

Erasmus+ Exchange at BOKU Vienna – Study Report

Summer Semester 2017

For my second Master semester in the European study program of Agroecology, I had the chance to live for four months in Vienna and study at the University for Natural Resources and Life Sciences – or as it is called by the Austrians: BOKU.

In the beginning the BOKU system for choosing courses seemed very complicated, and it appeared that many courses I wanted to take, were already full. So, as Erasmus student, one should start as soon as possible with course selection. But no one should be discouraged, many courses have waiting lists with a good chance to move up quickly and to get in the course. After a quite long process of selecting the classes, I finally had my schedule and the semester could start. In the beginning the workload is not too big, but working continuously always pays off, to reduce the stress in the end.

I chose mainly projects and seminars or lectures with excursions. In my mind, the practical aspect of these courses brings a much bigger learning progress. The projects were also a place to get in contact with Austrian students as team members or with local politicians or active Viennese citizens as stakeholders. As an example, one of my projects had the topic „urban agriculture and regional development“, where my group investigated the state of urban agriculture in Vienna. Therefore, we conducted many interviews with – for this field – relevant actors. This was a great opportunity to look behind the scenes of politics in Vienna concerned with agriculture and to get an insight into the city development of a capital city in a foreign country.

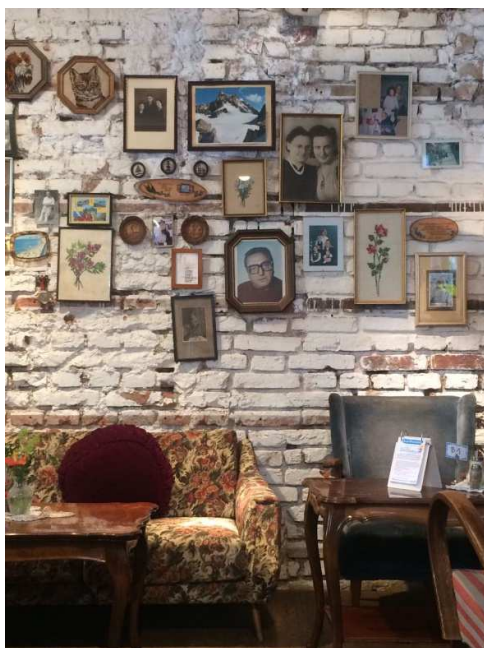


Figure 1: Café Vollpension - an intergenerational project and probably the cosiest coffee place in Vienna

Over all, my learning experience at BOKU was very good, the teachers were open for discussions and due to my personal course selection, I could gain some practical experiences.

At BOKU you can meet many international students from various countries, but getting in contact with Austrian students was easy, too. There are many events organized by the Erasmus+ Network and by student associations. One example would be the regular „Spritzer Stand“ in front of the University, where students serve the typical mix of white wine and sparkling water, other drinks and snacks; so the hot summer evenings after a long day of studying can be ended with a cool drink and a nice chat with fellow students.

As a German speaker, I could be part of the student group of „Global 2000“, a Viennese NGO concerned with environmental issues. There, I helped with activities like the *climate march* or a campaign against Glyphosat. Working with many young engaged people, enriched my experience highly.



Figure 2: Schloss Schönbrunn - former home of Empress Sissi

Vienna is a beautiful city with many historical buildings; wondering around in the castles *Hofburg* or *Schönbrunn*, drinking coffee and eating a typical Apfelstrudel in the Café Hawelka or the famous Café Central, could already fill a day. But also the museums and theaters have much going for. I enjoyed many of these cultural offers, especially because they often had student discounts, which made the cultural experiences affordable.

Important to mention are as well the numerous farmers markets, as examples the Yppenmarkt or the Karmelitermarkt. These should not be missed by students concerned with the topic of agroecology.

Especially in the warmer months, the Donauradweg for cycling and a swim in the Donau around the Donauinsel is to recommend.



Figure 3: In order not to get homesick as Norwegian student in Austria, there is even Brunost at the Kutschkermarkt :)