Master Degree Program: International Relations and International Organizations
Specialization: International Security
Name: Hester Gertruida Mostert
Student number: S3009521
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Placement at Consorzio Materhub Industrie Culturali e Creative in Matera, Italy
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Placement Report

Placement Supervisor
Eric Sportel

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1.0 Introduction

We live in a world where credentials play an important role in determining a person’s future. Therefore, it is important to pursue education for the purposes of not only finding a job but to build a career in a field that a person is passionate about. In university classroom’s, one would find some students who are there only for the credentials and some who are there for the pure pursuit of knowledge and following their interests. I belong to the latter category, having already obtained a Master’s degree in New Zealand, and work experience in Australia, which has differentiated my experience from some of my fellow students in several ways. For me, gaining an educational experience in Europe, and developing a deeper understanding of both the European university system and societies, had great appeal to me. The International Organizations and International Relations Master’s (IRIO) program at the University of Groningen (RuG) offered me the opportunity to gain the knowledge and experience that I would otherwise have missed, had I pursued a similar program in Australia or New Zealand.

In relation, I find it necessary to explain one other motivating factor which had an impact on my decision to complete an internship and the type of internship I decided upon. Before, arriving in the Netherlands, I was an English teacher at an English language school in Australia. After three and a half years of teaching, I realized what most people spend a life time trying to determine, that is what they wanted to do or be in life. I wanted to be a teacher just not an English teacher. In choosing to study at RuG, in the IRIO department, I believed that I could explore areas which I had an interest in and where I could find subject matter in which I could teach one day. This is important, because the decision to complete an internship, was not something which I decided upon at the beginning of the program, but rather it was a choice made closer to the completion of the first semester of classes, after consultation with lecturers and friends.

Having established some of the context which lead me to complete a Master’s degree in the Netherlands, I will now elaborate on my personal experiences leading up to, during, and after my internship at Consorzio Materhub Industrie Culturali e Creative\(^1\), in Matera, Italy, from 7 April 2017 to 31 July 2017. The report is divided into six sections. Section one details the pre-placement period and my thinking at the time. It details my approach to MateraHub, why I chose this placement as well as my prior expectations. Following on from there is section two, which details my experiences during the placement. In this section, the reader will find a brief description of

\(^1\) Hence forth MateraHub for ease of reading.
MateraHub and my tasks and duties. This is followed by my reflections on my personal, academic goals as well as how the IRIO program played a part in this placement, in section three. Section four offers insights about Matera and section five is advice for future students. The last section, section six, is my response to the question, “Where to from here” also making it the conclusion of the report.

2.0 Pre-Placement

Initially, as an international student, I did not consider doing an internship placement as I had the option of doing an additional research seminar. However, throughout the pre-master and master courses, I spoke to many Dutch and other European students as well as my teachers and began to realize the importance of the exposure to Dutch and European culture an internship would bring. New Zealand and Australia do not have an internship culture at their universities. It is not part of their university degree programs or the way in which students normally find jobs. This is one of the key reasons why I initially did not consider a placement. I also felt that as an older student, with work experience, this was not necessarily the direction in which I wanted to take my studies or my life for that matter. But after almost a year and a half in the Netherlands, I knew I wanted to stay in Europe for the longer term, and I realized that doing an internship would help with that. For me, doing an internship had become about adding something of value to my CV which other European job seekers have and something which would differentiate me from other job applications in Australia and New Zealand. In a way, doing an internship became a way for me to create a common experience with my European friends and colleagues through which I could build deeper connections with the people I know and new people I would meet. Moreover, it has also allowed me to explore a new area in which I could potentially teach, having opened-up the potential for a different career path from which I initially imagined.

Due to the factors outlined above, I did not start looking for an internship placement at the recommended time when most of my fellow students did. For me, this process started when I finished all my compulsory seminars and when I began working on my thesis. What follows below details that experience.
2.1 My Approach

I think it is important to state that I followed what I believed is the conventional approach to finding an internship, given the un-conventional way in which I finally did find one. I initially began by brainstorming areas of interest like; arctic governance, arctic environmental security as well as making a list of countries which I thought I would like to intern in. To this I added a list of non-governmental organizations I was interested in, narrowed down dates which I thought would be appropriate, and so with this information, I set out looking for internship positions. I should also mention that I spoke to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Christoph Humrich, and some contacts that he provided. They in turn gave more suggestions of organizations and possible other areas to consider. Thus, for a period of two months, I had been contacting organizations and sending them my CV and cover letter but with little to no response.

Initially, I had my mind set on going to a Scandinavian country because of my interest in Arctic security and governance, which countries like Norway, and Denmark are key players in. I soon realized that my chances of gaining a position as an intern at any of the Arctic related research institutions or environmental organizations anywhere in those countries was unlikely. Not only because of language requirements, which I lacked, but also because I am not an European Union (EU) citizen. Having no previous internships to my name, also seemed to be a deterring factor, or so I felt. Many of the internship profiles listed on organizations’ websites displayed interns with a broader internship experience than mine as well as more focus on one specific area. I mention this, because this is my second Master’s Degree, the first being in education, a completely different field to what I had studied and worked in before. Essentially, that means I have changed careers entirely, and am a beginner in this field. So, I realized that I was at a disadvantage in some ways and this was later confirmed to me by a German professor whom I met at a conference in Munster. He told me that as a non-European citizen, Scandinavian institutes would not generally consider me as I do not hold a European passport. Apparently, Dutch or German citizenship is preferred over a New Zealand one. Having realized after about two months that I was at a disadvantage because of my nationality and not so much my work experience, I started to extend my search to America, Canada and other places with Arctic focused research or projects which would be more New Zealand passport and linguistically friendly. At the same time, I also started looking at projects with a Human Security dimension to it, as human rights had been a focus on my studies.
as well. So, essentially, I broadened my scope in terms of what may have been previously a too narrow field of search. This worked out to my benefit.

I found my placement in, what some would say, an un-conventional and unexpected manner. If I had not broadened my search scope for internships and started to reflect on other areas where I may want to work in, I would not have been so open to the offer I received when I arrived in Italy.

They, say it is often not what you know but who you know that makes a difference, and in my case, this applies. I came to Matera, Italy to visit a friend and during a casual encounter, I met Carlo Magni, the Online Media Communications Manager for MateraHub. During our conversation, he inquired about my studies and previous work experience. I explained that I was working on my thesis and looking for an internship. At the end of our conversation, he explained to me where he worked and gave me some insight into what MateraHub does. He suggested that I should send him my CV and a cover letter. I kept an open mind, not knowing much about the place he worked for and thought it would not hurt to explore all possibilities.

The following day, I googled MateraHub and immediately took a liking to their projects. They are a not for profit organization that is funded by the European Commission. They also receive funding from Matera 2019, a local organization promoting Matera as the European Cultural Capital of 2019. They have a diverse portfolio of projects that work with local and international businesses and universities, and focus on creative and artists people with the aim to provide them with the tools and knowledge to help access information and markets and develop their entrepreneurial skills in order to improve local and national economies. Admittedly, I could not see the connection between this place and what I had been studying at first, however, I did remember from my CORE paper in the pre-Master course that the European Union (EU) often had projects where they implemented strategies to develop competencies the EU thought the European Community needed. MateraHub, I discovered, aligned their work with the EntreComp framework of the EU, which seeks to promote social development through entrepreneurial development and building entrepreneurial skills. Through these skills, greater civic engagement is encouraged and developed as well as helping meet people’s basic needs and by extension provide for greater social and economic security. I had not considered that many of the projects and networks that MateraHub creates and are involved in contributes to national, economic and social development, human rights and civic engagement, all security issues that are often neglected at the fringes of IR.
Having researched MateraHub and their EU connection and being able to understand their vision and mission within the broader European project, I felt comfortable to send them an email with the required information.

After two weeks, they invited me for an informal meeting where they asked that I describe my studies and interests in MateraHub and they described their various projects including a new project that was to start in April. After this meeting with Raffaele Vitulli, the Co-Founder and Senior Project Manager of MateraHub and Paolo Montemurro, the Project Area Director, they contacted me and told me they would be interested in taking me on as an intern to work on the new project. According to them, my prior work experience, in addition to my area of study, would be useful to them as they launched their new project. They thought that as an outsider I could provide a unique point of view for their new international network.

This means, that they created a position for me on their project team which did not exist before. Once I had received this email, I contacted my internship coordinator, Eric Sportel and followed the necessary steps as outlined by the Internship Placement Guide from RuG, to enroll.

This work asks me to be honest and reflect on my experiences throughout the internship process and so I will be honest. This was not the way in which I thought I would find an internship—a chance meeting. I know that sometimes it can work like this, and for me it reflects the importance of building networks and also being prepared when an opportunity like this presents itself. The fact that they were not advertising for an intern but were interested in meeting with me and then, because of my knowledge and experience, were willing to create a new role for me, showed to me that opportunities do not necessarily have to exist—they can be created. From this I learned that while the traditional path of applying to advertised positions is popular and does work, there are other ways to find internships as well. I will not hesitate to contact companies or organizations in the future, even when they may not have a specific vacancy, because as I have learned, someone might just recognize my skills and experience and see create a role for me. This experience has taught me that if I ever were in the position where I had to interview someone for an internship role or a job, I would be open minded and welcoming to them because of the potential benefits a person can bring to an organisation.

Lastly, the experience of finding an internship in this way also reinforced for me the importance of reflecting and reviewing decisions and plans. While I initially had a desire to focus on the Arctic and organisations that had a focus on this area, I inadvertently locked myself out of
an area where I had a long-standing interest and research focus on. Reviewing and reflecting on my internship options allowed me to broaden my search. It opened me up for other opportunities and because of this, I ended up working for an organisation which gave me broader and deeper understanding of the rapidly changing social, business, and political environment in the EU. Most importantly, it provided me with an alternative focus on Human Security issues which I feel has impacted how I understand and can, in the future, approach International Security issues and IR.

2.2. Why This Placement?
In part, I have addressed this question in the previous section, but I will elaborate on some of the points and add new ones. As previously stated, I had not deliberately sought this placement, which means the why, in the, “why did you decide on this placement,” is to be found not in the pre-planning stages of brainstorming and goal setting as might be the case with other students. It is very pertinent to note that although the placement with MateraHub was not in any way related to Arctic related issues, it nevertheless gave me the opportunity to broaden my horizons, which is part of the reason why I decided to take this opportunity. It should also be noted that while waiting for MateraHub to reply, I did continue to pursue internship opportunities in the Arctic track but ceased to do so when MateraHub offered me the position.

2.2.1 Reason One
The short version is that my thesis topic changed and that I was also reconsidering what type of internships I should and wanted to undertake.

I no longer had a focus on Arctic security issues with my thesis, but shifted focus to environmental security issues, and with a different theoretical approach. Environmental security issues and discussions are prevalent topics, not only around dinner tables, but also in academic discussions as well. Part of the frustration is that there are often more problems theoretically and methodologically in dealing with environmental security than there are solutions. I was not satisfied with the current thinking and discourses, which led me to take an interest in posthuman literature and in particular, post-humanist approaches to environmental security. Part of this approach is about acknowledging that we, humans, live in an increasingly complex world that is embedded and embodied and mediated by differing relations with technology, nature, and the economy. Part of this thinking sees our lives being lived in a highly-commodified world where
one of the key currencies is information, and where belonging, and being connected to networks, determines success, not only socially and economically but often physically as well. The immediate connection between information and these networks may not be clear to the reader, unfortunately that will have to remain so as I do not have the space here to go into more detail. However, these two points are important, and were important for me in accepting MateraHub’s internship offer. On the one hand, my academic interest had shifted. This meant that I wanted to find an internship that aligned with those interests. On the other hand, I knew that finding an internship that reflected my academic interest exactly would be difficult, as the post-humanist turn in IR is a recent advent. So, with this in mind, I looked at what MateraHub did and what they were asking me to do and I realized, that working for them would give me valuable insight into this ‘new’ world and networks. MateraHub, in part, is an organization that develops and sells purely intellectual products. Meaning, they come up with the concepts for creative projects, and market these to people, who then turn them into physical products. They do not have physical products such as food stuffs, or furniture for instance, but they rather trade and sell information, knowledge, and skills. Furthermore, not only are they a part of larger information networks that do similar things, they are seeking to develop and expand their own network. To me, this internship became an opportunity to gain insight in how the human capital, data driven, entrepreneurial economy functions and pushes people to creative innovations., The experience with them helped with my thinking during the writing of my thesis and given that human and nonhuman security are close related, I believe will eventually open-up new avenues for me to explore regarding environmental security

2.2.2 Reason Two
This reason is a bit of a carry-over from the previous section. My main job at MateraHub was to develop a strategy for them to launch their own network, where the tools they develop, Creative Project Canvas or Break-in-the Desk for instance, could be distributed to would-be artists, creatives, and entrepreneurs, and connect them to the network, where they could gain, develop, and share ideas. From my point of view, the internship was about being involved in the creation of one of the hundreds of thousands of networks that help the global economy run. Not only that, the tools which we developed and which they are going to use are an interesting innovation in project planning, which would benefit me later in life in any job situation.
2.2.3 Reason Three
I also took the role with MateraHub because it was not a typical IR placement such as with an embassy or with the World Wild Fund for example. It was important for me to understand how security and networks worked from a grassroots level upwards. It was an experience, which government type organizations could not necessarily offer. MateraHub offered me the alternative opportunity I was seeking.

2.3 Prior Expectations
In considering placements, the one with MateraHub, I had several personal and knowledge goals which I wished to develop and expand on. The first of these goals relate to communication skills. In previous positions as a teacher and a research assistant, effective communication skills in both oral and written form was extremely important. While I have improved upon these skills over the years, I hoped to hone these further in a situation where English was not the first language. It was important for me, not only to be able to demonstrate that I could deliver the work, write and speak, effectively and efficiently but also be able to do that across a cultural divide. Having decided on a placement in Italy, I hoped to develop my cross-cultural communication skills. Having gained insight into Dutch working life, as part of my student assistant position I felt there was an opportunity to gain different insights, knowledge and experience from a Southern European country. This, I felt, was in line with my broader goals highlighted in the introduction of this report. I knew that in my placement I would not only work independently but as part of a small professional team which was appealing to me. From prior experiences, I knew that the teamwork, dynamics and interactions of the team, being able to communicate ideas in an open and constructive manner are vital aspects for the success of a project. I hoped that with this placement, I could continue learning how to share ideas, give and receive feedback, and work together with others to advance ideas and produce project deliverables. Based on the initial interview at MateraHub, I knew that part of the appeal in taking me onboard was that as an “outsider” I would bring a unique perspective to the project. I therefore wanted to gain the confidence and ability to articulate my ideas, something which I have been working on developing but have felt constraint in doing through other research positions. It was important for me to demonstrate not only my research skills but also my commitment to the project, therefore it was important for me to complete tasks assigned to me on time.
With regards to knowledge goals, as articulated in my placement plan, before commencing the internship, I wanted to learn about the process of how to initiate, plan, and execute an international network. This is in addition to leaning to test and review parts of the network, how to understand, analyze and utilize feedback as part of project delivery. Other goals included learning how to set up and carry our workshops, and enhancing my learning on how to use social media to create a common method of communication and networking. As the next section of the report will show, I was able to meet almost all of these goals, while some circumstances precluded me from reaching others.

3.0 Placement

3.1 Description of MateraHub
In the introduction, I have already made mention of what type of business MateraHub is. In this part I expand on that but as the intention is to reflect on my personal experiences, this will be kept brief. MateraHub is a consortium that works with other hubs, networks and organizations at the international level, supporting enterprises and institutions through piloting and directing European projects. Currently, it has 150 partners, some more active than others. Since its founding, MateraHub has been involved in over 100 European based projects, 25 of which are still in progress. In addition, they have helped and continue to support 400 plus freelance, start-ups’ and organizations. They developed several European toolkits, their flagship project being Creative Project Canvas, a tool and guide designed for artists and creatives wishing to start new projects, or to improve on existing ones. In relation to this project, they offer workshops and training on how to effectively utilize this tool all over Europe. Other areas where MateraHub’s, project touch on is European Project Planning, where they develop new sustainable development models for industries such as cultural ones. Other project areas include EILEEN which is a project helping unemployed youth and recently graduated students to find work and internship experiences abroad. They are also members of a cultural and creative network in Basilicata, called CRESCO and Puglia Creativa Distretto (Puglia Creative District).

Some of the main activities MateraHub undertakes are the management of national and international projects, project planning, research and development in addition to consultancy work. They facilitate national and international networking as well as provide supporting services for mobility and traineeships. Currently, with my assistance, they have created and will soon launch
an international network supporting intermediaries between the arts and business world throughout Europe.

3.2 Description of Tasks

The tasks that I was assigned to during my internship, revolved around the main goal which I was assigned to, create an international network through which MateraHub could expand and develop their business. Broadly speaking this involved researching, analysing, planning, and testing the proposed project. To accurately describe the various tasks, I will describe them based on the three main phases of the project which can be divided into the three months of the internship. While I was assigned other tasks during my internship, I only highlight here what I felt to be my most important tasks, accomplishments, and learning moments.

3.2.1 Month One

The first month of placement was certainly the most challenging for me due to the new industry as well as the new environment, language, and people. The main task which I was assigned to, as stated before, was to develop and create a strategy to develop an international network. I was the main researcher and person working on this project, whereas the other members of the team were guiding me. Initially, a series of meetings were held to determine the focus and goals of the project and I was assigned reading material, which would help me familiarise myself with the background. Due to the new vocabulary and thinking that is characteristic of this industry, this was daunting at first. This required a large amount of reading, which lasted for about two weeks. The information I gained here was helpful to situate myself but and used to develop the first phase of the project. I was to apply what I had learned as well as any other knowledge or ideas I felt necessary when using the Creative Project Canvas to think through various components that would be required to create this project. I was to complete the Canvas, and then present my finding to Germana Gerlli, who served as an intermediary between myself and Raffaele Vitulli. Completing the first Canvas was a challenge for me, not because I found the Canvas itself difficult to complete, but because of the innovative type of thinking and answers it required. I was unsure if I was doing the task correctly but after the first review of the Canvas, I realised the dual purpose for getting me to complete the Canvas. Raffaele Vitulli wanted me to become familiar with the Canvas but it was also a way to beginning to narrow down the focus and scope of the project. After a meeting with
Germanan Gerlli, who provided me with constructive feedback about how I completed the task as well as the direction it would take the project, I was asked to revise the Canvas in light of the new information. This led to a second review, which proved to be more on point. Completing this task was useful for me in understanding what is required when launching a new project. There were many questions and aspects which I had not considered before in project management which I am now able to recognise. After the second Canvas, I was asked to use this information to compile a list of companies and tools that we may be able to use to develop the network. In order to do this, I made an analysis of the type of business MateraHub is and what type of services they offered and supported. From this I made a template, which I then used to search for other organisations and businesses. I loved this task, because I was given the freedom to search for companies in Europe and further afield and was trusted to select and choose businesses and tools that I thought would work best for MateraHub. This gave me confidence and allowed me the opportunity to express my ideas in ways that I have not experienced before. Based on the feedback that I received from the initial review, I felt confident that I was taking the project in the right direction. From the list of companies and the portfolios I created for them, we were able to move on to the next phase of the project.

3.2.2 Month Two- Milan
In June, an important industry conference was held in Milan, Italy. It was a conference where hubs, networks, and other organisations came together to showcase ongoing projects, launch new ones, and propose, and received feedback on projects in the development stage. This was an important event for MateraHub, because they wanted to test the reception of their proposed network. Therefore, I was asked to prepare a report which Raffaele Vitulli and Paolo Montemurro could present to the attendees at the conference. I was to use the portfolios I had established the month before and group them as best as possible. From these groupings, I was to analyse and report on these organisations’ missions, their values, and their needs, and assess where they overlapped with other organisations missions, values, and needs. This was important to establish because it was within these overlaps where we could identify existing gaps, which we could exploit for the purposes of the network. In a sense, it helped us identify our targets and the areas where we wanted to work in. From this, I was also to write a business proposal, highlighting our vision, mission, values, strategic aims and ultimately establish the need for this network. It was the first time I had
to complete a business report, and although nervous about this, Germana Girelli provided me with a framework to work from and Raffaele Vitulli guided me on the language and format. I found that my analytical abilities, cultivated at university, helped me a great deal with this project because it enabled me to quickly identify and assess information that was useful and not. Furthermore, the report writing skills that some university tasks required helped me to write concisely. Although I will admit that writing business reports was at times frustrating for me because of the change of vocabulary and structure they required. I often found that I was using language that was more suitable to academic writing. However, Germana Girelli helped me to identify this problem and gave me useful advice and examples to use. I also found myself having to make diagrams for the report. This is something which I did once or twice before at university, but was a skill, I now know I need to develop further. However, I did receive positive feedback on these graphs and ideas for how to present them in the future. I felt that the tasks given to me during this month were not only what challenged me the most, but was where I was able to draw on the skills I learned from university the most. At the end of this month, my work was presented in Milan. The feedback after the conference was very positive, and many existing partners, and new ones were interested in coming onboard with the project. They could identify with the gaps that my research pointed out and recognised the need for the network that was being proposed. Upon hearing this, I felt very proud of the work I had done.

3.2.3 Month Three-London
In July, another important conference was held in London, where one of the biggest and most important organisations in the industry was in attendance, Creative England. MateraHub was invited to this conference and again wanted to present the proposed network. However, some adjustments had to be made in order to present in England. I had to expand and refine the previous work. In addition, Raffaele Vitulli also wanted to have a website and logo ready through which to demonstrate the work and mission of the network. A PowerPoint presentation was also required. I was asked to collaborate with Carlo Magni, the Online Media Director, on the web content. This introduced a new element to my work. I was able to learn how web content got uploaded to a site, and learned about the process of creating a web page. As for the logo, this was mostly dealt with by another member of the MateraHub team. Sadly, my creative abilities did not extend so far as to be helpful in the design process but it was interesting to learn about the different functions of other
people at Materahub and see how these positions related to each other at MateraHub. Therefore, in the last month, the last phase of the project was completed. I helped write information that was later used in the presentation, my previous work was refined and expanded on. During this process, I also learned about the testing phases of a project. At the completion of this month, also signifying the end of my placement, I learned that the presentation in London was a success and that the first activities of the network will begin in September. These activities will include workshops, and conferences, as well as sending out of invitations for collaboration within the partner network. The activities that will commence September were the ones I identified and suggested in the first month through the Canvas.

Something which struck me was my last conversation with Raffaele Vitulli when we talked about the future of the network, and the industry in general. He told me that while technological innovation was advancing rapidly it also had a clear and more direct focus and target. However, if we are to imagine ten years into the future, we do not know the types of jobs people will do in a rapidly changing global economy. He told me that at the edge of this was the collaboration of the art and business world with the aid of government sponsored direction such as that provided by the EU. It is at this edge where creative innovation and solution will come from to change not just future jobs, and the economy, but I realised also the way politics will be conducted. I found this to be fascinating as I started to imagine the challenges this might bring for human security. I believe there is a position of privilege held in Europe with regards to the jobs, income, and innovation but that in non-Western countries this same privilege is lacking. It made me think that if Raffaele was right and that the world is taking this new direction, in what ways can we foster this same thinking in places like Africa and Asia, where human security issues such as food and the environments are felt more acutely? How would or can the interaction between the art and business world facilitate social and economic changes in these areas?

3.0 Reflections

3.1 Personal

Before I started the internship, I had certain expectations. Having completed the placement, I will now reflect on how those expectations were met or not. To begin with, my first expectation was related to communication skills. It was important for me to improve on these as well as build on the cross-cultural communication skills I possessed. After three months, I felt I gained new
communication skills, especially in the way of report writing and project delivery. While some of the seminars in the IRIO program offer the option of report writing, these were never options that I took up. I think sometimes for students it is easier to stick to something they know, such as essay writing, rather than take a risk on something that they do not know. For example, in my Security Capita paper, the teacher gave us the option of doing an essay or a report for the final assignment. I initially wanted to do the report, but eventually weighed the risks and decided against it. In light of my internship and the reports that I was asked to complete, this would have been very beneficial in helping me through that process. That said, MateraHub did give me on the job training in how to do this, thus adding a new skill to my work toolbelt. I also learned how to communicate information in visual ways, such as through graphs and presentations. Again, this is something which the IRIO program offers to an extent, if you take seminars with a more quantitative focus or complete tasks where there is a quantitative component. I have not taken any of those but throughout the internship program, MateraHub offered me the opportunity to learn this skill.

In terms of cross-cultural communication skills, this is an area where I felt I improved the most. The work culture and style of verbal communication was very different than what I was used to. I often found that when Raffaele Vitulli would give me instructions it sounded vague as he often spoke in longwinded and roundabout ways, and I had to interpret what he meant. After our team meetings, I would often find myself, summarizing the conversation and the tasks he wanted me to complete just to confirm that I understood the next steps of the project and what was expected of me. Coming from Australia and having spent more than a year in the Netherlands, I was used to a more direct approach—instructions listed in numbered or bullet points and prioritized. Therefore, at times I felt frustrated but with some advice from other team members, I learned and found ways in which to overcome this obstacle. I also learned about punctually and time management. While I always confirmed and met the times of meetings and the deadlines of assigned tasks, often meetings were moved or changed at the last-minute due to clashing commitments or forgetfulness. To deal with this I ensured that my work was already prepared and ready by the original date and time, therefore, even when meetings were moved or changed, I was ready.

As for my expectations about team work, I often found myself working independently. This was great because I loved the freedom to be able to organize my own time and I enjoyed the confidence that was placed in me to keep working independently. What was somewhat new for
me was working through intermediaries. Raffaele Vitulli was my main supervisor, but I often found myself communicating through Germana Gerelli to Raffaele and to Paolo Montemurro. This was certainly not a negative, but required me to learn to work with and through an intermediary. Initially, I was not sure if my communication would be clear and direct enough, but I learned to adapt to this situation and was able to effectively communicate my ideas. Feedback, was something that I wanted to learn more about as I wanted to learn, not only how to receive and process it better, but also on how to provide it to others. This is something that is vital in teaching. Through observation and discussions with Germana and Raffaele, I feel like I have learned different ways in which to do this.

Lastly, with the success in Milan and London, I feel more confident in sharing my ideas. This was a great experience for me, and I know that I have to keep working on how to do this in different and more effective ways that are also culturally appropriate, I have a newfound confidence in my own voice and abilities, which I would like to continue fostering.

3.2 Professional
Firstly, I wanted to learn about the process of how to initiate, plan, and execute an international network. Through the use of the Creative Project Canvas, I now know how to start a project from its concept— with a lot of reflections, adjustments, and continued revision—through to execution and delivery. In terms of planning and execution, I learned that it is important to have a clear vision and goal at the beginning. During this project, there was some confusion in the first month about what the network should be about and how it will be used by MateraHub and partners. This presented me with issues, as I often found myself having completed assigned tasks and then having to redo them due to a lack of clarity from my supervisors. However, I felt that through some critical concept checking, I was able to help in narrowing down our aims and set clear goals and objectives.

I was unable to learn much about the testing of the network as this was done in Milan and London by Raffaele Vitulli and Paolo Montemurro. Therefore, I do not think this expectation was met. Although I did gain some insight into what may be required, if I were to find myself in a similar position in the future. Similarly, most of the review parts of the network came from within MateraHub and was done verbally. I think I would have liked to learn how to approach reviews based on surveys or something similar. Another expectation which was not realized was how to set-up and carry-out workshops. During my time at MateraHub, there were many workshops which
they conducted, but these were often in places like Poland, Spain, and France which I did not attend. Given the locations and my position as an intern, I understand why I was not able to learn about this process.

The last expectation I had was to learn about the role of social media in creating a common method of communication and networking. I felt that this was partly achieved during the last phase of the project but as this was mainly dealt with by Carlo Magni, and not my part of the tasks I was assigned to. Nevertheless, I feel that I have a basic understanding of how this is to be achieved but it is something I would like to develop in the future.

3.3 Between the Classroom and Practice
In this section, I would like to discuss how the knowledge and skills I gained from the IRIO program helped me in my work. What I found myself drawing on the most was the practical skills that the program taught us, given the practical nature of the work I undertook at MateraHub. These I have highlighted throughout the report. That said, knowledge gained from the pre-Master course CORE paper about the EU, was most helpful as it allowed me to draw on knowledge about the institutional structures which enabled me to access the correct departmental information and understand the funding process. This was extremely useful when I had to locate documents needed for connecting the EU mission to the mission of the network. Over all the courses, key human security issues were discussed to various extents and these became useful for me when I was looking at organizations which we could use as a model. I was able to identify and match organizations with that of what MateraHub wanted through what I had learned in class.

I think it is important also to note that I realized the areas where the program could expand on by what was not included. There are big social and governance changes occurring in relation to innovation and technology coming from these hubs and networks which will play an important part in security issues of the future. I think I would have liked to see a class that focused on the relationship between technology, innovation, and security but also realize that this can be achieved through essays, where the topic is our own choice.
4.0 Matera, Italy

4.1 The place

Matera is located in the south of Italy. It is one of the three oldest cities in the world and regarded as among the first ever human settlements in Italy. It is the main city in the Basilicata region. The population of Matera is quite small compared to other Italian cities with approximately 60,000 inhabitants. Few people here speak English, and many speak a local dialect called Materanian.

The city is known for the Sassi, a neighborhood on the edge of a ravine. The Sassi, consists mainly of houses made of sandstone, produced here, or carved into the mountain side. The ravine, is scattered with caves which used to be inhabited and old rock churches. It also boasts one of the largest nature reserves in Italy, containing over 60% of the country’s flora and fauna species.

Until the 1960’s, Matera was forgotten and neglected, not just by Italians, but the rest of the world, despite representing a cradle of culture. Slowly, since the 1950’s, the Italian government recognized the plight of the people here in Matera, and worked to lift them out of poverty and into a new era of development.

In 2019, Matera will be the European Capital of Culture and many new projects and events are taking place. Change is coming to Matera. Some are excited by this prospect, especially the youth as they seek employment opportunities along with business, whilst others, are skeptical of the change. Needless to say, Matera is a place of contrasts, where old and new meets modern and traditional. It is a fascinating city, with a rich history and cultural traditions that is starting to open-up to the world.

4.2 Cost of Living and Transportation

Italy, in general, is considered to be cheaper to live in than the rest of western Europe, even more so in the south. Given the fact that Matera is so isolated from the rest of the country, living here is much cheaper than in other places. A budget of about 100 to 120 euros per week is more than sufficient for food requirements and entertainment. The majority of businesses here are locally owned, and stocked with local products. There are few, if any, chain stores or restaurants and local transport is scarce. There are some buses to neighboring towns and cities but these are not always reliable or frequent. There is a local train station, which connects to important hubs like Bari and Altemura, but this runs maybe six times a day and not on Sundays. People do not cycle here, as
they do in the Netherlands, many prefer to walk, as everything is located close to each other or they take a car. There are maybe one or two taxis in the entire town.

4.3 Cost of Housing
The cost of housing in Matera is much cheaper than in the Netherlands. It is possible to find a furnished studio or one-bedroom apartment for around 300 euros per month, which includes utilities. You can probably find a place to share, which would reduce the price even further but this is only now becoming popular as many young people and even older working professionals still live at home with their parents.

Anyone wishing to come to Matera has to be mindful of the season in which they arrive. From around June onwards, as the summer period begins, the price of accommodation goes up for foreigners because of the touristic nature of the town. I was fortunate enough to have contacts in Matera and to share a flat with a friend, so this was not a particular problem for me. However, local friends who are currently seeking places to live are finding it challenging because many places are being converted into BnB’s or are turning into Air BnB apartments.

People also prefer to sign rental contracts here which are done in Italian. If you do not speak the language or are not fortune enough to have an Italian speaking person to go over the contract for you that may be a problem. I was fortunate enough that my friend spoke Italian and was able to guide me through the process of signing the contract. It is possible to find a place to live in Matera without going through a rental agency, which avoids the fees that come with finding a place like in the Netherlands. Even if the locals overcharge you for a place, it will still be cheaper than in the Netherlands. There are no surprise fees here or exorbitant costs associated with signing contracts like in the Netherlands.

4.4 Social Surroundings
Southern living is unlike anything I have experienced before. Being raised in New Zealand and having lived in Australia, the ‘going out’ culture is very different here. In Matera, there are a few key places where the locals go to, and if you do not have any local friends you will most certainly end up in the expensive, tourist places. Do not leave your house before 8pm for dinner, as this is even considered early, and as for going out, try waiting till after 10pm. Few of the organized events start on time, so if you are afraid of being late, do not worry. Shops open around 9am here and
close for a long lunch at around 1pm or 2pm. They then open again around 4pm or 5pm and remain open until 7pm or 8pm. Grocery stores are closed on Sundays.

Living in Matera can be an isolating experiencing if you do not speak the language or do not have a car. I think I have been very lucky as I have experience in living in many different places, so I am used to building a network of people quickly. I am also not shy about talking to strangers and trying new things. The locals are friendly and curious and you can meet people quickly if you show a willingness to try.

5.0 Advice to Future Students
Students wishing to undertake a placement at MateraHub will find it a good place to learn to work independently and in an international context. My advice is that for ease of communication, knowledge of Italian or French may be beneficial, although all members of MateraHub have a high level of English. That said, it is an Italian based business and therefore having a working knowledge of Italian is an advantage. Furthermore, while I approached MateraHub from a human security perspective and could see how it applied to the area I was writing my thesis in, those students who are in the specialization track of International Political Economy could also find MateraHub to be a suitable placement. For students, not from Southern European countries, I feel that a placement in the South of Italy, and at MateraHub, could be a bit of a challenge due to the different attitudes and work ethic. Therefore, I encourage future applicants to acquaint themselves with cross cultural communication skills, not because the people at MateraHub are not experienced in working with people from different countries and cultures, but because for the student, learning how to communicate and conduct themselves in a way that fits in with the local culture may be beneficial and help overcome settling in problems.

6.0 Where To From Here?
Having completed my internship, and having almost completed my thesis, I am confronted with the question of, “What is next?” While it has been my desire for the last two years to continue living and studying in Europe, I find myself returning to Australia nevertheless. It is not my intention to stay there for a long period of time, just long enough to develop a PhD proposal and search for suitable programs in Europe. So, once there, I will pursue my goal of becoming a teacher at a university. I realized throughout my studies and my internship that I want to become a lecture
in IR, specializing in Environmental and Human Security issues. Where the internship has helped me is that I want to focus my PhD research on creative technologies, facilitated by creative hub movements similar to those that MateraHub represents and supports. While I am not yet clear on how to approach such a PhD proposal I have a goal to strive for. Furthermore, MateraHub has offered me the opportunity to continue working for them from Australia on the project which I helped develop for them. While this does not touch upon the direction in which I wish to take my future studies, it does allow me to stay connected to key people and networks in Europe which I can draw upon in the future when the opportunity arises. Ultimately, I do not see myself working in a hub, but maybe in the future with a hub that has more direct focus on innovative solutions to environmental problems.