

Accumulating much experience in journalistic writing; then came the eventful year of 2004. After graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Journalism and Mass Communication with a Minor in Political Science and Public Administration, Teke went for a Media Training Course that emphasized a Critical Analysis of Africa's Development in the South African Institute of International Affairs and continued his writing. "I still remember clearly when my article was first published on-line in 2004." Informed by his editor in Canada, he googled his name and article title and FOUND it. "Woo! I was so excited that my article got read internationally!" This was only a beginning. When campaigns for the 2004 presidential elections in Cameroon kicked off, Teke published a political analysis and commentary on the policies of the main opposition party in Cameroon, the Social Democratic Front, SDF. To his surprise, he received calls from a local official of the SDF party threatening him. "I reported the incident to the police, but I was still scared and afraid to go out for the next three months!" Fortunately, nothing happened and Teke did not stop writing.

In 2005, Teke came back to the University of Buea in Cameroon where he worked as a Public and Alumni Relations Officer, but he had never forgotten his dream in journalism and his passion for media studies. An email with the link to Erasmus Mundus Journalism sent by a friend who was involved in the Erasmus Mundus program ignited him. "The master in Journalism and Media within Globalization fits in my academic ambitions and will give me an international perspective on media within a globalizing environment." He felt lucky for being admitted to the program and hoped to go back to Cameroon with more knowledge about the media as well as make international friends and pursue a Ph.D. in Media Studies afterwards. "The policy makers in Africa have consistently paid less attention on the role of communication in development and have failed to realize that media policies should become part of development priorities." And Teke certainly has to do a lot to lobby government officials to recognize and prioritize media development in Africa.

Teke Jakob Ngomba from Cameroon was interviewed by Zhu Ye

Vu Thi Phuong Thao

While she has no grand illusion that awaits her career in the near future, Vu Thao looks forward at the vast opportunities that would knock at her doorstep once she completes her master's degree in global journalism under the Erasmus Mundus program.

"I don't have a very big ambition in my career. I only want to make my news and programs meaningful for other people. I want each and every work of mine is useful in some way. That's about my career goal," she says.

Vu took her undergraduate studies at the Hanoi University of Foreign Studies, earning her bachelor's degree with excellence in 2002. In 2005, she finished MediaNet Training Courses for Young Journalists sponsored by the British Council in Vietnam.

Prior to her admittance to the Erasmus program, Vu worked as reporter, news editor and news presenter for Vietnamese Television. She reported about international cooperation activities and cultural events, some of which have been aired over CNN World Report.

She also worked as a collaborative reporter for a science and life newspaper as well as editor for her alma mater's Journal of Hanoi University of Foreign Studies where she wrote about educational and training events and on youth issues.

After working for five years that taught her the rudiments of the profession, Vu now enters the program with high optimism and childlike openness that the rich experiences and vast learning she hopes to gain will somehow meaningfully affect her countrymen.

"Studying abroad is an emerging trend in Vietnam, as many more people go out and bring knowledge and confidence back. I believe I will get high quality education from developed countries, and that I'll build up for myself a broader perspective," she quips.

This 25-year-old Vietnamese lady admitted that she needs to incorporate sound theory at the way she reads and reports current events sweeping around the globe in order to complement her experiential learning she gained from the job she left behind at home.

"I was not trained in journalism or communications. All that I have in TV journalism is from practice, without a theoretical basis. So I was always seeking for opportunities to be trained," she says.

Describing herself as sensible, independent and responsible, Vu says she always put her heart in whatever tasks at her hands. "I always try my best to do the job. But I'm not in favor of explicit struggle, or fight for something, and I can never be a journalist who is willing to be war correspondent."

Vu will take her specialism in Media Systems, Journalism and Public Spheres in a Comparative Perspective at the University of Hamburg, Germany.

Vu Thi Phuong Thao from Vietnam was interviewed by Ferdinand Maglalang

Let's talk about politics

Politics might be a topic that barely arouses girls' interests, but it works for Zhanna Bezpiatchuk. The 22-year-old Ukraine woman is passionate for political science. And she joined the Erasmus Mundus journalism Master program 2006-2008 as the youngest among the class.

Zhanna, in a black jacket and a pair of glasses looks nothing different from other girls at her age. Yet, she stands out from the image of a normal girl around the neighborhood, when she talks. The girl is from a country where the famous Orange Revolution took place. She loves deep conversations and the future of her country and its relations to the world is always her concerns.

"Becoming a political journalist is my dream," Zhanna never thought she was too young to think of questions about politics. While studying political science in university, Zhanna had worked as a part-time journalist for national newspapers *Weekly Mirror* and *Word of Enlightenment* for three years.

She worked in the page of editorial and columns and she wrote political critics, though this was never easy for a young student to start with. Zhanna felt grateful to her editors, "I was given opportunities and through practices, I learned a lot and I made progress," she said.

However, the most impressive story that Zhanna wrote was in fact not about politics, but a profile of an NGO chairwoman. Zhanna said she was also interested in social journalism. "The lady, in charge of a charity fund, takes care of intellectual disabled children. Interviewing her is amazing and I think social journalism is far more about learning from books.

"I believe journalist is a highly professional job which is not merely about writing skills," Zhanna wished she could make the best outcome of the Erasmus Mundus program with the help of her political science background.

Zhanna is going to pursue her dream of a career as a political journalist in the University of Wales with the specialization in Wars and Conflicts reporting.

Zhanna Bezpiatchuk from Ukraine was interviewed by Bonnie Cao Yining

Hopping through the Mundus “Asian Window” with hopes

Among the five country-specific “windows” of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship, is a China Pilot Window for the period 2005-2008 worth €9 million. The China Pilot Window is one of the Asian Windows within the Erasmus Mundus Programme earmarked to fund for the most part, only qualified students from the relevant Asian countries. When the names of Chinese who “passed” through the windows to study in Europe are read, prominent among them would be that of 24 year-old Zhu Ye, admitted to study for a Masters degree in Journalism and Media within Globalization in Denmark, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

To Zhu Ye, studying in three different European countries is literally a dream come true. When she was still a second-year undergraduate student in Beijing Foreign Studies University, (BFSU), she traveled to the University of Westminster to study as an exchange student for a summer course. There, she fell in love with international journalism and nurtured the dream of continuing her education in that field out of China.

Zhu Ye strengthened her enthusiasm to become an international journalist by doing internships notably at CNN Beijing Branch, an internship which she recalls was “pretty huge” for her given that she was the only intern from China. She sharpened her skills further by writing food and entertainment columns as a freelancer in *Time Out Beijing*. Shortly before her graduation, she got a part time job with the Chinese Central Television. Amongst her most striking professional experiences, Zhu Ye holds passionately the setting up of a Photography Club in BFSU, which she masterminded. With sponsorship from companies and individuals, the Club awards annually, students who take the best photographs in Beijing.

While a final year student at BFSU, one of Zhu Ye’s professors told her about the Erasmus Mundus programme. Burning with ambitions and talents, Zhu Ye says she “Googled Erasmus Mundus” and saw the programme in Journalism. “Yes” she thought, “this is what I want.” She applied and months of waiting followed. Then in April 2006, she received an e-mail informing her that she had been selected for the programme. “Thank God it finally came!” she exclaimed as she saw the mail. Zhu Ye says she is “pretty much thankful” to the professor who told her about the Erasmus Mundus scholarship.

Being the only one selected from mainland China for the 2006-2008 batch, Zhu Ye says “it feels good” even though it is challenging. A challenge she plans to tackle head-on as she expresses almost a litany of hopes that after her graduation, she will go back to China where she plans to open a Photo Studio, establish her own PR Company, launch a Traveling Magazine as well as open her own TV Travel Channel. Through these, she intends to impact positively on journalistic professionalism in China and also “make some money.” Zhu Ye explains that “there are so many people in China who want to travel, but they don’t know so much about the world. That’s where I want to help them.” In order to do this, while she travels from Denmark to the UK through the Netherlands, she intends to know more how travel agencies work in Europe so that when she returns to China she can improve the traveling agency sector as well.

But that is not her only fascination being in one of the Erasmus Mundus programmes. Zhu Ye summarizes her expectations, saying while studying in Europe, she expects “to be international, be exposed to a lot of people all around the world...learn international journalism and media...By exchanging ideas and notions with class mates, I can learn about the whole world. Can you imagine that?”

Zhu Ye from China was interviewed by Teke Ngomba