

# 01\_study trip

asmara, eritrea 05.-14. november 2010

Friday 05. November

Departure from Trondheim/Oslo. We met in Copenhagen and travelled together with Egypt Air via Cairo.

Saturday 06. November

02:50\_arrival Asmara airport

Even before landing we understood that Asmara was rather different from what we had seen before. The whole city was pitch dark, and impossible to spot from the airplane window. And after landing we were met with lots of paper work, luggage chaos and registrations of all our electrical equipment.

05:00\_arrival at the Crystal Hotel

That first night we went to sleep to the morning prayers from one of the city's mosques.

12:00\_we met with Kari Bjørnsgård (the Norwegian Ambassador in Eritrea) and Svein Bjørberg after a few hours of sleep.

They showed us where the embassy was, before taking a short walk around the city. First impressions were that the city is tidy and clean, with broad avenues and spacious piazzas. Can this be where the 500.000 inhabitants of the city live when the streets feel rather empty? Then we had lunch at Casa degli Italiani. Afterwards exchanged dollars to nakfa, which again meant a lot of

paper work.

19:00\_dinner at the Ambassador's residence

Kari and Svein answered our many questions, and we got a better understanding of how the country works. Narve (intern at the embassy) and Mari (junior expert at UNICEF) also attended, and gave us the view of someone of our age. Afterwards they took us to Zara, and we got to try the nightlife in Asmara.

Sunday 07. November

07:30\_departure for the train station

We went by the steam locomotive from 1913 to Nefasit and back. Beautiful mountains, small villages in the middle of nowhere, adoring kids hoping for candy and a traditional Eritrean coffee ceremony were things we got to see. The old locomotive had a hard time bringing us back up to Asmara, which meant a lot of smoke and steam through the thirty tunnels. We were covered in ash when we got back home.

15:00\_lunch at Asmara Palace Hotel

The only hotel in Asmara that has a swimming pool. The rest of the afternoon was spent here.

20:00\_dinner at the Pizza House across from the theatre









Monday 08. November

09:00\_welcome and introduction at the Department of Infrastructure in Asmara (Dol)

They held presentations with information about the city, its history and the future plans. We were happy to see that they had done a lot of analysis and found many strategies. Their plans are very ambitious, and it is interesting to discuss how they can carry them out.

12:00\_lunch in the garden of the Ambassador's residence

14:30\_NTNU presentations

Svein had an introduction about NTNU and the faculty of engineering. Together with the engineering students we had made a presentation about what we do in our studies. The employees at Dol had a lot of questions afterwards.

15:30\_tour together with Dol

We started looking at the new residential developments and infrastructure projects, before we continued to one of the traditional villages outside the city, called Tessa.

There we really got to experience the Eritrean hospitality, when we were invited in to a complete stranger. She lived in a traditional home, called a hidmo, and had roosters under the ceiling, built in shelves and secret storage rooms in the walls. She even served all twenty of us suwa (traditional drink) and injera (traditional bread). This encounter was one of the many highlights this day.

19:30\_dinner with Dol and the Governor of Zoba Makel at Pyramid restaurant

The atmosphere and the conversations were great, and we think the collaboration with Dol will work out good.













Tuesday 09. November

09:00\_visit to the historical perimeter

Asmara has a lot of architectural jewels within the historical perimeter, such as the mosque, the coptic and the catholic church, Asmara theatre, Fiat Tagliero and Cinema Roma. Dol took us to the different sites and told us the buildings' stories. Especially the Fiat Tagliero was amazing. But the high fence surrounding it, and the huge neighbour building stole some of its spark. It is difficult to understand that such a building hasn't been better maintained.

13:00\_lunch at the Ambassador's residence

14:30\_visit to Medeber market

Medeber market was truly fascinating, and we filled our cameras memory cards in no time. Old ladies dried chili on big blankets, which gave us difficulties breathing for the next hour.

15:30\_visit to the unplanned city

A short walk from Medeber we entered the unplanned city. The beautiful colours and the intimacy stroke us

immediately as strong qualities, and despite the area's low standard the overall impression of the area was positive. We also learned that a couple of the employees at Dol lived in the area.

19:30\_dinner at Crystal Hotel















Wednesday 10. November

09:00\_meeting at Dol

Ole Møystad held an introduction of the Faculty of Architecture, followed by discussions about the possible tasks at hand. The bus terminal issue was also introduced. We tried to understand what issues were important to them. Working in a different country can be a challenge when you don't speak the same language.

12:30\_lunch with Dol and the Ambassador at Sicomorro

15:00\_visit to the bus terminal area

Dol were especially eager to show us this area, and we quickly comprehended why. Parts of the area were chaotic and stressful, as all the buses, cars, trolleys, donkeys and all sorts of other animals where all over the place. At the same time it was fun and energetic, with all it's surrounding markets and stores.

19:30\_dinner at Albergo Italia







Thursday 11. November

09:00\_departure for Mai Nefhi Institute of Technology

The university lies half an hour drive outside of Asmara. Students have to ask for permission to leave the grounds, and before entering the area, very different from our student life. We met with both teachers and students, and they all seemed very happy to be able to work and study there. Both Ole Møystad and we held presentations about NTNU. Since they don't have an architecture program, they were eager to understand how we worked.

We were then given a tour of the campus, followed by discussions with the students. The students were doing their bachelor thesis, and wanted to get input on their projects. The lack of an architectural education was emphasized.

The Mai Nefhi dam lay next to the university, so we took a look at it before eating traditional lunch together with them.

16:00\_visit to the market/shopping

Beautiful baskets, colourful fruits, traditional pottery

and woven fabrics got to go home with us.

19:30\_dinner at the Pizza House



**Eritrea  
Institute  
of  
Technology**



**Mai  
Nefhi**









Friday 12. November

09:00\_departure for Massawa

The road was twisting and twirling more than Trollstigen, and the car made unknown noises. All in all a scary, but spectacular trip down the 2300 meters to Massawa. The temperature and the humidity increased for every meter. Rumour has it that there exist a tiger in the area, but knowing that there are no tigers in entire Africa, we weren't that disappointed when we didn't spot it.

13:00\_lunch at Hotel Gorgosum

After eating lunch we spent the rest of the day on the beach. The water held thirty degrees. We were in heaven!

19:00\_fish dinner in Old Massawa









Saturday 13. November

09:30\_guided tour of Massawa

First stop was at the tanks monument, which has a strong background story. The Ethiopians capitulated when three tanks attacked their position. They sacrificed themselves for their country, and gave Eritrea freedom. In honour of those who died, this monument was made.

We then took a walk around the city. White coral buildings with green wooden decorations were done in a Egyptian, Italian and Turkish mix. But in Massawa, in contradiction to Asmara, we could really see the wounds of the war. Many buildings were in complete ruins. One of the big palaces however, was in ruins for other reasons. When the Italians came, they started building in concrete. But in the humid climate, the reinforcement corroded and caused severe damages to the building.

13:00\_lunch at a deserted hotel with great food

14:00\_ visit to the National Museum

The museum held a collection of everything from weapons, old skeletons, rare pottery to Haille Selassie's bed.

They were proud to show us their struggle for freedom, and their national treasures.

15:00\_departure from Massawa

On the way back we got to see a large group of monkeys, which willingly posed for us in the sunset.

20:00\_dinner at Crystal Hotel

Discussions with Ole about the projects.









Танк Т-72, участвовавший в боевых действиях  
в Афганистане в 1980-1981 гг.  
Экспонат Музея истории и культуры  
Вооруженных Сил Российской Федерации  
в г. Санкт-Петербург





Sunday 14. November

01:00\_departure from the hotel

Exhausted and satisfied from an intensive and interesting trip, we returned to Norway eager to continue the work on our assignments.

Much is still left to be discussed, but hopefully we have a good basis for doing our preliminary project.





